

Sarah Carr

Chief Knowledge Broker at Open Communications for the Ocean (OCTO)



What is your current occupation?

I am Chief Knowledge Broker at OCTO (Open Communications for the Ocean), a conservation nonprofit. I coordinate and manage a number of forums (listserves, webinars, newsletters, etc.) that bring ocean conservation and management professionals together to share knowledge to improve ocean conservation and management

What is your educational background?

I have a BA in economics, a Diploma for Graduates in Geology and Marine Science, and a PhD in Marine Science.

A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?

As I was finishing graduate school, I applied to be a NOAA Knauss Marine Policy Fellow in Washington, DC. At the end of my fellowship, I took a position coordinating a network that brought ocean professionals together to develop information about tools to do holistic management of ocean ecosystems. That work touched on all aspects of ocean conservation and management, and I loved getting to work with many different types of people who play so many different roles in ocean use, conservation, and management – marine scientists, fishers, protected area managers, other natural resource managers, economists, anthropologists, computer modelers, software developers, education and outreach professionals, policy makers, and many more. While the name of our network, my job title, my employer, and the way we work have

changed since I started, I am actually still running this same (much larger) network dedicated to bringing ocean professionals together to help each other do their work better.

Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?

While technology changes, core skills needed for the ocean conservation and management field – a solid science background and great people skills – remain the same. Students should definitely think about both the natural and social sciences for their coursework and should get as much real-world experience where they talk to ocean users and understand their viewpoints, needs, and constraints as they possibly can. Getting training and experience in negotiation, conflict resolution, and marketing are also invaluable. We can't really manage ocean ecosystems; we can only manage human activities.

What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?

My job is networking! My advice is to talk to everyone you can – fellow students, professors, guest lecturers, etc. – and get involved as much as you can in ongoing projects and public policy decisions – through jobs, internships, research, volunteer activities, or even just as a stakeholder.

What does a “typical” day of work look like for you?

Lots and lots of email, internet research, calls, and webinars, and when possible, travel to conferences and meetings. But we mainly work through emails and webinars, so I spent a lot of time communicating with people online to find out what information ocean conservation and management professionals in the field need for their work and connect them with people who are also working in that area.

What is the best part of your job?

The people for sure. The people in our networks are so passionate about and dedicated to their work. And I am always impressed by their generosity in lending their support to others in the field.