

***Report for questionnaires –
information sharing among culture collections (Oct 2006)***

Background

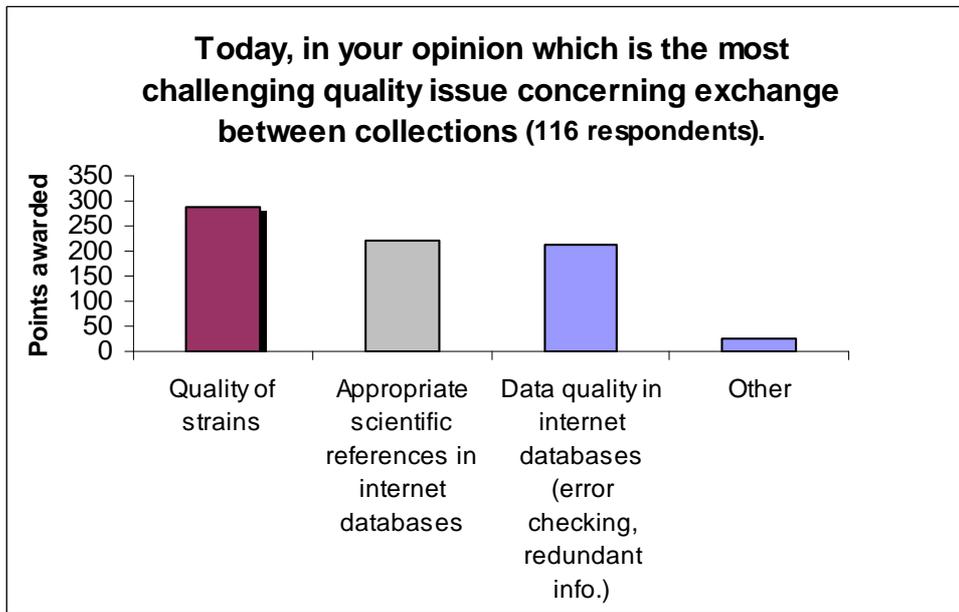
This document outlines some of the findings from a survey that was conducted among WFCC in the period from March to July 2006. The motivation for such study was to enhance the understanding about the WFCC community. Three areas were explored: information sharing among culture collections, quality management and data sharing, policies and networking.

Three questionnaires were distributed to all the members of WFCC and MIRCEN networks, respectively. Of these, 153 collections responded to the first questionnaire, 117 to the second and 78 to the last. Key results are presented below.

Abstract of key findings

The aim of the survey was to have an overview of the WFCC members' practices of sharing of biological resources in the public domain. Such "fact finding" is important to show the importance of public infrastructure in both public and private R&D in the life sciences. The main finding of the survey is the importance of "open sharing" of biological resources based on confidence and common standards of quality, more than on formal contracting. An important policy implication that could be discussed is the continuing importance of an appropriate institutional environment with some general provisions that facilitate such "open sharing", without having to negotiate contracts on a case by case basis. An auxiliary finding (needs some further research) is the concern for the new emerging issues of quality of scientific references and data quality in scientific databases associated with such biological resources.

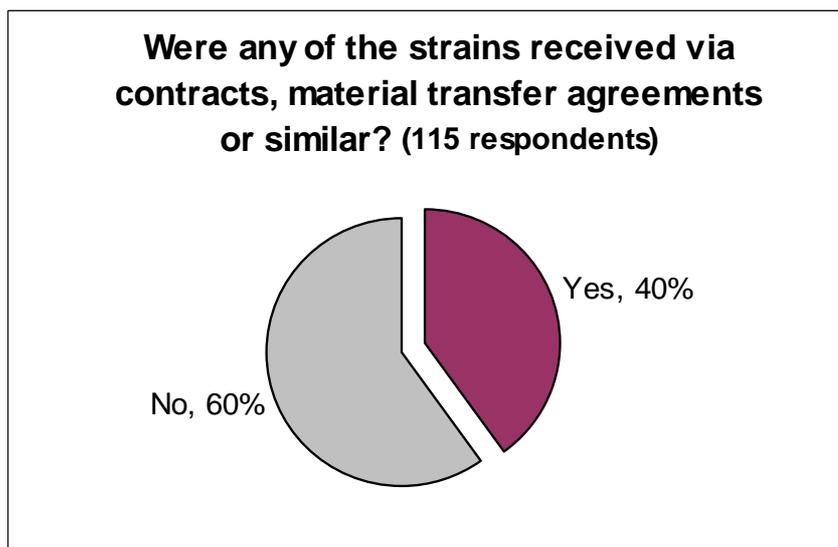
Data sharing



Note: the respondents were asked to rank each option from 0 to 3, with 3 being the most challenging, and zero indicating "not applicable".

The diagram above indicate some potential quality bottlenecks in the sharing of information among culture collections: quality of strains tops the ranking of challenging issues. However, the respondents consider that sharing of digital information is almost equally challenging. That is, appropriate scientific references and data quality in internet databases. This may be an important issue to address, especially since information sharing is increasingly performed through such digital means.

