

South Asian Zoo Personnel attend ZIMS Data Standards Development Workshop, Rotterdam

Two senior zoo personnel from South Asia represented the region at the ZIMS Data Standards Development Workshop in Rotterdam, Netherlands from 14-18 March 2005. This was Dr. R. K. Sahu, President of the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation and Mr. Raja Mohammed Javed, Director of Lahore Zoo, Pakistan and host of the very successful SAZARC meeting held in his zoo last December. We hope for a Report from both of them in due course.

ISIS is working with zoo and aquarium experts worldwide to build the Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS), a new web-based software application for managing animals in zoos and aquariums worldwide. With the help of international and regional user committees (IADISC and ADISC) and other professional organizations ZIMS has engaged almost 500 experts from zoos and aquariums so far.

The ZIMS Data Standards Workshops are designed to help our software developer (CGI) define the rules for recording information in ZIMS so that this information is valuable to all users. (For example, when ISIS software users input the sex of an animal, data standards determine the choices you have to describe that animal's sex.)

The workshop was divided into three sessions. The first

two days (14-15 March) focused on the topics related to animal management, animal inventory, population management, enclosure management, taxonomy, group management, and institution management.

Wednesday, 16 March was a combined day-long session of both groups. The last two days (17-18 March) was focused on clinical medicine, drug inventory, necropsy, pathology, nutrition, preventative healthcare, protocol management, sampling, and scheduling.

Our participation in the ZIMS data standards development process is extremely important. Dr. Bob Lacy, as shown in the previous article, took time to give the entire background of ZIMS in a presentation to SAZARC participants. Dr. Lacy also developed a form which all the participants of SAZARC filled out. The collected information about zoo records in the zoos presented in SAZARC this year has been included in this special report on ZIMS on subsequent pages. You may find more information about ISIS at www.isis.org, on the ZIMS Project at <https://zims.isis.org/> and on IADISC and ADISC at <http://www.iadisc.org>.

In the words of Dr. Hans Keller ZIMS Workshop Manager & Chief Technology Officer, National Aquarium in Baltimore. . . "Together we can build ZIMS!"

The ZIMS Project ... from the World Wide Web: <https://zims.isis.org>

Ed. Note : This material was pulled off the internet where you can find almost everything you want to know at one of these sites ISIS at www.isis.org, on the ZIMS Project at <https://zims.isis.org/> and on IADISC and ADISC at <http://www.iadisc.org>. We have reproduced it here because not all our readers have access to the web and some of them don't have time to check out every site suggested to them. We hope this will help everyone connected with the zoo community

Almost 500 volunteers from almost 200 zoos, aquariums and related institutions across the globe are working on the Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS) Project. When complete, ZIMS will be a global animal management system that will serve as the central location for accurate and comprehensive information on 2 million animals in more than 70 countries

The ZIMS Project is one of the largest, international Web based projects of its kind. We have estimated that the first phase of this project will cost US \$10 million. Encouragingly, ISIS has already raised commitments for US \$ 5.5 million through Building ZIMS: The Campaign for ISIS, which is supported by the worldwide zoo and aquarium community, governmental organizations and corporations.

The ISIS Data Quality Campaign

We launched our Data Quality Campaign three years ago. While ISIS members have made substantial progress on one data quality target (linking), progress has been slow on

the very important institution/studbook data reconciliation effort.

Because of the importance of accurate information to the zoological community, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) has adopted a resolution calling on everyone to reconcile their data in the ISIS database. The Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks & Aquaria (ARAZPA) has hired an intern to help their studbook keepers work on reconciliation and at set a goal of 100/- accuracy. Laurie Bingaman Lackey, ISIS SPARKS/studbook keeper support (and a studbook keeper herself), has received requests for training and help with the studbook/ institutional data reconciliation tool from studbook keepers around the world.

Let's not lose this momentum! It will take all of our efforts to assure that the data in the ISIS system is ready for ZIMS. If you need help in reconciling your data, please contact ISIS support (support@isis.org; +1.651.209.9250). If you have recently updated your studbook, remember to send a current SPARKS backup file to Laurie Bingaman Lackey (laurie@isis.org).

