



Project no. 018340

**Project acronym: EDIT**

**Project title: Toward the European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy**

Instrument: Network of Excellence

Thematic Priority: Sub-Priority 1.1.6.3: "Global Change and Ecosystems"

## **C6.10 Report on discussions of the first version of the Data Portal with the user communities**

Due date of component: Month 29

Actual submission date: Month 32

Start date of project: 01/03/2006

Duration: 5 years

Organisation name of lead contractor for this component: 10 NHML

Revision: final

<b>Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)</b>		
<b>Dissemination Level</b>		
<b>PU</b>	Public	<b>X</b>
<b>PP</b>	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
<b>RE</b>	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
<b>CO</b>	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

## **C6.10 Report on discussions of the first version of the Data Portal with the user communities**

The WP6 exemplar groups (i.e. Diptera, Cichorieae and Arecaceae) have designed web portals to display their taxonomic data stored in the Common Data Model database (i.e. the CDM). The current version of the portals, developed by WP5, is based on an initial set of requirements specified by the exemplar groups. Future versions will follow after a process of evaluation and refinement of the requirements.

As part of this process, this document describes the feedback provided by members of the taxonomic expert communities on the exemplar group portals. Discussions with the taxonomists centred on the content, functionality and layout of the websites. Comments received are pooled here as the recommendations largely apply to and will benefit all the portals.

### **Content**

- The exemplar groups have different approaches to gathering content for the portals. Some concentrate on generating new information while others emphasize building the background catalogue for existing information. The need to enrich the portal with more content was expressed, but it was understood that data creation and gathering is a continuous activity and that, therefore, content will increase in time. Priority was given to delivering descriptions (including protologues for plants), synonymies, type information, images, and distribution maps.

### **Functionality**

- Using the classification tree to navigate the site was well received with the caveat that presenting the full classification may be unfriendly to non-expert users. An option to allow users or administrators of the site to choose the level of the classification to view in the tree was suggested. This could be, for example, an option to either display genus and lower levels only or show also higher taxa.
- An alphabetical index of species was suggested as another way to browse the data.
- The current function to filter the tree by taxon was seen as potentially useful but confusing in its current implementation.
- More advanced searching was recommended, in particular options to search the data by geography and to search the images.
- The lack of citations on the content was pointed out as an important flaw to correct. It was stressed that all the information displayed in the portals must clearly indicate its source and authorship. In a taxon page, citations should apply to the different content categories (i.e. description, geographical data, etc.) as they may derive from different sources.
- The quality of the information displayed in the portal should be made explicit to warn the users of incomplete content or data that has not been reviewed by experts.
- Major changes were requested in the handling of bibliography. A searchable bibliography database is seen as essential, as well as cross linkage of citations with the full references.
- The TDWG area maps were taken as relevant, but it was stressed that these should not be the only maps presented in a taxon page. Taxonomists, who prefer more precise data (e.g. point distributions), have complained that the scale of the distributions of these maps is too coarse and may result in inaccurate interpretations (e.g. a point endemic in Madagascar is mapped as the entire island). More accurate mapping services should be provided. A

further criticism of the TDWG area map is that small distributions cannot be seen. Zoom functionality or automated adjusting of map size are required.

- Images presented within the galleries should clearly indicate metadata (e.g. name of photographer) to give appropriate credit and to make the site attractive for contributors.
- Presentation of the protologues linked to the nomenclatural references was much appreciated, but printing functionality should be improved.

### **Layout**

- The formatting of the synonymy and the type information had a mixed reception. Some groups found both (i.e. types and synonyms) were clearly presented while others thought it could be improved. For the synonymy a legend explaining the meaning of the symbols used was requested.
- Adjusting the size of the box containing the classification tree in order to avoid having to scroll horizontally to view the tree was considered desirable.
- Different opinions were expressed regarding the branding of the portals. It was agreed that branding will be handled in a flexible way in the three exemplar groups, to meet the needs of the different user communities.
- Some important changes concerning the layout, format of the taxon pages and the wording of some headers were proposed. Several members of the expert communities recommended general improvements in web design of the portals, reflecting competition with similar projects in this field (e.g. Encyclopedia of Life, EoL).

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the taxonomic communities agreed that the portals, even at this early stage, are a useful tool that provides easy access in one place to previously scattered taxonomic information and associated data. Some members of the communities participated in the process of gathering requirements and have high expectations of the portals. Progress is recognized although developments are perceived as slow.

### **Actions**

The feedback obtained from the taxonomists has been discussed with the portal developers and actions are underway to incorporate the suggestions received and apply other measures requested by the exemplar groups to improve the websites. These improvements are expected to be visible in the next version of the portals.