2004 LTER Information Managers Meeting

July 28-31, 2004 in Portland, Oregon

"Enabling the LTER Decade of <Synthesis/>"

Meeting Overview

The annual IM meeting was held July 28-31, 2004 in Portland, Oregon and was attended by representatives from 23 of the 26 sites, members of the IT group from the LTER Network Office, and IT partners (link to participant list). The meeting agenda included presentations from recent projects (items 1-2 below), working group discussions (3-8), appointment of a new DataBits editor (9), and election of new IMExec members (10). Special emphasis was given in the meeting to the product-oriented working groups.

1. EML Best Practices. A working group assembled last spring met at LNO on May 19-20, 2004 to formulate best practice recommendations for EML implementation across the LTER Network. Goals included providing guidance to sites in their initial implementation of EML, identifying subsets of EML to correspond to the various levels of the tiered trajectory formulated by NISAC, and maximizing the interoperability of LTER EML documents to facilitate synthesis and tool development. A draft document with specific EML examples was presented at the annual IM meeting. The document will be distributed to the IM Committee for comment in Sep 04 and subsequently posted on the LTER Intranet web page (contact: Wade Sheldon GCE).

2. EML Harvester. The EML Harvester recently completed by Duane Costa LNO is designed to periodically retrieve EML documents from LTER sites for automatic inclusion in the LNO Metacat (Metacat is a network-accessible metadata database system developed by NCEAS). Four LTER sites are currently using the Harvester, and it is expected that other sites will participate in the near future. In addition to supporting centralized searches for LTER datasets, the new system will enable LTER sites to leverage new EML-based tools under development by NCEAS, SEEK, and LNO to access and analyze data distributed across the network (contact: Duane Costa LNO).

3. Metacat Query Interface. This working group (four sessions at the annual meeting) initiated design of a query interface for EML-based catalogs such as the LNO Metacat described above (3). The goal was to create a system that would support queries useful to ecologists and would provide some measure of standardization and interoperability among distributed information resources. A set of design specifications and a general prototype interface were created. Specific plans were also developed for review of the interface by LTER researchers, design completion, implementation on the LNO Metacat, and posting of the generic code for use by the community (contact: Peter McCartney CAP).

4. Site IM Evaluation Criteria. This working group (four sessions) drafted a document containing recommended criteria for the evaluation of information management at LTER sites. The document is intended to be used as a reference in formal reviews by NSF as well as in informal self-assessments by LTER sites. The proposed criteria focus on functionality in specified key areas and include metrics for evaluation. The current plan is that the draft will be completed by the working group and the IM Committee this fall, reviewed by the NISAC Committee next winter, presented to the CC meeting next spring, and then in its final form presented to NSF (contact: Emery Boose HFR).

5. LNO Support for EML. This working group (one session) discussed the needs of individual LTER sites for LNO assistance in implementing EML. A survey was created and distributed to assess these needs. Results of the survey and feedback from LNO will be passed on to the NISAC Committee (which sets priorities for the NIS development team at LNO) early this fall (contact: Ken Ramsey JRN).

6. LNO Web Development Tools. This working group (one session) discussed current web tools and projects at LNO, as well as ideas and needs for the future. Demos of SiteDB and the IM Mentoring web page were discussed. SiteDB is scheduled for release early this fall and sites should update their data by the end of August (a demo version is available on the LTER Intranet). LNO will work with members of the IM Committee to complete the IM Mentoring web page later this year (contact: Marshall White LNO).

7. Designing LTER Web Sites. This working group (one session) discussed the diversity in content and structure currently found across LTER web pages, and the various problems that may result from that diversity (e.g., difficulty locating information, lack of network identity). At the same time the LTER Network web page (http://lternet.edu) provides a single portal to the Network, while SiteDB will provide a unified interface for outside users (see 6) and the Metacat Query Interface will provide a unified access point for data (see 3). Future action items of this group may include development of general guidelines for site web pages, creation of a controlled vocabulary for dataset keywords, and a workshop on web design techniques (contact: Karen Baker PAL).

8. Partnership & Outreach Planning. This working group (one session) discussed future LTER IM outreach and partnership activities, including an eco-informatics symposium at the 2005 ESA meeting and an information management volume in the LTER Oxford series. Preliminary chapters for the volume were identified (contact: James Brunt LNO).

9. Databits. The LTER Information Managers newsletter is available online at http://lternet.edu/databits. The newsletter is designed to engage the LTER IM community with a rotating editorship and authorship. Jonathan Walsh BES is editor for the fall issue. Eda Melendez-Colon LUQ is co-editor and will become editor for the spring 05 issue.

10. IMExec Committee. Regular members for the coming year include: Emery Boose HFR, Nicole Kaplan SGS, Linda Powell FCE, Ken Ramsey JRN, Wade Sheldon GCE, and Jonathan Walsh BES. Ex officio members include: Barbara Benson NTL (IM chair), James Brunt LNO, Don Henshaw AND (NISAC chair), and Peter McCartney CAP (LTER Exec).

21-Sep-2004   *Web design by Wade Sheldon, Georgia Coastal Ecosystems LTER*   webmaster