Using the Taxonomic Backbone(s): The challenge of selecting a taxonomic resource and integrating it with a collection management solution

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Abstract

The reality is that there is no single “taxonomic backbone”, there are many: the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Backbone Taxonomy, the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and MolluscaBase, to name a few. We could view each one of these as a vertebra on the taxonomic backbone, but even that isn’t quite correct as some of these are nested within others (MolluscaBase contributes to WoRMS, which contributes to Catalogue of Life, which contributes to the GBIF Backbone Taxonomy). How is a collection manager without expertise in a given set of taxa and a limited amount of time devoted to finding the “most current” taxonomy supposed to maintain research grade identifications when there are so many seemingly authoritative taxonomic resources? And once a resource is chosen, how can they seamlessly use the information in that resource? This presentation will document how the Arctos community’s use of the taxon name matching service Global Names Architecture (GNA) led one volunteer team leader in a marine invertebrate collection to attempt to make use of WoRMS taxonomy and how her persistence brought better identifications and classifications to a community of collections. It will also provide insight into some of the technical and curatorial challenges involved in using an outside resource as well as the ongoing struggle to keep up with changes as they occur in the curated resource.

Keywords

API, museum collection, digitization, collection management, extended specimen, linked data

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