

**ECOMON/PHYLOMON COLLECTIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
(INITIAL DOCUMENT OF INTENT – INCLUDING SOME DESIGN SCHEMATICS)**

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PREMISE:

In 2002, a conservational biologist named Andrew Balmford, based out of the University of Cambridge, performed an unusual experiment to assess children's knowledge of nature. What was intriguing, was that under his methodology, the experiment was designed to directly compare a child's inherent familiarity with local flora and fauna versus his/her familiarity with characters from the popular Pokemon trading card game. In effect, what Andrew was interested in was whether "a child's innate interest in diversity was nowadays met by man-made variety."

The results were striking and demonstrated a huge disparity between a child's cognition of the "real" (their environment and ecology) and the "unreal" (cartoon creatures that in effect have no real bearing in the world at large). To quote:

"Our findings carry two messages for conservationists. First, young children clearly have tremendous capacity for learning about creatures (whether natural or man-made), being able at age 8 to identify nearly 80% of a sample drawn from 150 synthetic "species." Second, it appears that conservationists are doing less well than the creators of Pokémon at inspiring interest in their subjects: During their primary school years, children apparently learn far more about Pokémon than about their native wildlife and enter secondary school being able to name less than 50% of common wildlife types. Evidence from elsewhere links loss of knowledge about the natural world to growing isolation from it (3, 4). People care about what they know. With the world's urban population rising by 160,000 people daily (8), conservationists need to reestablish children's links with nature if they are to win over the hearts and minds of the next generation. Is Ecomon the way ahead?"

The second piece of this project occurred in 2007 when David Ng, a science literacy academic at the University of British Columbia queried Andrew on whether any institution had decided to move forward with Andrew's idea. In particular, David was interested in whether the continually evolving landscape of social media networks could lend a hand in creating a viable database of biodiversity cards, that was not only grassroots in nature but also open source, so that all children (with computer access) could in principle benefit. In other words, whether a well designed website, capable of interacting with various communities (graphic design, scientific, gaming, and education) could moderate production of a wide variety of cards of high quality – in artistic, science literacy, entertaining, and educational terms.

This document will present a more formulized strategy for the project, including timeline, paying attention to various scenarios and preferences as budget allows. Comments are appreciated.

PROJECT FLOWCHART

Various components of the project will roll out in different phases. Whereby each phase is largely dictated by the type of community engaged. Note that the website will be structurally in place and active before any of the phases are formally launched (preferred date would be late December 2009, or early January 2010)– this way, movement from one element of the project to the other is as seamless as possible.

Another notable requirement is that the program template remain open source and strives to have both its user interface and back end maintenance as low maintenance as possible. From discussions, it's been decided that a website run by wordpress is perhaps the best fit.

PHASE 1:

Getting the pictures.

The first part of the project requires rallying the graphic design and illustration community to provide images of animals, plants, etc. A social network model for this has been shown with a project previously highlighted at [beingboing.net](http://www.beingboing.net) called "The 700 Hoboes Project" (<http://www.e-hobo.com/>). This particular model took advantage of Flickr as a tool for submission, organization and light moderation.

For this project, we are interested in the following features:

- Mechanism for submission. Cross talk between Flickr sets and/or direct submissions interface is preferred. Alternate model would be through email submissions with editorial uploading. Image dimensions and format would be explicitly stated to minimize work.
- Mechanism for graphics to be displayed on the front page, as well as a tabbed category designated for a graphics only page. On the front page, a limited set of 4 to 6 or so of the most recent or most popular images would be best. On the tabbed category page, a scrolling palette (similar in premise to the layout of notcot.org would be nice). If there was a dynamic way of presenting this palette based on Flickr sets then that would allow the production of specialized sets of cards – by locale, by game rules, down the road (this part more important for the card phase).
- Graphics would be displayed as "blank" card.
- Ability for graphics to be tagged with initial details such as organism name, latin name, locality information (name of city or GPS stuff would be cool!). Also a link that can refer image back to artist's homepage or boutique.
- Each graphic entry allows for comments from the community at large.
- Full disclosure that copyright for images still remain with the artist, except that artists provides permission for use of the image (at these small card dimensions) for this project. Therefore, the project essentially remains commercial free, educational use only. If professional printing services are suggested at a later date (that involve commercial sales), will insist on a requirement for non-profit collaboration is put in place from the get go.

