The 50th Anniversary of World Data Center for Microorganisms

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ABSTRACT
The European Culture Collections' Organisation: How to promote training and education innovative approaches

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Abstract

The European Culture Collections' Organisation (ECCO) was established in 1981. The aim of the organisation is to promote collaboration and exchange of ideas and information about all aspects of culture collection activity. ECCO meetings are held annually and are a valuable forum for discussion and innovation on the future development of member culture collection activities. The organization has evolved for an important think tank with important contributions through collaborative projects like the MINE EU in the mid-1980s to bundle the common interests of microbial service collections and their users. In the subsequent CABRI EU project, some of the leading collections in Europe made available the contents of their individual catalogues for comparison via a search engine which provides access to a common Catalogue. Later on, the EBRCN EU project focused on guidelines for best practice towards an ISO-compliant quality management. These outputs were key-elements for the OECD initiative related with the BRCs task-force and the current OECD guidelines for BRCs. More recently, the EMbaRC (2009-2012) project enlarged the spectrum of activities and dealt with contemporary topics such as biological safety, improved identification methods and the development new concepts on training and education. Finally, inside of ECCO organisation another important developed project is the current MIRRI (2012-2016). Currently, MIRRI is involved on the RITrain (http://ritrain.eu/) and CORBEL (www.corbel-project.eu) Horizon 2020 projects. This
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cascade of projects has had ECCO as incubator and several Culture Collections as lead partners. Moreover, documents that have addressed legal framework of Culture Collection operation, like MTA were also developed inside ECCO and a core MTA is now available to all Culture Collections that want adhere. Certainly that many other topics are in discussion inside of ECCO, like the implications of Nagoya Protocol and the relate EU regulation 511/2014 with a fully entry into force on last 12 October 2015. Other topic is long tradition that culture collections have in training people that directly, or indirectly, are interested in microbial taxonomy and in microbial preservation and management. Academic (PhD and Master), advanced as well as bespoke courses on related topics in this field are regarded of true added value for the educational and microbial research community in Europe. In addition, only with modern and appealing approaches we can reverse the strong decline in numbers of trained microbial taxonomists in Europe that has been observed over the last decades. Gaps in microbial resource management training and potential synergies have been identified and the establishment of an educational community to create a knowledge-based training network and implement lifelong educational and continuing professional development courses for people working within culture collections have been developed. Training courses involved both theoretical and wet laboratory experiences in microbiology not only covering elements of taxonomy and identification of microorganisms but also isolation, characterisation, preservation and use of microbial resources are of the importance. To support these actions e-learning materials for training activities and distance courses need to be implemented with innovative approaches.