

Report on the WoRMS virtual Steering Committee meeting

16 December 2015

Venue:

Virtual meeting, through Skype, start at 12h (noon) UTC time

Present:

Geoff Boxshall, Andreas Kroh, Tammy Horton, Nicole Devoogd, Sabine Stöhr, Nicolas Bailly, Michelle Klautau, Serge Gofas, Gustav Paulay, Gary Poore, Mark Costello (second half of meeting only), Francisco Hernandez, Leen Vandepitte, Bart Vanhoorne & Wim Decock

Apologies for absence:

Jan Mees

During the last SC meeting, it was decided to have WoRMS SC meetings twice a year: a virtual meeting and a physical meeting. This was the first virtual meeting, and was evaluated positively by the present SC members. Due to the many different time zones present, it was decided to keep the duration of the meeting limited to 2 hours. The majority of the topics on the agenda was discussed within this timeframe. Items that were not discussed in enough detail will be picked up during the next physical SC meeting which will take place on June 16th, at the Flanders Marine Institute in Ostend.

The SC also discussed the possibility to have virtual meetings more frequently, to cover specific topics. These can be organized depending on their need.

Minutes of SC meetings: clarification of process for agreeing and posting minutes

The SC agreed that the minutes of the meeting should be sent to the whole SC for feedback and approval, before they are sent to the editors. When the DMT sends out the minutes to the SC, a deadline should be set for feedback, allowing the DMT to finish & send out the minutes within a reasonable timeframe.

ACTIONS

- DMT to draft report & send to SC, with deadline for feedback
- SC to give feedback/approve the report
- DMT to finalize report & send it to all editors

New format of the web pages

After the last SC meeting, there has been discussion on the need for a new web layout and specifically a much clearer distinction between editor approved and non-editor approved content.

In preparation of this meeting, the DMT has sent out a document with 3 concept proposals. They all have in common that the taxonomic information will be grouped at the top of the page, including the taxonomic citation. The concepts differ in the approach of showing the additional information: either all on one page (as is currently the case) or in a tab-structure.

The 3 concepts were discussed in detail, but no final decision has been made. To help move the decision process forward, the DMT will prepare “mock-ups” of options 2 and 3 and send them to the SC. These mock-ups will include an example of a species page with lots of information and a species page with very little information.

There was consensus on the fact that the taxonomic information needs to be grouped at the top of the page, and the SC extended the proposed list by the DMT with taxon notes and edit-history. Holotype image was rephrased to ‘type image’.

Additional note of DMT: we will prepare these mock-ups during January. They will be sent to the SC early February, for further discussion. We would aim to have a decision in March, so we can then start on the technical developments.

ACTIONS

- DMT to develop mock-ups which can be send to SC for further discussion
- DMT to implement decided scenario

Copyright statement on the WoRMS website

Francisco Hernandez (FH) has circulated a draft text for the copyright statement prior to the SC meeting. During the meeting, the comments of Mark Costello were communicated to the full SC.

FH clarified that the CC-By-NC only applies to information that is derived from other sources, such as FishBase. Nicolas Bailly explained that FishBase indeed follows the CC-By-NC license and that they cannot change this. If people want to use FishBase data for commercial purpose, they can contact FishBase for approval. If WoRMS extracts and shows information from FishBase, it needs to be clear that this can only be used under the CC-By-NC license. All information added by WoRMS editors (taxonomic-regional-thematic) remains under CC-By license.

After discussion, there was a unanimous decision by the present SC members to adopt the text prepared by FH. Geoff Boxshall will communicate on this topic with Mark Costello.

ACTIONS

- Geoff Boxshall to talk to Mark about this discussion and following decision, as Mark was not yet present when this topic was raised

- DMT to make this available on WoRMS website

Dissolution of SMEBD

Several items for discussion were listed under this item. The item related to copyright was covered under the previous topic.

There is some funding left within SMEBD, which needs to be re-allocated. There was agreement in principle among the SC that this money should be invested in WoRMS. From a practical point of view, the money can be sent as a donation to VLIZ, thereby mentioning that it needs to be invested in WoRMS. The SC then has freedom of use for this money, and it was decided that some will be invested in the artwork needed for the WoRMS Editor Award.

Francisco Hernandez (FH) gave an update on the MoU with Catalogue of Life/Species2000. This agreement was originally set up under SMEBD, and needed to be renegotiated. A draft version is available and will be sent to the whole SC shortly. During the meeting, it was discussed who should actually sign the agreement. FH indicated that it can either be signed by the WoRMS Chair, or by VLIZ (by Jan Mees, after approval of the SC). This latter option was preferred, as VLIZ can act as institute, which is a more comfortable situation).

An MoU with FishBase will also be drawn up. A draft version will be composed by Nicolas Bailly and FH and will then be circulated to the SC for comments.

ACTIONS

- Mark Costello to transfer the money to VLIZ as part of the VLIZ donation programme “make a gift for the sea” & indicate this is to be used for WoRMS (<http://www.vliz.be/en/make-gift>).
- Francisco Hernandez to send the MoU with Species2000 to the whole SC for feedback
- Francisco Hernandez & Nicolas Bailly to draft an MoU between WoRMS and FishBase and send to the SC for feedback

WoRMS Editor Award

Michelle Klautau (MK) has been appointed as chair of the Award Jury. The current jury now consists of 5 people (MK, Noa Shenkar, Christopher Boyko, Tina Molodtsova & Nicolas Bailly). Geoff Boxshall will inform these people as a group and he will also inform the remaining jury candidates. It was opted not to make the Jury group too large, to allow easy communication. Nicolas Bailly proposed to have at least 1 back-up jury member, in case there would be a conflict of interest with the current Jury members in the selection procedure. The reserve member is Frederic Sinniger.

