

OECD Global Science Forum

Workshop on Policy Issues Related to Scientific Research Collections Draft annotated agenda, as of April 17, 2007

Background and rationale

Delegates of the Global Science Forum discussed and agreed upon convening a workshop on policy issues related to scientific research collections. The workshop will focus on the optimal maintenance, utilisation and international coordination of large scientific research collections. Although the value and importance of such large collection facilities are increasingly recognised, they face common problems linked to their historical structure, increasing demand for access, and needs for changes to their operation as internationally cooperating research infrastructures. Current political, organisational, technological and financial issues and bottlenecks faced by these scientific collections also have international implications.

A number of issues for discussion and opportunities for change were described in the previous documents submitted to the Global Science Forum by the delegation of The Netherlands. These documents resulted from the work of an International Steering Committee chaired by Prof. Wouter Los, whose members are listed in the appendix.

The goal of this workshop is to identify the key bottlenecks that prevent effective use of science collections and to propose appropriate in-country and cross-border policies and programme recommendations related to four main issues:

- International standards and performance indicators
- Definition of the missions and common priorities for collection institutes
- Regional and international networking policies for small and large-scale collections
- Access to research collections

Interested Global Science Forum delegations are encouraged to nominate experts (collection curators and managers, intensive users of scientific collections, policymakers, administrators and representatives of interested international organisations) who can contribute to the deliberations.

Workshop organisation

The Netherlands will host the workshop on Tuesday 12 June and Wednesday 13 June 2007 in Leiden.

The workshop venue is in the National Museum of Natural History Naturalis (<http://www.naturalis.nl>).

All bookings of workshop participants will be handled by a conference agency. The participants will receive all the necessary logistical information as soon as they are nominated.

The university city of Leiden can be easily reached by train from the airport Schiphol. The [location](#) of the museum is close to the station. A provisionally reservation for 50 persons has been made in a selected hotel (Golden Tulip and Tulip Inn in Leiden centre <http://www.goldentulipleidencentre.nl/>).

A pre-workshop day on Monday 11 June will offer to interested participants examples of research collections in Leiden. By visiting the research collections “behind the scenes” the participants will be introduced to the workshop themes from different perspectives.

Workshop programme

The following offers the outline of the workshop programme. The emphasis is on identifying common problems and the scope of possible effective recommendations for the international platform of the Global Science Forum. International speakers, chosen by the International Steering Committee, will be invited to introduce each major workshop topics before effective discussion between participants.

Pre-workshop day, Monday 11 June 2007

Whole day: Organised tours to a selection of the research collections in:

- The National Museum of Antiquities
- The National Museum of Ethnology
- National Herbarium Netherlands
- National Museum of Natural History Naturalis

- 16:00 h.: Meeting of the Steering Committee
- 17:00 h.: Reception for all participants in the Naturalis Museum

Workshop day 1, Tuesday 12 June 2007

Welcome

08:30	Start (coffee/tea)
09:00	Welcome by the host country
09:10	Introduction of workshop participants
09:30	General discussion about the workshop aims and expected outcomes

10:00 Coffee break

Session 1: Standards and performance indicators

Present day scientific collections have very often grown from older collections and may still reflect outdated structures and practices. They operate in diverse ways, they are financed with diverging mandates from different ministries, agencies, foundations, universities etc, and cannot always share common goals in, for example, joint research programs. Perhaps most importantly, there is no (international) mechanism to achieve agreement on common standards, procedures, and priorities. This situation hampers large scale international undertakings since each individual collection makes its independent own choices within its given mandate.

Standardization and best practice development in collection management have to be directed to the present-day requirements of advanced scientific development. This should go together with a policy of the governing bodies to request and to facilitate such management.

10:30	Simon Owens (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK): “Collection standards and performance indicators – what the EU-funded SYNTHESIS Network activity C has achieved and what the results tell us”
-------	---

	A discussion paper from Leo Kriegsman (National Natural History Museum Naturalis, Leiden), will also be distributed for the debate.
11:00	Discussion <u>Issues:</u> Needs and mechanisms for international collection standards (including special needs for societal use); development of internationally agreed performance indicators to assess national collections

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Short guided tour of 45 minutes through the exhibitions of Naturalis

Session 2: Missions and common priorities for collection institutes

The present situation where (even within a single country) the scientific collections are very often the responsibility of different ministries, agencies, universities and other bodies means that the different mandates and expectations of these bodies often hampers the necessary joint activities of the collection institutes.

