Virtual Update Notes March 2 & 3, 2009 - Governance Update

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Tue, 02/24/2009 - 12:26pm — sremillard

Governance Update

Participants:
Monday (3/2): Karen Baker (moderator), Barbara Benson (NTL), Corinna Gries (CAP), Don Henshaw (AND), Emery Boose (HFR), Margaret O'Brien (SBC), Gastil Buhl (MCR), Suzanne Remillard (AND)
Tuesday(3/3): Nicole Kaplan (moderator), Hap Garritt (PIE), Jonathon Walsh (BES), Jason Downing (BNZ), Theresa Valentine (AND), and Eda Melendez (LUQ)

Monday Notes:
by Emery Boose

For more details, see slide presentation on IM website.

IMC governance working group met recently in Puerto Rico and several times by VTC.

5 topics – working group charge, best practices, governance arrangements, new module called IMhistoryDB, summary slide of major issues (retrospective & prospective).

Working group charge was developed at the last IMC meeting and subsequent WG meetings.

Intent is to explore, document and observe ways in which IMC has conducted its governance: structure, practices, decision making. Identify topics for future WGs.

WG will make recommendations but needs input from the larger group from time to time. Add to charge: WG will make specific governance recommendations.

Recommendations for best practices:

(1) Define governance and principles of good governance (presented at IMC meeting last year).

(2) Revisit mission statement and site review criteria. Governance issues might be better reflected in these documents. Discuss in breakout groups at next IMC meeting.

(3) Bundle critical documents (review criteria, web design recommendations, EML best practices, LTER data policy, etc) and make easily available. Create a library of critical documents.

Mission statement should reflect current activities. IMs should be aware of mission statement. Not currently on IMC website.

Site review criteria summarizes much of the work we are responsible for. May not need to be updated now.

Library of critical documents. Documents are currently available on the website. How should they be organized? Need to think through governance issues with respect to website organization.

Identify source of slides 5-7. Vision statement from 1995 Snowbird WG (Susan, Barbara, Don, etc). Summarized in vision statement bullets in slide 8. Slide 9 from 2007. Slides 5 and 6 apparently from 1998 IMC meeting report.

Governance elements related to IMExec. Evolution of conceptualization of how IMExec fits into LTER structure. Importance of reporting historical and current membership. Suzanne maintains a list.

Create guidelines for decision making and leadership. When to take a vote, required communications, etc.

Diagrams of entity relationships by decade. 1980s = long term (time series), 1990s = large scale (regionalization), 2000s = synthesis (complexities).

How can the Executive Board (EB) convey needs to IMExec and NISAC? What are the differences between IMExec and NISAC? What is the development line

for best practices? How does the LNO fit in? NISAS has given some thought to work flow.

Policy is set by the EB, except in areas where the Science Council (SC) has indicated a need to vet. NISAC is an integrative group and makes recommendations to the EB. The EB can delegate tasks to other groups such as the IMC.

NISAC does not make policy. The EB (or SC) makes policy. The IMC makes recommendations to the EB via its EB representative. The relationships among the LNO, NISAC, and PIs are not clear from the diagram.

IMhistoryDB. A new module with multi-level structure. Allow free text entries. Queriable over the web.

A long-term process to gather materials. Distributed experience across the network. Karen collected past talks to add to timeline.

Create the capability to look at materials quickly. First step is to make visible. Second step is to make queriable.

Stories often have multiple facets. IMC often has to balance many concerns. These concerns may not be apparent at a later date.

Include simple facts and dates. When sites began, key documents, etc. Common need for a timeline.

Some of our history is not capture in free text. Also include photos, power points, bibliographies, notes from meetings, etc. Media gallery.

How to implement the new module? Who, how, where?

Present idea with prototype at ASM. Ask for funds to create and support. Need to commit over time to populate.

Functionality might be possible with Drupal system. Easy to submit materials.

Some experience with content management systems over the last 5+ years. Drupal may not provide all the capabilities needed, but Drupal has straightforward design.

XML and Drupal do not mesh very well. Drupal has powerful keyword search capability if documents are appropriately keyed. Other media can be linked or attached via separate pages.

