Taking Historical Records Online: ESA's Evolving Digital Footprint
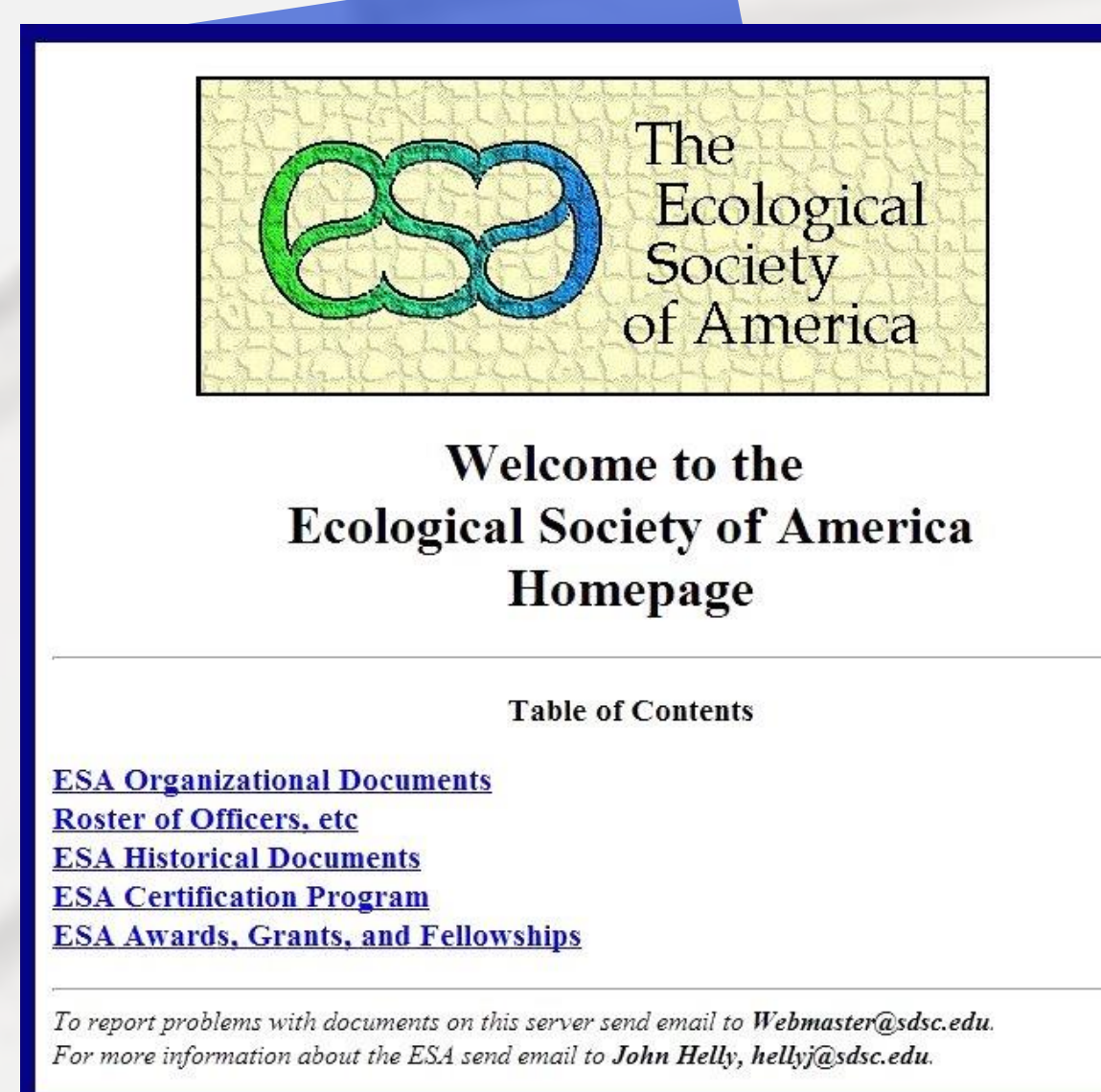
Sally L. White - Morrison, Colorado // C. Susannah Tysor - Faculty of Forestry - University of British Columbia // Robert K. Peet - University of North Carolina

