

First IABIN Council Meeting Project Summary
Advanced Training in Technology for Linking Biodiversity Databases:
Species Analyst Project

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Thanks to World Bank funding, and with help from the University of Kansas, the following activities have taken place. A description of required and preferred qualifications for participants was developed and circulated to all IABIN focal points, as well as to as wide a variety of contacts across Latin America as possible. Given the high level of qualifications required, the pool of applicants was limited (12 complete applications); however, of this pool, we found many qualified applications. Although our original intent was to accept five trainees, seven applicants were highly qualified, and we decided to accept all of them. Institutionally and nationally, the distribution of these applicants was as follows: Fundacion Miguel Lillo, Tucuman, Argentina; Fundação André Tosello, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil; Instituto Humboldt, Colombia; INBio, Costa Rica; Division de Biodiversidad, Tegucigalpa, Honduras; and CONABIO, Mexico. Two individuals were accepted from the latter institution.

Trainees and their institutions were sent letters of invitation to attend a course during 1-13 November 1999, and all accepted. Participants arrived on 31 October, and were housed in a Bed & Breakfast close to the KU campus. The training course began the following morning, with an opening by Dr. Leonard W. Krishtalka, Director of the Museum, a U.S. IABIN overview by Barbara Bauldock, and overviews of course content by Dr. A. Townsend Peterson and Mr. Robert C. Anderson. The bulk of the course was given by Dr. David A. Vieglais, developer of The Species Analyst. Course content included:

1. The nature and characteristics of biodiversity and biodiversity information.
2. Other types of information relevant to biodiversity studies (e.g., remotely sensed data).
3. Inferring ecological niches and predicting geographic distributions based on point occurrence data.
4. Connecting biodiversity data sources to The Species Analyst using Z39.50 technology.
5. Building applications for improving functionality of the distributed network.

Participants were provided with individual Pentium laptop computers (rented locally), a set of text and reference books, and extensive software resources; copies of printed materials were provided also to unsuccessful applicants. Social gatherings included a reception at the Peterson home, a closing dinner at a local restaurant, and a field trip to the Konza Prairie LTER site.

Training was intensive, but participants expressed satisfaction at the result of the training, several commenting that they would use several sectors of their training in coming months in their regular institutional work. Several will continue in development activities related to course content in coming months.