

NOAA Science On a Sphere Users Collaborative Network Workshop  
NOTES  
Day 1, DOCENT TRAINING AND QUALITY CONTROL Break Out Group  
Bishop Museum  
July 30, 2008  
Honolulu, HI

It is noted that many institutions have a formal docent training program now, as opposed to last year. Right now, there is not programmatic level docent training. There are however many options available to facilitate sharing of best practices at programmatic level, just need the scripts and ways. So let's think about ways and means.

Some institutions are new to training SOS docents, but perhaps can draw on docent training from experienced programs.

General lack of training in the field, lack in consistency. What is lacking in SOS is lacking in other areas of museum, too.

Lawrence – docents are not there to educate, only to guide people. Unpaid volunteers.

Training for Chicago – outline of shows, certain points they had to hit but from different angles.

Jessy – paid vs unpaid – there is a training level difference for both. For this discussion, a docent is different than a volunteer. Docent at Wildlife Experience is 16 hr training, test, evaluated... suggest this higher standard for SOS as well.

Cross dept users presents challenges, too.

Lawrence – get copy of script, observe 2, co present, present in front of education staff, then in front of public for a certain period of time, then become trainers. Used Star Wars set up (knights, masters, grand masters, etc.)

Trainees have schedule with certain amount of flexibility, documents and person presenting will sign off on the document. The docent pick times for training when that fit their schedules. Not as tight a structure as one would think.

Doug does the same thing with 4 staff, 20 students. Now have 10 presenters, train 2 at a time. Takes 4 hours total. Do first presentation as audition/ practice.

Celeste – piece missing is initial training for staff regarding presentations. My understanding is SOS arrival involved tech support, not education support.

Beth - Now with every SOS installation there is a 2 day training, then it is up to the museum to train their employees.

Celeste – what are the concepts that need to be transmitted in a training program to keep scientific integrity and quality?

Carrie – witnessed inaccuracies in info transfer. Are your scripts vetted by scientific experts in arena?

Lawrence – the scientists from other places will come in. Most scripted info comes from NOAA resources. Depends on data set, but tend to pull from federal agencies' web sites. Also the state standards web sites.

Doug – mechanism to solve a related problem: People who teach intro astronomy made a google group. Enough people there (old and new) so questions can be posted and asked. The group will respond, one or two in a day.

Beth – we have yahoo group, nothing saying we can't use that group, even though there's not a whole forum of experts.

Doug – give docents access. Probably have some questions technical info and some re docent activity.

John – has there been any sharing about docent training programs across institutions? Answer from group is no.

Lawrence has all programs scripted. They get retooled frequently. Docent training documents, sign-off sheets, flow charts etc, are documented. They have a training coordinator with docent schedule. Coordinator keeps track and offers flexibility.

Celeste – when training docents, do you find where they stand in terms of science literacy? Misinterpretation can happen with different levels of scientific literacy (what is data, what is

Frank – docents are asked questions and may not be able to answer

Susan's institution had laminated cheat sheets with FAQ's, main concepts, background and training of how to respond if they are asked a question they don't know the answer (where to send them to find the answer).

Jessy – their docent's have "I Want to Know" cards. When a docent is unable to answer a question that have the person write their question on the card with their return address. Questions on the cards are then answered and sent back to visitors. Try to do 48 hour turnover for questions. They call CU if their research can't find the answer. They then get copied and added to docent training notebook. If they get the question a lot, then it goes into formal training.

Has anyone done this with SOS?

Chicago – yes. FAQ expectation setting. Questions are similar and then put into outlines.

Carrie - NOAA be involved in this?

Susan - YES! Say for a question on tsunami wave height... "Lets do this together"

NOAA wants to know the FAQ's so they can answer things thru data sets.

Posting datasets is accessible to everyone. Nice thing is the group can also answer.

Beth would see which questions would be answerable with the catalog and which ones would be best sent to an expert.

Keith – where the museums start when they get info... that is the question for him. Each institution has different needs, so will need different answers. He put together 2-pagers for reporter/staffer at press release level. At end, had references. "If you want to know more, go to website..."

Beth – most datasets don't come with that level of detail. And asking for the info is met with partial info.

Doug – the model for outreach is Hubble. Along with image is press release, then "if want to know more" you get 2 pages, then places to ask for more info or photo release.

Celeste – scientists are not always willing to write out the info to flush out the data for a learner. A template may be necessary to flush out the info needed for the learning community.

Carrie – If a scientist visited their work and heard a miscommunication, they'd want to write a 1-pager to set it straight! Perhaps make this a requirement for use of the sphere. Having quality standards or don't get to post it. Understand there will be a lot of backlash to standards of quality, though.

Keith – tell them how many people will see it, get them to understand the impetus.

Beth – its easier to get info re new datasets. Is more difficult to collect info re the older pre-existing sets.

1. sometimes not easy to talk to scientists. Say write something, but if we have questions... 2. now that we're at critical mass re SOS, possible that viewership will grow rapidly.

Doug – Currently target who is a SOS docent. Offer docent opportunities to soon-to-be-teachers. They have context.

Problematic in Ohio. They have x amount of observation to do and don't recognize informal institutions for credits

Those of you who have in terms of docent training send stuff to Beth and start a working group to review

Clarify request - Docent standards: minimums for training, scripts, or training program

Katie talking about training specifically. **Susan, Melanie, Lawrence, etc to send to Beth who will send to committee to review and formalize and send out for comment.** Combining what everyone has could produce a good quality product.

Two separate parts – scientific accuracy of info conveyance and the methods of docent training.

This isn't just the docent, but the visualizations. We have 200 data sets. It's time to look at the ones out there and say "these aren't being communicated well" and take them off the play list.

How to assess the quality of datasets?

If the docent can't answer the question well then it probably should be off the playlist.

Gives the NOAA seal of approval, responsibility to NOAA. "Has been misused, mis-explained, or not used at all."

**John – on YouTube...** How about docent training presentations put on there? Can help to tell if it's a dataset that others would want to do or ways to make it better. Also a great docent training device.

Great! And scientists should be doing this/ giving the talk on some of these. We know the data is complex to explain, so users need more support. It is upon NOAA to have products used correctly. Get to best of the best and create templates. The network can create content, but NOAA content should insure rigor.

But each museum has it's own expertise, don't want to prevent an institution from having access.

**User rating system idea!** Which ones getting most used and why.

Carrie – would you guys be willing to look through the library and say which ones used commonly, which ones used by docents and which ones they respond to the most?

Idea to have a working group continue to discuss this issue.