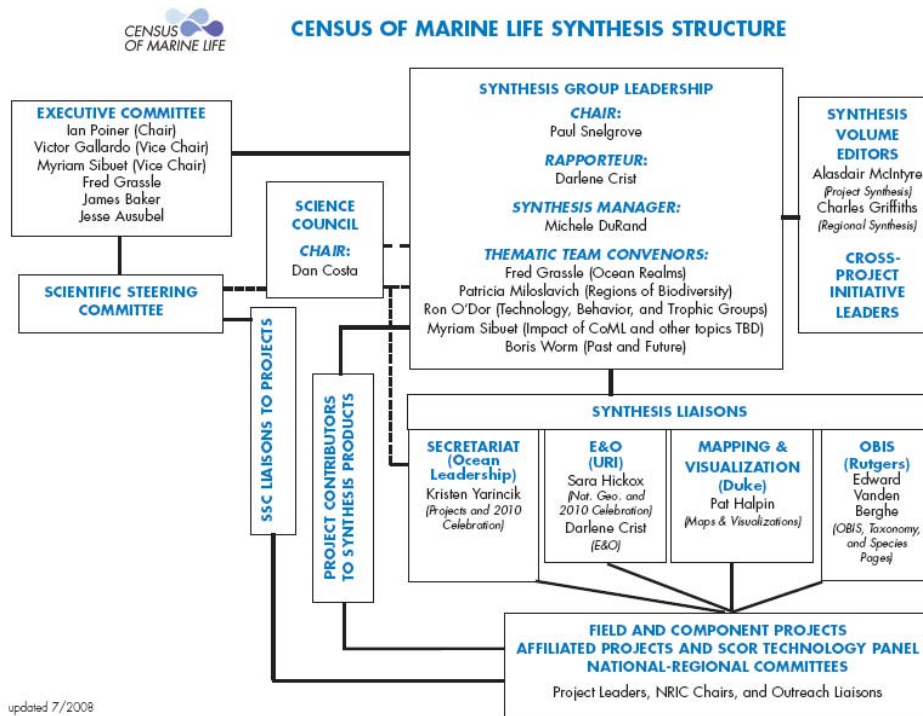


July 22, 2008

## The CoML Synthesis Strategy: Moving the Census Toward 2010

Dear Project Synthesis Leaders, Cross-project Synthesis Leaders, and NRIC Leaders:

Most of you are aware that the Census of Marine Life Scientific Steering Committee has assembled a group to oversee the final phase of the first Census and specifically to lead in developing a range of synthesis products. This concept arose from the Framework Committee that had been tasked with developing a plan to maximize the impact of the Census for 2010, and was based on the concept that the whole of the Census can, and should, be greater than the sum of its parts. The schematic below outlines the organization structure for the group and its link to other key Census components.

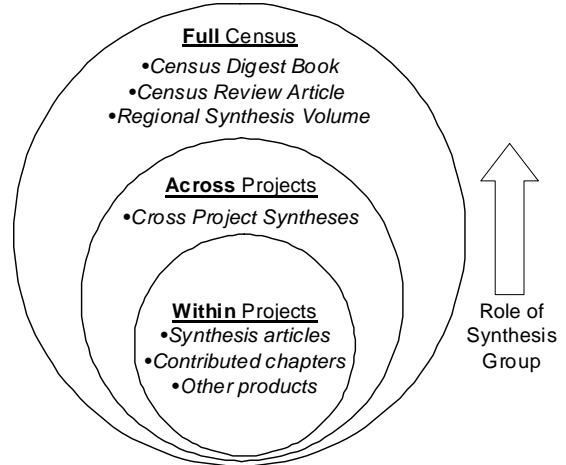


The Synthesis Group then developed a proposal to Sloan to create and oversee a wide range of synthesis products around the idea that *“The new challenge...is to refocus the community to integrate and synthesize the vast information into common themes and overarching messages to ensure comprehensive content and that a cohesive suite of Census products are communicated to the world in 2010.”* That proposal was reviewed and approved for full funding. So now we are

moving forward! The purpose of this communication is to outline the synthesis plans, provide a timeline (see page at end of this letter), and hopefully to clear up any points of confusion. We want to be very clear that the Synthesis Group has no intention of circumventing internal project synthesis plans, and our goal is simply to help organize activities to avoid duplication and to ensure that some key objectives are met for the Census as a whole.

The mission of the Synthesis Committee is captured in the diagram below, and an explanation of each of the activities follows. **Please take the time to read this explanation so that confusion can be minimized!**

Within project syntheses refer to activities that will take place within Census projects, that will be led by Census projects, and that are really at the discretion of project leaders. The number, variety, and content of these products are limited only by what the leaders wish to achieve. The role of the Synthesis Group for these within project products will be primarily observation and some coordination. We ask only to be kept up to date on them to avoid duplication and to provide us access to information to ensure it can be considered as part of Census-wide efforts.



