

Summary of Discussion

The two day meeting was hosted by the Museum für Naturkunde and generously funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF). Herr Bernd Fischer (Deputy Head of the Division and German representative at OECD) welcomed the delegation and confirmed that SciColls goals resonated with the German Federal Government's strategy for the internationalisation of science and research.

34 delegates attended from 20 countries bringing together the broadest cross section of nations around the world in the history of group (*see annex 1*). Dr Michael Rottmann attended on behalf of the BMBF.

Aims of SciColl

SciColl aims to build an international coordinating mechanism for scientific collections with two primary goals (a) to ensure collections are efficient and integrated infrastructures and (2) to enable more science to be done, especially interdisciplinary research using collections.

Background

The 2008 Washington meeting recommended the creation of an international coordinating mechanism for scientific collections and in October 2008 the Global Science Forum (GSF) authorised a follow-on activity over an 18 month planning period to produce an implementation plan leading to a design and creation of this mechanism. The Steering Committee held its inaugural meeting in London in March 2009 at which a number of key issues were identified and four working groups established to take forward the planning phase. The meeting also identified the current unmet needs for the international coordination of collections, which were:

- *Quality of collections* (value, quality, how well are collections run as a scientific infrastructure, efficiency measures, quality of data)
- *Sharing best practice and standards* (management/care; improving access to material; having metadata associated with objects in a form that can be compared and computed, the interoperability between different data standards);
- *Enhancing value to science and society* (can collections address the large scale questions that we need to deal with now);
- *Cultural diplomacy* (historical resource inequity needs to be addressed by sharing collections between ourselves)

The objectives for the Berlin meeting were identified as:

- To consider the governance model for SciColl
- To agree the draft Strategic Plan
- Consider the financial/business model (sustainability)
- Review progress on the science outreach conference;
- Determine expressions of interest to host the proposed Secretariat

Key Outcome

There was overwhelming agreement to the proposal that the pioneer project for SciColl should be the "changing environment" project. This project would ensure that SciColl delivers on its mission within the first 3-5 years by identifying those collections that can contribute to understanding changing environments and how these collections can be made more widely available. The project will look at a logarithmic series of values to evidence changes in the environment. It was proposed that a small and focussed Secretariat be set up to identify a clear work plan that will deliver a tangible output on a

3-5 year timescale. It is anticipated that the work plan will be funded by government sources and the Secretariat primarily funded from institutions that hold collections. The project would satisfy the key aims of SciColl (see above).

This revised strategic plan was received with great enthusiasm with members confident that their institutions will be able to commit and some members indicated that their institutions would consider hosting the Secretariat. However, there was uncertainty at this stage about the level of commitment by respective governments. There was major interest in setting up a small coordinating group to take forward the proposal so as not to lose momentum. Institutions would be asked to commit resources to this group.

Next Steps:

- RPL/FS will prepare papers for GSF meeting in Krakow, which will be circulated to the SC together with a progress report and revised documents (20 September)
- The GSF national delegates will have access to these papers and so any comments the members may wish to make should be directed at the national representative.

Timeline for SciColl Development (Sept 2009-2011)

- 2-4 Sept. 2009: SciColl Steering Committee meeting, Berlin
- 20 Sept. 2009: deadline to submit documents for GSF autumn meeting (Krakow, Poland)
Lane, Sgard
- 30 September: Provide List of relevant institutions for SciColl membership and suggestions for potential invitees to conference: **All to Allen.**
- 5-6 Oct. 2009: GSF autumn meeting (Krakow, Poland): SciColl update, including presentation of agreed governance model (& budget), draft Strategic Plan / Program of Work; obtain feedback from GSF / national delegations **Lane, Sgard**
- End October 2009: Outreach brochure ready for distribution **Nechad**
- late 2009: WG meeting(s) for planning Feb. 2010 conference on Work Program (global project/product): **Né Chad, Schindel, Barakat, Carvalho, Guiraud, Leinfelder, Grootaert, Lee**
- end of 2009: develop and open SciColl website: **Grootaert, Häuser**
- 31 December 2009: final draft documents made available on SciColl website **Lane**
- December 2009: letter to institution directors asking for indication of interest to join SciColl (deadline for response: 1 February)
Names:
Send letter: **Lane**
- 8-9 February 2010: SciColl outreach & Work Program planning conference (Brussels): "Changing Environments – Building the Global Research Base/Infrastructure". **Grootaert**
- 9 February 2010 afternoon, possibly 10th: SciColl Steering Committee meeting **Grootaert, Lane**
- mid-March 2010: final documents (incl. TOR, ...) to be submitted to GSF: **Lane, Sgard**
- Prepare Article in Nature, Science, New Scientist, Economist, for publication after conference. **Scott Miller, Steering Committee**
- April 2010 (perhaps 1st / 2nd April 2010): GSF spring meeting: ask for GSF endorsement of final proposal to establish SciColl. **Lane, Sgard**
- May 2010: SciColl MOU (& documents) open for signature
- May 2010: launch of request for proposals to host SciColl Secretariat
- July 2010: Tipping point signature of MoU, establish Interim Exec. Board
- Est. October 2010: Selection of secretariat host

- Est. Nov. 2010: Adv. for post of Exec. director
- start 2011: official launch of SciColl (establishment of Secretariat)
 - Outreach opportunities announcing SciColl: UN General Assembly (); CBD COP10 (Nagoya), Oct. 2010; AAAS ?

