

TDWG Newsletter

International Working Group on Taxonomic Databases for Plant Sciences

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Type registers: some questions.

by Ellen Farr

What is the "minimum functional Type Specimen Register"? There are really two parts to this question.

First, what is the minimum function a type register can perform? Second, what is the minimum set of data elements such a register must include?

The Subgroup on Type and Lectotypification Registers identified name of taxon, author, collector's name, number and date, herbarium code, country, source of information and level of verification as the minimum elements necessary to locate a type specimen. If the project goes forward in this form, the register will be a list of probable types in the world's herbaria.

Does the botanical community consider this to be a useful project? Some will feel that to be useful, a type register must do more and will see serious omissions in this proposed list of minimum elements. Mr. Burdet raised the question of including literature citations in the last issue of the newsletter. Lectotypes and neotypes and their citations and reference to existing photographs have also been suggested. At what point will the requirements of the project discourage participation? The question of what is a

reasonable scope for the project can be considered by each of us on light of our own experience with computerized databases. The size and complexity of the individual records is an important factor whether the final product exists as a centralized database or as distributed files.

Finally, should the holdings of herbaria who are unable to provide all of the data elements be excluded from the project? I have personally taken a conservative approach to this project, e. g., trying to define the "minimum functional type register," for two reasons. 1) To minimize the burden placed on the herbaria providing the information. 2) To attempt to define a project of reasonable scope that can reach a functional level of completion in the foreseeable future. I have written this as an individual member of TDWG rather than as a member of the subgroup, but many of my ideas come from correspondence exchanged last year. I would welcome opinions from other TDWG members. Please let me know if I can circulate your comments to the rest of the subgroup. Present members include Brummitt, Burdet, Cannon, Cullan, D'Arcy, Farr (Chairman), Morin, Pankhurst, Russell, Sutton, Thiers, Tuccinardi and Utech.

International Register of Plant-Taxonomic Databases

Have you returned your questionnaire?

On behalf of the TDWG, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation has undertaken the task of publishing a printed *Register* of computer databases that have an application in plant taxonomy. Questionnaires were distributed to all directors of Institutions listed in Index Herbariorum, all members of IAPT and ASPT.

The stated deadline was 30th April but Bob Kiger communicates that they will still accommodate returns as late as 15th July. Anyone who didn't receive a questionnaire can request one from Bob Kiger or the nearest Index Herbariorum listed Institution.

It is not too late...



Further TDWG meetings & activities...

TDWG 5 at Las Palmas, November 9-11 1989

by Frank Bisby

Arrangements have now been confirmed for the fifth annual meeting of TDWG to be held at the Jardín Botánico, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in the Canary Isles. Participants will assemble on the evening of Wednesday 8th November and disperse after mid-day on Saturday 11th November. But before confirming travel arrangements do please check whether you are involved in one of the additional meetings before or after the main sessions. A meeting of the symposium planning committee is being arranged for Wednesday 8th November. There has also been a meeting arranged for those involved in producing lists for the IUBS/IAPT Names in Current Use initiative on Sunday 12th November - check with Prof. D. Hawksworth if you may be involved.

This year's TDWG meeting will focus on some unfinished business from previous meetings (notably XDF, exchange formats for accession data, and the Data Dictionary) and some new areas for discussion - ideas on standards for Habitat, Uses and Life Form descriptors.

Invitations are being mailed any time now!

