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Conference Abstract

Improving Access to Collection Information in Asia and Africa through the Global Registry of Scientific Collections

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Abstract

Global Registry of Scientific Collections, or GRSciColl, is a comprehensive registry of natural history collections maintained by the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), building upon previous efforts developed by the Consortium of the Barcode of Life (CBOL) and other organizations. Its primary purpose is to provide a centralized platform for accessing information on institutions, their collections and associated staff members.

While both GBIF and GRSciColl aim to encompass data from all around the globe, Asian and African collections are often underrepresented. To address this disparity, initiatives like the Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) and the Biodiversity Information Fund

for Asia (BIFA) have been established. These initiatives specifically focus on assisting institutions from underrepresented regions in sharing their data through GBIF.

In addition to providing support in the framework of these initiatives, the GBIF Regional support teams are actively engaged in efforts to improve access to relevant data about Asian and African collections. This involves updating information on Asian and African institutions and their collections in GRSciColl. Furthermore, the teams assist towards publishing biodiversity data held by these institutions for open access.

To support this objective, a Collection Mobilization repository has been established on GitHub, with more than 1,900 issues created at an institutional level and a systematic workflow is developed and followed. The overall aim of this workflow adheres to the goal of GRSciColl in providing an updated information on scientific collections, their host institutions, and relevant staff, also making the specimen data from those institutions open access when possible.

Here are a few key points of this ongoing work:

- The process begins by compiling relevant information on institutions and their collections by browsing the institution's web pages to gather accurate and up-to-date data.
- Based on the findings, necessary changes or additions to the existing data are made in the institution and collection page of the GRSciColl registry, and simultaneously noted in related GitHub issues in the collection mobilization repository, ensuring transparency and record keeping.
- When required, contact is established with the staff of the institution, to seek clarifications and ensure accuracy of the information in the registry.
- Appropriate GitHub labels are then assigned to the institutions based on their data mobilization or digitization status, to help prioritize the ongoing work.
- Institutions that are familiar with GBIF data infrastructure or those that have digitized records of the specimens are given priority for contact to gauge their interest in mobilizing their data for open access.
- Institutions interested in publishing their data are offered support in the process, and their datasets are added to the Data Mobilization Repository in GitHub as an issue, using the Suggest a Dataset tool on GBIF.org.
- Finally, progress on data preparation and then publication is tracked and relevant comments and labels are added in the GitHub issues.

The ongoing work ensures continuous improvement and expansion of GRSciColl, while promoting open access to valuable scientific data. This presentation will highlight the work done so far, as well as the challenges and lessons learnt from this ongoing project.

Keywords

scientific collection, biodiversity data, open access, data mobilization

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Conflicts of interest

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