The Paleo Data Working Group:
A model for developing and sustaining a community of practice

TDWG 2021

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2013
iDigBio Paleo
Digitization Working
Group forms

2014-2017
iDigBio Paleo
Digitization Working
Group hosts average
of 5 webinars/year

2020
"Georeferencing for
Paleo" workshop

2010
US National Science
Foundation begins
funding program for
digitizing collections

2019
biodiversity_next
conference

2020
Paleo Data Working
Group forms

Identifying as a community of practice

"Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger 1998)

domain

+

community

+

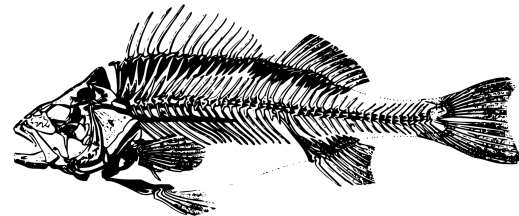**practice**

requests for information

problem solving

reusing assets

coordination and synergy

Mapping knowledge and identifying gaps

Wenger E (1998) Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. Systems Thinker 9(5): 2-3.
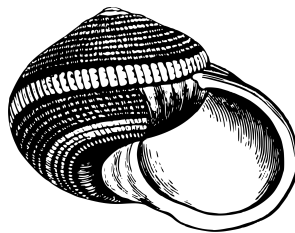
A community relies on individual people

Our domain is at the intersection of disciplines

informatics

digitization

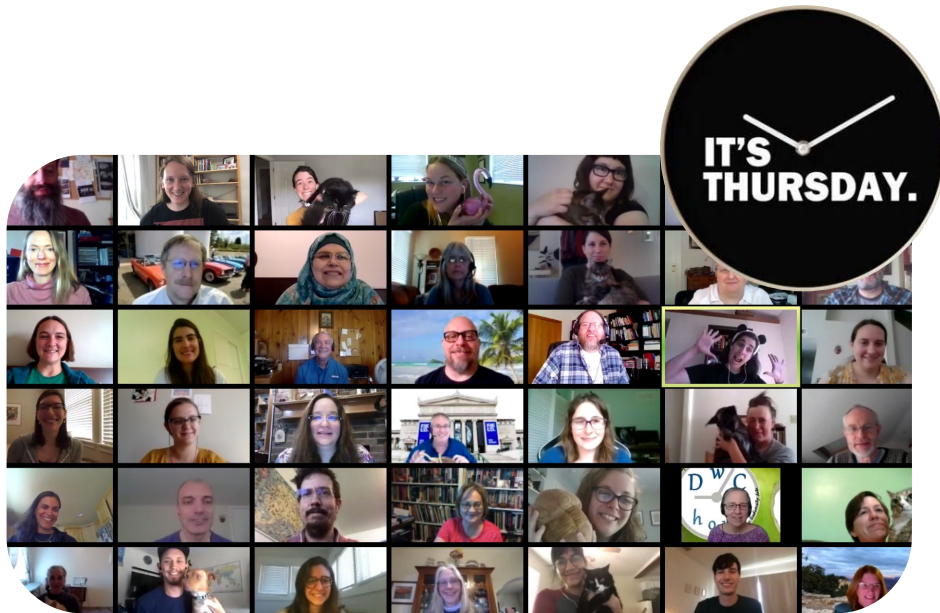RESEARCH

Physical collection curation

Individuals operating as a community of practice

Consistent connectivity

- Biweekly "Happy Hour" meetings
- Slack

Shared resources

- Google Drive
- Wiki (https://bit.ly/paleo-digi)

"Happy Hour" discussion topics

Past

Paleo-specific
Stratigraphy
Preparations
Anatomy
Counting
Casts
Trace Fossils

Interdisciplinary
Bionomia
Wikidata
Paleobiology Database
PBOT [Paleobotany]
GloBI [Biotic Interactions]

General
Taxonomy
Georeferencing
Locality data
Sensitive localities
Citations
Identifiers
Data cleaning
Digital assets
Copyright
Collection Descriptions