After the World Wide Web went public in April 1993, ESA was among the early adopters of this new communication format. The first ESA website was online in January 1995.
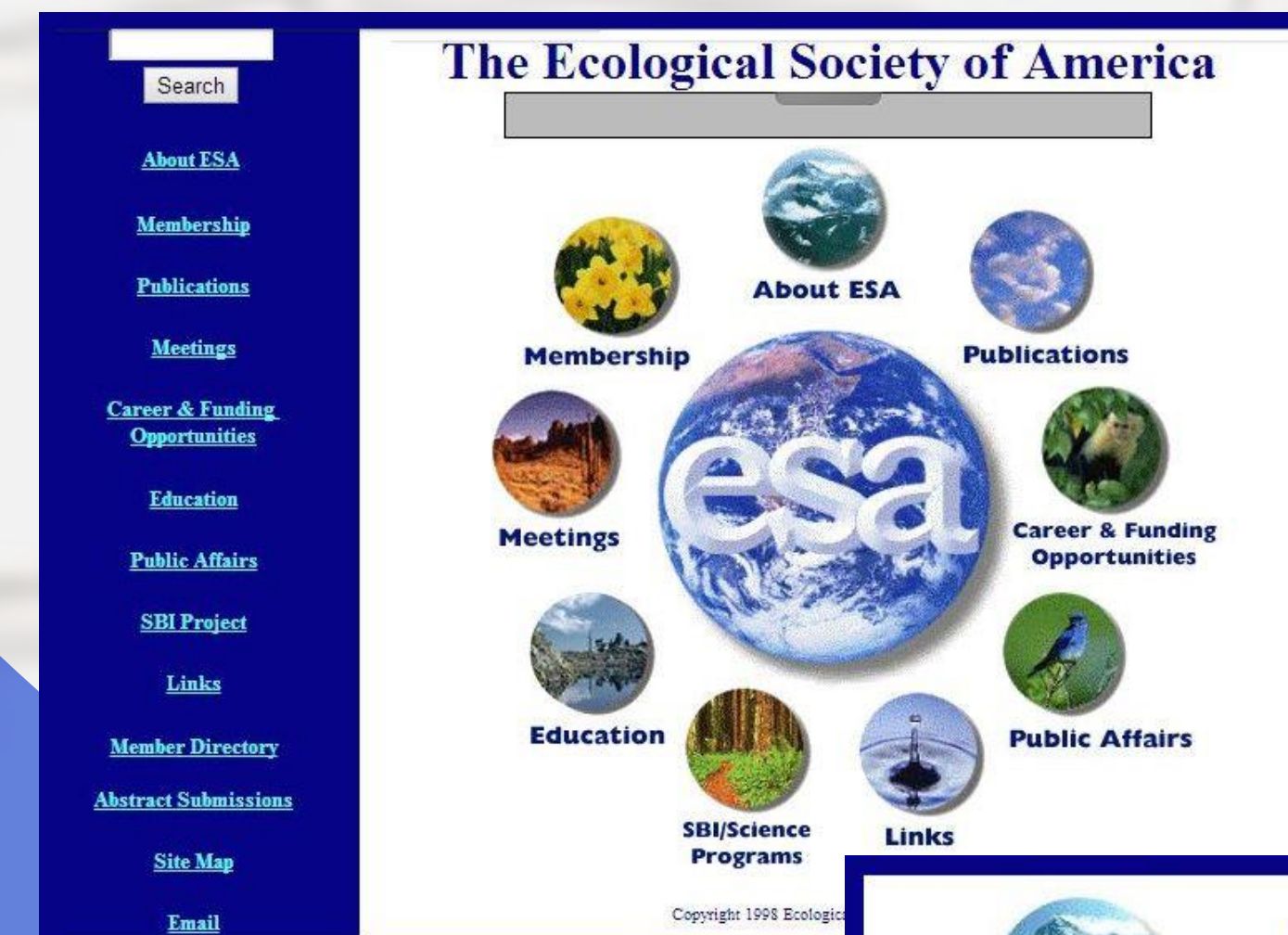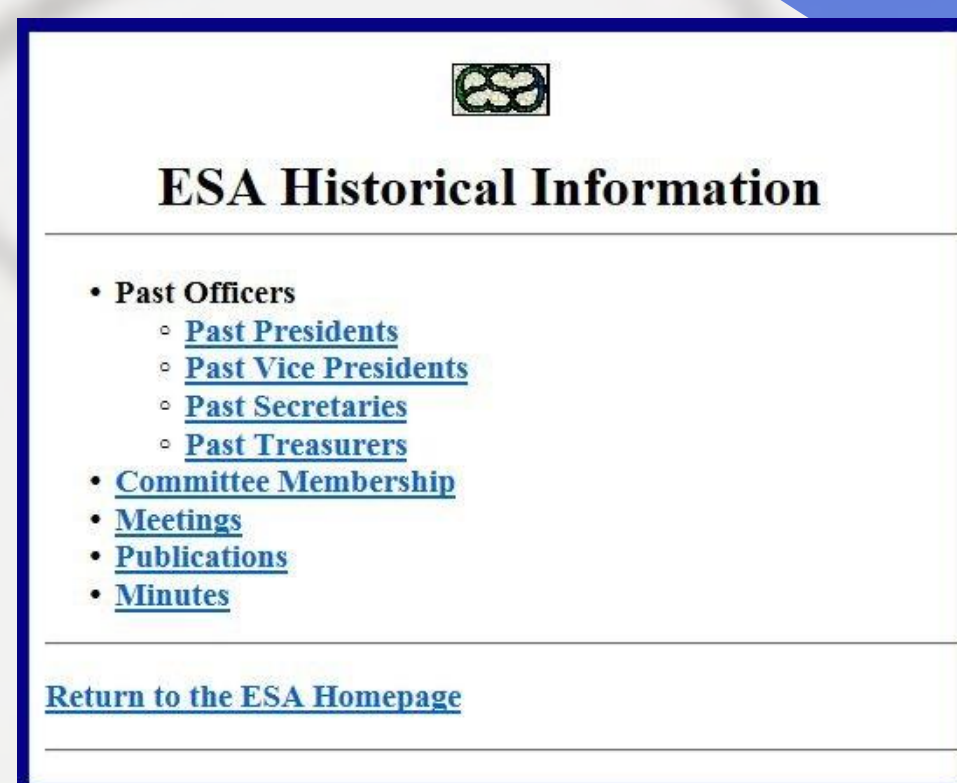
The Historical Records Committee (HRC) soon added a history component that introduced ESA's origins and provided access to detailed lists of the Society's officers, sections, chapters, committees, awards, and meetings in table form. These records were updated regularly and constituted the core of the history website, as they still do today.

