

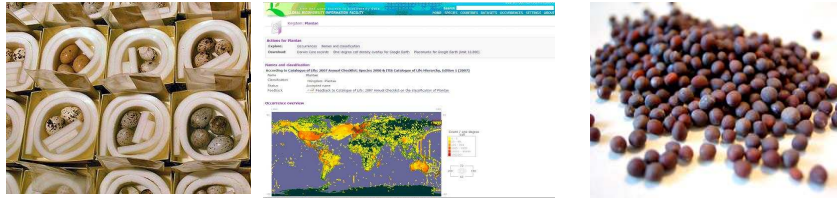
Meeting the needs of those that use scientific names

A workshop organised for professionals from outside the scientific systematic community
Organised by EDIT, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew & Natural History Museum, London

www.e-taxonomy.eu

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Hosted by Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid



Do you rely on knowing the names of biological organisms? Do you use these names to find or manage information about these organisms? Do you know how to check the names that you use are correct? Do you know their synonyms? Do you understand what practical advantages scientific names have over vernacular local names? Are you aware of the implications of using scientific names as part of your information management and of the full potential that this brings?

Do you gather information about organisms or disseminate such information to others? How do you maintain lists of names over time given that names change as new species are found and our knowledge of evolutionary relationships improves?

Systematists – the biologists ‘responsible’ for names - study the relationships between organisms, establish classifications, give names to new species and decide when two or more names refer to the same organism. Traditionally they publish information in catalogues, floras and faunas, field guides, and electronic databases which are used mostly by others with more or less understanding of systematics. The scientific names of plants and animals, however, are essential for those in professions and walks of life far beyond systematics since a name is the key means by which information about organisms is located and communicated. A recent survey of users of the Invasive Species Information Network discovered that almost all used scientific names as the primary route for discovering information. Unfortunately, when used outside of a systematic context, numerous pitfalls can be encountered and the further the users are from systematics, the greater the risk that errors are incorporated into their name lists. Thus health regulators in the US and Japan attempt to control the use of herbal remedies via lists of plants which include the same plant many times (with different names) and names which are not of plants at all. This illustrates the difficulties for those from other disciplines to access scientific names and the effort involved in managing their own lists.

The potential beneficiaries of systematics including conservation agencies, environmental assessment consultancies, agriculture, food and fishery departments, environmental studies, ecology; public health and veterinary research, and systematists are increasingly seeking means of providing the information they need. Technology offers novel and exciting opportunities for delivering these services. To meet the practical needs of these users, however, requires first that we understand those needs. This workshop aims to ask those that depend on systematics to describe the names services that they would like to see, how these would operate, their relative priorities and significance.

This workshop will bring together users of scientific names and names services to discuss:

- 1 the nature and role of scientific names and synonyms
- 2 needs and priorities for scientific names services outside of systematics
- 3 limitations of existing services
- 4 recommendations for improved or novel services

Thus if you depend on scientific names and are frustrated at how these are currently made available, if you would like to see their delivery more tailored to your needs or if you wish to discover and discuss problems in accessing or using names in a forum that can deliver the changes you need, then we need you at this workshop.

The organising entities



EDIT (European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy) is an international network of natural history organisations that aim to reduce fragmentation of taxonomic research in Europe and to coordinate the European contribution to the global taxonomic effort.

EDIT was initiated in 2006 as a “Network of Excellence” within the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission.



Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew's mission is to inspire and deliver science-based plant conservation worldwide, enhancing the quality of life. Its work is grounded in fundamental research aimed at understanding the huge variety of plants and fungi on earth.



Natural History Museum's mission is to use the knowledge gained to promote responsible interaction with the natural world. Its mission is delivered in part by the collections of over 70 million specimens that they look after, and by the generation of new knowledge through research.

Workshop moderators:

Bob Allkin,
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Chris Lyal
Natural History Museum, London

Contact details organisers:

Bob Allkin
Information Projects Manager
Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew
r.allkin@kew.org

Daphne Duin
EDIT Stakeholder Liaison Officer
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
duin@mnhn.fr

Xavier Eekhout
EDIT-WP4 Project manager
Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid
xeekhout@mncn.csic.es

Meeting Venue:

Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid
C/José Gutiérrez Abascal, 2.
28006 Madrid
Spain

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