

23.08.2023 MacaqueNet General Assembly Minutes

Meeting attended by members of the MacaqueNet consortium only.

Group decisions that were made following discussion are presented in **bold blue text**.

Agenda:

- Provide brief overview of the database & GitHub repository
- Outline database search tool and data request/contribution forms
- Discuss new project proposals
- Discuss new types of data
- Discuss 3-monthly newsletter

1. Database & GitHub overview

- Delphine gave a brief walk-through of the Database workflow diagram, which provides an overview of the pipeline from primary data submission (as provided by the data contributor), through the data checks and standardisation pipeline, to produce standardised data that can be requested by data users.
- Delphine highlighted that currently, both the primary data and the standardised database are being stored and managed in a private repository in the MacaqueNet GitHub.
- Delphine showed contributors how to access all of the open-access database resources via the new MacaqueNet database GitHub repository, briefly describing each of the following files:
 - the database schema, which shows the name of each table (highlighted in dark blue in the document) in the database, and the name of each column within these tables. The arrows link common columns between the tables, which can be used to join the individual tables together. E.g. in the diagram, you can see that the information in the *research_site* and *population tables* can be joined via the *site_id* column.
 - The glossary, which provides column definitions for each database table.

Questions & suggestions:

- There were no specific questions or suggestions from contributors on this section of the meeting.

2. Search Tool & Data Request/Contribution forms

- Delphine showed contributors how to utilise the database search tool via the database page on the MacaqueNet website. This tool can be used by data requesters to view which datasets

are available in the database, allowing the individual to filter datasets depending on their study e.g. by species, behaviour.

- Delphine highlighted that the tool's filters can be modified to include other variables, such as sex, age range, setting (e.g. captive, free-ranging).
- Delphine also gave a brief demonstration on how to request specific datasets and/or make a data suggestion/contribution via two separate forms: one for data requests, and one for data contributions or suggestions. Both forms are available on the database page on the website.
 - Contributors were walked step-by-step through the process, including being shown the automated email they will receive from the MacaqueNet gmail once they have submitted either form.
 - The data request form should be completed for each new project. The form asks for information including researcher name(s), tentative project title, a brief project proposal including research questions and hypotheses, as well as which dataset(s) the requester wishes to utilise for their project.
- Delphine mentioned the terms of use, detailing the requirements associated with requesting/using data, emphasizing that individual data contributors can set their own requirements e.g. requesting co-authorship or acknowledgement for themselves and/or colleagues e.g. field assistants related to a specific dataset.

Questions & suggestions:

- Delphine asked contributors whether there are other variables that data requesters might find useful to subset the datasets in the search tool e.g. sex, setting (captive, free-ranging) etc.
 - *Noone had any specific suggestions of which new filters data requesters would find useful at this time but the general consensus was that further subset options would be useful for data requesters to decide which datasets were most suitable for their project's.*
- Contributor asked whether all available data is/will be available to view via the database search tool on the website
 - *Delphine explained that at the moment, the search tool only includes a few datasets for which we have permission to share metadata for.*
 - *Once datasets have been finalised (we have all metadata info and data contributors have answered any questions we might have), and we have permission to show some or all of the information provided in the search tool, these will be added.*
 - *Contributor asked what happens if a data contributor does not want their dataset to be shown in the search tool. How do requesters know it exists in the database?*
 - *Contributor suggested that data contributors should allow basic information to be shown in the search tool e.g. their lead contact name, species, population etc. to provide enough information for their data to be requested, even if more detailed information e.g. group, year, datatype info is not shown.*
- A contributor asked: Once data has been contributed, can the data contributor withdraw data?

