

Development of an International Coordinating Mechanism for Scientific Research Collections

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One of the major issues at the present stage of the process is engagement of research communities (scientists working today on collections, scientists who could work much more on collections, scientific fields outside natural history) and outreach to other stakeholders. The disciplinary scope and country participation (currently limited to OECD countries) have to be expanded. Therefore, an international workshop is being planned, which will take place in Brussels at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in February 2010. It should gather around 80 people at the maximum.

The **goal** of this conference is to strengthen the activity by widening the circle of actors (scientists, policymakers, EC representatives, research funding agencies, end users) and clarifying the need for this international coordinating mechanism. The participants will be presented a strategic plan for a broader community which will aim at making SCIColl valuable nationally as well as internationally. They will be involved in the formulation of SCIColl's Programme of Work.

The greatest challenge for researchers in **developing and emerging countries** is to have access to the scientific collections. TWAS, the Academy of Sciences for the developing world, and some representatives of major collection-based institutions in these countries will be invited in order to associate them to the ongoing work.

Co-operation with umbrella organizations such as ICSU and the European Science Foundation is planned for networking support and information dissemination.

The **first draft of the conference programme** is the following:

1. Plenary session:
 - Presentation of SCIColl (including drafts of Strategic Plan and Programme of Work)
 - Best examples of cutting-edge science based on interdisciplinary (and inter-collections) research on collections (5 min per example)
 - Examples of collections-connecting organizations (EDIT, SYNTHESYS, the South-African Virtual Herbarium or the Chinese one, the German Consortium of collections) upon which SCIColl will build.
2. Plenary presentation by representatives of major collections and collection-based organizations describing initiatives to improve cost-effective management, research impact, and socio-economic relevance of scientific collections.
3. Break out in 4 groups (random). In each group, discussion aiming at emphasizing where the gaps, the barriers which stop from using collections are, and identifying what the expectations of the participants are. This discussion will be based on the presentations made during the plenary session.
4. Plenary session: panel discussion between the chairs of the break-out groups on SCIColl organisation, Strategic Plan and Programme of Work, and on research topics.

Expected outputs:

- scope of interest from a much wider community than the one presently represented in SCIColl Steering Committee
- inputs from non-OECD countries
- finalization of SCIColl Strategic Plan and Programme of Work
- these will be presented in a final report on the proposed initiative to the OECD Global Science Forum at his spring meeting next year (April 2010).