

Stafford

PROPOSAL FOR DATA MANAGEMENT COMPONENT IN LTER COORDINATING COMMITTEE RENEWAL

We request funds to:

- * Reinstate the Annual Data Managers meeting in conjunction with the ESA meetings each year
- * Promote the visibility and scientific profile of data managers by sponsoring an annual contributed paper session at the ESA meetings (See Call for Papers attached.) Produce a Symposium Volume if appropriate (based on the quality of papers) patterned after the style of the Baruch Volume on Research Data Management in the Ecological Sciences.
- * Hire a facilitating data manager person to coordinate information-sharing and intersite data communication/networking.

BACKGROUND:

The LTER Data Managers are making this request for three reasons. The turn-over per site is high - how many sites have the same Data Manager as three years ago? Not many. Second, as additional sites join the LTER network and it is imperative that all the data managers talk to one another. By sharing our collective experiences and discussing ideas we can prevent "re-inventing the wheel" at each site. We seek to capture the experience of the older sites and the ideas of the newer sites. And finally, with computer technology changing so rapidly, it is important to provide an annual forum for data managers.

Our common goals are to facilitate intersite communication among data managers and to encourage the collaborative sharing of data. When the idea was first broached to hire a Data Management person through the LTER/CC grant in Jerry Franklin's 7/12/87 memo the reaction of the data managers I surveyed was lukewarm. It is clear that better intersite communication among data managers is critical for reasons mentioned above. But, if this person saw his/her role as an authority figure dictating how individual sites should go about their business that would not be well received among the sites. Data managers said that do not want a person coming in and and telling them, "What you are doing is wrong, you've got to change." On the other hand, if this person was to serve as a facilitator and resource person, travelling among sites answering questions and sharing information that would be very useful and beneficial. To date, the LTER data management effort has been successfully built on the premise that top-down requirements for standardization are incorrect. Rather, there should be agreement on research data management principles rather than on the details of implementation. Individual computing environments and resources are too diverse to enforce 100% standardization.

However, the new sites ARE looking for direction from the older, experienced sites in terms of data management. So there is a

pressing and immediate need for pooling ideas and strategies which will only increase as additional sites are added to the network. In the early days of LTER we learned much from one another. In fact, we learned just as much of what NOT to do as what to do by talking among ourselves at our annual Data Managers meetings. I am confident we can serve this same purpose and meet the same need with the newer sites.

The Facilitating Data Management person would be the Editor of a Data Manager's Monthly/Quarterly Newsletter and be responsible for getting the articles from each site and putting it together. One of the first articles would be an updated geographical map of LTER sites with a list of data managers' names, addresses, phone numbers, computing equipment (HW and SW), and EMAIL (CSNET and BITNET) addresses. To assist this facilitating person, we suggest forming an advisory committee composed of three data managers - 2 from older sites and 1 from a new site - combining the experience of the older sites with the fresh ideas of the newer sites to inform and educate the new Data Management person.

We propose to tie the Annual Data Managers Meeting with the Annual ESA meetings to increase the visibility and scientific profile of the LTER data managers as a group. Towards this end we propose to sponsor an annual contributed paper session on a relevant topic at the ESA meetings. This would give national exposure to LTER Data Managers. The topics would focus on the interface between statistics, ecology, and data management. The Call for Papers for the 1988 ESA Meeting is attached and serves as a prototype. If there were significant interest and quality of papers submitted, then we would follow with a Symposium volume patterned after the 1986 Baruch Volume from the the South Carolina Research Data Management Symposium. (Publication costs would be requested separately as necessary.)

A proposed topic for the '89 ESA meeting would be: GIS for Ecologists/ Innovative Approaches in Landscape Ecology. For '90, suggested topics include: Remote Sensing Data and Time Series Data / IGBP: Implications for Data Management.

In conjunction with the more formal Contributed Paper Session, there would be the LTER Data Managers' Annual Meeting held the weekend (Saturday evening through Sunday) prior to the ESA meetings. See the attached Michener proposal.

BUDGET

We request money to send 1 data manager per site and up to 4 Topic Experts/Symposium Coordinators to the ESA meetings each year for the next three years.

Cost: \$20,000 per year

Total: \$60,000

We request money to hire one facilitating data management person for the next three years.

Cost: \$ 25-30K per year

Total: \$75-90,000