- *The consensus was that yes, if the data contributor decides that they no longer wish to or are no longer able to share data with MacaqueNet, they have the right to withdraw it at any time.*
- *A contributor suggested that we add text to the terms & conditions stating that data can be withdrawn, to make data contributors and data users aware that this is an option.*
- Another contributor asked what happens if people leave a field site or retire? Is there the option to share data forever? Can data be made open to anyone who wishes to use it?
 - *The contributor added that once people retire or if they leave an institution, they might be less likely or unable to review data requests.*
 - *Delphine explained that there is already an option for data to be 100% open access, allowing data to be permanently available to any project.*
 - *Contributor suggested that in many cases, lead data contributors move on to other projects, field sites or institutions and so the lead researcher or team might change over time. Should there be a method e.g. a form to allow data contributors to alter contact information?*
 - *Contributor asked whether once data was contributed as 100% open access, can the data contributor withdraw the data? This requires further discussion and we should check the F.A.I.R guidelines, to see if it outlines what to do in this scenario.*

3. New project proposals

- Delphine explained that once a data request form was submitted and an auto-reply email had been received, contact will be established between the data requester and the data contributor(s) for each specific dataset that was requested. Both parties can then discuss the proposed project and determine whether the contributor's data is suitable for the project. If the dataset is suitable, specific usage terms can be negotiated, as defined in the terms of use. Usage terms may differ for different datasets and data contributors.
 - *For example, one contributor may request co-authorship on any publications that result from the use of their data, while another may not request co-authorship, but may want the data user to cite a paper relevant to the data.*

Questions & suggestions:

- Contributor asked about the possibility of tracking data requests, so we can review data approvals and refusals on an annual basis. Doing so will allow us to ensure there are no biases e.g. the same data contributors refusing and the same data requesters or projects on similar topics being refused data.
 - *Another contributor added to this, suggesting it might be beneficial to show data request information, both for transparency and so that anyone wanting to request data can see if e.g. which datasets similar projects were able to gain access to.*

- The group agreed that the most clear and accessible option would be to have an excel spreadsheet that keeps track of all data requests, showing whether data requests were accepted or not for each specific dataset.
- Another contributor asked whether we may store the project proposal's or the request forms somewhere with open access e.g. GitHub.
 - A few other contributors agreed that all requests should be open access.
- A contributor asked whether all projects would appear on the website/somewhere that is open access.
 - Delphine mentioned that in some cases, those involved in an ongoing project might not want their study info to be public, especially if it is in the early stages.
 - Contributor suggested that one of the requirements of data requesters being given access to data in the MacaqueNet database could be that their project will be shown on the website. Otherwise, it defeats the point of MacaqueNet?
 - Contributor suggested the possibility of having a password protected area on the website. Another contributor agreed with this idea.
 - Another contributor added that being able to view ALL current projects would be useful for data requesters, as they can see whether a similar project is already underway. In this case, perhaps data requesters might be able to contact those involved in that project and suggest a collaboration.
- The group agreed that all current and future projects that utilise at least one MacaqueNet dataset will automatically appear on the website, with no option to opt-out or password protection.
- The suggestion above led to further discussion about how someone viewing a project will know if they are open to collaboration.
 - Contributor suggested that when people propose a new project in a data request form, they may decide to have their project be "open" to collaboration.
 - Another contributor suggested we could have something on the MacaqueNet website saying e.g. "We encourage people (especially early-career researchers) to reach out to lead researchers on projects for potential collaboration"
 - We discussed that for early career researchers especially, who might not have access to a field site or be in contact with many people from the same field, or perhaps those who wish to branch out into a new field, being able to potentially join or aid a project would be beneficial.
 - A contributor added that external people may also be able to contact those involved in a project with suggestions e.g. if the project is similar to something similar they're working on and both projects could compliment each other, ultimately leading to better, big-team science.
 - Another contributor suggested that in many cases, ECR's might not have any data of their own to contribute to a project.

