

SYNTHESYS

Synthesis of systematic resources

Project:	Synthesis of systematic resources
Project acronym:	SYNTHESYS3
Grant agreement number:	312253
Deliverable number:	2.2
Deliverable title:	"Virtual Collections" Management Policy
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Date:	18 th May 2017
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SYNTHEsys 3 / Work Package 2 (Network Activity 2) / Objective 1 / Task 1.1**Report on Deliverable 2.2****- "Virtual Collections" Management Policy -****Framework**

The main aim of Task 1.1 (*"Develop Policies for Virtual CM and Integrate JRA Outputs"*) is to collate existing European virtual collection policies and to use them as a basis for recommendations on common European virtual (or digital) data management policies and procedures. Task 1.1 is part of Objective 1 and, like the latter, led by the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (MfN). Further participants of the Task are: CSIC, MRAC, NHM, NMP, RBGE, RBGK, and UCPH. An essential requirement for the Tasks work is a close cooperation with the SYNTHEsys JRA Objective 4 (*"Access and Management of an Integrated European Digital Collection"*). To take advantage of additional expertise, the CETAF Collections Policy Board (CPB), the CETAF Digitization Working Group (DWG), and other external experts were involved as well. Apart from the close collaboration with the SYNTHEsys JRA and the CETAF CPB and DWG, Deliverable 2.2 is closely linked to **Deliverable 2.1** (*"Virtual Collections" Management Policy Meeting*): Its associated report (January 2016) already covered some activities described below (http://synthesys3.myspecies.info/system/files/Report_Deliverable_2.1_281116_0.pdf).

During the CETAF CPB core group meeting in Paris (22nd to 23rd July 2015), it was decided to split the final output of Task 1.1 (Deliverable 2.2) into two components: One is an online handbook with recommendations on Management Policies on Digital Collections (MPDC), the other is a short policy statement on digital data produced by guests or other external users of natural history (NH) collections. After completion of the Task, the handbook is to be adopted by the CETAF DWG. The policy statement is to be adopted by the CETAF CPB.

Preparatory Activities

To determine and discuss overlapping contents between NA2 Objective 1 and JRA Objective 4, the JRA leaders David Harris and Elspeth Haston (both RBGE) were contacted and a productive telephone conference with Elspeth Haston was conducted at the end of February 2015. Among others, it was agreed to closely cooperate and to adjust working schedules. Also, it was decided to use the platform SYNTHEsys 3 Biowikifarm (http://synthesys3.biowikifarm.net/syn3/Main_Page) as main tool for collaborative development of the handbook. Further contacts and exchange of information were initiated and realized, for example with Vincent Smith (NHM, lead of JRA Objective 4), Gregor Hagedorn (MfN, head of Science Programme "Digital World and Information Science" at that time), and René Dekker (NBC).

A questionnaire on the gathering of digital data produced by visiting researchers as well as on the presence of respective procedures and/or policies was designed and circulated within the CETAF CPB members (December 2014) and within the SYNTHEsys 3 TAF leaders (February 2015). Additionally, a more general search on existing and already established collection management policies (CMP) covering digital data was done.

Policy Statement: Common Principles on Digital Data produced by External Users of NH Collections

During the CETAF CPB meeting (15th October 2015) in association with the CETAF 38 General Meeting in Geneva, Michel Guiraud (MNHN) presented a first outline of a policy statement on digital data produced by external users of natural history collections, like guests working with the collection and borrowers of collection material. This draft was discussed and (in greatest parts) approved. A refined draft was phrased and circulated for feedback between SYNTHESYS partners and CETAF CPB members in September 2016. The feedback and comments were incorporated and the next draft was discussed at the CETAF CPB meeting in Madrid on 18th October 2016. Additional comments and adaptations were inserted and a final draft version of the document was circulated again in both groups for final checks at the beginning of November 2016.

The final document "*Common Principles on Digital Data produced by External Users of NH Collections*" was issued on the 15th December 2016 and made available on the SYNTHESYS website (http://synthesys3.myspecies.info/sites/synthesys3.myspecies.info/files/NA2_Task_1.1_Policy_Statements_final_151216_1.pdf) and the website of the CETAF CPB working group. Furthermore, the product was presented at the CETAF 41 General Meeting in Bonn, on the 25th April 2017. The document is committed to the CETAF CPB for further implementation.

