GBIF NODES LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER:
A trilateral mentoring project

THE GBIF MENTORING PROGRAMME

This programme brings together GBIF Participant nodes with complementary skills and needs to share their experiences and expertise through partnerships and node-to-node interactions. It enables personalized transfer of information, technologies, experiences, best practices and know-how between nodes.

A typical mentoring proposal is a collaboration between two or more nodes, in which a recipient node requests technical assistance and guidance from one or more nodes with greater experience, which act as mentors in areas that are strategically important for the development of the mentored node.

Initiated in 2003, the programme is designed as a vehicle to speed up the establishment of biodiversity information facilities at the Participant level and is funded by small grants allocated from the GBIF core funding. The GBIF Secretariat used to issue annual calls (typically at the end of the year) to which interested nodes can apply. All information is distributed through the Participant nodes mailing lists. However, 2013 was the last call, as this programme is no longer supported.

Under the GBIF's mentoring programme for 2013 a common project between GBIF nodes in Spain, France and Portugal was approved and funded. These nodes had previously identified common areas where each country could benefit from other's experience. GBIF France used its experience with a website using crowdsourcing to digitize botanical specimen labels, to support a similar pilot project in Spain and Portugal. France also supported Spain and Portugal in developing a tool for visualizing data from their collections, based on tools developed for the new French data portal. As part of the same project, GBIF Spain helped to set up an e-learning platform and an e-learning training package for GBIF Portugal and GBIF France. Training events on publishing data papers and on data quality were also carried out.

FRANCE

GBIF France will hold the third and last capacity exchange event in Paris from 14 to 16 October, 2014.

This meeting will focus on crowdsourcing and more specifically on the project for herbarium label transcription Les Herbonautes (http://lesherbonautes.mnhn.fr), developed by the French National Museum of Natural History (MNHN) and the GBIF France IT team. This will allow GBIF Portugal and GBIF Spain to set up similar collaborative platforms for data digitisation based on crowdsourcing.

Another topic will be a state of the art presentation of data visualization tools for the Spanish and Portuguese nodes. The persistent identifiers should also be mentioned during the meeting, given the current discussions about this subject in the scientific community and within the GBIF network.

All materials from this event will be available after the meeting at:
http://www.gbif.fr/page/infos/nos-projets

PORTUGAL

In the second meeting in Lisbon (April 2014), the main achievements were:

Journal options and requirements for publishing data papers (Pt): review on the journal options, requirements to publish data papers, and the coordination going on between GBIF and different publishers to facilitate the use of IPT to prepare data papers.

Exploring challenges and opportunities in using Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) portal code for Nodes Data Portals (Es): demonstration about the advantages for the GBIF nodes in using the ALA portal.

Cleaning biodiversity data using Open Refine (Pt): presentation of a practical exercise on the advantages of using the Open Refine to perform data quality checks of DarwinCore Archive datasets.

All materials of this mentoring event are available at: http://www.gbif.pt/node/160

SPAIN

The first capacity exchange event was held from 21 to 23 January, 2014 in Madrid and stemmed from one of the three projects to receive funding under the 2013 GBIF Mentoring Programme.

At the event, GBIF Spain demonstrated the use of its e-learning platforms and building e-courses. The node offered its current platform – ATutor – to be used and adapted by the other nodes.

Tools and procedures put in place by GBIF Spain for publishing national biodiversity data were also presented and discussed. Darwin Test, a software application developed by GBIF Spain to validate datasets in Darwin Core format, was shown and put in practice. As well as the IPT toolkit for crafting data papers.

All materials from this event are available at: http://www.gbif.es/formaciondetalles.php?IDForm=124

LESSONS LEARNT

The interaction between nodes' teams exponentially increases productivity through the identification of similar problems, working situations, and brainstorming solutions. Optimal use of nodes' infrastructure can be achieved by extending services to other nodes. Using tools such as Google Drive for sharing working documents were really useful and made the workflow very easy going.

ACTION POINTS

Each meeting closes with a list of specific actions points elaborated by all teams. This list is monitored between meetings to assess progress in all activities. Some actions result in new tools and resources that become available to the benefit of all GBIF community.

SPIN OFFS

As a side output of these meetings some collaborative projects were developed. French and Spanish IT teams work together on launching the ALA portal at their respective nodes. Besides, a common procedure to publish data papers in Nature journal is being monitored by the three nodes.

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