"Designs" Symposium goes ahead

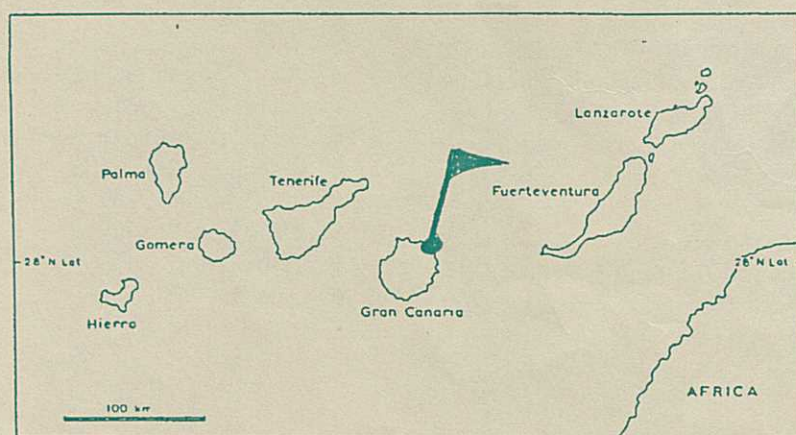
by Frank Bisby

Frank Bisby and Rusty Russell have been working hard to make TDWG's plans for a 1990 international symposium actually happen. The Symposium "Designs for a Global Plant Species Diversity Information System" will go ahead in autumn 1990. The exact dates (in September/October 1990) and European location will be announced shortly. The symposium is co-sponsored by CODATA and IUBS; substantial funding has already been agreed by the Commission of the European Communities; and travel funds are under discussion with the US National Science Foundation.

The five main sessions planned cover different levels of designs suitable for a global system or network of systems to make available a catalogue of all the world's plants.

- 1) The demand for a Global System
- 2) Management, Ownership and Funding
- 3) Taxonomic decision-making, coordination and data-entry
- 4) Data structures and logical design
- 5) System design, computers and communications

The First Circular will be mailed to everyone on the TDWG Secretariat and TDWG newsletter mailing lists. If you have ideas on contributions to the symposium, do please contact Rusty Russell or Frank Bisby in the next month or so - we would welcome more suggestions. The programme will be finalised at a meeting of the symposium planning committee on November 8th at Las Palmas, prior to the main TDWG meeting.



Sketch Map of the Canary Islands.

International Working Group on Taxonomic Databases in Plant Sciences

TDWG 5: Las Palmas, Nov. 8-11 1989 (1st Draft Programme)

8 November, Wednesday

7.30 p.m. COMING TOGETHER

9 November, Thursday

9-10.30 PLENARY SESSION

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

11.00-12.30 a.m.	a) XDF (Exchange Data Format)	Convenor Dr. R. Allkin, RBG Kew
	b) World Geography System	Convenors Dr. R. Brummit, RBG Kew & Dr. S. Hollis, ILDIS
2-2.30 p.m.	a) Exchange Formats - Accessions	Convenor Dr. G.E. Gibbs Russell, FNA
	b) Names in Taxonomic Databases	Convenor Dr. F.A. Bisby, ILDIS
4-5.30 p.m.	a) Data Dictionary	Convenor Mr. G.F. Russell, Smithsonian
	b) POSS (Plant Occurrence & Status System)	Convenor Mr. H. Synge, WWF

10 November, Friday

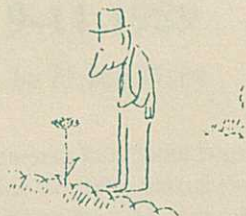
9-10.30 a.m.	a) Directory of Taxonomic Databases	Convenor Dr. R. Kiger, Hunt
	b) Author's Name	Convenor Dr. R. Brummit, RBG Kew
11-12.30 a.m.	a) Conference organisation	Convenors Dr. F.A. Bisby, ILDIS and Mr. G.F. Russell, Smithsonian
	b) Uses & Ethnobotany Descriptors	Convenor Dr. W. Lewis, Wash. Univ. ST. Louis
2-3.30 p.m.	a) Type & Lectotypification Registers	Convenor Dr. E. Farr, Smithsonian
	b) Habitat, Soil & Landscape Descriptors	Convenor Dr. J.M. Lock, RBG Kew
4-5.30 p.m.	a) Nomenclatural Indexing	Convenor Dr. T. Duncan, Univ. of California
	b) Life Form Descriptors	Convenor ?

11 November, Saturday

9-10.30 a.m.	PLENARY SESSION: Adoption of Standards
11-12.30 a.m.	PLENARY SESSION: TDWG Business

Be careful !

The address sheet has been corrected! Please, look for a "*" were changes happened.



Short news

TDWG Standard No 2: "Geographical units for recording plant distributions in databases", is ready and will soon be edited.

The number of the TDWG Newsletter subscribers passed beyond a hundred. They are exactly 107 all around the world. That is about 40% more than for the first issue.

Remember: if you want to contribute to the next issue of the TDWG Newsletter, be sure to send your paper before September the 1st. Number 4 will be sent out before the annual meeting.

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