



Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC)
 Division Géosciences et Technologies Appliquées (SOPAC)

Second Meeting of the SOPAC Division Noumea, New Caledonia, 3-9 November 2012 (SOPAC-2)

AGENDA ITEM	TITLE
2.	REPORTS
2.5	PMEG Reports
2.5.4	Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Group Report on Technical Support Services

PMEG Review of SPC/SOPAC Division's Support Groups

Corporate Services – As stated last year the SOPAC Division Corporate Services is working closely with the SPC to standardize budget reporting and balancing. This has been a juggling act in that all anticipated funding has not been realized and that extracurricular activity not planned, but necessary, have periodically adversely impacted financial planning within the Division. However, the Corporate Services have been extraordinarily adept at balancing and re-balancing the budget at the same time as assuring coverage of critical projects during the transition period. Some hurdles still exist in the selection of best practices from each organization and further work needs to be done in this task. Overhead funds are no longer realized in the Division as they go into the general funds and cannot be used at the discretion of the Deputy Director. However, much of the support functions that were covered by these funds are now supported directly from SPC core funds.

Recommendations – Implementation of a Sustainable Funding Initiative or increase in Core Funding is paramount in smoothing the flow of funds to critical projects, maintaining expertise, and bridging programs in a Division such as SOPAC that is basically a soft money organization. Return of a portion of overhead funds to those programs that have brought in significant funds to the organization could support core activities and fund raising efforts.

Web Site/Data Management – Last year PMEG noted that the SOPAC's web site was moving ahead in being updated and that significant progress was being made in the digitizing and archiving of reports, maps and other library holdings. This year it has been demonstrated that substantial impressive progress has been made in the incorporation of SOPAC's considerable data holdings into a web data management system and that a compendium web site exists and is assessable. The web/data management group is still apprehensive about having their efforts wasted and that the electronic data holdings might not be supported in the future. However, this is most likely a cultural attitude difference between SPC and SOPAC and should heel and pass

with time. In addition, the group is backing up each countries electronic data set that resides at SOPAC on portable hard drives that will be sent to each country to use as they see fit.

Recommendation – Assure that the Data Management team that their efforts are not in vain and that the intent of SPC is to see to it that the SOPAC member countries have full access to their electronic data sets in the SOPAC Division.

ITC – The SOPAC Division's ITC group uses open-source software to provide country members with an inexpensive means to connect with the internet and to access data within the Division. A concern exists by the group that an SPC policy for using only one software package such as Microsoft will impact low-cost service to countries and stymie internal Division software development.

Recommendation – Assure flexibility to use the best practices, hardware and software of both SPC and SOPAC.

Computers/Network Transition – The internet transition from SOPAC to SPC has progressed well and new servers and other electronic equipment have been added to the network in Suva. However, some interruptions such as receiving new portals to launch web sites are often delayed disrupting progress in providing electronic services and information to the larger Pacific Community.

Recommendation – SPC ITC work more closely with SOPAC Data Management services to assure that timely response to request for new portals and other services are provided.

GIS and Remote Sensing – This service has expanded into a major function within the SOPAC Division and its staff has increased to 20 people. Good integration with other Divisions and programs within SPC is occurring, especially in forestry. This group has become the GIS factory for SPC and the member countries with many workshops being provided and training becoming a major task. In fact the success of training has led to the internal SPC offer of higher paying positions for the trained personnel leading to degradation in service and excessive time spent in training activities. In addition, this service provides satellite photos well below normal costs and assist countries and other divisions within SPC in raw and interpretive products beneficial their remote sensing activities.

Recommendations – Standardize pay scale within SPC so that trained personnel skilled in GIS can be retained within the SOPAC Division to complete the work they were hired and trained to do. Encourage SPC and member countries to take advantage of obtaining low cost satellite imagery from the SOPAC Division.

Library Services – The library organization has substantially progressed and much of its data holdings have been digitized and placed on the web. An environmentally controlled room for use in digitizing data, with eight people housed there and working on this task, and archiving shelves has been constructed for preserving SOPAC Division's data holdings. All hard data such as paper copies and tapes will be stored in the room in a manner that will facilitate easy access. This facility will continue to be a necessary asset to the Division, as well as to the entire SPC organization and the external scientific community. This effort has been accomplished by the hard work of the Adviser Publications and Library, who is planning to retire soon and could lead to the loss of a valuable corporate memory. Also, concerns exist within the Division that the

Library Services will be moved and integrated within the larger Library Services at SPC headquarters in New Caledonia.

Recommendations – The Adviser should be complimented for her efforts and dedication to the job of seeing that the value of the SOPAC data and information holdings is maintained and easily accessible and encouraged to stay involved through some sort of part time capacity that will allow smooth and ongoing services for all of SPC and the countries. The major data holdings of the SOPAC Division should be housed in Suva close to the staff and scientist that at time to time have a need to access the documents, maps and datasets. PMEG understands that a decision within SPC has been made to allow this service and dataset to be retained at the Division in Suva.