With the ESA Centennial approaching, the HRC has been engaged in promoting awareness of ESA's history in relation to the history of ecology and its practitioners.

More tools, more ways to make history accessible to ESA members
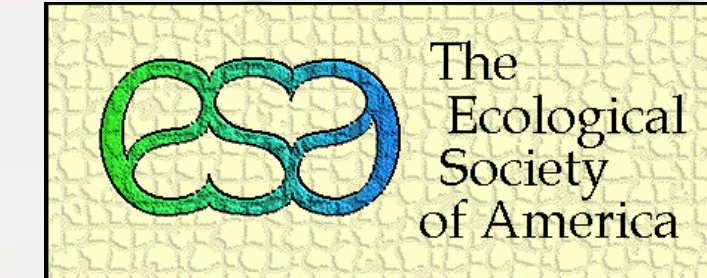
The Four Roberts
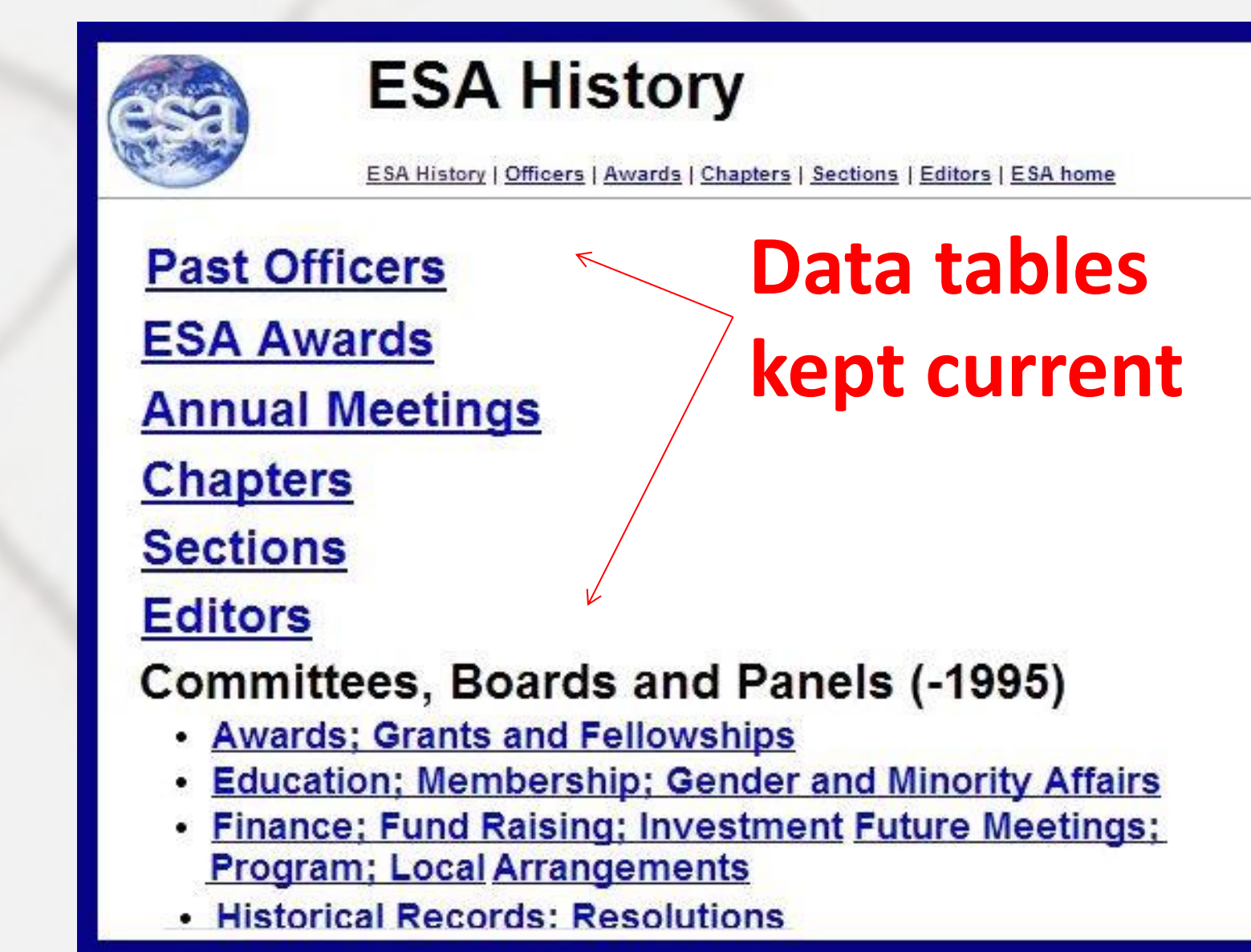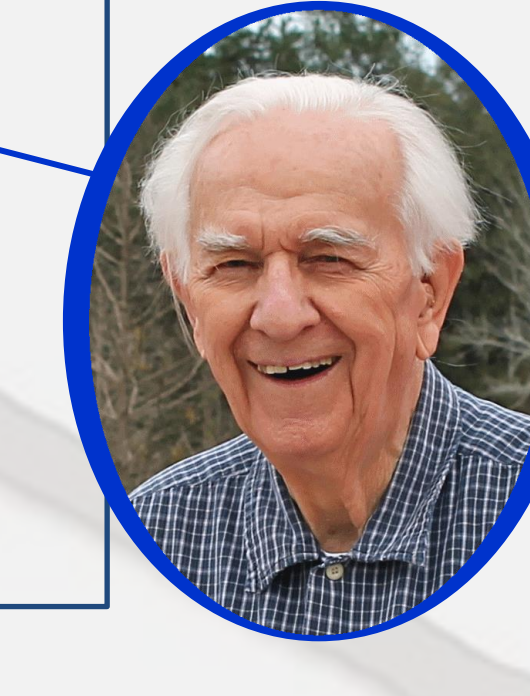
ESA's and the Historical Records Committee's original websites were built by efforts of four early historians:

