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The Marine Social Science Network: Helping us understand people's relationship with the sea

Editor's note: Emma McKinley is a research fellow at Cardiff University in Wales in the United Kingdom. Her work explores the relationships between society and the ocean, and focuses on concepts around ocean literacy, marine citizenship, and public perceptions and attitudes towards marine and coastal systems. Her most recent projects have explored the relationship between ocean literacy and behavior change and [coastal community adaptation to climate change in Ireland and Wales](#). Emma is the founder and chair of the [Marine Social Science Network](#) and can be contacted at mckinley1@cardiff.ac.uk or info@marsocsci.net as well as on Twitter [@EmmaJMcKinley](#).

Skimmer: What is the Marine Social Science Network, and how did it get started?

McKinley: The [Marine Social Science Network \(MarSocSci\)](#) started from some informal conversations with colleagues in the UK. These conversations led to a



stakeholder workshop in January 2018 that explored whether there was need and scope for a network or community of marine social scientists, initially in the UK, and what this might look like. There was an over-riding sentiment from those of us working within marine social sciences that we felt a bit isolated and that the community was more fragmented than other areas of marine sciences.

At the workshop, we quickly agreed that there was a need for a community or platform for marine social science researchers and practitioners, and that, crucially, this should be an international and interdisciplinary network. And so MarSocSci was born! We started off small with a [Twitter profile](#) in May 2018, and then launched officially at the Society and the Sea conference in London, September 2018.

Since then, it feels like the momentum has just continued, and we now have over 600 people signed up to the newsletter and over 3000 following us through social media. Our Committee has also grown, and we now have an amazing team behind MarSocSci, all working voluntarily to support and grow the Network.

Skimmer: How can practitioners engage with MarSocSci?

McKinley: Through our brilliant Communications Team, we send out a monthly newsletter ([sign up here](#)) which has information about:

- New publications from across the spectrum of marine social sciences disciplines and practice
- Research and PhD opportunities
- Upcoming events – including all of those that have had to adapt to new ways of working during 2020.

We have also started a MarSocSci BookClub to provide an informal networking opportunity that is also a bit of fun for all those who get involved, and we have recently started our [MarSocSci Webinar Series](#). One of our main aims is to create a platform that promotes the diversity of marine social science work that is being done globally, and we are keen to showcase this in as many ways as possible. The webinar series is one way of doing that, with talks covering blue growth, MPAs, stakeholder engagement, climate change adaptation, and arts-based research, and recordings are made available on our YouTube Channel. We have recently launched our Blog Series too, which will be another avenue for promoting research and projects.

We also recognize that one size will not fit all, so we have regional and thematic chapters establishing themselves all of the time. If you are interested in doing this, or if you have any ideas of other ways we might be able to support the marine social science community, we would love to hear from you! You can find out more at our website www.marsocsci.net or you can email info@marsocsci.net.

Skimmer: What impact could MarSocSci have on ocean conservation and management?

McKinley: Recent years have witnessed a real shift in the conversation around the role and potential application of marine social sciences within global ocean governance and sustainability. An aspiration of the Network is to be a voice for this community of researchers and practitioners and to ensure that the expertise, skills, knowledge, and insight that can be gathered through marine social sciences are used effectively to support sustainable ocean use and governance now and in the future.

As we look towards the UN Ocean Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability, marine social sciences, in all of its forms (we take a very broad definition in MarSocSci!), has an integral role to play in achieving the goals set out by the Decade. To make real change, we need to understand people and their relationship with the sea. The marine social sciences provide us with a diverse range of lenses that can be used to really explore and understand this. (Read more about this [here](#).)

Learn more about the Marine Social Science Network by following them on Twitter and Instagram [@MarSocSci](#) or going to the website www.marsocsci.net. If you would like to contact the MarSocSci team, email info@marsocsci.net.

