

The role of science centers in the citizen science landscape

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Citizen science is a growing field of research and practice, in which volunteers engage in active scientific research. It includes projects of vast magnitude alongside local initiatives, in which publics engage in data collection and other scientific activities, which assist scientists in their research.

Science centers, science museums and natural history museums have played an important role in the growth of citizen science, facilitating public engagement and participation and supporting project development. This is due to their expertise in engaging large audiences in science, alongside their scientific specialties and experts. An example for such support of science centers in citizen science is illustrated by the Australian museum who both leads citizen science projects and has supported the establishment of the Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA) some years ago.

However, despite the significant support some centers and museums provide to citizen science, this is not yet widespread phenomena. Furthermore, the motivations, opportunities and challenges of engaging in such practice are not well understood. In this proposed panel we will discuss the benefits and barriers for science centers, science museums and natural history museums to engage in citizen science.

The panel will begin with a 10 min introduction on citizen science in a global perspective, followed by short 5-minute presentations by each of the panel members (senior staff in science centers and/or citizen science experts), demonstrating their unique perspectives. The core of the session, will feature a lively discussion between panelists addressing the role science centers and museums have in the citizen science landscape. Specifically, we will discuss the following questions:

What roles can and should science communication establishments have in promoting citizen science?

What are the differences between science centers, science museums and natural history museums in conducting and supporting citizen science projects?

In what ways can citizen science promote public engagement with science?

What are the challenges and barriers for science communication establishments to engage in citizen science?