



M3.15 Ambassadors network is fully operational

State of the art of the Ambassadors network is given and a mechanism for long-term sustainability of the Scratchpads community support is established

Date: 31 July 2013

Work package: WP3 'Training, outreach and community support'

Partner: RBINS

Reporter: Isabella Van de Velde

In cooperation with: Thierry Backeljau & Dimitris Koureas (NHM)



The Ambassadors programme

In order to promote Scratchpads use and to foster long-term sustainability of the Scratchpads community, the ViBRANT project launched the Scratchpads Ambassadors programme. The Ambassadors programme is an outreach programme designed to work with motivated volunteers across the Scratchpads community.

Scratchpads are a social networking tool to build, share and publish information on the diversity of life on the Web (<http://scratchpads.eu/>). Scratchpads are free and rely on the open source content management system Drupal (<http://drupal.org/>). The system allows individuals or groups of people to create their own networks supporting their research communities on the Web.

Scratchpads Ambassadors are enthusiastic and experienced Scratchpads users that support the Scratchpads team, linking the Scratchpads team with Scratchpads' growing user base.

The programme was launched in May 2011 and at present, July 2013, a select group of 19 Scratchpads Ambassadors from all over the world has been appointed to be our official representatives.

What do Ambassadors do?

Ambassadors spread the word about Scratchpads in their university/institution in any way that suits them.

They are our point of contact person for Scratchpads users in their area, and in that way they will also help us better understand the needs of users, so that the Scratchpads developers can keep improving Scratchpads.

Some activities they do:

- give talks to colleagues about Scratchpads;
- arrange for or give a training course or demo to colleagues on Scratchpads;
- be the focal point of local Scratchpads expertise, sharing useful tips and tricks that their users discover;
- promote the use of Scratchpads in their community;
- provide support to new local Scratchpads user communities;
- provide support to local users in languages other than English;
- or any other good ideas they might have!

What does Scratchpads offer to Ambassadors?

Some of the benefits:

- be a part of a virtual research environment development team where innovative research tools are being developed;
- become the official representative of Scratchpads in their community;
- be the first to learn about what's going on at Scratchpads;
- get access to new features before others do;
- interact with our Scratchpads developers team and other ambassadors and make important contacts;
- have the possibility for receiving financial support to give a Scratchpads training in their institution;
- get an ambassadors' badge on their online profile.

Ambassadors grants scheme

To further strengthen our Ambassadors network, Scratchpads provided grants to support Scratchpads training courses proposed by our ambassadors. A total of four proposals were funded (March 2013):

"A step into the future: online taxonomy for Cameroon"

Location: Université de Yaoundé I, Département d'Informatique, Cameroon

Ambassador: Thomas Couvreur

"Basic training course during the 2nd International Conference Modern Phytomorphology"

Location: State Natural History Museum NAS Ukraine

Ambassador: Andrew Novikoff

"Opening up the biodiversity of hyper-diverse Malaysia"

Location: the Museum of Zoology, University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

Ambassador: John Wilson

"Organising African Biodiversity Communities via Scratchpads"

Location: National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi

Ambassador: John Sullivan

The above proposals promote the use of Scratchpads in selected new research communities around the world. The Ambassadors training courses grants scheme gives the opportunity to our Ambassadors to actively promote Scratchpads. All courses run in cooperation with a Scratchpads team member. This enables the Ambassadors to develop their skills as support to users and as training providers in the future.




Meet our ambassadors










Currently we have 19 ambassadors in 16 countries around the world.




