1.9. Support for national and regional needs and applications (USE)

dhobern #1 March 27, 2020, 10:08am

> This is topic 1.9. in the *Uses* section of the ***Advancing the Catalogue of the World's Natural History Collections*** consultation. Use this topic to discuss the questions listed below.

Background
Although this consultation aims to encourage the development of standardised information for all collections globally, each country or region may have needs or uses for this same information to in local applications and services. It is important to identify a range of these needs and to make sure they are addressed as part of a collaborative solution. An inclusive approach will bring incentives to work together to make information on each catalogue as complete, current and accurate as possible. Requirements are relatively well understood from Europe (e.g. DiSSCo) and the United States (e.g. iDigBio), but other regions may have subtly or significantly different needs.

Other materials

The following contributed materials are particularly relevant to this topic:

- **Presentation: CETAF and DiSSCo Collections Registry**
- **Document: GBIF Services and Support for the Collections Catalogue**
- **Presentation: ALA Collectory**

Questions

- What national and regional needs or possible uses should be considered?
- Do national portals or specialist networks require information not currently addressed by data standards for collection metadata?
- Are there significant regional research infrastructures or public websites that include (or should include) information on local collections?
- Are there regionally important uses that are not addressed elsewhere in this document?

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2.5. Wider data linkages (INFORMATION)

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Faire Avancer le Catalogue des Collections d'Histoire Naturelle du Monde

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Presentation: ALA Collectory

Presentation: CETAF and DiSSCo Collections Registry

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vsmithuk #4 April 20, 2020, 11:07am

There is an important use case missing from the list which probably fits closest within this section, or possibly in 1.1. One of the biggest issues we face is demonstrating the role and value of collections. This is often a national challenge because this is where the funding lies, but on occasion becomes a continental or global challenge. A collections catalogue is the foundation for this form of advocacy, demonstrating the power, relevance and diversity of usecases. The data can be used to build funding cases, show current (often national) capacity), and highlight gaps. Related to this, there is significant potential use these data as a management

tool at a range of spatial scales to demonstrate strengths, weaknesses and capacity of collections. Again, this level of management is often local (national) but requires global coordination and needs founding on the catalogue data as the first line of evidence.

4 Likes

1.4. Assessing the scale and value of collections (USE)

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trobertson #5 April 20, 2020, 3:37pm

Thanks @vsmithuk

There are some important aspects in this which are useful to validate the **sketch** for a collection catalogue design. In particular, you highlight the need to *aggregate* at spatial levels and highlight gaps; presumably requiring a comparison across collections or to some reference.

Can you please elaborate a little on this section?

> A collections catalogue is the foundation for this form of advocacy, demonstrating the power, relevance and diversity of usecases.

Collating citations such as those found in taxonomic papers or tracking data downloads and the **subsequent use** are well-understood objectives. Have you ideas of other information feeds that can be accumulated or compiled?

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dhobern #6 April 20, 2020, 11:42pm

Hi @vsmithuk - you are quite correct that this is an important topic, although I have been surprised while preparing for this consultation that rather few people seem to want to discuss it. We decided it was so important that we added it as a topic of its own (**1.4. Assessing the scale and value of collections**). I'll add a link to your post from that page.

1 Like

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vsmithuk #7 April 21, 2020, 8:27am

Hi Donald, Tim and all,

It's interesting that I didn't link 1.4 to this topic. I think this is because while the section title speaks to the aggregation part of the issue, I'm not sure the text captures the use case about what one then does with the data. Specificall using these data as a management tool to understand capacity, completeness, strengths, weaknesses, priorities etc of an institution/nation/government/scientific community etc isn't covered. Also, aggregation is in some cases unnecessary. If you are an institution head, while aggregation is useful, it is not essential to making the business case of why our collections are useful. Its simply value in the effort of having a stable, standardised record of the collection (a benchmark) that is critical. Another point is that the comparison component isn't captured at the moment. i.e. the need to compare holdings often arises. This isn't purely about numbers, but also about strengths of collections and complementarity. For example, Kew and NHM's botanical collections are complementary and we try to minimise overlap so that when viewed together we are more complete and there is less redundancy. That said, some of this is about benchmarking (comparing sizes and related metrics of collections for example) and this benchmarking is of itself part of the use case, but I know some will also resist this for political reasons.