- At this time, various discussions have suggested that images produced (of organisms) are closer in aesthetics to the iconic look and feel of Pokemon. This is deemed more effective in both attracting the graphic design community as well as more effective in engaging children. The idea is that efforts to segment reality can be introduced into the gaming and educational aspects of the project. i.e. the cards are partly about being the bait. However, there is also an academic interest to see how images evolved – maybe in the end, it will be a collection of photos after all

GOAL: By Feb/Mar 2010 to have amassed at least a collection of approximately 60 different organisms (from a wide variety of phyla), preferably with a Vancouver local in mind.

PHASE 2: ***Adding scientific content.***

This part of the project will occur in tandem as graphics become available. Essentially, a small team of biodiversity scientists (a mixture of biology undergrads, graduate students, and a few faculty) will participate in this phase with a number of clear objectives. These include:

1. That a list of attributes be determined that best reflects characteristics of the organism. In other words, keeping in mind that there is a limited amount of space on the card (i.e. ~6 or so lines plus room for a small comment for instance), what exactly should those 6 lines be? Water need? Temperature constraints? Size? Diet? Community size? Terrain? Some thought will be needed to go over this, as this will directly affect game play down the road. However, it is thought that at this phase, the scientists' input is purely on determining what's best to make these cards contain significant content. ALSO NOTE THAT the gameplay blog section will have opened prior to this section, so that initial thoughts from the gaming community can be collected.
2. That once this list of attributes is agreed upon (and a format for the "small comment") that scientifically sound values are inputted for each graphic provided.
3. Ideal would be a way for a back end user to input these values directly into the website, such that the website can dynamically produce a high res image file for each completed card. If there is a way that card sets can be organized into image files of 9 cards (for printing), then that would also be ideal. Tags or arrangement via Flickr sets for the graphics can be used to create sets dynamically.
4. Since this is also the most moderated component of the project, another model is that an InDesign template exists where the values can be entered manually and converted to an image or pdf file. Under this latter model, these hi-res card files can be organized via Flickr sets, such that the home page can again pull from the set (i.e. a second row of cards on the home page, this time rich with values), as well as a separate tabbed category page just for the cards.

PHASE 3:
Game play.

Once an initial card set is developed, then there will be increased promotion of the tabbed section that will be devoted entirely to game play. This will be presented in a blog format so that game rule submissions can be presented and commented upon. This sets up a mechanism of feedback for various ways of utilizing the cards (be it for certain age groups, to focus on certain learning objectives). i.e. participants are interested in a way to develop game play that illustrates the effects of climate change – make a request for certain types of cards that can introduce that gaming element (i.e. temperature cards, or scenario cards, resource cards, etc).

The idea here, is that because ultimately the cards are technically only content holders, there may be a rich and diverse variety of ways to use them. (from basic trump card like game play for younger kids, to more developed strategy type games for older students).

- Ideal would be a scenario where readers can upload their own rules, and then an element where easy moderation or popularity ranking can occur.
- Alternative is a straight up submissions by email model, and then wait for feedback.
- The ability to create card sets (either by Flickr grouping or dynamically via the website itself) would be nice bonus, since certain rules may work best with certain card sets.
- Lots of potential seen here. Wonderful if very specific gaming scenarios are created (like climate change phylomon rules, etc).

PHASE 4:
Engaging the education community.

Once a few rule sets have been developed by the gaming community, we can then open up a new tab which focuses on the educational use and merits of the project. This will also be run in a blog like fashion, with community being able to weigh in via the usual commentary route.

If time and/or budget allows, having this section of the project amenable to student work being uploaded on specific pages linked to the specific card, would be an excellent feature to try to incorporate.

In the process of courting an education academic to possibly monitor learning outcomes from use of cards.