Interactive map at: <http://scratchpads.eu/support/ambassadors>




Our ambassadors and their achievements




 <p>Andrew Novikoff Researcher, State Natural History Museum NAS, Lviv, Ukraine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of Scratchpads on society website http://phytomorphology.org/ and in journal Modern Phytomorphology, Vol. 4, April 2013 - Provide support to local and new local users - Scratchpads seminar "ScratchPads 2.0 online databasing" for MSc students, Biology Faculty, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv on 12.10.12 - Scratchpads seminar "ScratchPads 2.0 online databasing" for staff of State Natural History Museum NAS Ukraine, Lviv on 18.10.2012 - Granted to organise Scratchpads training in Lviv - Organisation of Scratchpads training in conjunction with the 2nd International Scientific Conference on Plant Morphology - Modern Phytomorphology, 14-16.05.13, Lviv, http://phytomorphology.org/conference-3/, 2 training sessions: 16.05.13 - in Russian; 17.05.13 - in English - Cooperation in Scratchpads interface translation project, translation in Ukrainian language: completed! - Promote Scratchpads at the Institute of Botany of SAS in Bratislava (Slovakia) on 30.01.13 - Oral presenting (promotion) Scratchpads at conferences - Intention to translate Scratchpads manuals in Ukrainian
 <p>Aubrey Moore Assistant Professor, Western Pacific Tropical Research Center University of Guam, Guam, USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, selection for test group - Participation in online training course, 25.05.2013 - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community as a tool for capturing and sharing biodiversity information for Guam - Provide support to local and new local users: I am seriously considering incorporating Scratchpads training into an entomology course I will be teaching next term to my students - Presentation at the 2011 Entomological Collections Network meeting in Reno, Nevada, USA, "Evaluation of a Scratchpad Template as an Online Database for the University of Guam Insect Collection"; have a look at my presentation here
 <p>Bryan Simon Principal botanist Queensland Herbarium Brisbane, Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my Grass Flora community and support local and new local Scratchpads users - Participation in online training course, 25.05.2013 - Presentation at the Australasian Systematic Botany Society Conference 2012, Perth, Australia, 23-28.09.2012, "Grasses online – Scratchpads for Poaceae", http://www.asbs2012perth.com/ - Presentation at the 5th International Conference on comparative biology on monocotyledons. Monocots V, New York, 7-13.2013, "Grasses Online: Scratchpads for Poaceae", http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1060172

 <p>Eli Sarnat Research associate, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, Manager Antwork Consulting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0 as a collaborative database management system for NSF project (National Science Foundation DEB 1141989) - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my research community, the ants working group - Provide support to local and new local users, antkey.org - Provide funding to (1) translate components of the Antkey.org site into Chinese, Bahasa Indonesian and Thai languages, (2) develop content translations modules that can be used for all Scratchpads, (3) develop module to allow Scratchpads to interface with the www.Antweb.org website - Published journal article discussing the use of Scratchpads: Sarnat, EM (2011) Ant identification in cyberspace: tools, applications, and challenges. American Entomologist, 57, 227-230 - Presenting Scratchpads at conferences: Sarnat, EM (2011) "Ant identification in cyberspace: tools, applications, and challenges", Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting, Reno, Nevada (Oral Paper), http://www.entsoc.org/entomology2011
 <p>Erik van Nieuwerkerken Entomologist, NCB- Naturalis, Leiden, Netherlands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, selection for test group - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the Nepticuloidea moths workgroup and in Naturalis at various occasions - Provide support to local and new local users, nepticuloidea.info - Organisation of interview session the Scratchpads users community Leiden and the VU sociology team, Netherlands Centre for Biodiversity, Naturalis, 15.05.2012
 <p>Gontran Sonet Researcher, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the JEMU working group - Provide support to local and new local users and to visitors of the lab - Presentation of Scratchpads at conferences: Sonet, G., Nagy, Z.T., Breman, F.C., De Meyer, M., Backeljau, T. & Jordaens, K. 2012. "Integrating DNA barcoding in taxonomic practice: Experience from a joint initiative of two natural history museums", 19th Benelux Congress of Zoology, Brussels, Belgium, 19-20.10.2012, http://bcz.ulb.ac.be/19thBCZ/Welcome.html - Co-organisation of the ViBRANT workshop "ViBRANT tools for the DNA taxonomist", 11 June 2013 at RBINS Brussels; organisation: ViBRANT/BeBOL/JEMU community, http://bebol.myspecies.info/node/82

