

Weaving the MacaqueNet 3.0 @ Kolkata

General Assembly – Minutes

24th August 2025, 16:00-17:00, Kolkata, India

Agenda:

- General announcements
 - Management Team updates
 - Data Request Workflow Update
 - The Future of MacaqueNet
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1. General Announcements

Summary:

- Each year the management team will issue a call to existing data contributors for:
 - **New data contributions** i.e. new data from the same groups/populations as those already in the database.
 - **Up-to-date contact/institutional details.**
- A [poll](#) will be circulated to gather information on **contributor locations** (ie where they are from/based as opposed to just the institute they are affiliated with).
- We are still recruiting interns to **assist with digitizing** and processing historical data.
- We welcome any new datasets that require digitization or processing support.

Questions & Suggestions:

- No specific questions or suggestions on this topic.
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2. Management Team Updates

- **Summary:**

Introduced the new management workflow:

- Presented the [diagram](#) showing the overall **consortium structure**, emphasizing the fact that the **structure is nested** and many members fall within multiple categories:
 - Newsletter mailing list, data users, data contributors, management team.

- **All members are part of the newsletter mailing list** (unless they request otherwise), and this might be the only “role” you have within the consortium.
- Alternatively, you might also be a data contributor.
- Some members of the management team also fall into the data user and contributor categories.
- Outlined the different **member roles** (newsletter recipients, data users, and contributors).
- Explained who is in the management team, how this is structured and what each persons’ responsibilities are.
- For transparency, the **full management workflow will be shared publicly on GitHub**, accessible via the new [“CONSORTIUM” page](#) on the **website**.

Questions & Suggestions:

- No specific questions or suggestions on this topic.

3. MacaqueNet Advisory Board

Summary:

- Explained the **purpose and function** of the Advisory Board and reiterated the commitment required (Full details of advisory board roles can be found in the full management workflow via the [website](#)).
- The **four new advisors** (Julia Ostner, Oliver Schulke, Marine Joly and Cesar Rodriquez del Castillo) were introduced.
- Advisory Board **applications remain open-ended**; anyone who applies will be accepted, with no voting system. If you are interested, [apply here!](#)

Questions & Suggestions:

- **Q:** Member asked if the board will be internal contributors only:
 - **A:** *Non-members can also apply. Once their application is submitted, they will automatically become MacaqueNet members.*

4. Data Request Workflow Updates

Summary:

- Updated members on the **new updates to the data request workflow**:
 - **every two months** the management team will review new requests, check forms for required info and overlap with existing projects.
 - **All data requests will be logged on GitHub.**
 - MacaqueNet **communications managers will connect data requesters with relevant data contributors.**

- The full data request workflow is available in our “full management workflow” in Github, accessible, via the [Consortium page](#) of the website

Questions & Suggestions:

- No specific questions or suggestions on this topic.
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5. The Future of MacaqueNet

Summary:

Covered potential for open access data, timestamp data, shared data collection protocols and new data branch workflows. For this section, emphasis was on balancing transparency, collaboration, and data ownership.

a. Open Access Data

Summary:

- Gauged interest for making some data **open access**:
 - A few members were open to this e.g. just a few behavioural matrices.
 - Discussed what accessibility of open access data would look like, and how we protect data ownership and ensure proper acknowledgement of data owners and MacaqueNet.
 - There will be clear notes in the terms of use stating that anyone utilising the data must acknowledge data owners and MacaqueNet.

Questions & Suggestions:

- **Q:** Lots of behavioural data is openly accessible e.g. in published papers - why not just get the data directly from there, rather than through MacaqueNet?
 - **A:** This approach loses the community and collaborative aspect that MacaqueNet has built.
 - **A:** If you acquire data from papers, you would need to standardise them yourself- time consuming and difficult without clear metadata.
 - **A:** MacaqueNet data already standardised with detailed metadata - works closely with data contributors, so users can be more confident in interpreting MacaqueNet data than data drawn from papers.
- **Q:** Concern over ownership disputes - e.g. What if data user manipulates the data in some way e.g. pulls out degree from grooming matrices, who then owns the degree data, just the data user? Or the original data owner?
 - **Follow-up comment:** With our data request workflow, data user and owner can discuss usage terms, which may not be possible if data is completely open access.
 - **Follow-up comment:** Worries of data misuse and lack of collaborative element - helps to communicate with the data owner to assess if a dataset is suitable for your project and ensure data are correctly interpreted.

