

LTER Information Managers Report to the Coordinating Committee

Prepared by IMEXEC

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1. IM Meeting. The annual LTER Information Managers meeting was held on July 11-13, 2002 in Orlando, Florida. The meeting included invited talks by Henry Gholz (NSF), Tony Fountain (SDSC), and Judy Cushing (Evergreen College), as well as conference calls to Henry Gholz and Bill Michener (NET). A planning committee was assembled for the next All-Scientists Meeting. Other results are outlined below. The IM Executive Committee (IMEXEC) met on July 14.

2. SCI2002 Meeting. Many IMs also attended an international computer science conference (SCI2002) in Orlando on July 15-18, with partial support from the Network Office. J. Porter and S. Stafford delivered the first plenary talk (*The ecoinformatics challenge: meeting ecological information needs for the site, network and community*) to an audience of more than 1000 conferees. Two LTER sessions, chaired by K. Baker and J. Porter, included 12 peer-reviewed papers published in the conference proceedings and available on the LTER Intranet:

http://intranet.lternet.edu/committees/information_management/sci_2002

Three of these presentations received "Best Paper" awards.

3. NIS. At the IM Meeting there was considerable discussion of the future role of the NIS (Network Information System). The IMs welcome PI involvement in the design of the NIS, strongly support the formation of an NIS Advisory Group, and will forward recommendations on the structure and function of this group to the LTER Executive Committee. The current NIS working group will assemble a draft vision statement as a working document for the NIS Advisory Group to finalize after the fall CC meeting. There was agreement that current NIS modules should be completed before new modules are started and that the NIS should be built to emerging community standards (such as EML, web services, and integration of spatial data). There was also acknowledgment that the NIS cannot achieve its intended purpose until there is full participation by all LTER sites. A survey of current site participation was completed for the IM Meeting, and will be maintained in the future as a dynamic web page on the LTER Intranet. There was discussion of obstacles to site participation and as well as possible solutions, including automatic e-mail reminders and mandatory reporting on site participation in annual LTER reports to NSF.

4. ClimDB. At the IM Meeting the following goals were set for the coming year: (1) all sites should submit at least level 1 & level 2 data for their primary meteorological station for all years of record, and (2) all sites should submit appropriate metadata for their site. Over the next year, the user interface for ClimDB and HydroDB will be redesigned under the direction of D. Henshaw, with support from an LTER Supplement to the Andrews LTER. At the same time, a collaborative project between LTER and SDSC will prototype a web services implementation of ClimDB that may serve as a model for future NIS modules.

5. EML. Workshops were held in January and June 2002 at the CAP LTER to help sites migrate their scientific metadata to EML (Ecological Metadata Language). Organized by P. McCartney and funded by the Network Office, the two workshops were well attended by LTER Information Managers. The next step (this fall) will be a series of visits to individual sites by experts from NET and ASU to help address site-specific problems. The goal for the coming year is for each site to produce EML metadata that can be searched over the network. At the IM Meeting there was discussion of various software tools that will build on the EML foundation, including tools for data entry and automated quality control, data discovery and display, aggregation of heterogeneous data sets, and conversion to other metadata standards. Once developed, these tools will be usable at all LTER sites.

6. IM Mentoring Web Page. At the IM Meeting there was also discussion of the IM Mentoring Web Page currently under development for the LTER Intranet. The web page will help train new Information Managers as well as provide useful resources for experienced IMs. Topics will include frequently asked questions (FAQs), management of time and responsibilities, communication with PIs, proposal preparation, software expertise at individual sites, and software tools developed by IMs, as well as links to other useful web pages. In particular a document is under preparation to help guide reviewers in the assessment of information management during LTER site visits and proposal reviews.