

Project FAIR WISH: FAIR Workflows to establish IGSN for Samples in the Helmholtz Association

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Physical samples or specimen are often at the beginning of the “research chain” as they are the source for many data described in scholarly literature. The International Generic Sample Number (IGSN) is a globally unique and persistent identifier (PID) for physical samples and collections with discovery function in the internet. IGSNs enable to directly link data and publications with samples they originate from and thus close the last gap in the full provenance of research results. The modular IGSN metadata schema has a small number of mandatory and recommended metadata elements that can be individually extended with discipline-specific elements.

Based on three use cases that represent all states of digitisation - from individual scientists, collecting sample descriptions in their field books to digital sample management systems fed by an app that is used in the field - FAIR WISH will (1) develop standardised and discipline specific IGSN metadata schemes for different sample types from the Earth and Environment Sciences, (2) develop workflows to generate machine-readable IGSN metadata from different states of digitisation, (3) develop workflows to automatically register IGSNs and (4) prepare the resulting workflows for further use in the Earth Science community.

After investigating and identifying controlled linked-data vocabularies that can be included in our metadata schema, we recently have published the first data description template that includes new fields for biological and water samples. The template can be used by researchers to provide their sample descriptions and will serve as basis for semi-automated metadata generation.

Primary author: ELGER, Kirsten (GFZ)

Presenter: ELGER, Kirsten (GFZ)

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