- *The contributor suggested that perhaps anyone can “apply” to join a project, explaining their reasons for wanting to be part of the project. It can then be up to the team whether or not to accept the application.*
- Some contributors were less positive about projects being “open” to collaborators.
 - *A few contributors suggested that this might lead to conflict. Having this option available would mean a) more work for the project team as they would have to review these comments/suggestions and b) the team might have to keep defending their work, as it allows people to give their opinion regarding e.g. design flaws.*
 - *A contributor also suggested that in some cases, having new people come on-board on a project might not be possible, e.g. if the project is in its later stages, there might not be a role available to someone new.*
 - *In response to this, another contributor reiterated that having your project open could be optional, and not a requirement, though encouraged.*
 - *Another contributor added that project PIs can say no without giving a reason and we can make it clear to researchers wishing to “join” a project that while collaboration is encouraged among MacaqueNet projects, it is not a requirement and is up to the project team whether or not new team members will be accepted.*
- **The group agreed that on each project’s website page, it will clearly state whether or not they are open to new collaborators, accompanied by the email address of the project leader, so people can get in touch.**
- After the workshop, Contributor asked: What about projects beyond the scope of macaques e.g. those studying larger taxonomic groups?
 - *Another contributor suggests that multi-taxa projects should be allowed, as one of the main aims of MacaqueNet is to facilitate and encourage comparative research.*

4. New types of data & new branches of MacaqueNet?

- Delphine highlighted that at the moment, the database only contains behavioural data, but hopes that in time, it will grow to include many other data types and formats.
- Delphine asked the contributors which types of data (either other types of behavioural, or non-behavioural) they want to see in the database.
- As a starting point, Delphine suggested that morphological, genetic/genomic or life history data might benefit many studies.
- Delphine encouraged contributors to take the lead with adding new types of data.
 - *Contributor suggested that MacaqueNet could have different “branches”. E.g. So far, Delphine and the core team have been in charge of the behavioural side of the database, and if someone has e.g. macaque genomic data, they can begin a new branch that they or their team are in charge of building.*

- *Delphine added that adding new branches to the database will require less work, as Delphine and Christof have solved many of the more complex, logistical aspects of the database already, so no one would be starting from scratch.*
- *One contributor was enthusiastic about implementing communication data.*

Questions & Suggestions:

- Clifford Jolly volunteered his services to whole-genome sequence blood samples through the illumina project, at no cost. The illumina project has sequenced the genomes of over 200 primates, including macaques, in order to better understand genetic diversity and evolution.

5. How do we keep everyone involved with MacaqueNet?

- Delphine mentioned that she regularly gets asked by contributors how the database is progressing, whether their data is still going to be used etc.
- Delphine reassured everyone that their data is part of the database, and that it is being cleaned and standardised behind the scenes by herself, Christof and Macaela.
- Delphine emphasised that MacaqueNet is for everyone, and while the core team is more heavily involved in e.g. Database building etc. everyone is welcome to provide suggestions and be more involved in MacaqueNet if they wish.

Questions & Suggestions:

- In order to keep everyone updated, we will publish a MacaqueNet newsletter every 3 months
 - *There was a brief discussion about whether this be available to contributors only, or anyone.*
 - *The general consensus was that it be available to anyone, in order to spread the word that MacaqueNet exists.*
 - *A contributor suggested there be a sign-up button on the website home-page where people can subscribe to the newsletter.*
- Delphine suggested that while so far, the MacaqueNet general meetings and database marathons have only included the core MacaqueNet team (Delphine, Lauren, Macaela, Christof, Julia, Oliver, Julie), we could open these meetings to all contributors.
- **The group agreed that all future MacaqueNet meetings will be open to all contributors. Meetings will be advertised via a Slack channel, accompanied by a zoom link for the meeting. Contributors were encouraged to join the Slack channel by clicking the [link](#) on the website home page. The link will open a webpage, providing instructions on how to become a member.**

5. The future of MacaqueNet

- Delphine highlighted that current funding for MacaqueNet won't last forever. Delphine asked that everyone bear MacaqueNet in mind when applying for research grants.
 - *Contributor highlighted that because of its cross-comparative nature, having MacaqueNet on a grant might actually make it more attractive to funders.*
- There were no further questions or suggestions, and Delphine thanked all contributors for joining and for their input, drawing the meeting to a close.

End of meeting.