eLife

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Community Manager
eLife

▶ LIFE SCIENCES
▶ RESEARCH CULTURE
▶ PUBLISHER

" *Creating the space and processes for researchers to discuss the future of research culture and communication creates an inspiring knock-on effect that leads to change in many research labs and institutes.* "

COULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS? TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE COMMUNITY YOU MANAGE.

Hello / Dia Dhuit, I am Ailís O'Carroll, PhD, the Community Manager at eLife. eLife is a not-for-profit peer-reviewed open access scientific journal for the biomedical and life sciences. eLife's mission is to reform research communication by ensuring its openness, integrity, and inclusiveness, which depends heavily on improving global research culture. To do this, we need close engagement of the research community. I manage this global community through our Early-Career Advisory Group, the eLife Community Ambassadors, and the eLife Open Science Champions network.

WHAT WAS YOUR PATH TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT? WERE YOU TRAINED AS A SCIENTIST OR DID YOU COME BY ANOTHER ROUTE?

Before starting my career as community manager, I studied Immunology at Trinity College Dublin in Ireland, and then I completed my PhD at the University of New South Wales in Australia. During my time as a postdoctoral fellow working on virus-immune protein interactions, I decided that as much as I loved science and the excitement of discoveries in the field, I preferred research community management. I enjoyed organizing events and internships, as well as creating and maintaining societies and programs. I was particularly interested in activities aimed at improving equity, diversity and inclusion in academia. I was fortunate to discover a community manager role in eLife that aligns with my values of creating a research culture that benefits both research and researchers.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR ROLE? HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR TIME?

Most of my time goes toward running the eLife Community Ambassadors program. Now in its 3rd year, the program recruits early-career researchers who work alongside eLife's Early-Career Advisory Group to advocate for responsible science practices. I also run an extended network of early career researchers called eLife Open Science Champions. (Click here to join!) My role is to schedule and plan events and meet-ups to hear the needs of the global research community. I then work alongside the ambassadors, eLife staff, editors, and reviewers to implement changes that align with eLife's future vision. I also organize meetings and events between our advisors and editorial and leadership staff to ensure all members of the global research community are heard at leadership level.
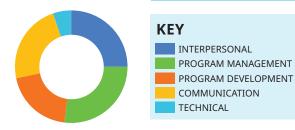
LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST YEAR, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON?

In the past year, we've recruited 128 ambassadors from more than 50 countries into our eLife Community Ambassadors program. The 18-month program is split into 2 phases - first the learning and community building phase, and then the activism phase where ambassadors work together to create sustainable change to research culture. Meeting and working alongside such an inspiring group of researchers has been the highlight of the year for me. It led me to create the eLife Open Science Champions network to enable any researcher interested in reforming research culture to join this extended network of the program and receive resources, event invites and opportunities from the Ambassadors program.

KEY

- INTERPERSONAL
- PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNICATION
- TECHNICAL

ℹ AILÍS'S SKILLS WHEEL SIGNATURE

The CSCCE skills wheel is composed of five core competencies, with nine skills within each competency. Skills wheels are a common way of visualizing and curating information about skills that also allow for the creation of a job "signature" or "fingerprint" based on the particular skills in use. This wheel is representative of the skills Ailís used over the last 12 months.

▶ For more information, see the CSCCE skills wheel.

DO YOU SHARE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT DUTIES WITH ANYONE ELSE? WHERE DOES YOUR POSITION FIT WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

I work alongside a wonderful communities team at eLife, consisting of a Head of Communities, Research Culture Manager, Community Engagement Assistant, Social Media Officer, and the Community Managers of both eLife and our preprint evaluation and curation platform called Sciety. Our team was set up to oversee and drive forward eLife's work in all areas of research culture, including the promotion of equity, diversity and inclusion, and efforts to increase openness and integrity in science and medicine. We also work alongside all other teams across the journal from marketing and communications to the production, editorial and features teams.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A COMMUNITY MANAGER?

I thoroughly enjoy meeting researchers from all across the world every day, hearing about their experiences, their research, and their research communities. As scientists, they know the value of working together to expand knowledge. I'm inspired by the drive and passion of these researchers - particularly the early-career researchers - to create sustainable change and improve research culture.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED AS A SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGER? ARE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOUR ROLE COULD BE MADE EASIER – SUCH AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES OR SOMETHING ELSE?

The biggest challenge has been that to have a truly global community, we have to consider every time zone when we're organizing events. I now aim to record all events and have them accessible to rewatch at a time that is convenient, and I build in a window of 2 weeks after the events during which participants can ask the speakers questions via a live document and/or email. Having more access to resources for creating globally accessible events would have helped, but having the support of the CSCCE Slack workspace for tips and tricks has been extremely beneficial.

AND ZOOMING OUT A LITTLE, WHY DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SCIENCE? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY?

Community management is crucial for the future of science. A large and diverse community of scientists is shaping the future of our world through discovery and communication of knowledge. Community managers are needed to hear these scientists' needs and shape the systems and environments that they work in. For too long, many of these needs have not been heard. But when we create space and processes for researchers to discuss the future of research culture and communication, we create an inspiring knock-on effect that leads to change in many research labs and institutes.

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