Summary of Discussion on Documentation

Strategic Plan : Working Group 1 (Chair - Dr David Schindel)

The Strategic Plan (SP) introduces the overall activity in a form which is comprehensible to non-specialists (i.e. policy makers, funders etc). The SP captures the need and benefits for international/interdisciplinary coordination, together with the strategic objectives for 2010-13, the longer-term goals (2010-2020) and the ensuing programme of work. The mission for SciColl was defined as:

- *Help scientific collections and their host institutions increase their effectiveness and the return on investments they realise from the long-term management of collections and the training they provide to the professional workforce responsible for them, and*
- *Catalyse ground-breaking interdisciplinary research that relies on access to scientific collections and their associated information.*

Key decisions:

- The SP must be strong in its forward look, i.e. new types of collections to respond to new research challenges. Biomedical collections should be included in the scope of SciColl
- Although pure art history collections are excluded (previously agreed), scientific illustrations may be included.
- The relationship between institutionally and privately held collections is an important issue; in this context the SP should acknowledge that SciColl may not have access to some material (e.g. private and sovereign collections) and that this challenge needs to be addressed. This could be the topic for a study or technical workshop (e.g. data treatment, patrimony ownership, access etc).
- Getting the best out of collections needs to be better exploited and articulated in policy development.
- Capture the “big picture” by referring to the global challenges facing society and providing concrete examples of useful output is also important for engagement with funders and policy makers.
- Expand on using collections as a distributed infrastructure for science and make some reference to the benefit going to the workforce.
- Document should articulate how SciColl relates to other large initiatives e.g. GBIF. Perhaps use GBIF as a model for something we want to do in other fields.
- Include the objective “*creating an inventory of the major collections across disciplines*”
- Promote the idea that countries with small collections should be encouraged to build up these collections - providing advice and technical assistance if expertise is unavailable. It was noted that developing and managing collections in developing countries could be a problem due to funding/resource constraints.

Outreach Plans: Working Group 2 (Chair - Myriam Nechad)

The focus of the Conference would be to develop a work plan to be presented at the GSF international conference/launch in 2011.

Myriam Nechad (MN) has secured funding (15k Euros) from the European Science Foundation (ESF) for an international workshop taking place in Brussels on 8-9 February 2010. It is anticipated that the delegates will comprise: leading scientists, policy makers, associations of collections etc. The group agreed the following strategic approach.

Key Issues:

- A strategic “advertising campaign” will be mounted to target potential attendees. Members to nominate four organisations/contacts for the creation of a core distribution list. These organisations will then be sent information about the conference seeking expressions of interest in attending the conference, together with a simple questionnaire asking what “big question” their collections can address. An invitation list can then be created from these responses.
- Suggestions for brochure content to be sent to MN [illustrations are needed].
- The Conference should be advertised at forthcoming scientific meetings, e.g. GSF meeting (Oct), General Assembly Summit at the UN, Year of Biodiversity (2010) etc.
- Journalists and funding agencies to be invited to attend.
- An article will be drafted for publication after the conference to catch the attention of policy makers. Target journals include: *Nature*, *Science*, *New Scientist*, and *the Economist*. Participation in an AAAS symposium should also be considered.
- The research impact has too low a profile at present and need to include the next generation of collections. Engagement with biomedical, anthropology is required if a broad scope organisation is to be created. Be more specific about output.
- The Organising Committee will comprise: Working Group 2, David Schindel, Claudia Carvalho, Reinholdt Leinfelder, Patrick Grootaert, Michel Guiraud, Hala Baraka.

ACTIONS:

- **Steering Committee** to prepare a simple questionnaire on the use of collection for research to be circulated with invitation.
- **ALL** to nominate to MN four organisations/contacts for the creation of a core distribution list.
- **ALL** to send suggestions for brochure to Myriam Nechad
- **Steering Committee** to draft an article for publication after the conference to catch the attention of policy makers. Target journals include: *Nature*, *Science*, *New Scientist*, and *the Economist*. [Scott Miller drafting piece for *Science*]. Participation in an AAAS symposium should also be considered.