 <p>Ilia Gjonov Citizen Scientist, Sofia, Bulgaria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, selection for test group - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the Cicadina workgroup - Provide support to local and new local users - Organisation of Scratchpads training in conjunction with the: "Sixth European Hemiptera Congress", American University, Blagoevgrad, 25-29 June 2012 and promotion on conference website http://www.ehc6.eu/scratchpads-training - Presenting Scratchpads at "Sixth European Hemiptera Congress": Ilia Gjonov, Alexandr Emeljanov, "Dynamic Scratchpads based catalogue of Bulgarian Fulgoromorpha and Cicadomorpha (Insecta: Hemiptera): our development plans open to your contributions." http://www.ehc6.eu/congress-programme
 <p>Jeffery Saarela Research scientist, Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa, Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, selection for test group - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the Arctic plants workgroup - Provide support to local and new local users, arcticplants.myspecies.info - Presenting Scratchpads at conferences
 <p>Jens G. Rohwer Professor, University of Hamburg, Biozentrum Klein Flottbek und Botanischer Garten, Hamburg, Germany</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0 - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the Lauraceae working group - Provide support to local and new local users and promoting Scratchpads to students - Preparation of guideline on how to add contents - Presentation of Scratchpads at the Flora Malesiana meeting in Bogor, August 2013, http://floramalesiana.org/ - Presentation of Scratchpads to a number of people in personal conversations, on the occasion of conferences, invited lectures, or visits from other scientists to our institute
 <p>John Friel Researcher & curator, Cornell, University Museum of Vertebrates, Ithaca, NY, USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, selection for test group - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community: African ichthyology, networking and collaboration among taxonomists, conservationists, fisheries managers, aquaculturists, aquarists, and students and faculty at African universities - Provide support to local and new local users of africhthy.org - Promote regularly our Scratchpads and Scratchpads in general in informal conversations with those for whom I think the information is useful. Discussed their usefulness to African biodiversity projects to Don Doering, Exec. Director of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation and also to Colin Apse of the Nature Conservancy

<p>and</p>  <p>John P. Sullivan Research Associate Cornell University Ithaca, NY, USA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Granted to organise Scratchpads training in Kenya, although we had to postpone. Will try again in 2014 to get funding for me to go to Nairobi. - Scratchpads in the news: http://www.seriouslyfish.com/africhthy-the-interview/ - Presenting of Scratchpads at the Electric fishes satellite meeting, International Congress of Neuroethology, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, August 4-5, 2012, poster presentation "Developing cybertaxonomic resources for electric fishes." http://www.icn2012.umd.edu/ - Presenting a poster at the 5th International Pan African Fish and Fisheries Association meeting in Bujumbura, Burundi, 16-20 September 2013, "Africhthy: A Virtual Research Environment for African Ichthyology at which we will describe Scratchpads." http://africhthy.org/content/fifth-international-conference-pan-african-fish-and-fisheries-association-paffa-5-cinqui%C3%A8me
 <p>John Wilson Researcher, Senior Lecturer, University of Malaya, Malaysia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution flyers - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community and promotion in Bulletin of the Museum of Zoology - Provide support to local and new local users - Granted to organise Scratchpads training in Kuala Lumpur - Organisation of Scratchpads training at the Museum of Zoology, University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, 25.04.2013, for postgraduate students, PhD students, postdoctoral fellows or early stage researchers and representatives from the Malaysia Forest department - Network building: meeting with University staff (head of departments, curators) and Scratchpads team member to discuss future collaboration in view of Scratchpads developments and data sharing using Scratchpads - Presenting Scratchpads at conferences in Canada and Malaysia, July 2012 - "Building a DNA barcode reference library for the true butterflies (Lepidoptera) of peninsula Malaysia: What about the subspecies?" paper dealing with Scratchpads submitted to PLoS ONE (in second stage of review)
 <p>Lyndall Pereira-da-Conceicao Postgraduate, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community: helped other people with starting or maintaining their Scratchpad and spread the word about Scratchpads to researchers from institutions that I am associated with - Participation in online training course, 25.05.2013 - Presenting of Scratchpads at conferences: Pereira-da-Conceicao LL, Price BW, Villet MH (2011) "Taxonomy 2.0: Biodiversity in the digital age", Congress of the Entomological Society of Southern Africa (ESSA), July 2011, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Rhodes University eResearch Repository link: http://eprints.ru.ac.za/1984 - Giving talk involving Scratchpads at my university (Rhodes) for Rhodes students as well as researchers from SAIAB (South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity)