Prototype need not be final implementation.

Ease of adding new information is important, especially in population phase. May be some disagreement over what happened and when.

Classic Wikipedia problem when users disagree and replace each other's versions. Role of editor is important.

The IMC has been self-governing from its inception. This is a good time for formal consideration.

Documentation of IMC history is worth spending some resources. Important to pass information on to new IMs.

How have past issues come up and been decided? Identify what has worked in the past.

LTER is a loosely connected system, which is good. Identify alternative pathways and recurring issues over the last three decades.

Tuesday Notes:
LTER IM Water Cooler March 3, 2009

Attending: Nicole Kaplan, Hap Garritt, Jonathon Walsh, Jason Downing (notes), Theresa Valentine, and Eda Melendez
John Campbell could not connect

Goal of today is to get some feedback on deliverables and governance. Also to cover database timeline, etc.

Meetings at ABQ IMC, interviews with IMEXEC chairs and co-chairs, various teleconference meetings, and then working meeting in Puerto Rico.

Interviews really give basis for perspective of how decisions were made and became part of the imHistoryDB.

Revisit the Best Practices for IMC at the next IM meeting. Have breakout groups to look at vision statement, def of governance and additional review of IM Site Review Criteria, Web Design Recommendations, EML Best Practices, LTER Data Policy, and other materials.

Define how our governance should operate.

- Legitimacy and voice: Participation and consensus orientation
- Direction: Strategic vision
- Performance: Responsiveness; effectiveness and efficiency
- Accountability: Accountability & transparency
- Fairness: Equity

Historical documentation (authors?) for Ecological Informatics - 1998 Vision Statement (see presentation slides)

Could the imHistoryDB follow the evolution of information management as it went from file-data-ecoinformatics?

Also cover the evolution of NIS?

For example, could it contribute to the development of guidelines for new NIS modules; as well as updates/improvements/ maintenance priorities to current modules.

Is the strategic vision question a good charge to breakout groups for the next annual meeting? Do we need to look at this more closely? It has it been to long

since we have looked to update these statements. This group thinks it is a good and will help the group to grow.

Nicole put together this review of what is expected by members and chiars on the IMEXEC board: two types of content
Logistical Information (terms of service and rules for elections)
Operational Guidelines and Responsibilities

Bylaws may be too restrictive to allow enough flexibility to respond to issues, but some sections could be put into bylaws to cover parts of our operations. We should try to combine formal procedure documentation to cover some set parts of what we do (NISAC creation, groups and terms); which still leave room to have flexibility in other operational activities. A more formal documentation of our governance, may continue to help level the field between EB, IMEXEC, etc. and show that we have documented rules of conduct.

If people could review slides 13-14 and see what needs to be added (both those that have been on IMEXEC as well as those who have not).

What is the formal relationships between IMEXEC and other groups within the LTER? (next set of slides 15-17). This shows the changes in interactions and key players. The diagrams are not exact representations of working structure (there is too much overlap to not be confusing) but this covers a good deal of the interactions. New color coding idea may help to clarify any confusion, as members of IMexec are also members of IMC and members of the EB are also members of SC.

imHistoryDB

Seeking feedback on this topic/tool in particular. The desire is to document and allow reflection on how we operate. Standardize what IM's can report to DB. Large portion of the work will be to backfill the DB but a good deal of work has been done to put many key pieces into the system. Robust enough to start working with. Use the historical SiteBites info to fill in so history as this would also allow sites to report their activities. Useful to new IM's to have historical information. Also as an outreach tool to other groups to share how our projects have been completed across the community.

Also, can we answer what are the resources as to how we operate and accomplish these tasks? Some of it went into the free text part but we could try to qualify and parse the information into other fields. Funding/resource information is important to clarify. We can also use it as documentation and justification for future support requests. We could be hurting ourselves by being so good at completing unfunded mandates and this could help us to better represent ourselves.

That's a wrap!!!

- Virtual Updates [1]

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[1] http://im.lternet.edu/taxonomy/term/169