Governance and Potential Funding Model: Working Group 3 (Chair - Christoph Häuser)

Governance Model:

This new international coordination mechanism for scientific collections will be a free standing mechanism independent from other umbrella organisations and structured on a mixed membership model, as follows:

- *National representation/single national focal point*
- *Individual Institution*
- *Individual Organisation*

SciColl would also offer special observer status or other forms of cooperation with partners not covered by the above membership categories. The different membership categories offer different rights and obligations and so the governance is somewhat complicated.

To aid the governance SciColl will be organised as follows:

- *Secretariat*
- *General Assembly*
- *Executive Board*
- *Science Advisory Board*
- *Ad hoc task groups*

Discussion:

- The voting rights and obligations as institutional members needs to be explicit.
- Number of issues relating to the membership of developing countries, in particular:
 - Financial obligations required for membership
 - Voting rights.
 - Currency fluctuations and how this is managed to ease the future financial burden will be of particular importance in trying to engage governmental support from developing countries and emerging economies.
- An additional non-paying category (with voting rights) for developing countries was rejected as free membership could be open to abuse. However, it was suggested that the CETAF model could be adopted whereby a number of smaller organisations join together to form consortia thus sharing the membership cost.
- Whilst SC accepts that there is a difference between the developing and developed countries the cornerstone of SciColl is to create an international coordinating mechanism for scientific collections and to enhance free and open access to these collections. It would be highly desirable to help developing countries, but it is not one of the primary goals.
- An institutional screening mechanism may be introduced for those outside the scope of SciColl.
- The message that SciColl provides a forum for national governments to coordinate policy and to get sound scientific policy needs to be communicated to national governments.
- The proposal for “associate membership” may be investigated further once the budget has been agreed.
- SciColl will use the creative commons approach to IPR so this may not be an issue, but should be borne in mind nonetheless. A statement should be included, but most of the material is already in the public domain

Financial Model

The group looked at the minimum operating budget for the Secretariat. The Secretariat will be led by a senior Executive Director (high profile person with international and diplomatic experience). Money will be raised as follows:

National Governmental Rep:

Annual contribution in the first three years based on GERD/GDP. Have a seat on the EB and have voting rights.

Individual Institutions:

4 categories of membership are proposed using criteria such as: size/importance, GDP/GERD per capita, number of staff, budget for collections, management/ collections-based research, operating expenditure (overall or collections-based). These members would pay an annual financial contribution (4 categories,) and have a seat with voting rights in the General Assembly.

International Organisations:

non-paying, non-voting. Eligible to sit on the EB (no more than 10% of total membership)

- The categorisation is based on the collection and not the institution, which is compatible with the ethos of SciColl. Operational budget is based on the running costs of the organisation – including staff numbers (including temporary staff), but excluding the building. Clearer definition is needed.
- Document should be explicit about the rate of increase of members over the first four years, which should be broken down to help structure the budget in the first four years. As the Secretariat may not be fully funded in the initial stages (dependent on membership) an interim group will have to get the ball rolling in year one. There was major interest in setting up a small coordinating group to take forward the proposal so as not to lose momentum. Institutions would be asked to commit resources to this group. However, we have to be explicit about what this interim group can achieve. By March 2010 there should be a much clearer indication what countries and institutions are interested in joining, which will form part of the case submitted to GSF in March 2010.

- At present no target size of membership. SciColl needs a minimum number to make the initiative viable and in this context institutional members are encouraged to join in year one, but the expectation is that not every target institution will be on board from the beginning. The number of big institutions is finite and it is expected that smaller institutions will continue to join
- Paying in kind (by secondment etc) may be practical, but this would be the exception to the rule and very compelling cases would have to be presented. Voluntary contributions are not an option. Other incentives can be used to compensate, i.e. more people able to attend.
- Setting disproportionately high fees to get increased representation on the GA was rejected as it would skew the vote in favour of richer countries. Share option was discounted for the same reason.
- Small organisations should be encouraged to form consortia that could join at category 4 – a minimal budget line should be set for this. This is a good way to get collections together and eliminates the need to adopt an overly complex organisation. There will be no stipulation of consortia composition, but a definition of the maximum size should be included in the governance document.
- A serious suggestion was made that the SC considers having a more definitive period to test ideas involving relatively few champions and to launch the enterprise as soon as possible. Seeking fewer countries with larger budgets (at least in the initial stages) would be more advantageous. This should take precedence over equity (equitability can be built into system once enterprise is running).
- Operating the Secretariat on a phased basis (i.e. start with a small number of staff and increase the size as funding is received) is to be considered.
- It was suggested that letters of intent/MoUs be sought from interested participants to provide security to the host country and GSF delegation as well as providing time for organisations to raised membership funds.

Request to Host the Secretariat: Working Group 3

The model was discussed and the revised version will be circulated.

Annexe 1

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