Conference recaps
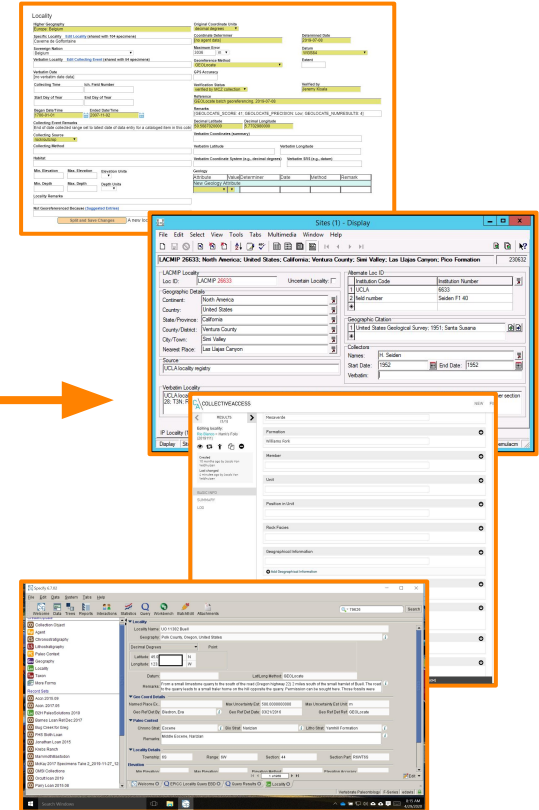
Open discussion

Future

Continuing
Taxonomy
Preparations
Citations
Locality data

New
3D digital assets
dwc:materialSample
Permits & regulations
Sharing locality data

Sharing the burden of staying professionally up-to-date

- Take advantage of individual group members' expertise

- Invite external speakers on topics where no group members have expertise

- Make new content relevant by assigning "homework"

- Divide and conquer when necessary to keep up with emerging work

Images: Paleo Data Working Group member database screenshots

Conversations lead to action & implementation

February 2021 Happy Hour with David Shorthouse

- All group members learned about people identifiers

- Many group members got an ORCID ID for the first time

- Some group members added fields in their CMS to capture people identifiers

- Some group members added existing identifiers to people records in their CMS

- Some group members encouraged living researchers & collectors associated with their collections to get ORCID IDs
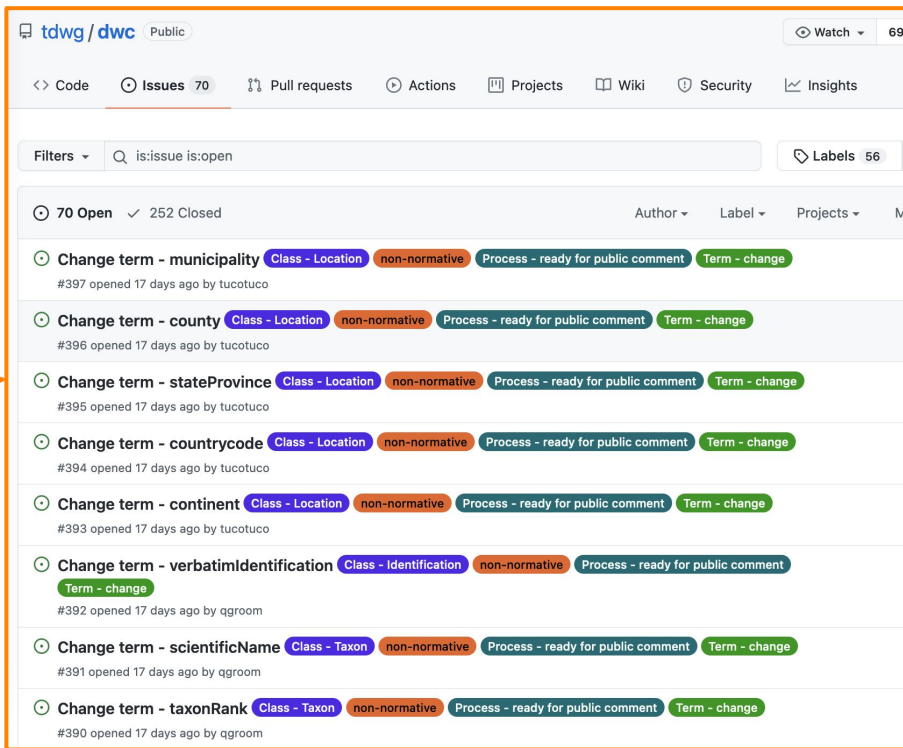
Conversations lead to action & implementation

At the **local** (i.e., collection) level

At the **institutional** level

At the **data aggregator** level (i.e., aligned across paleo collections)

At the **standards** level

Images: https://github.com/tdwg/dwc/issues

Connecting to other communities

TDWG Earth Sciences & Paleobiology Interest Group

institutions

Paleo Data Working Group

wikidata

TDWG Collections Description Task Group

Strategies for success

- Informality keeps the social barrier to entry low

- Maintain consistent connectivity

  - Set a standard schedule (biweekly zoom)

  - Offer multiple ways and times to interact

- Curate shared resources

- Connect new knowledge to actionable examples

- Stay organized - logistical support doesn't magically appear when you need it!

Strategies for sustaining

What's next for us?

Extending our community of practice

- presentations and networking at conferences

Actively participating in evolution of standards

- FAIR data: buy-in from data providers
- CARE data: embrace participation from a broad spectrum of perspectives

Thank you from the Paleo Data Working Group!

See our other talk in session CO02, tomorrow:
Improving the adoption and evolution of data standards for fossil specimens