Property rights

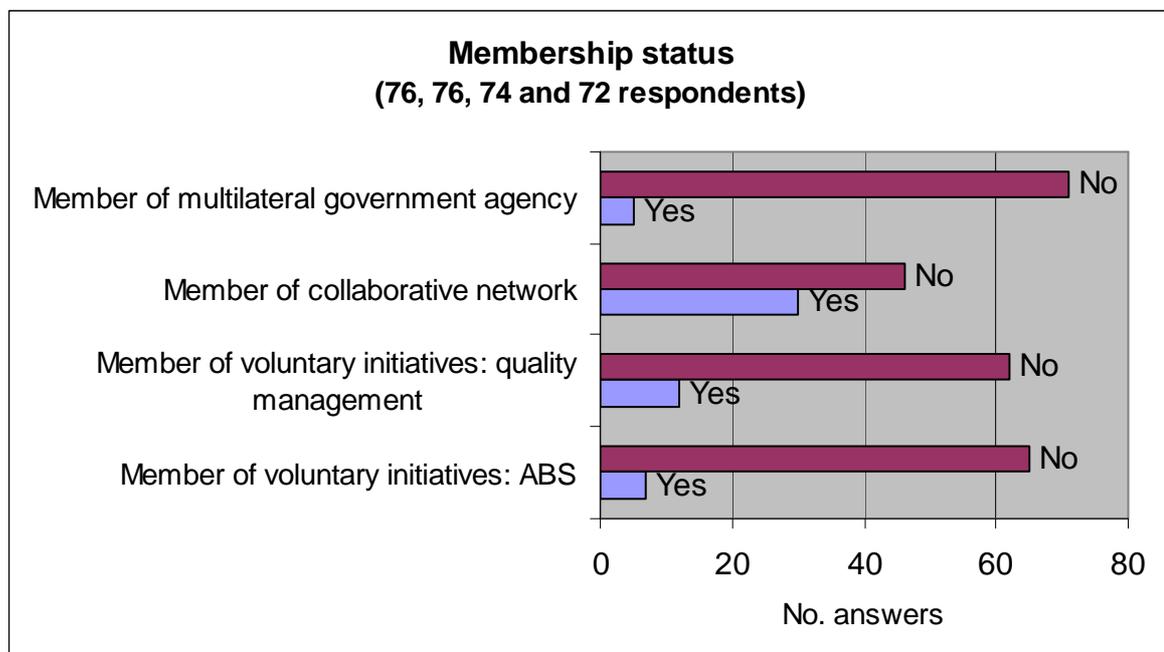


Note: In 2005. Including all sources of strains.

Collections receive their strains from many sources. A general question was formulated to illustrate how usual it is that such transfers are regulated in some formal way. Forty percent of the respondents received their strains through some formal agreement, either through material transfer agreements or similar. However, a follow up question shows that this practice is limited in terms of number of strains that the collection receives: usually up to twenty percent of their strains are sourced in this way, while nine collections obtained between twenty and hundred percent via contracts.

Also, the status of the collection is relevant. Thus forty-four percent (twenty four collections) of governmental culture collections use MTA, compared to thirty five percent (seventeen collections) of university collections. The other categories have rather few observations: four out of seven "other" culture collections, and one out of four private collections, use MTAs.

Networking



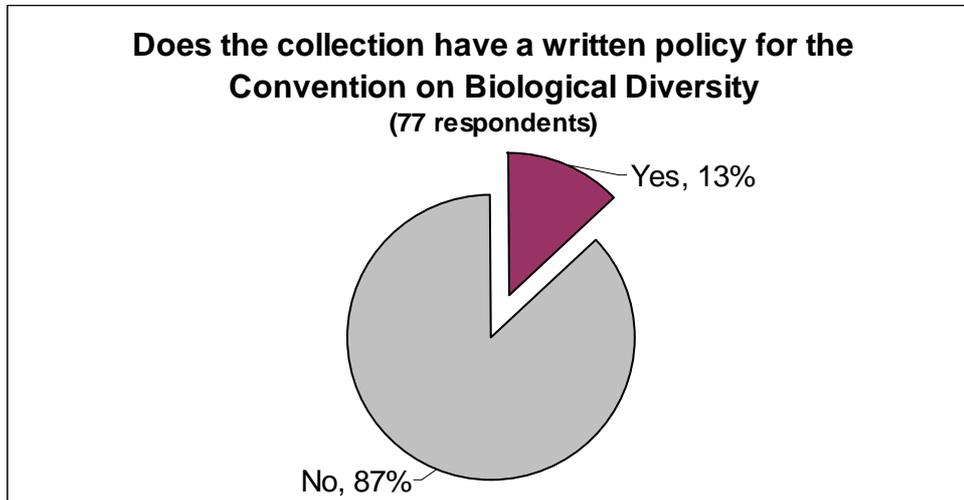
Note: the exact questions are "Is the collection member of a multilateral governmental agency (for example of the United Nations)", "Is the collection member of collaborative networks (apart from WFCC and WDCM)?", "Is the collection member of voluntary initiatives in the field of quality management, except for ISO (please indicate which; common standard setting initiatives, etc.)", and "Is the collection a member of voluntary initiatives in the field of access and benefit sharing (please indicate which; Mosaics, Kew code of conduct, etc.)".