The important exception here is the *Contributed Chapter Book* (also called the Project Synthesis Volume) that will be published by Wiley-Blackwell and which Alasdair McIntyre is editing (title TBA). The book will contain a chapter for each of the 17 projects. We ask that all projects contribute to this effort and follow the author guidelines recently distributed to project leaders by Alasdair. In some cases, this may create some overlap for within-project syntheses that are already planned but we hope complementary articles can be achieved and that duplication will be carefully avoided. Alasdair will obviously play a key role in this product, and the Synthesis Group will ensure the chapters are reviewed internally and will monitor progress but will not play any other role. **This is the only synthesis product that the Synthesis Group is asking from each project, though many projects have other activities planned as well.**

Across project syntheses refer to the products that span multiple projects and for which Letters of Intent were submitted to the Synthesis Group and included in the synthesis proposal to Sloan. The role of the synthesis group for these products will be active managing and coordinating. For each of these products, the Synthesis Group has identified a liaison and asked the product leaders to do the same. For these products, Synthesis Manager Michele DuRand will manage activities and the Synthesis Group will monitor progress and, in some cases, provide funding. Individual members of the Synthesis Group will attend workshops and may participate in the writing of some of these products where appropriate. For these products, the venues, titles, and specific content will vary and are at the discretion of the groups writing them. The Synthesis Group will, however, request frequent updates on these activities.

Full Census Syntheses are those products that will span the full Census and attempt to integrate across projects as fully as possible. The role of the Synthesis Group for these products will be one of leadership, management, and some funding. There are three products within this category.

(1) The *Census Digest Book* (title TBA) is a narrative on the Census that will summarize the different activities of the Census for a general audience. Paul Snelgrove will write this book in 2009, incorporating as much material from projects as possible, while creating a readable story. Publishers have been very clear that for a book like this to work, it must be written in a single voice and cannot have many authors. Having said that, this book will not duplicate or undercut efforts by Census scientists because it will cite the appropriate papers, it will target a different audience than the original articles, and it will have a substantially longer lead time than journal articles. But we hope that authors will be generous in making papers and mature manuscripts available as soon as possible (especially synthesis chapters and related material) with the understanding that unpublished material will not be cited unless agreed to by the authors.

(2) Jesse Ausubel has spoken to *Nature* about the possibility of a piece that synthesizes the Census and they are very interested. Paul Snelgrove will spearhead this effort in parallel with the book initiative, but in this case, we anticipate a product that will have multiple (potentially many) authors based on its contents and who contributes to its writing. This is the publication that has been referred to as the *Census Review Article* (title TBA).

(3) Patricia Miloslavich is overseeing the *Regional Synthesis Volume*, for which Charles Griffiths and Michele DuRand will serve as editors. This will be a special issue journal consisting of articles led by National and Regional Implementation Committee (NRIC) members. The object of these articles is to focus on geographic regions or countries to evaluate where they are in the context of “censusing” their marine biodiversity. This will likely be a journal format, though discussions about the best format and publishing venue are ongoing. The articles may also use relevant project information, and it will be the responsibility of the NRIC Chairs or writers to contact the projects as needed.

In closing, we hope that this explanation resolves any concerns and we ask you to take a moment to look at the attached timeline. We look forward to the Census community working in close collaboration towards Synthesis and 2010.

On behalf of the Synthesis Group,



Paul Snelgrove  
Synthesis Chair

# TIMELINE

**2008**

Month  
07  
08

Funding award from Sloan Foundation to Synthesis Group & Cross-Project Synthesis Products

Synthesis Group meeting to assess progress, assign tasks (Woods Hole) [21-22 Aug]

09

10

Initial workshops of Cross-Project Synthesis Products [Fall]

Mapping & Visualization workshop to develop coherent synthesis scheme [23-25 Oct]

11

12

Synthesis Group meeting (Valencia) [Nov]

01

**2009**

02

Synthesis writing workshops aboard Queen Mary (Long Beach, CA) [1-5 Feb]

03

04

Synthesis papers & drafts provided to Paul Snelgrove for inclusion in Census Digest Book [1 Apr]

05

Synthesis Group meeting (Cape Town) [May/Jun]

06

07

08

DRAFTS DUE [15 Aug] for Contributed Chapter Book (McIntyre, editor), NRIC syntheses (Griffiths and DuRand, eds.), Cross-project Synthesis Papers, and Census Digest Book (Snelgrove)

09

Synthesis Group meeting (Goa, India) [Sept]

10

11

12

01

FINAL COPY DUE [30 Dec] for Contributed Chapter Book (McIntyre, editor), NRIC syntheses (Griffiths and DuRand, eds.), Cross-project Synthesis Papers, and Census Digest Book (Snelgrove)

02

Synthesis Group meeting [Feb]

03

04

05

**2010**

Synthesis Group meeting [May/Jun]

06

07

Briefings to high level policy makers and other stakeholders [Jun]

08

09

10

Publication of Contributed Chapter Book (McIntyre, editor), NRIC syntheses (Griffiths and DuRand, eds.), Cross-project Synthesis Papers, and Census Digest Book (Snelgrove)

11

12

First Census of Marine Life Released in London [4-7 Oct]