

Dear Curators, Dear Collection Managers, Dear Colleagues,

Since 2010 the World Federation for Culture Collections has seen the number of collections registered in the World Directory grown up to 654 distributed in 70 countries, an increase of 8% in three years, in sharp contrast with the stagnation of the previous decade. That shows the renewed confidence and interest of culture collections in their federation. The tools developed by the World Data Centre for Micro-organisms meet the expectations of the collections and increase their participation. It shows also that the collections come out of the shadow and assert their socio-economic role.

In the same way, through difficult times as well as during more favourable periods, collections have always been concerned about cooperation and have looked for scientific exchanges. Financial difficulties and socio-economic changes have not always made it possible; fortunately the role of culture collections as Resources Centres underpinning biotechnology and the need for support is highlighted.

There is a renewed interest of the decision makers for infrastructures underpinning the biotech developments in bio-economy. Culture collections are basic scientific tools necessary for accessing the microbial realm, an almost unlimited source for sustainable solutions to socio-economic and environmental problems. Investments in R&D in microbiology have yielded solutions in all fields of activity: feed, food, health, environment and industrial biotech. Unfortunately the world economic crisis limits the financial support to culture collections although preservation of and accession to the microbial material used in research programmes is the conditions *sine qua non* to ensure cumulative research. Hopefully more and more decision makers will support scientific infrastructures; it is a worthwhile long term investment with guaranteed socio-economic profit.

The general public starts to better understand the role of microbes in their daily life and the stakes of biotech driven solutions to face socio-economic problems. There is a growing interest in the media concerning the protection against hazardous micro-organisms or the sustainable use of beneficial micro-organisms. Nevertheless, there is still a lot to do to improve the general public's understanding of the roles of micro-organisms in daily life.

The developments by culture collections of their own bioinformatics tools for managing and processing the data related to their microbial material. The increasing use of web based systems for communication, data exchanges, and data processing, including for administrative and legal purposes facilitates integration of data. Interoperability of databases, data sharing and pooling mechanisms must be framed to be optimal. That is why the work done by the World Data Centre for Micro-organisms is so important.

There are multiple challenges ahead but we, the culture collections have the scientific and technical knowhow to face them, provided that appropriate funding and administrative support is provided on a long term basis.

In 2014, the instances of your federation want to fully update the culture collections directory CCINFO, strengthen the WFCC membership and further develop the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms, an essential initiative of WDCM.

I express my gratitude to the WFCC Executive Board members who voluntarily take on their time to organise the federation's activities.

I thank also the WDCM team for their dedication to WFCC and their hard work.

I thank you, collection leaders and staff members, for your confidence in WFCC.

On behalf of the entire WFCC Executive Board, I wish you a fruitful, prosperous and happy 2014.

Philippe Desmeth

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