- **A:** These are all factors that will be taken into consideration and we will ensure that data users must agree to MacaqueNet terms of use before they can access datasets.
 - **A:** Terms of use will clearly state the rules around using open access data and how to correctly acknowledge the data contributor, management team who standardised the data, offer authorship etc.
 - **Q:** How do we know who is accessing the data? E.g. Could we automate the download so MacaqueNet or the data owner is notified when a download is made? Would this tell us who downloaded the data and for what purpose?
 - **Follow-up comment:** We should look into a way of automating the open access data download on the website, so MacaqueNet and/or the data owner gets notified.
 - **A:** Not sure how easy or possible this is.
 - **A:** All open access datasets will be accompanied by clear metadata and data owner information (with data owner's permission).
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b. Timestamp Data

Summary:

- Timestamp data would provide more **detailed individual level data** than the behavioural matrices currently provide.
- Member willingness to share and ways to reduce workload were discussed.
- Some members agreed that timestamp data would be useful, as having **exact timestamps on when behaviours occur** would allow us to answer more questions than we can currently.
 - E.g. questions about time of day, seasonality (e.g. breeding vs non-breeding season), within individual behavioural changes across e.g. a given year.

Questions & Suggestions:

- **Q:** Some members raised concerns over the large time and effort needed to standardise.
 - **A:** Would require a different and more complex pipeline than the data standardisation process currently.
 - **Q:** Who would be responsible for standardising timestamp data?
 - **A:** Database managers - dependant on whether they have the capacity.
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c. Shared Data Collection Protocol

Summary:

- Proposed idea of creating a **shared protocol including a standardised ethogram** for MacaqueNet:
 - data contributors collect behavioural (and in future, potentially non-behavioural data?) in the same or a similar way.

- Long-term data collection using shared protocol may lead to co-authorship/publication.
- Shared protocol would make it much easier for data users to utilise data:
 - Better transparency and trust in the data - having a clear standardised protocol makes it easier to understand how data were collected and reduce the likelihood of misinterpreting data and/or findings.
 - If many or all of the datasets requested are collected using the shared protocol, it makes writing methods sections easier (all datasets collected in the same way, rather than each dataset using a different data collection method).

Questions & Suggestions:

- **Q:** How do we incentivise members to utilise the shared protocol vs the protocol they currently use and are familiar with?
 - **A:** Incentives could include authorship on publications using data from shared protocol.
 - **A:** E.g. if we all collect grooming data using the shared protocol for 5 years, we will have enough data to ask comparative questions on XYZ.
- General consensus was that shared protocol would provide many benefits for MacaqueNet members.
- Some members were very open to having a shared protocol and would make use of this. Some of the comments/suggestions as to potential benefits were:
 - Already, many protocols are inspired by or are adapted versions of ethograms from similar field sites. Makes sense to formalise a shared protocol.
 - Useful for students - e.g. PhD students designing their own projects can directly utilise or take inspiration from the MacaqueNet protocol, rather than starting from scratch.
 - Makes standardisation process easier - data will already be in the same or v. similar format before being imported into the database.
 - Comparisons between populations, species become much easier.
 - protocol will be developed using expertise from the MacaqueNet community, pulling together all of the best parts from existing protocols.
 - Protocol will be developed using expertise from the MacaqueNet community, drawing from all of the best parts of existing protocols.
- Member suggested we include example datasets for new users to show what the raw data should look like.
- A member made a good point that shared protocol doesn't need to include ALL behaviours, only a few key behaviours most people utilise e.g. grooming, agonism etc.
 - Start simple and can add more behaviours, including non-behavioural data types in future.
 - Should send a **poll to members** to gauge **a) how many people would utilise and are open to a shared protocol** and **b) which behaviours people are interested in standardising** data collection for.

- Could make protocol public on the website for anyone to use (even non-macaque researchers).
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d. New Data Types

Summary:

- Proposed having **Google form on the website to enquire about new data types** that do not currently exist in the database. New data types include any type of data that does not currently exist in the database: e.g. behaviours we do not yet have data for, or non-behavioural data e.g. microsatellite or fecal samples.
- **Discussed how this process would work:**
 - E.g. When does MacaqueNet get involved to make it a new branch vs when does MacaqueNet simply establish contact between the data requester and the data owners?
- We will have a basic form asking what data type the data requester needs (that is not in the database).
- Management team will meet every 2-months to check newly submitted forms have all the requested info and decide whether it makes sense and is feasible to add the requested data type to the MacaqueNet database:
 - If YES - e.g. if members have expressed interest in this data type.
 - management team would be involved and work with the person who submitted the request to acquire and standardise the data: Contributed data will be implemented into the database as a new “branch”.
 - Database managers in the management team will be responsible for development of a new data branch, ideally with the help of the data requester.
 - If NO - e.g. the type of data being requested is not compatible with the database at the current time, if the management team do not currently have capacity to build a new branch, or if the data type is very niche and there is not a high demand for it
 - Communications managers will establish contact between the person requesting the data type and the entire MacaqueNet consortium mailing list.
 - At this point, MacaqueNet is no longer involved and the requester is responsible for acquiring and standardising the data and agreeing usage terms with the persons contributing the data.
- In both scenarios, the communications managers will establish contact between the data requester and the MacaqueNet community via **email**.

Questions & Suggestions:

- There were no major concerns regarding the proposed workflow.
 - A member suggested that once we start adding new behaviour types and non-behavioural data to the database, we can add these to the proposed standardised shared protocol.
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End of meeting.
