

IWC Document Archiving: a way forward

The Secretariat

Background

The Commission's document archive contains several thousand documents arising from Commission meetings, Scientific Committee meetings and intersessional meetings since 1949. They provide a unique record of the IWC's development and an invaluable historical, technical and scientific archive.

Hard copies of all IWC meeting documents are held at the Secretariat offices in Cambridge and at the UK National Archives at Kew in London.

However, it is becoming essential for logistical and technical reasons, as well as transparency and communication, for this archive to also be held electronically in a robust, time-proof format. In recent years, the IWC Secretariat has been developing an electronic archive of documents – the majority of documents have now been converted to a searchable electronic format. However, for reasons of staff time and the need to develop an efficient, user-friendly and comprehensive online archive system, only the most recent of these electronic copies are as yet available online, apart from the formally published reports and the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*. After the considerable effort put in to converting and scanning the documents, it is an essential next step to make these available to all in an efficient online archive.

Progress so far

To date, Commission meeting and Scientific Committee meeting documents since 2006 (over 3,000 documents) are now available on the IWC website (see <https://iwc.int/iwc-documents> and <https://iwc.int/sc-documents>). Pre-2006 documents are available via e-mail on request to the Secretariat.

All Commission and Scientific Committee documents are automatically added to the IWC document archive at the close of each meeting (at least 500 documents per biennial period).

Within the limited time available, effort has continued within the Secretariat to develop and populate fully an online document archive. This is a major task and to be successfully completed in a reasonable timeframe requires a dedicated effort rather than an *ad hoc* approach. An online archiving system using open source software is in use but requires additional programming and investigation to make it suitably fast and user-friendly. Checking and uploading the several thousand scanned documents also requires considerable time and effort.

An updated and revised proposal for the archive is attached for consideration (see Appendix 1).

The Future for the Archive

The IWC online document archive does not at present allow comprehensive searchable access. Suitable software and a secure platform for the archive has as yet to be found.

Pre-2006 documents are not yet ready for upload. Uploading requires a comprehensive error check process. A minimum of one full-time week (37 and a half hours) per year of archive is envisioned to enable the files held by the Secretariat to be recorded and progressed to be suitable for upload, and for their details to be entered/updated on the IWC Endnote reference database.

To enable the IWC Electronic Archive to progress over the next biennial period (2017-2018) a considerable amount of time and effort needs to be invested in this process.

Appendix 1:

Estimated Budget for the Development of the IWC Electronic Archive, 2017-2018

Task	Time taken	Expertise level	Estimated Cost (£)	Notes
Software Sourcing and Website Preparation - Source and test software	20 days	IT	7,500	<i>The archive needs to be fully searchable</i>
Document Preparation - Standardise filenames - Search for and scan any missing files - Check files for blank pages or unwanted cover sheets - Check files for problematic settings (e.g. Job Options attachment) and remove them	200 days	Archive Assistant	15,000	<i>Scanning of documents from intersessional meetings has yet to be done and is not included in this estimate</i>
Document Upload to Website - Add keyworded references to bibliographic database - Upload 5,000+ Commission and Scientific Committee documents	150 days	Archive Assistant	10,000	<i>Commission meeting documents are not in the bibliographic database at present so this is a large data entry task</i>
Total			32,500	

Notes to the Table:

1 working year = 5x46working days= 230days (allowing 6 weeks statutory holiday)