The graph above summarises a series of questions that aim to illustrate another angle of networking among collections: membership in formal collaboration initiatives. Less than half, thirty nine percent, of the respondents are members of any collaborative network apart from WFCC and WDCM. For example, nine of the respondents are members of ECCO, and two of GBIF, followed largely by national and regional initiatives, such as UKNCC.

However membership is much lower in specific voluntary initiatives in quality management, and Access and Benefit Sharing, respectively. In terms of quality

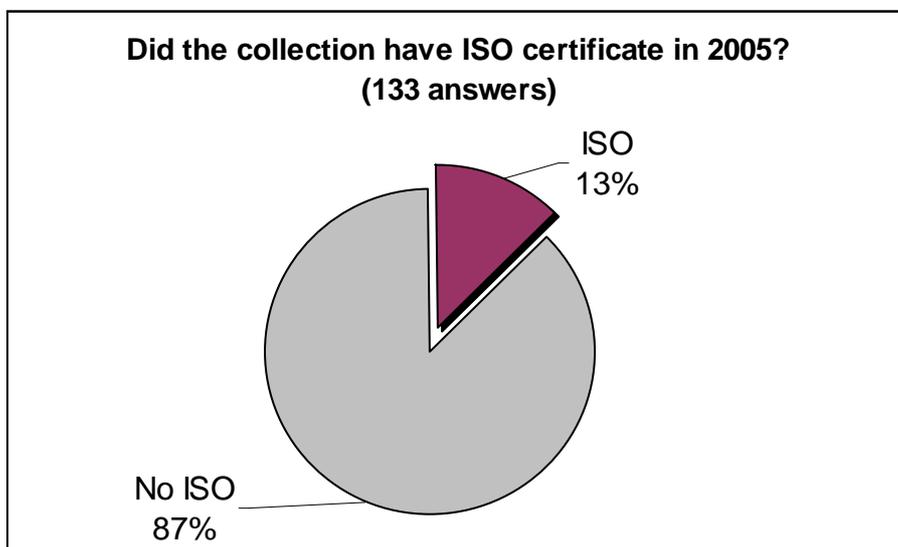
management initiatives, three respondents indicated that they are members of common standard setting initiative, and three of CABRI, followed by less frequently cited initiatives. Five collections are members of multilateral government agencies.

Policies for distribution



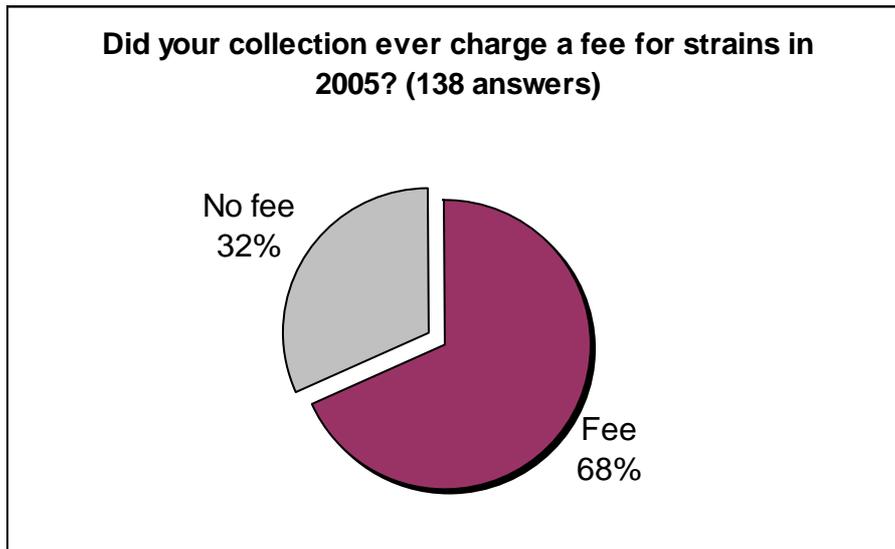
A limited share of respondents, ten, have a written policy for the Convention on Biological Diversity. The earliest such policy among the respondents is from 1995, the latest from 2006.

Quality management



The number of ISO certificates provides some information about the quality management regime among culture collections. 17 collections responded that they have at least one type of ISO certificate.

Fees



A large majority (94 collections) of the respondents do apply a fee for strains, at least for users that are perceived to be more commercially oriented. However, note that many collections actually did not provide any strains at all in the requested year, in which case no income was generated from strains.