

Census of Marine Life

Workshop on the

Ocean Biogeographical Information System (OBIS)

3-4 November 1999

Reports from the Working Groups

WORKING GROUP 3 - GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF OBIS

The working group agreed that there were a number of issues that structured the discussion:

- Mission of OBIS
- Degree of centralization
- Funding and revenue flow
- Intellectual property rights
- Data sources
- Data types
- Products
- Model systems

1. Mission of OBIS

Draft Mission Statement

The purpose of OBIS is to integrate marine biological and environmental data from a variety of sources to define the diversity, distribution, and abundance of marine organisms on a world-wide basis and to assess temporal changes in these three elements.

Initial efforts should focus on:

- digitization of existing data (including historical data)
- data from museums and fisheries organizations
- data on fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and seaweeds

Long-term goals should include using these data:

- to identify gaps and priorities for new sampling efforts
- as a baseline for detecting and predicting future changes
- to broaden taxonomic coverage and data sources (from the initial efforts)

Characteristics of OBIS:

- OBIS should be a participatory, voluntary, autonomously-managed database
- OBIS should act as a central clearinghouse that maintains the webpage, helps define data and metadata standards (with participation from data donors) and coordinates/ facilitates the exchange of information among data providers and users

2. Structure

The group agreed that OBIS should be part of the Census of Marine Life which will be a part of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).

The organizational structure will consist of:

- an OBIS Steering Committee supported by
- an OBIS Secretariat, or Program Office, that manages the information system and provides networking and outreach to potential participants.

The SC and Secretariat are supported by advisory bodies that will provide recommendations on and from:

- data quality control
- informatics (system design and function)
- funding
- regional representation
- data providers (or donors)
- end users

3. Funding:

Funding depends on Costs - what needs to be done?

Potential Costs of the system:

- digitizing recent and historical data
- quality control (cleaning up the data)
- accessing data
- coordination
- software, hardware development
- capability-building for less-developed countries
- "networking" (extending and building partnerships, public relations, publications)
- Secretariat (management, evaluation, physical plant - personnel, salaries, etc.)
- a needs assessment
- education, outreach to the public (not clear to the group how much of this would/should be done)

Sources of funding:

- For Startup
- Private foundations
- Governmental, intergovernmental agencies
- Private sector, corporations, etc.

There is a strong need to develop a BUSINESS PLAN

- For other (operating) costs
- User fees, sale of products (i.e. CD-ROMs)
- Internet sponsors, advertisers (low webpage-user fees?)
- In-kind contributions (digitizing, expertise)
- Institutional/ country memberships, dues, subscriptions
- Public memberships? (depends on the role of education, outreach)

4. Incentives to Participate

- NEED EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS STRATEGY
- credit - contributors must be visible
- multiplies fame/ visibility/ use
- access to direct and especially indirect funding sources (some funders may require OBIS for projects)
- repatriation of data (to countries from which data was collected originally)
- prestige - early involvement of most prestigious institutions with the biggest data sets
- ability to access several data sets more easily than going to multiple institutions; get additional correlated data (physical data coincident with biological)