Beside some introductory sentences, it gives the aim and background of the document, a definition of used terms, a description of the legal framework the undersigning institution adheres to and its commitment regarding digital collection data. As well, it declares principles to optimize the management of NH digital collections and digital collection data produced by external users. These principles aim, among others, to support the access of the collections by external users, to guarantee and organize the availability and usability of (specific) digital collection data produced, to inform external users comprehensively, and to ensure (standardized) acknowledgments.

Recommendations: Management Policy on Digital Collections

Both, the survey feedback on the handling of digital data produced by visiting researchers and on the presence of respective procedures and policies as well as the results of a general search on already established CMP covering digital data (see above), were used as basis for a draft online handbook or reference text on Management Policies on Digital Collections (MPDC). It was created using the Biowiki platform of SYNTHESYS 3 (<http://synthesys3.biowikifarm.net/syn3/NA2/objective1/task1/cmp>). At draft status, the document was not publicly accessible, registered authors being Christiane Quaisser (MfN), Elspeth Haston (RBGE), Saskia Jancke (MfN), and Stefanie Krause (MfN). It gives comprehensive information and recommendations to support natural history institutions in their efforts to create their own MPDC (see below).

Repeatedly, internal as well as external experts were involved and asked for advice and for feedback on the intermediate results: The draft handbook was circulated and discussed during the CETAF CPB core group meeting in Paris (22nd to 23rd July 2015). There, it was decided to split the final output of Task 1.1 (Deliverable 2.2) into two components, one of them being the online handbook (see also above). Also, the scope and aims of Task 1.1 as well as its intermediate results were presented in conjunction with the CETAF 38 General Meeting in Geneva in October 2015 during the associated CETAF DWG meeting (13th October 2015) and the associated CPB meeting (15th October 2015). These occasions resulted in productive discussions on the online handbook and on how to proceed and to link the Task 1.1 work with the CETAF DWG and CETAF CPB. At the beginning of December 2015 and in January 2016, NA2 Objective 1 and JRA participants as well as CETAF CPB and CETAF DWG members were asked for an evaluation of the draft handbook. Also, the draft handbook was (re-) circulated for feedback between SYNTHESYS partners as well as members of the CETAF DWG and the CETAF CPB in September 2016. To date, comprehensive feedback was provided (among others) by Alan Paton (RBGK), Carlos Lado (CSIC, RJB), by Celia Santos as representative of the MNCN (CSIC), by Karin Wiltschke-

Schrotta as representative of the NHMW, by Tim Fulcher (RBGK), and by Begoña Sanchez (MNCN, CSIC). Their feedback was considered and, as far as possible, incorporated into the draft handbook.

The Biowiki document “*Recommendations: Management Policy on Digital Collections*” and its supplements are subdivided into six main chapters:

- A. About the Draft *Recommendations: Management Policy on Digital Collections* and Supplements
- B. Overview: Background and Aims of the *Management Policy on Digital Collections*
- C. Contents and Suggested Structure of the MPDC
- D. Related Links and Documents
- E. Glossary
- F. Attachment

Chapter A clarifies the aim and rough content of the document as well as its SYNTHESYS background.

Chapter B explains the nature of a MPDC, its benefits and limitations. It illustrates the need and reasons for institutions with NH collections to develop their specific MPDC and gives measures to enhance the MPDCs acceptance as well as premises to ensure their lasting relevance and actual realization.

Chapter C proposes a structure and gives main contents of MPDC. For each proposed chapter or main content, a list of aspects, which should or may be covered, is provided. If applicable, these aspects are linked to more detailed information within the document as well as to proposed phrasings in the attachment. Suggested contents are, among others, the target groups of specific MPDC, challenges when handling digital data, the establishment and formal implementation of MPDC, the clarification of authorities, property rights and licensing, digitization approaches, and procedures to access and use digital collection data.

Chapter D gives links to extern websites with more information on relevant topics and to CMP of different institutions, which cover digital data and are available online.

Chapter E lists abbreviations used within the document as well as the respective meanings.

Chapter F gives – sorted by topic - proposed phrasings (templates) which may be adapted, modified, and used by institutions with NH collections to create their own MPDC.

Further changes, regarding content and format, continuously are being realized. Ideally, the handbook with recommendations on MDPC will cover all possible aspects, which should or may be treated in MPDC. It is designed to be an ever evolving document, which will be regularly updated, adjusted, and expanded. At the moment, the document is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License (CC BY-SA 3.0). During the initial stage of development, it was solely accessible by registered Biowiki users. However, after completion of the Task, the online handbook is to be publicized and adopted by the DWG. The DWG will proceed to implement, promote, and also to update the document as necessary. Therewith, the sustainable provision of a long lasting, regularly updated, and widely used document is guaranteed.