Robert Colwell: led the committee that in November 1994 proposed first ESA website, arranged for it to be hosted at the San Diego Super Computer Center, designed hypersymmetric logo, precursor to current version, and built website; Distinguished Service Citation, 1999

Robert Burgess: collected materials and photos documenting ESA history from 1915 through 1970s; Distinguished Service Citation, 1988
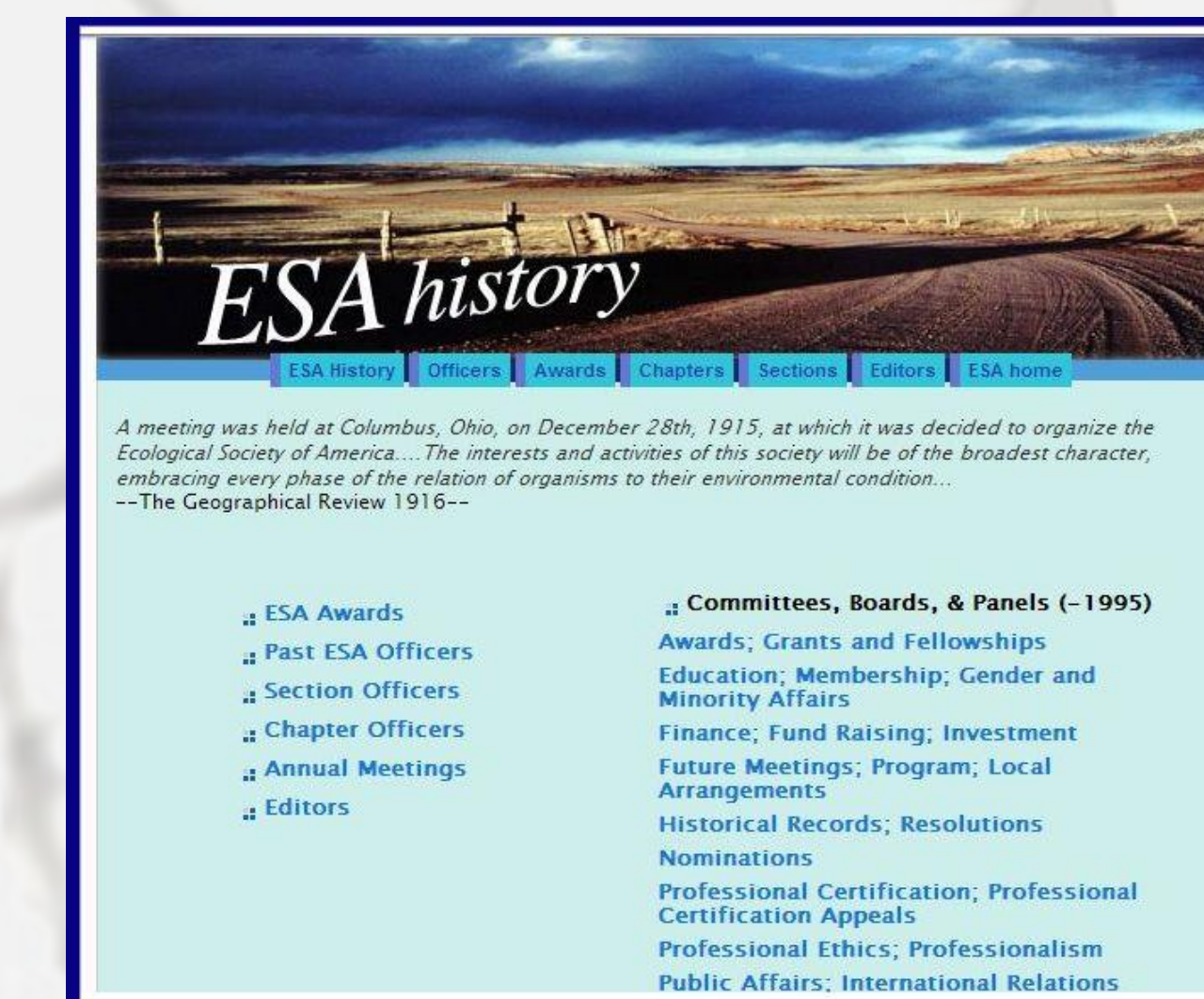
Robert McIntosh: ecologist and student of the field's history, wrote articles and books reviewing the history of ecology and its concepts, compiled historical records while ESA Secretary

