IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE
OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASING ACCESS TO TAXONOMIC INFORMATION IN MESO-AMERICA
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Implementing the Global Taxonomy Initiative

The CBD has developed the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) to help implement the Convention.

To implement the CBD, taxonomists need information of many types, e.g.:
• Images of living organisms, specimens and dissections
• Data from specimens held in collections worldwide
• Published information, including original descriptions, identification keys, revisions
• Information on names
• Geographic information
• Molecular sequences
• A wide variety of ecological information

An Information System to solve the problem

Operational Objective 3 of the Global Taxonomy Initiative Programme of Work is to provide a global taxonomic information system.

All information should be accessible:
• From any location
• With user-friendly front ends

Which seamlessly access and make interoperable appropriate databases around the world

The Biologia Centrali-Americana Centennial project

Responding to the GTI mandate:
A vision for electronic access to taxonomic resources

The Biologia Centrali-Americana:
• A fundamental work for the study of New World biota
• Issued 1879 – 1915 by The Natural History Museum (London)
• Leading biologists of the time provided treatments
• Includes most everything known at the time about the region’s biological diversity
• For many groups still the current state of published knowledge
• 63 volumes with 1677 plates covering 50,263 species of plants, vertebrates, insects, spiders and related invertebrates, and mollusks
• The entire 63 volume BCA believed held by only 6 libraries; many other libraries hold individual volumes or partial sets
• A few volumes have been republished but never the entire series
• Some Central American countries lack a complete set and the BCA is not generally accessible to taxonomists working in the region

Phase I:

Create images in multiple formats of all 40,000 pages of the 58 biological volumes, including illustrations, and make freely available on the World Wide Web

Phase II:

• Create eXtensible Markup Language (XML) schema for taxonomic literature
• Apply to BCA and digitize full text
• Information in the BCA text will be searchable and addressable with web tools
• Make freely available on the World Wide Web

Phase III:

• Link the digitized text to the digital Flora Meso-Americana (and similar modern works)
• Link to specimen, taxonomic and geographic data, and to images
• Ultimately, information from all sources will be interoperable and treated by web-based analytical tools

Current state of project

• Funding for Phase I and much of Phase 2 obtained by Smithsonian Institution Libraries
• All pages now turned into JPEGs and web access planned for January 2004
• Currently developing XML schema applicable to all taxonomic literature

Project web page:
http://www.sil.si.edu/bcaproject/index.htm

Project Partners

This is a collaborative project, including: Smithsonian Institution (NMNH, SI Libraries, STRI), USA; The Natural History Museum, London, UK; The National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, Mexico (CONABIO); Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad, Costa Rica (INBIO); Missouri Botanical Garden, USA; American Museum of Natural History, USA; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK; Museo Entomologico de Leon, Nicaragua; Global Biodiversity Information Facility … and you

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