Andreas Kroh has been delegated with the task to get the artwork done. He will provide the artist with some source material, on which they can base their work.

ACTIONS

- Geoff Boxshall to inform involved people (Jury members & additional candidates)
- Michelle Klautau & Jury to initiate the first edition of the Editor Award
- Andreas Kroh to communicate with the chosen artist to get the artwork done

The “Carnets de Geologie” affair

All items under this topic were discussed as a whole.

Geoff Boxshall (GB) reported that he received 17 responses from WoRMS editors after communication on this issue was sent out to the WoRMS editor mailing list. Responses varied, but the common message was one of support for what WoRMS is doing.

The SC unanimously decided that GB – as WoRMS Chair – should contact the editor of the journal again and ask for an official retraction of the Emig *et al.* paper, based on the errors in the paper.

It was agreed that GB and Andreas Kroh will contact the co-authors (Fernando Alvarez & Maria Aleksandra Bitner) individually, to try to hear their side of the situation. It is suspected that they are not completely aware of the situation between Emig & WoRMS and the consequences of their publication.

It was also agreed that GB will contact Christian Emig (CE), asking for his resignation as a WoRMS editor. Even without taking into account the published paper, there are 2 strong motivations to ask for this: (1) CE refuses to add synonyms to the database and (2) CE does not follow the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature when adding information to the database. These two actions of CE are against the core principles of WoRMS and are seen as enough reason to no longer allow CE to edit the database.

Related to this situation, Gary Poore asked if we need to have procedures or rules on how to appoint editors. This is currently happening on an ad-hoc basis. Following from this discussion, it was decided that ‘inactive editors’ should become an item on the agenda of the next SC, where the DMT can provide more information on this.

ACTIONS:

- Geoff Boxshall to write to the journal editor, asking for a withdrawal of the paper
- Geoff Boxshall & Andreas Kroh to contact the co-authors, asking for more explanation
- Geoff Boxshall to contact Christian Emig, asking for his resignation as WoRMS editor
- DMT to remove Christian Emig as editor, after reply to Geoff Boxshall
- Chair/DMT to add ‘inactive editors’ as agenda item for the next SC

Online editing guidelines

Tammy Horton (TH) & Serge Gofas elaborated on the work done so far, the way the document is structured and which input they expect from the SC.

A discussion followed, with focus on the name status terminology and how this could improve in WoRMS. A restructuring of the note types also seems necessary, but a full overview of the available note types and their usage is needed. It will be important to make a thorough analysis of the different note types; if they are re-named or re-structured, no information can be lost. It was decided that this needed more thought and discussion than was possible within the given timeframe of this meeting.

TH requested that the whole SC and DMT have a detailed look at the current document and provide feedback to her. The DMT will share the list of note types and the times these are used.

This topic will be revisited at the next SC meeting (June 2016, Ostend).

ACTIONS:

- Full SC to read provided documents by Tammy & Serge and to give feedback within reasonable timeframe
- DMT to send list of note types and their usage to SC
- Chair/DMT to add this topic to agenda of next SC meeting

Images working group

Geoff Boxshall reported that there is nothing to report on this topic, as no actions have been taken yet.

There is a concern in the SC regarding the quality of images. It is suggested that minimum quality requirements are set, both for the image itself and the associated data. It still seems undecided who should be part of the image working group.

It is suggested that the SC invites editors to form a group to develop a policy framework for the management of images in WoRMS. They should deal with e.g. quality issues, taxonomic scope, verification of species identity ...

Additional DMT comment: the names listed in the action points come from the previous SC meeting: these people were proposed as good candidates to become part of this working group. They had not yet been approached and it is now suggested to send an email to all editors to invite people to be part of this group.

ACTIONS (copied from previous SC meeting)

- Geoff Boxshall to initiate this working group. More people from the SC or outside the SC can be invited to participate. Appoint a responsible for this working group.
- Working group to make a small general analysis of what we have in WoRMS + include one editor that needs to check images.
- Working group to be represented at the next SC meeting

Reporting from DMT – some highlights

There was no time during the meeting to go over these topics.

Additional notes from DMT:

- *All actions of the DMT of 2015 will be made available in the annual report. We expect to make this available late January/early February.*
- *All information on upcoming workshops and initiated grants has recently been made available on the WoRMS activities page: <http://www.marinespecies.org/activities.php>.*

ACTIONS: *none*

Any other business

Nicolas Bailly had listed two additional items on the agenda. Due to lack of time, he has only briefly introduced these. They will be put on the agenda for the next SC, to be discussed in detail.

A small discussion emerged on specimen information and images and how WoRMS could work together with e.g. iDigBio and possible other sources. iDigBio has a very large specimen and image collection which could be linked to WoRMS. This should be looked into in more detail, time did not permit a more extensive discussion.

ACTIONS

- Add following items to agenda next SC meeting:
 - o Display of the taxon tree and management of the hierarchy in WoRMS
 - o Names with or without subgenus, choosing the easiest option
- Check specimen and image collection of iDigBio and how a link with WoRMS could be established.