ZIMS Data Standards Workshops

To help our software developer CGI determine the necessary standards for recording each type of data in ZIMS, we are holding ZIMS Data Standards Workshops.

(Data standards define the rules for recording information in a system so that the data is valuable to all users. For example, when ISIS software users input the sex of an animal, data standards determine the choices you have to describe that animal's sex.)

So far, data standards sessions have been held in Perth, Australia, Osaka, Japan and in Rotterdam, Netherlands and 16-20 May in Orlando, Florida, USA. These workshops are to be very intense as hundreds of data standards need to be reviewed and determined. If you are interested in attending, please contact ISIS (kim@isis.org). ISIS and

IADISC are working to fill these meetings with experts from each subject area, while also representing all areas of the world and various kinds of institutions. Because there are only a limited number of spaces at these workshops, we may not be able to invite everyone who expresses an interest. That doesn't mean that you cannot participate in the project! We would be happy to hear from you!

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ZIMS Project : Building Better Zoological Information Systems for Zoos and Aquariums

Sue DuBois*, Kevin Johnson, Brandie Smith*****

The following is a brief summary of the processes that have lead us to this point in the project and a vision for the future. Our goal in making this presentation is to make more people aware of the need for improved animal information technology and to solicit additional support for the project from the various regions and institutions.

History

Many of the software programs for zoo and aquarium animal data management have been developed and distributed by the International Species Information System (ISIS). ISIS, founded in 1974, is an international non-profit membership organization that serves nearly 550 zoological institutional members from 54 countries worldwide. ISIS also serves as a central repository for institutional data. Although ISIS is dedicated to serving the zoological community, it is a small, member-owned non-profit organization that has not been able to keep pace with the technological advancements in information management and does not have the resources to ensure the accuracy of the records it receives. Unfortunately, this has left many members of the zoological community searching for alternate data management strategies that will adequately meet their needs.

In an effort to improve their animal collection records, several institutions and some zoo and aquarium associations have developed their own software. For example, the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria (ARAZPA) developed REGASP, software for managing institutional and regional collection planning data. REGASP is now used by several regional associations. The Zoological Society of London supported the development of software to manage invertebrate populations. Several individual institutions have developed in-house inventory systems that meet their individual needs but still export data to a central ISIS database. In addition, veterinarians have been struggling for several years to find a replacement for the DOS-based medical records system, MedARKS.

In January 2000 the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) formed a Strategic Software Task Force to examine the data needs of the Association. On the task force's recommendation, AZA hired a technology consultant to meet with zoo and aquarium experts and ISIS, to produce a study of the current state of our information systems, and to

recommend several courses of action. ISIS also began broad-based, visionary planning for an ideal animal database and, in February 2000, convened a "Futures Search" meeting of international stakeholders to address software issues and guide ISIS' vision and efforts.

These separate meetings resulted in the same answer. What is needed is the immediate development of a global animal management database that is Web-enabled and contains up-to-the-minute information that is both accurate and secure. Although the database must be flexible enough to meet specific regional needs, there must still be a central, "core" database that allows free and easy exchange of information between all participants.

Since that time, ISIS has continued refining its vision for the future while working to improve its current software and data. Zoos in the Australasian region identified a strong need to improve and facilitate communication and cooperation within and between Australasian zoos and aquariums, for the attainment of regional collection management and conservation goals. By developing and implementing the regional collection planning software, REGASP, zoos are able to make joint decisions regarding species common to their collections, while maintaining the broadest genetic diversity of animals within zoo resources. This helps us to create a regional collection, which can act as a major scientific and conservation resource.

In August 2000, AZA created the Animal Data Information Systems Committee (ADISC) to determine the association's needs for animal information. In July 2001, AZA hired the Inteq Group who, after a series of meetings with zoo and aquarium experts in North America, developed a high-level project plan for the design of an integrated animal information system.

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