Robert K. Peet: proposed in November 1994 distribution of ESA historical records over the web, created most of ESA's original website and completed compilation of historical records from 1915-1995; Distinguished Service Citation, 1995

*"When I became ESA Secretary in 1992, I discovered our records were a mess, but found that Bob McIntosh and Bob Burgess had accumulated some pretty good documentation, so I pulled these records together and updated them and created what soon became **our first historical records web page**. Rob Colwell and I created the first ESA website, writing it in raw HTML, and this new means of publication seemed the obvious way to make our evolving historical records readily available to our members."*

—Bob Peet

1995

Welcome to the Ecological Society of America Homepage

Home page, June 1995
History page, same date, below
Courtesy Robert K. Peet

ESA Historical Information

ESA homepage as of December 1998, courtesy of the Wayback Machine, archive.org

1998

2001 – 2005

ESA History

Past Officers
ESA Awards
Annual Meetings
Chapters
Sections
Editors
Committees, Boards and Panels (-1995)

Data tables kept current

ESA Historical Records homepage as of July 2001, courtesy of the Wayback Machine, archive.org

2005 - 2011

Front page 2007-2014
Current news in red oval after 2012

Latest blog posts

@ESAhistory twitter feed

Interactive history timelines

Useful menu options

Searchable

Projects in progress

Sort by topics

2014

Find everything on the ESA History homepage
Visit us at Booth #114 for a demonstration, or online at ESA.org/history

Online Presence Today

Integrated use of several tools—blog posts, twitter, interactive timelines, and online documents and data—enables HRC to provide historical information at many levels simultaneously.

ESA's Historical Records Committee Home — ESA.org/history

Building connections to community and public 2008-2014

Our approach
— Expanding available information and connections
— Outreach via social media
— Exploring new tools for interactivity

