

The Northeast node working group assembled June 2, 2008, at the University of Massachusetts to continue discussions about getting specimen data digitized so that it can be made available online to the larger community of researchers. The main focus of the meeting was adopting a formal structure and name for the organization.

Karen Searcy of the University of Massachusetts, who organized the meeting, welcomed the group to the UMass campus, and those in attendance introduced themselves (see list below).

James Macklin of Harvard led a brief discussion of the group's prior activities and of efforts to organize nodes elsewhere in the United States, including TORCH (the Oklahoma-Texas consortium), SERNEC (the Southeast node), and the California Consortium. Macklin and Mike Donoghue of Yale also discussed funding opportunities for organizing meetings as well as underwriting databasing activities, such as those offered by the Mellon Foundation and the NSF's Research Coordination Network program. It was generally agreed that the Northeast network could move itself forward a little more aggressively, establishing a web presence and investigating funding opportunities. It was also agreed that an organization structure would facilitate the node's efforts.

The group discussed various organizational structures that it could adopt and agreed that for the time being we would create an interim steering committee with an interim chairman. We discussed various possibilities for the term of service of the chair and steering committee members but left the matter unresolved for the present. It was understood that, while the organizational structure is likely to persist, the membership of the steering committee will change over time and that more formal bylaws will be needed at some point.

We discussed the importance of making the steering committee representative of the region's herbaria by including members from small as well as large institutions and including members from states and provinces throughout the area to be served by the Northeast node, which extends from New Jersey and Pennsylvania north through New England to the eastern provinces of Canada. It was agreed that setting a date and location for the next node meeting ASAP was essential to ensuring maximum regional participation at the next meeting.

Janet Sullivan and Chris Neefus, two representatives from the University of New Hampshire, agreed to organize the next annual meeting of the Northeast node on their campus in the spring or early summer of 2009. This meeting will be two days in length. The group will seek external funding to support the meeting. A meeting of the steering committee was scheduled tentatively for November and is possibly to be held at Yale University.

Membership in the steering committee will include individuals focusing on particular tasks as well as those with special expertise. The initial members of the committee and the areas on which they will work are: Patrick Sweeney, Yale, chairman; Jennifer Doubt of the Canadian Museum of Nature, Canadian membership; Alina Freire-Fierro of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural History, membership; Kathie Hodge of Cornell, web design; James Macklin, Harvard,

bioinformatics and national efforts; Chris Neefus and Janet Sullivan, UNH, conveners for the next annual meeting; Karen Searcy, UMass, membership; Julie Dragon, University of Vermont and McGill University, membership; Bob Capers, University of Connecticut, recording secretary.

There was much discussion about the importance of smaller herbaria because they hold specimens that are not duplicated elsewhere and may have more recent collections than larger herbaria. These herbaria also have fewer resources in many cases and may not be able to database, image or place data online without support from outside organizations. In the first meeting of the node in 2004 it was agreed that it would be useful to demonstrate the value of assembling the collective information represented by our separate herbaria, and members had agreed to collect information on specimens of *Celastrus scandens*, *C. orbiculatus* and *Epipactis helleborine*. Little resulted from this initial effort, so members of the current meeting agreed to revive it. Macklin offered to approach Dave Bufford about obtaining the data that were generated during the first effort, and participants who did not contribute to the initial effort agreed to provide their data.

The group discussed membership in the node, and it was suggested that all officially recognized herbaria would be potential members but that small teaching collections also should be included. However, exact criteria for membership were not established.

Following lunch, the group toured the UMass greenhouses, paying particular attention to specimens of *Amborella* and *Welwitschia*, and the UMass herbarium.

After the tours, James discussed various efforts taking place at the national level. It was agreed that Patrick and/or Sullivan would attend the WDC012 meetings and workshops; the WDC012 project is intended to coordinate and assist in the creation of regional herbaria networks.

During the afternoon, the group discussed possible names for the node, the attendant acronyms and the writing of a mission statement and goals. Suggested names (and acronyms) included: Northeastern Herbarium Network (NHN, NEHN), Northeastern Network of Herbaria (NNH, NNOH), Northeastern Consortium of Herbaria (NCH, NECH, NCOH, NECOH), Northeastern Herbarium Consortium (NHC, NEHC), Northeastern North American Herbarium Consortium (NNAHC, NENAHC), Northeastern North American Consortium of Herbaria (NNACH, NENACH), Northeastern America Consortium of Herbaria (NACH, NEACH), Consortium of Eastern North American Herbaria (CENAH, COENAH), Consortium of Northeastern Herbaria (CONH, CONEH), Eastern North American Consortium of Herbaria (ENACH, ENACOH). Much discussion ensued on the respective strengths of “consortium” vs. “network” and on the need to have a name that would be found inclusive by herbaria in eastern Canada. Sweeney suggested that a Google group be created and that further discussion on the best name be continued there. He also read the mission statement and goals adopted by other

nodes and suggested the wording of a possible mission statement for the Northeast network. This was much discussed and refined by members of the group. One version of the mission statement follows: “The Northeast Herbarium Consortium [or some other name] serves as a communication and organizational structure that unites herbaria in northeastern North America with the primary goal of providing online access to specimen data housed in member institutions, with an emphasis on regional collections.” Group members agreed to continue discussing the mission statement and goals via the Google group and to reach a consensus within the next couple of weeks.

Later in the afternoon, Macklin demonstrated the Specify Workbench program, which works on data output from a Specify database or generated elsewhere and being imported to the Specify database. The workbench offers data-organizing, mapping and image-display capabilities.

The steering committee working groups agreed to work towards the following immediate goals:

Membership Group – Macklin has communicated with Pat Holmgren and obtained an updated list of herbaria in the Northeast. 1) The group will get this list from Macklin and work on verifying and updating it. Active recruitment of herbaria not on the list will be pursued later, after criteria for membership are established.

Meeting Group – 1) set date for meeting, 2) at the Botany meetings, talk with representatives of potential funding sources about obtaining money for the spring/summer meeting at UNH. Macklin and Sweeney will assist Sullivan in this effort.

Web Group – 1) build a site ASAP. Sweeney will work closely with Kathie Hodge to create a draft version of the site for members to evaluate.

Bioinformatics Group – 1) assist in reviving the pilot project (the *Celastrus & Epipactis* effort), 2) assist member institutions in preparing data to be served to broader community, 3) possibly set up data server.

Those attending the meeting were:

Steve Brewer, UMass

Robert Capers, UConn

Michael Donoghue, Yale

George Drake, UMass

Jennifer Doubt, Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa

Julie Dragon, University of Vermont and McGill University

Alina Friere-Fierro, Academy of Natural History, Philadelphia

Paul Harwood, Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Kathie T. Hodge, Cornell

Chris Hoogendyk, UMass

Roberta Lombardi, UMass

James Macklin, Harvard

Chris Neefus, UNH

Pam Polloni, Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
Library.

Karen Searcy, UMass

Janet Sullivan, UNH

Patrick Sweeney, Yale