

Annual Report
IAVS Working Group for Ecoinformatics
August 2008

Susan Wiser, Nick Spenser, and Bob Peet have organized on behalf of the IAVS Ecoinformatics Working Group an initiative to establish an international exchange standard for vegetation plot data. The initial meeting was held 24-27 April, 2007 at the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center in Durham, NC, USA. A broadly international team of approximately 14 persons was invited. The IAVS Working Group was represented by Robert Peet, Susan Wiser, Stephan Hennekens, Martin Kleikamp, and Miquel Cáceras. Details are available at <http://cvs.bio.unc.edu/iavs-ecoinfo/nescent2007.htm>. After the meeting Martin Kleikamp and Miquel Cáceras developed draft XML schemas and these were shared with a core group that also included Jerry Cooper, Michael Lee, Matt Jones, Robert Peet, Nick Spenser, and Susan Wiser. A follow-up meeting to further develop the emerging consensus schema was held June 23-26 2008, again at NESCent with Martin, Miquel, Nick and Bob participating. Subsequently draft versions of the proposed schema have been circulated. Nick Spenser intends to present this project to TDWG (the Biodiversity Information Standards organization) at its meeting in Perth in October 2008. The intent will be to make this activity an official TDWG Interest Group, closely aligned with the Observations Group, so that the standards developed will have more broad-based, international acceptance and compatibility. We hope the resultant exchange standard will be endorsed and adopted by both TDWG and IAVS, and will facilitate the rapid development of vegetation plot data sharing internationally.

North American plant ecology has been lagging significantly behind European plant ecology in the compilation of plant traits. Last year Robert Peet endorsed on behalf of the Ecoinformatics Working group a research coordination network proposal to the US NSF specifically to develop a trait database for North American plant taxa. The proposal has been funded and the first formal meeting was held at Columbia University in New York City in December 2007. IAVS members participating in TraitNet include Scott Collins, Sandra Diaz, Ingolf Kuehn, and Robert Peet.

A new working group has been established at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis in Santa Barbara, California to work on a project titled "Developing an integrated botanical information network to investigate the ecological impacts of global climate change on plant biodiversity. This group, led by Brian Enquist and codirected by Rich Condit, Robert Peet, and Brad Boyle seeks to build on the progress made in merging large plot databases and plant occurrence databases represented by projects like VegBank, Salvias, and the CTFS tropical plot network.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert K. Peet