Our results
— **Main website has more than 30 pages and 100 posts!**
— **More than 300 visitors per week**
— **New top-level access from ESA homepage**
— **Three major timelines in use**
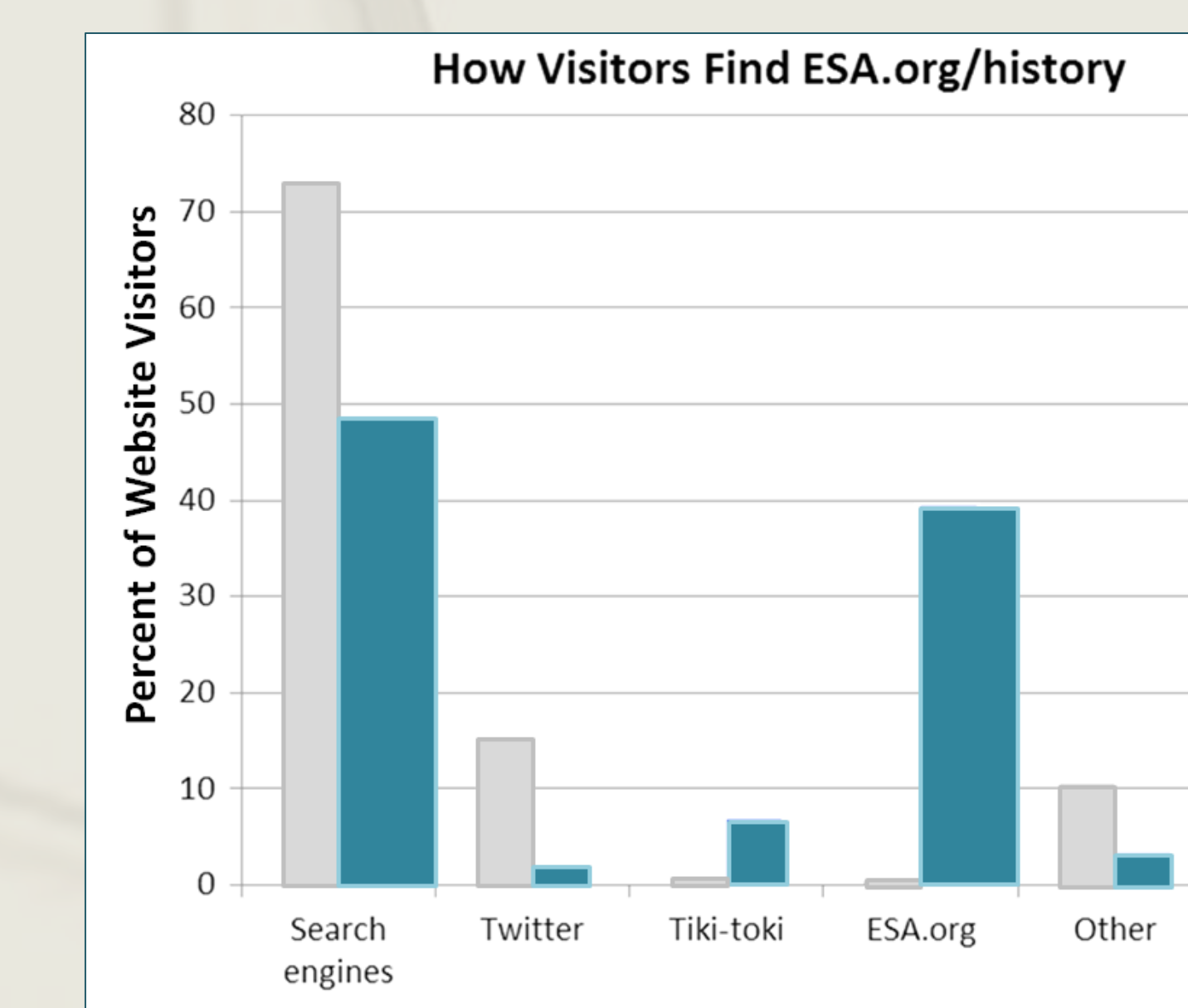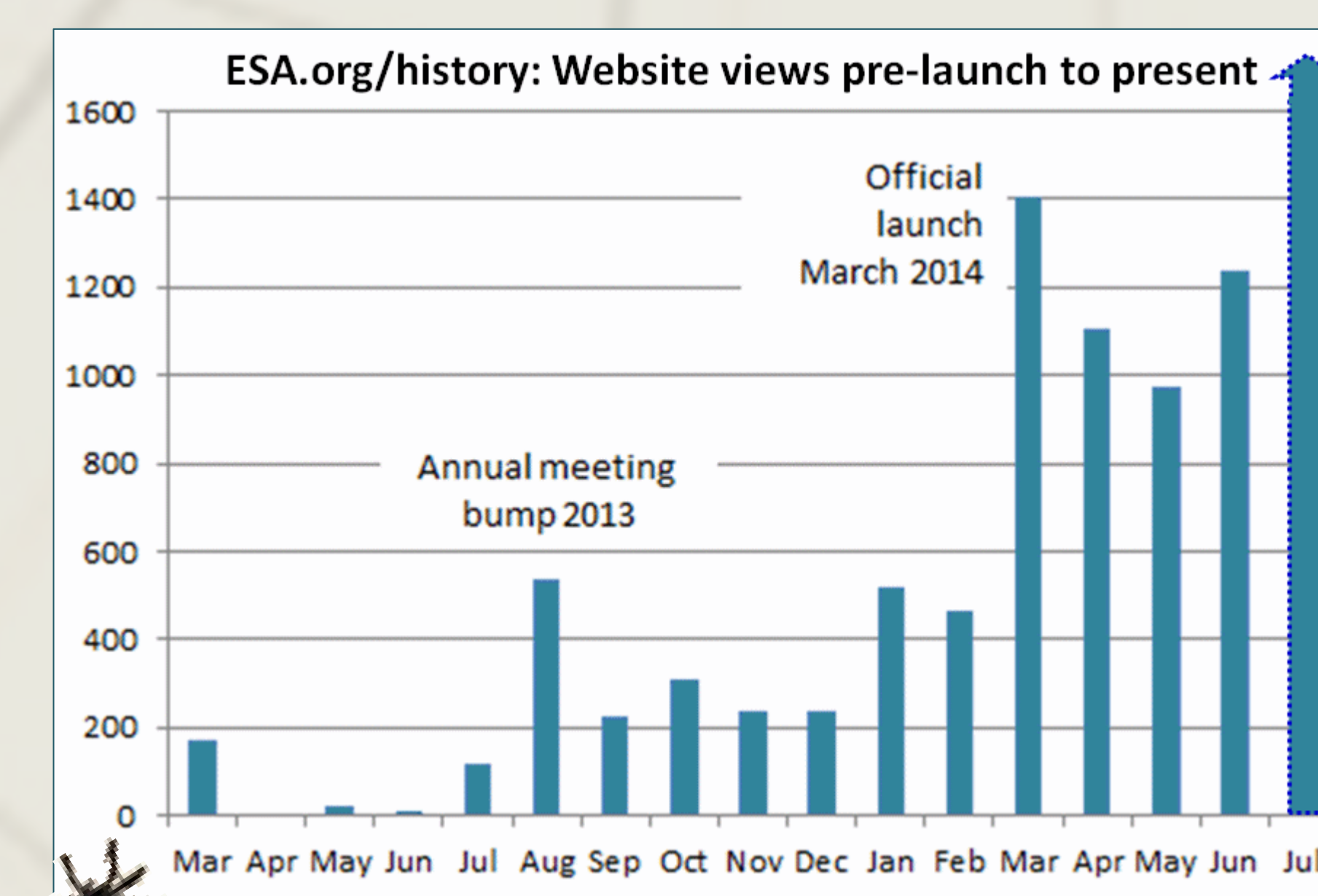— **432 tweets, 177 followers on Twitter**

Our interactive timelines help visitors find website information

Finding our audience for historical information

The new website version was online for testing and feedback a year before its official launch in March 2014.

ESA.org/history: Website views pre-launch to present

Official launch March 2014

Annual meeting bump 2013

How Visitors Find ESA.org/history

After a "History" button was placed on the ESA homepage, traffic sources and volume changed dramatically

For the latest in ESA history Follow us on Twitter @ESAhistory

Join us!
We need your help to continue to improve the ESA/history website!