

Training in Records Management ISIS ARKS ZIMS



Records Management training included the International Species Information System and its current software ARKS, or Animal Record Keeping System and the software in progress, Zoological Information Management System or ZIMS.

Karin Schwartz, a regular trainer for the American Zoo Association's ARKS training and Registrar of the Milwaukee Zoo was primary trainer. Karin is also Registrar Advisor to Tapir and Monotreme/Marsupial TAGs, and the Tree Kangaroo and Cheetah SSPs. She is a member of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and has participated in several CBSG Working Groups which were held in or initiated from Asia, e.g. the Conservation Breeding Guidelines Working Group in Taipei, Taiwan in October 2004 and the Substandard Zoos Working Group in Syracuse, New York CBSG meeting last October 2005.

Karin opened her presentation with some personal remarks and then launched into lovely slides of "wild places" where she had visited making the point that in zoos we want to do our share protect the wild places and preserve the wild populations, and can learn from the animals we have in our care worldwide. Quoting the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums Conservation Strategy Visitor "The major goal of zoos and aquariums will be to integrate all aspects of their work with conservation activities. The fundamental elements of each organization's culture will be the values of sustainability and conservation, and social and environmental responsibility", she explained the importance of animal records within institution, to understand the behavior of the animal, track measurements, training experience, medical problems, development, in improving their care, make husbandry and medical decisions, in complying with government regulations that monitor endangered species, marine mammals, injurious species in maintaining inventory information available for use by Education Department, Public Relations, volunteers.

Further uses of animal records in zoos are for Cooperative Captive Management, Animal information passed on to receiving institutions when animals are transferred, for generating International and Regional studbooks, for Pedigrees which can be used for genetic and demographic analysis by breeding programmes and committees. In addition the data generated can be used for development of husbandry manuals and research by taxon groups.

Karin covered the following additional aspects of records management, giving a full overview. She briefly explained the International Species Information System which was founded in 1973 by Dr. U. S. Seal, reviewing its functions. Now ISIS members number over 645 zoos/aquariums worldwide, and ARKS4 software now in use by over 500 institutions. The ISIS ARKS data sets can be pooled and used globally, as well as the other tools and programmes of ISIS, such as the studbook programme, SPARKS, the medical records programme, MedARKS, and the species

coordination programme, REGASP. A new software will encompass all functions of these programmes, and that is ZIMS, Zoological Information Management System, which is in progress.

Karin then gave a series of presentations which were designed to introduce various aspects of the ARKS computer programme to participants using computers provided in the workshop. Participants worked two to a computer while Karin led them through the basics of ARKS. She gave a demonstration and training in the use of ISIS ARKS4 software and information on other aspects of ISIS.

The agenda was as follows

1. Roles of Records and Data - the big picture.
2. Setting up a records-keeping system
3. ISIS Overview - what it is and how it functions
4. ARKS Data Entry screens - information entered in ARKS
5. ARKS Data Entry — Accessions - what animals and how
6. Taxonomy
7. ARKS Data Entry : Births/Acquisitions
8. ARKS4 - Disposition
9. ARKS4 - Data Entry - Identifiers and Measurements
10. ARKS4 - Data Entry - Enclosures
11. ARKS4 Reports.
12. ISIS Website - accessing individual specimen reports
13. Specimen Reference DVD and Studbook Library/
Husbandry CD-ROM

Part of the reason for holding this training now, despite a difficult time over the last two decades, trying to introduce ISIS records systems to this region, is because, in a matter of another year or two, the entire system of ARKS, MEDARKS, SPARKS, etc. will be replaced with a much more sophisticated system, that is, ZIMS. If zoos are not conversant with ARKS, then ZIMS is going to be much more difficult. It is desirable for zoos who are not members (that is all zoos of South Asia aside from the National Zoo, Sri Lanka) to become members before this time. With that in mind, Mr. Aasim Turk, systems manager from the International Species Information System gave two presentations on ZIMS.

ZIMS

Mr. Aasim Turk of ISIS gave two presentations about the pending Zoological Information Management System ZIMS. ZIMS will be a web-based records-keeping system which will rely very much on the internet, broadband and will — as a highly futuristic programme compared to others — completely replace ISIS software in the next year or two. Aasim, as well as Karin, also spent much time assisting and speaking with individual participants, explaining what ISIS ARKS now and ZIMS of the future would do for their particular zoo situation.

Editorial Note : We hope that participant zoos will investigate taking membership in ISIS. This has been a very long term project to induct South Asian zoos into ISIS and will pay large dividends in better zoo management all around.