Compositae Working Group

GLOBAL COMPOSITAE DATABASE

Empowering the synantherologists of tomorrow

LifeWatch editor workshop October 2019
Ostend - Belgium

Compositae Working Group

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LifeWatch editor workshop report

M. Bonifacino

Participants of Compositae workshop

Attendees

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Instructors and facilitators

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Global Compositae Database

Introduction

The Compositae, with an estimated total of 25,000–34,000 species, is most likely the largest vascular plant family on the planet and is divided in ca. 50 recognized tribes. The objective of putting together the Global Compositae Database is to produce an authoritative site where curated information for all the names ever associated with all the taxa currently recognized in the family could be obtained.

The workshop was conducted in Ostend, Belgium, at VLIZ Marine Institue from October 28th till October 31st. It was attended by eight members of The International Compositae Alliance (TICA), representing Brazil, China, Spain, the United States, and Uruguay. The main objectives of the workshop were 1) to get participants to know from a first-hand basis the UI of WORMS database and how to interact with it, 2)to discuss how to organize the task of completing the database, 3) to come up with a series of realistic milestones to monitor the project progress, and 4) to discuss about future ideas to further develope compositae.org

Objective 1. WORMS 101: getting acquainted with the UI

Through a series of quick live demonstrations, the VLIZ team introduced the main elements of the WORMS database UI. After a series of exercises, participants soon were able to perform basic tasks. Participants also realized that the well thought UI was very intuitive and made almost every task easy to accomplish. Through repetitive practice, several issues arose in terms of the suitability of a database designed mainly for marine animal taxa to a group made of land plants. VLIZ team was very patient attending requests of changes or adaptations and accomplished several of those on-site while the workshop was occurring (e.g., way to cite infraspecific or infrageneric taxa)

Objective 2. Global Compositae Database: how to get there

Given the sheer size of the family, the monumental task of curating an estimated total of almost 170000 names demands at least two key elements to get to the final line and remain sane along the way: 1) broad participation and 2) tight coordination. During the workshop, it was determined that a list of coordinators, each of them familiarized with a particular tribe within the Compositae would coordinate the efforts of researchers worldwide to curate the data. Following along these lines, an ever-growing list of editors, a worldwide coalition of like-minded individuals, through the aggregation of small efforts will, with time, complete the final objective. The task of coordinators would be to contact potential editors for that particular tribe and funnel the work through them. During the workshop, a first list of coordinators was produced; from this list, several were contacted and have agreed to join in the project.

The important point is that coordinators are not the last nor first authority on any given group. Coordinators are just facilitators of the task of completing this difficult endeavor. Another critical point is the citation. It was agreed that all editors are equal and that an alphabetical list of editors by the last name will serve as a full citation. At the same time, the preferred one would be the use of Compositae Working Group denomination for the fluid list of editors contributing to the project. A DOI to reference the resource will be implemented.

Objective 3. Milestones: Setting up a calendar: the what and when

A series of short term milestones were agreed upon to monitor the advancement of the project. A comprehensive list of ca. 170000 names are currently on the database. The final objective is to have that list sorted out, so it constitutes state of the art and most authoritative reference in Compositae taxonomy and nomenclature.

Milestone 1. Taking the site on-line: cleaning the orphan taxa: putting unassigned genera on a general bag
February 10th, 2020

Milestone 2. Write a divulgation article for TAXON journal to be published on the first issue of 2020 where the project will be announced, and a general call to participate is issued.

Milestone 3. Buil a landing page for Compositae.org. The landing page should be about the family characteristics. Transfer current content to "About us" page.
February 10th 2020

Milestone 4. Short term projects goal (first year)
December 2020

i. Accepted subfamily names checked
ii. Accepted Tribes names checked
iii. Accepted Subtribes names checked
iv. Accepted Genera names checked
v. 25 %Accepted species names checked

Milestone 5. Organize a meeting in 2020 (ad hoc or associated with another meeting) to discuss progress and plan future work and write an article on what was accomplished by December 2020
July 2020 (associated with ASPT meeting)

Objective 4. Future work: to infinity and beyond

The last activity carried out during the workshop was a discussion of what future developments the Compositae Working Group should commit to. While broader participation is needed to sense the will of the community better, workshop participants agreed on the need to include type information. Participants also agreed that a link to protologues in BHL when available should also be desirable. Well curated images depicting species would also be of interest. Special attention was devoted to the standardization of terminology and the need to compile all available electronic keys.

While the workshop was taking place, an impromptu virtual meeting with the World Flora Online (WFO) project was conducted. The WFO project expressed their interest in using the CWG and their GCD as the Taxonomic Expert Network for the Compositae. While some details still need to be worked out for the CWG to commit to the WFO project formally, this collaboration has the potential of becoming one major contribution of the GCD effort and an excellent selling point for attracting more editors.

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