

Project no. 018340

Project acronym: EDIT

Project title: Toward the European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy

## Executive Summary

### C3.6.2

#### Report on

## Scientific Publishing in Natural History Institutions

Meeting held

June 22-23, 2009

Bratislava, Slovak Republic



*Version 13/11/09*

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme		
<b>PU</b>	Public	X
<b>PP</b>	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission	
<b>RE</b>	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission	
<b>CO</b>	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the	

## Executive summary

The Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN) and European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy (EDIT) held a meeting on scientific publishing in natural history institutions, 22-23 of June, 2009, in Bratislava<sup>1</sup>. Natural history institutions are unique in academia when it comes to publishing their own scientific titles. Among the EDIT institutions over more than 124 titles are published of which are at least 79 research journal, most of them covering taxonomy and systematics<sup>2</sup>.

On the meeting agenda were the merits and challenges of electronic publishing. In the digital era of today the field of scholarly publishing is rapidly changing. Publishing representatives in natural history institutions have to respond to new opportunities and new strategic questions concerning visibility, access, format, and financial structure of their titles. Some developments are generic for academic publishers, yet some are specific for natural history sciences. The occurrence of new technical and strategic issues and the particular questions for natural history publishers was the main reason for the scientific publishing department of the MNHN and EDIT to organise the meeting on this subject. The issues discussed were:

- WHY, HOW and WHAT do natural history institutions publish
- Open Access journals and impact on publishing strategy; improvement of discoverability of publications, possibilities to measure (online) impact; challenges for existing cost models etc.
- Online tools and publishing services to support online publishing
- Opportunities and challenges for electronic archiving
- The future of library exchange programmes
- Electronic publishing and nomenclature rules
- Not-for-profit publishing and related Intellectual Property Rights
- Launch of joint published journal in descriptive taxonomy (proposal)

The meeting aimed to:

- Discuss optimisation of dissemination and access to taxonomic journals published by EDIT institutions.
- Inform and share experiences on the different scientific publishing services, tools and strategies applied.
- Discuss how these services, tools and strategies can help further optimise scientific publishing production output.
- Discuss how NHI's can organise themselves in the future to decrease fragmentation and continue to learn from each other.
- Formulate recommendations on dissemination and access, at two levels:
  - to the publishing level in EDIT institutions (staff working on scientific publications)
  - to the EDIT Steering Committee and Board of Directors

## Conclusion and next steps

The main issues that rose in the presentations and the discussion of the meeting in Bratislava are listed below:

- International collaboration and exchange of expertise between publishing representatives in NHI is crucial. It will help to increase access and to control of (part of) the dissemination of taxonomic research.

---

<sup>1</sup> A first meeting was held December 8, 2008 in Paris (see also report EDIT, 2009)

<sup>2</sup> The full list of scientific titles published by partners of the EDIT consortium can be downloaded from [http://www.e-taxonomy.eu/files/EDIT\\_InstitutionalJournals\\_090429.xls](http://www.e-taxonomy.eu/files/EDIT_InstitutionalJournals_090429.xls)

- Not only as producers but also as consumers of taxonomic information it is in the interest of NHIs to continue to provide access to information under their own set of conditions that are favourable to the research of the field.
- Among taxonomists there is a demand for a journal dedicated to descriptive taxonomy. A joint published journal, by several EDIT institutions will send a strong political message on the importance of descriptive taxonomic research.
- A merger of existing journals would improve the visibility of taxonomic information that is now published in small journals that are not easy to discover. Yet a merger of journals will take a way from institutions one of their communication channels and it will affect the current library exchange programmes.
- In the majority of institutions the costs and benefits of the library exchange programmes are not (yet) transparent enough to make a proper cost benefit calculation on the effect of going all-electronic.
- Adopting the OA publishing model would fit the publishing mission of NHIs but will have consequences for current cost models and library exchange programmes.
- Also in the future NHIs should guarantee free access to their journals for institutions in the South. This service is (and should continue to be) one of the core missions of the NHIs in the developed world.
- Electronic archives of taxonomic literature will facilitate access and create storage space, however it is important to keep (some) hard copies of each title in circulation. A coordinating mechanism is needed to prevent duplication and guarantee access.
- Obtaining an ISI IF is important for taxonomic journals because this makes them more attractive for researchers.
- At the moment the ISI IF is the most common used impact measure. Quantifying the impact of taxonomic publications is important, but not necessarily exclusively by using the ISI IF. Also criteria like: means of dissemination; accessibility and publications speed are important indicators for researchers to help them decide where to publish their work.
- Currently the ISI IF is a journal based measure, though measuring the impact at the level of articles will become more important and publishing online offers opportunities to develop such an article-based metric<sup>3</sup>.
- Useful Web metrics exists to measure the impact of online taxonomic publications. Editors and institutions have the possibility to choose those that suite them best. These could be used next to or instead of the ISI IF. Generic Web metrics will provide insight in the impact of taxonomic information in a wide variety of fields in and outside science.
- Digital printing offers possibilities in the transitional phase moving from paper to online publications and for publications with low print-runs, but quality issues and costs benefits should be studied for each publication individually.
- There are numerous electronic tools and services available that can help journals to improve their online visibility and discoverability.

---

<sup>3</sup> See for instance the Plos One article-metric project <http://article-level-metrics.plos.org/>

## Recommendations

Based on the meeting in Bratislava the organisers would like to make the following recommendations related to access, dissemination and discoverability of taxonomic information published by NHI's.

To publishing representatives in natural history institutions

- Reinforce collaborative partnerships in order to constitute a network which can face the technological change and weight on strategic decisions to promote dissemination of scientific information in natural history sciences.
- Go online, go online, go online
- Make your journals visible and easy accessible electronically by using services that are out there and suit your publishing model (e.g. BioOne, IngentaConnect, others etc.)
- Make the content of your journals easy and sustainable citable by using DOIs
- Guarantee sustainable, long term access make sure this is covered if working with commercial publishers.
- Take measurement of content impact into your own hands by integrating a web statistics tool, or using impact services provided by BioOne, IngentaConnect or CrossRef, others.
- Communicate and involve the library in your institution's in decision making and development of publishing strategies
- Use the expertise of the network, participate in meetings, mailings list, post your questions, share your experiences.

To libraries in NHIs

- Administrate journal exchanges, track records and costs and benefits for the institution
- Support the development of a protocol "master catalogue" to coordinate access to hard copies and to avoid duplication

To EDIT directors

- Encourage and facilitate financially and politically the collaboration between publishing and library staff in your institutions.
- Encourage and facilitate financially and politically that your institutional publications go online and use the appropriate platforms and tools to increase dissemination and discoverability of the journal content.
- Encourage and facilitate financially and politically the use of a non-commercial and/or OA publishing model to be able to control, access, dissemination, and IPR that serve best the research interests of taxonomy.
- Encourage and facilitate financially and politically the implementation of Web metrics to measure the impact of taxonomic information beyond high impact journals in order to get a broader view on the impact of taxonomic data has in science and on society in general.

\*

The full report can be downloaded from the EDIT website:

[http://www.e-taxonomy.eu/files/Report\\_Scientific\\_Publishing\\_in\\_NHI\\_2009.pdf](http://www.e-taxonomy.eu/files/Report_Scientific_Publishing_in_NHI_2009.pdf)

For questions on the meeting or the meeting report, please contact the organisers:

*Laurence Bénichou* Editorial manager,  
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle  
[benichou@mnhn.fr](mailto:benichou@mnhn.fr)

*Daphne Duin*  
EDIT – Stakeholder Liaison Officer  
[duin@mnhn.fr](mailto:duin@mnhn.fr)