Getting back to aggregation, the push for these aggregated statistics this has often come for higher in organisations who need an evidence base on which to argue for the role of collections and greater cooperation - in part to manage the scare resources of staff and expertise, maximising (or often preserving) taxonomic breadth while minimising duplication. Lastly for me, as we move toward developing a more integrated model of the natural world, founded on observations and collections, we need an evidence base to see where we are deficient in data, and which organizations might coordinate to fill these gaps. The collection's catalogue isn't of itself sufficient to do this but its the foundation for such an effort. This for me at least, is the big overarching goal, and while the ideas paper might not go too far on this point (some will see this as too much of a stretch) hinting at the catalogue as the foundations for such as effort, given that complete digitisation of our collections is still a long way off, might be useful.

1 Like

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tkarim #8 April 21, 2020, 4:18pm

Being able to demonstrate that your collection is unique (e.g., taxonomic or geographic coverage, many ways to look at this) in the global collections enterprise is also something that could be really powerful. This type of information is something that can be leveraged with administrators/funders/directors for resources.

2 Likes

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abentley #9 April 22, 2020, 10:08pm

Yes, a reliable catalog would allow this to be scaled to whatever regional or discipline specific lens is appropriate for whatever purpose is necessary for whatever end user or group. this could very easily be “skinned” in whatever way is necessary to answer these questions efficiently.

1 Like

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abentley #10 April 22, 2020, 10:10pm

This would be more difficult to articulate at the collections level (except in the broadest terms) and would be much better expressed at the individual specimen level. What do I have in my collection that no one else has (taxonomically or geographically or combination of both) or that is contributing to answering a particular question in a unique way?

1 Like

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trobertson #11 April 23, 2020, 12:21pm

> abentley:
>
> This would be more difficult to articulate at the collections level (except in the broadest terms) and would be much better expressed at the individual specimen level

This seems sensible to me and would only compliment any comparisons drawn from metadata/collection descriptors.

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sharif.islam #12 April 23, 2020, 3:20pm

I have tagged a few DiSSCo users stories that speak to this topic. Even though these user stories talk about loan and visit statistics from the perspective of the curator or museum director, they all refer to the evidence that is needed to asses the value.

2 Likes

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Collections Catalogue - Daily Summaries

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Debbie #13 April 28, 2020, 5:46am

> vsmithuk:
>
> This isn't purely about numbers, but also about strengths of collections and complementarity.

This resonates for me. Finding out what makes your collection unique is huge win for collections, with a lot of potential for helping focus on prioritization of digitization (for example). But, the complementarity piece, that's what gets at how we can collaborate across our regions and international borders. It's how we can share economies (as you point out), expertise too. It's how we can raise awareness for our stakeholders, about the benefits of working together – to more quickly understand what we have, and at the same time, reduce duplication of effort.

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pzermoglio #14 April 29, 2020, 8:01pm

From @ErikaSalazar in the Spanish thread

In the case of Colombia, there is policy associated to permits that the Colombian state grants for collecting wildlife. An obligation that the holder of a collecting permit has is that collected specimens are deposited in a biological collection registered in the Registro nacional de Colecciones (RNC). Given that, the online platform, (which is a catalogue of Colombian biological collections) serves as a database of the biological collections in the country, the biological groups they hold, the preservation methods used, the geographic, taxonomic and temporal coverage, among others. The RNC serves as a querying tool for those permit holders to know which biological collections they can contact to deposit the specimens. Also the platform is used by the scientific community, the biological collections, the environmental authorities.
.

Answer from @WUlate in this Spanish thread:

> permit holders to know which biological collections they can contact to deposit the specimens.

I think this integration is key and could be very important to ensure the success of a Catalogue like the one we are proposing: associating collection permits, international donations, collecting projects, with the collections and institutions in the Catalogue would ensure their maintenance and updating.

Collections Catalogue - Daily Summaries

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