 <p>Paul Cannon Principal Botanist , CABI & Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0, especially relating to multiple taxonomies - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the fungi workgroup. Primarily to date to the lichen community (mostly the British Lichen Society) but also to the British Mycological Society. Currently developing a consortium approach to the development of the UK Scratchpad, involving the societies as well as Kew and other government institutions. Part of the plan is to use the Scratchpad as a means of updating the major printed account of British lichens (Lichens of Great Britain & Ireland, Smith et al. 2009) - Provide support to local and new local users of fungi.myspecies.info as part of the consortium approach - Scratchpads presentations made at Kew (annual meeting of the British Lichen Society), University of the Free State, South Africa, National Museums of Kenya. Also planning to present at the African Mycological Association meeting next year (linked to AETFAT in Stellenbosch) and probably the forthcoming International Mycological Congress in Bangkok, August 2014
 <p>Quentin Groom Researcher, National Botanic Garden of Belgium, Meise, Belgium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community, the alien plants workgroup - Provide support to local and new local users, alienplantsbelgium.be - Organisation of two Scratchpads training courses in the workshop “e-platforms & e-tools for taxonomy” at the pro-iBiosphere conference, 12.02.2013, Leiden, http://wiki.pro-ibiosphere.eu/wiki/Workshops_Leiden_February_2013 - Presentation of Scratchpads at pro-iBiosphere conference, Leiden, 11.02.2013, “Communicating information on alien plants using Scratchpads” - Presentations (3) to the National Botanic Garden Belgium in which I promoted the use of Scratchpads
 <p>Santiago Madriñán Researcher, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my community and to students - Provide support to local and new local users - Presentation on the use of paramoflora.myspecies.info as part of my Paramo Plants Online project at the Monocots V conference in New York, 7-13.07.2013, http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1060172 and at the Botany 2013 conference in New Orleans , 25-30 July 2013, http://www.2013.botanyconference.org/info/index.php

 <p>Thibaut De Meulemeester Postdoctoral Researcher, NBC - Naturalis, Leiden, The Netherlands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of flyers to colleagues and close collaborators - Promote the creation of Scratchpads to taxonomist that are not aware of it - Train collaborators of my Scratchpad project as independent user, so they can actively participate in the construction of the website - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my research community, e.g. through my personal web page (https://sites.google.com/site/thibautdemeulemeester/research/fossils) or through my project on identification of Dutch bees - Promotion of Scratchpads use was also done in a recent publication: De Meulemeester T. 2013. "Bee" a taxonomist! pro-iBiosphere Newsletter (2):6 (click for pdf)
 <p>Thomas Couvreur Researcher, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement , Montpellier, France</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beta testing Scratchpads 2.0 with afroannos.myspecies.info, selection for test group - Promote the use of Scratchpads and provide feedback for the creating of Scratchpads for several of my colleagues and my students - Provide support to local and new local users on a regular basis, although it can be hard sometimes via Internet (in Cameroon) - Granted to organise Scratchpads training in Yaoundé - Organisation of Scratchpads training at the Université de Yaoundé I, Cameroon, 16 & 17 September 2013, for postgraduate students, PhD students , postdoctoral fellows or early stage researchers
 <p>Wang Lisong Researcher, Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing Scratchpads 2.0, creation of several sites using Scratchpads (all keep its recent git version): (1) Catalogue of Life: Higher plants in China (National checklist of higher plants, data were investigated by more than 100 taxonomists during the past two years), http://www.etaxonomy.ac.cn (update of data and APGIII system is ongoing), (2) Digitisation of “Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae” (FRPS) (Chinese Language National Flora, 80 volume and 126 books, ongoing to put data into system), (3) Group based sites, Chinese Fern, Conifer, Apiaceae (Umbelliferae), Fabaceae (these are under test, find appropriate taxonomists to work on in the future) - Promote the use of Scratchpads in my research community, the higher plants of China workgroup - Provide support to local and new local users, etaxonomy.ac.cn - Contribute to the translation of the Scratchpads interface in Chinese - Presenting Scratchpads at training course: “Online Flora of China” (much of the content is about Scratchpads) in the “High level Plant taxonomy and identification training course”, which is hosted by Institute of Botany, the Chinese Academy of Science, July 2013 (> 120 attendants from University, Natural reserve, institution and government agency in China). This training course will run every year from 2013 on. - Presenting Scratchpads at the 3rd conference on Biodiversity informatics in China, September 2013.

Why is the programme so important?

The Ambassadors programme is an example of giving users (ambassadors) a certain autonomy which is an asset for user uptake and long-term sustainability of Scratchpads. The programme provides a mechanism that encourages and facilitates the involvement of users in the design and development of Scratchpads. Being involved in the improvement of the system (e.g. beta-testing, reporting bugs etc.) gives them a sense of responsibility and a feeling that they are respected. Both are elements that make users engage. Ambassadors are proud to be an Ambassador and the network is fully operational as is reflected by the Ambassadors achievements. The programme has the potential to increase user uptake.

The Ambassadors programme makes power users visible to other users, offers a structure for help support between users and this independent from the training and support given by the Scratchpads support team. The Ambassadors network is one of the mechanisms for long-term sustainability of the Scratchpads community and for other ViBRANT products and services.