Collections are also distributed through a very large number of public and private organizations. Consequently the collections of specimens and associated information related to answering any particular scientific question are highly fragmented.

An (understandable) consequence is that the value of the combined collections resources in a specific area is not always obvious to governments and science administrators, and therefore the value of individual collections is not easily recognized or acknowledged.

14:30	Phyllis Johnson (USDA, USA): "Collections policy in the US: Interagency efforts to assess federally held and non-federal collections as a basis for formulating policy."
14:50	Keiichi Matsuura (National Science Museum, Japan): "Collection policy in Japanese institutions: towards strategic collection building and management through networks of natural history museums."
15:10	Coffee break
15:45	Discussion <u>Issues:</u> Definition of similar mission statements for collection institutes; Development of processes to identify international priorities; Common approaches for collecting, selecting, validating and storing specimen, and data generation and sharing

19:00 Drinks and buffet in the museum restaurant of Naturalis

Workshop day 2, Wednesday 13 June 2007

Session 3: Networking policies

Each of the institutes holding collections has specific strengths with respect to particular disciplines, geographic regions or thematic characteristics.

International and regional networking, or sometimes, closer organisational connections are required to achieve the necessary focused attention and scale in jointly managed activities. This would imply that policies have to be in place, which remove (legal and other) obstacles and provide incentives for such – sometimes cross-border – collaboration. This is also a mechanism by which the centre of gravity in research could be moved from almost exclusively in the 'north' to a more equitable north-south partnership.

8:30	Start (coffee/tea)
9:00	Larry Speers (GBIF): “Networking of collections; towards a common agenda”
9:20	Judy West (Australian National Herbarium): “Atlas of Living Australia: networking Australia’s biological collections”
9:45	Questions and short discussion
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	Discussion <u>Issues:</u> Definition of common position on the values and roles of collection facilities; road-map for establishing networks of collections and linking national policies; analysis of policy approaches towards orphaned collections

12:00 Lunch

Session 4: Access policies and conclusion

The accessibility of scientific collections for visiting scientists is crucial to optimise the use of the collections for scientific progress. Accessibility of collections for scientific use is thus an issue, since very different policies exist for promoting and regulating such access. While countries have made significant progress (notably, through OECD) in granting access to publicly funded collections of data, the situation for physical collections is not as advanced. This is often true for cross-border access, and especially for researchers from developing countries, given that most collections are in the developed part of the world.

The professional collections community has sometimes started to address the problems with bottom-up initiatives to maximize their collection assets. Such moves need to be complemented by international and governmentally led initiatives which will provide conditions and incentives to allow the professional community to accelerate a networked approach towards sharing, maintenance and maximizing the utilization of scientific collections.

13:30	Paolo Gama Mota (Coimbra University Museum of Anthropology, Portugal): “Managing and studying anthropological collections. How to increase their relevance by increasing their accessibility.”
13:50	Ruediger Klein (European Science Foundation): “Scientific collections as research infrastructure: towards a coordinated approach to access and research policies”.
14:15	Questions and discussion <u>Issues:</u> Definition of principle and standards for access to scientific collections; mechanisms to facilitate international access
15:15	Coffee and tea
15:45	<u>General discussion:</u> Suggestions for overall strategies, possible next steps and wrap up of possible conclusions
17:30	End

Annexe
Steering Committee members

AUSTRALIA	Joanne Daly	CSIRO Entomology
BELGIUM	Camille Pisani Jackie Van Goethem	Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences
FRANCE	Michel Guiraud Myriam Nechad	Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle
EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Bodil Agasoster Hervé Pero Leonidas Karapiperis	DG Education DG Research DG Research
GERMANY	Reinhold Leinfelder Christoph L. Häuser	Museum of Natural History at the Humboldt-University Berlin State Museum of Natural History
NETHERLANDS	Leo Leduc Wouter Los (chair)	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science Zoological Museum, University of Amsterdam
NORWAY	Ivar Myklebust	Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre
UNITED KINGDOM	Richard Lane	The Natural History Museum
UNITED STATES	Phyllis Johnson	USDA