



INFORMATION SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION *Working Group Charta*

Coordinator: Anton Güntsch (BGBM Berlin, DE)



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1. Purpose and Vision of the Working Group

The Information Science & Technology Commission (ISTC) was established as a technical working group of the EU-funded project European Distributed Institute of Taxonomy (EDIT) and was integrated into CETAF in 2011. It facilitates dialogue and collaboration between the IT departments of CETAF member and non-member institutions to ensure interoperability through the development of sustainable common informatics infrastructures, best practices recommendations, and standards. The group works toward compatibility of components for digital information exchange and sharing, through procedural changes and adaptations to IT systems. The ISTC plays an essential role in knowledge transfer between CETAF member organisations, in ensuring the sustainability of data services and the widest possible use of existing open-source software components. An important aspect is the planning and facilitation of collaborative projects between CETAF informatics departments.

2. Strategic Relevance to CETAF

The ISTC supports CETAF's strategic priorities by promoting open access policies and collaboration on digitization efforts to increase the accessibility of natural science collections. By fostering technical innovation and collaboration, ISTC contributes to CETAF's mission of addressing biodiversity and geodiversity challenges.

An important contribution to the strategic goals of CETAF is, in particular, the support provided to smaller institutions in the transformation of analog collections and research processes into digital infrastructures.

3. Main Themes and Objectives

The main topics of the ISTC are currently 1) the development of a global registration system for type specimens (in cooperation with TETTRIs), 2) Collection Management Systems (CMS), 3) AI, robotics, and digital collections, and 4) collaboration between citizen science platforms. Specific objectives include 1) a proof of concept for a wiki-based type specimen catalogue and 2) a coordinated approach (e.g. with GBIF and DiSSCo) for the sustainable development of this catalog. Another objective is the development of a programme for the newly created sub-groups for CMS and AI.

4. Work Plan and Deliverables

2025/Q2: ISTC charter agreed.

2025/Q3: Subgroup "AI, robotics and digital collections" established.

2025/Q3: Subgroup "Collection Management Systems" established.

2026/Q1: Proof of concept for Type Specimen Catalogue communicated.



5. Evaluation and Success Metrics

The success of the ISTC can be measured by specific products that have emerged from the group's work. Prominent examples in the past were the CETAF Identifier specification, the CETAF IIIF recommendation, the “Botany Pilot” and (in collaboration with TETTRIs) joint missions of citizen science platforms.

The ISTC is not seeking to establish evaluation criteria in the form of KPIs.

6. Strategic Relevance to CETAF

ISTC is a permanent CETAF working group.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The ISTC Coordinator(s) organise and moderate the working group's general meetings, establish communication with the CETAF EC and CETAF working groups, maintain the communication platforms used and support the subgroups and task groups in their work.

Conveners of ISTC subgroups are responsible for developing the scope, membership, and work plan for their subgroup. They report to the ISTC plenary.

The ISTC Plenary decides on the medium-term work plan and the establishment of thematic subgroups.

8. Governance and Decision-Making Structure

The ISTC does not have a formalized governance structure. Decisions are made by consensus. The ISTC would be open to discussing and adopting joint governance structures for all CETAF working groups.

9. Communication and Collaboration Tools

The main communication platform of the ISTC is the ISTC wiki at https://istc.cetaf.org/Main_Page, presently hosted and curated by FUB-BGBM. The wiki documents important ISTC products, RDM-related and data policies by CETAF members (in preparation), and meeting minutes. The ISTC uses an email list hosted by CETAF.

10. Stakeholder Engagement (Internal & External)

The ISTC collaborates closely and occasionally holds joint meetings with the Digitization Working Group (DWG). The ISTC is strongly connected to standardisation and infrastructure initiatives such as TDWG, DiSSCo, and GBIF. Collaborations are established via joint projects and mutual participation in meetings. The ISTC is open for participation of external experts both in the meetings and the Email list.

11. Resource Planning – Human, Technical, Financial

The critical resource for cooperation in the ISTC is the available working time of its members and the coordination. For this reason, many activities are opportunity-driven and are promoted, for example, in the context of funded EU projects. It is therefore difficult to draw up work plans that function independently of project funding. However, it is possible and desirable to integrate ISTC topics into project proposals.

Potential support for ISTC would be mainly at the organisational level, for example, in planning and organising meetings.

12. Appendices

The ISTC does not currently maintain a curated list of members. We therefore consider the members of the email list to be ISTC members.

