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LTER DataBits
Information Management Newsletter of The Long Term Ecological Research Network

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◆ *Feature Articles*
LTER Newsletter DataBits New Design
- Karen S. Baker, Palmer LTER and Marshall White, LTER Network Office

DataBits, the LTER Data Manager newsletter, has a new design. The newsletter was developed in 1990 as a mechanism for the LTER sites to share information. Publication continued through 1994 under the editorship of John Porter (VCR). A visit by Karen Baker (PAL) to the network office catalyzed the Network Office plan to recreate DataBits. A prototype was developed for presentation to DataTask and was built upon the concepts of modular design, online publication, co-editorship as well as both inreach and outreach opportunities. The redesign for Spring99 DataBits was developed in conjunction with Marshall White (NET), a part-time student graphic designer, who works with Patty Sprott (NET) to produce the online version of the LTER Network News. The initial guiding principles listed below will evolve as the concept of rotating editorship develops.

- Keep layout simple and modular
- Make look coherent with LTER Network News and LTER Web
- Design for online presenation, but store as single file for simple hardcopy output
- Promote cross-site and cross-network data manager communications
- Co-ordinate editor responsibility by having rotating co-editors
- Facilitate remote editing (ie Netscape Composer is free)
- Develop in working documents location to facilitate co-editing prior to posting
- Provide Table of Contents for quick browsing
- Provide summary box to serve as email announcement with active hyperlink
- Sections to include Summary Box, Feature Articles, News Bits, and Calendar
- Standardize layout graphics (ie size < 20kbytes, resolution = 72DBI, format=JPEG)
- Consider article organization for archive and future access

Site Information Manager-Network Office Exchanges
- Karen Baker, Palmer LTER and James Brunt, LTER Network Office

What does an LTER Network Exchange mean for LTER Information Managers? In recognition of the benefits derived from having individual LTER site members directly involved with network activities, a mechanism for short-term fellowship support has been

identified within the framework of the LTER Network Office. A part of the goal to improve connectivity and communication is addressed by the ongoing collaboration with the National Partnership for Advanced Computational Infrastructure (NPACI) which is working to make high-performance environments more generally available. NPACI Funds have been made available to support individuals to work on projects that will accelerate the accessibility of LTER Network data for modeling and synthesis activities. Two pilot projects supported in this manner include ClimDB and SiteDB which are prototype modules of the Network Information System (NIS).

Access to climate data is critical to many cross-site and modeling studies in the LTER Network. The North Temperate Lakes LTER has served as the test development site for the ClimDB prototype through the efforts of Barbara Benson, NTL data manager, and Robin Stubbs, NTL programmer. Robin migrated the ClimDB prototype from the ORACLE database at NTL to Microsoft SQLserver at the Network Office in February of 1999.

Descriptive information about the sites is another critical component of any modeling effort in the LTER Network. The site description database and interface prototype, SiteDB, addresses this need. The Palmer LTER data manager, Karen Baker, is receiving support to further develop SiteDB by exploring network tools available for database descriptions and co-ordinating with GTOS efforts. Starting in 1999, her efforts also include exploration of communication structures such as the network web structure, working document areas, figure archives, electronic newsletter template, and network registration forms as well as establishment of partnerships between information management and education.

These pilot efforts have focused on NIS development activities, but future projects are not limited to NIS work. The Network Office will strive to identify and make available funds for these kinds of activities. Data Managers working on LTER Network oriented projects may inquire about opportunities for support to James Brunt (jbrunt@lternet.edu) or Robert Waide (rwaide@lternet.edu) by outlining a project that would benefit from network support in the form of salary support for a site data manager or programmer, travel of network office personnel to the site and/or travel of site personnel to the Network Office. NIS related projects should continue to be routed through the NIS working group and the Data Management Committee.