As the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum has progressed, the percentage of female-identifying speakers has generally increased. The purpose of collecting this data was to see if there is any issue of bias present with the invitation-style curation of the event. At the beginning, inequality between speaker invitation is apparent with the first and current forum were researched to determine if they had published relevant work within four years of the forum they participated in. To collect this data, the speakers were searched using the Google Scholar search engine. The first page of results was analyzed to find publications from the presenter. Not all published work is represented in this search method. This comparison is shown in Figure 3 (to the right).

Results and Discussion

While there are many reasons for the overall underrepresentation of women, the field of Great Salt Lake this research shows us that we are making strides in how the percentage of women who were publishing lake research, the data indicate that women are fairly represented this year at the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum. While there are still noticeably fewer women scientists and engineers than men in the U.S. economy, they hold less than 25 percent of those in the field of STEM. This has been the case for decades, even as college educated women continue to increase their presence in the overall workforce. Underrepresentation of women creates a disparity that impacts not only job opportunities and promotions, but also income and grant-funding. To bring this closer to home, we looked at participation of female-identifying researchers exploring the Great Salt Lake and how their work is represented and accepted in our community. Preliminary results showed how female-identifying researchers are not as widely represented in the fields of study and are not participating at the same level as men. We explored this issue by looking at papers with the key words “Great Salt Lake Utah” published in 2009, the year before the first examined Great Salt Lake Issues Forum up to 2017, the year prior to this year’s forum. Our poster will explore ideas and questions such as how can we be more inclusive and representative of women in STEM? And what can we do locally to make our lake research environment more accessible to female-identifying researchers?

Although women fill half the jobs in the U.S. economy, they hold less than 25 percent of those in the field of STEM. This has been the case for decades, even as college educated women continue to increase their presence in the overall workforce. Underrepresentation of women creates a disparity that impacts not only job opportunities and promotions, but also income and grant-funding. To bring this closer to home, we looked at participation of female-identifying researchers exploring the Great Salt Lake and how their work is represented and accepted in our community. Preliminary results showed how female-identifying researchers are not as widely represented in the fields of study and are not participating at the same level as men. We explored this issue by looking at papers with the key words “Great Salt Lake Utah” published in 2009, the year before the first examined Great Salt Lake Issues Forum up to 2017, the year prior to this year’s forum. Our poster will explore ideas and questions such as how can we be more inclusive and representative of women in STEM? And what can we do locally to make our lake research environment more accessible to female-identifying researchers?

With the increasing amount of female presence in medicine, law, and business, it begs the question, why are there still noticeably fewer women scientists and engineers than men? Overall female representation in the workforce is growing, yet men continue to outnumber women year after year, especially at the upper levels of these professions (Hill, 2018). Unfortunately these high-level professions often come with more publicity and recognition which creates a disparity in how women are represented (NSF, 2018). However, this is more of a community-wide issue than a gender or generational issue. Women’s representation depends heavily on the an inclusive and fair atmosphere. Research suggests that women are not getting an equal say at academic conferences (Schoedroe et al., 2013; Isbell et al., 2014; Baxter et al., 2014).

To explore this issue further, we looked at the participating speakers in the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum for 2018 and previous years. We noticed that the amount of female-identifying speakers did not seem to match the amount of female-led research being done. Through analyzing this research we saw firsthand how women may be being done. Through analyzing this research we saw firsthand how women may be participating in research, but not represented at full capacity in conferences, reflecting the larger problem observed across many academic settings. Roughly a quarter of the presenters are women in this year’s forum (FoGSL, 2018). It is unfortunate that women and men cannot share this space equally because, in the words of Marie Curie, “after all, science is without genders, and it is only through lack of the historical sense that gender qualities have been attributed to it.” We are hoping through sharing this research we can better combat these problems of underrepresentation and make a more equal space at Great Salt Lake. Lake researchers have passion and understanding for the world around them, and we should tap into that energy to catalyze female participation in our backyard.

While this appears to be a underrepresentation of women speakers, when normalized for the percentage of women who were publishing lake research, the data indicate that women are fairly represented this year at the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum. The forum, consciously or not, is addressing the issues that go beyond the health and safety of the lake by giving a platform for women to speak. Future work should follow the trend of increasing female participation that we observed in the data.

Methods

To observe the overall female representation at the Great Salt Lake Issues Forum we calculated the percentages of female oral presenters at every forum year. The compiled speakers from each forum (FoGSL, 2018) were researched in order to make conclusions about how the person identifies. The number of female-identifying speakers and the total number of users were used to calculate the percentage of female speakers at each forum. This is represented in Figure 1 below. The next step was to compare the speakers represented at the forum with people publishing research on the Great Salt Lake. Using the Google Scholar search engine, searches were conducted for the term “Great Salt Lake”, collecting citations of the lake research published in the literature. We filtered to examine the year before the forum held in 2010 and also the year before this year’s forum, in 2018. Only the first 7 pages of engine searches were considered. The articles that met the classification of year and relevance were recorded. The authors from the papers were researched and number of female-identifying authors counted. If the person’s gender was ambiguous, the author was not included in the data. The published authors of the year were compiled into a comprehensive list and the percentage of female identifying authors calculated. This data is displayed in Figure 2 below. Because the data collected was only based on publishing researchers, we decided we needed to determine how many speakers were actually publishing. The presenters from the first and current forum were researched to determine if they had published relevant work within four years of the forum they participated in. To collect this data, the speakers were searched using the Google Scholar search engine. The first page of results was analyzed to find publications from the presenter. Not all published work is represented in this search method. This comparison is shown in Figure 3 (to the right).