THE PHYLOMON PROJECT

graphics | cards | game play | education | about

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Links:





















[Flickr group \(graphic\)](#)
[Flickr group \(school\)](#)

UBC
 Michael Smith Laboratories

Science Creative Quarterly
Terry.ubc.ca

bioteach.ubc.ca

UBC Office of Learning

CARD QUEUE more	Raccoon Procyon lotor <input type="checkbox"/>	Striped Skunk Mephitis mephitis <input type="checkbox"/>	Red Fox Vulpes vulpes <input type="checkbox"/>	European Starling Sturnus vulgaris <input type="checkbox"/>
				
	NOTES: art by: Randy Laybourne	NOTES: art by: Colin Moore	NOTES: art by: Ele Willoughby	NOTES: art by: David Ng
LATEST GRAPHIC more				
				
LATEST SCHOOL more				
				

Flickr comments (RSS)



Jesús Guerra [deleted] says:

jejeje, bonitos personajes
 Posted 36 months ago. ([permalink](#))



i(L)teb says:

me gusta el de abajo de todo a la derecha y godzilla
 Posted 36 months ago. ([permalink](#))



zerohdog pro says:

these are too cute!
 Posted 36 months ago. ([permalink](#))



.Nichole. says:

I love the bat!
 Posted 36 months ago. ([permalink](#))

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CARDS!

flickr set

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Raccoon Procyon lotor</p> </div> <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> </div>  <div style="font-size: 8px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Taxonomic: Habitat: Energy needs: Life cycle: Behavioural:</p> <p>NOTES: art by: Randy Laybourne</p> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Striped Skunk Mephitis mephitis</p> </div> <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> </div>  <div style="font-size: 8px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Taxonomic: Habitat: Energy needs: Life cycle: Behavioural:</p> <p>NOTES: art by: Colin Moore</p> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div> <p>Red Fox Vulpes vulpes</p> </div> <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> </div>  <div style="font-size: 8px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Taxonomic: Habitat: Energy needs: Life cycle: Behavioural:</p> <p>NOTES: art by: Ele Willoughby</p> </div>
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1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8

Produce 3x3 pdf | Produce set pdf

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Biodiversity Lab (June 4th, 2009)

with one comment

Here's what we did:

We went for a walk around the UBC campus, and stopped at a number of different places to obtain botanical (plant) samples. We were asked to find four different specimens in total. Then we brought it back to the lab - here we took notes on our samples (like where it was found, and the date) and then examined the samples under the microscopes. We also drew pictures of our observations of things we thought were especially interesting about the specimen (sometimes what we saw under the microscope).

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Dr. Ng will also take photos of our specimens and notes, and then will put those pictures up on this website. This means we'll have a chance to see if we can identify our samples when we get back school or at home (may have to use the library or the internet to do this).

There are 62 specimens presented on this website. If you're interested, find your samples, and try to identify the plant you found. You may have to use a plant guidebook, or search the internet, or maybe even ask a grownup you know who loves to garden. If you do identify your plant, leave a comment with the name of the plant!

Please be respectful and friendly if you leave comments about your classmates samples. Mean comments will be removed (and the teacher will be notified - we can track them if need be)

Have fun! Dr. Ng will be keeping an eye out on this website for the next few weeks to see how you do...

Written by David Ng [Edit](#)
June 4, 2009 at 11:21 pm

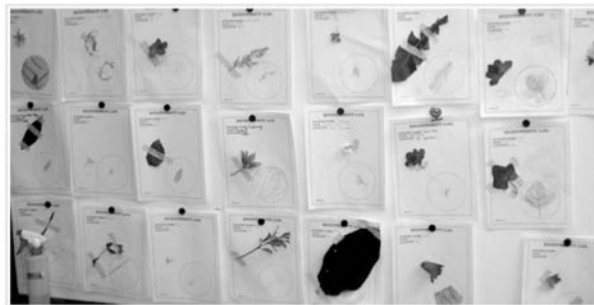
Posted in [Lookwhatfound](#)

Biodiversity Lab (June 4th, 2009)

with one comment

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Notes: Launch: late Feb, early March. Graphics section, plus game play section.

Final Card dimensions: 2.5 inches x 3.45 inches

Final Image Dimensions: 2.4 inches x 1.5 inches (submitted Flickr image dimensions @150dpi = 360px x 225px)

Main page initially "graphics" page. (see pdf)

Page width: 800px (same as terry.ubc.ca) split into two columns, 640px + 160px
Wide column to hold "card queue", "latest graphics", and "latest school"

Card Queue dimensions: (~640 x 193): image data pulled from Phylomon Flickr account ("card queue" set)

Card dimensions on graphics page: 140px x 193px. Image thumbnail: 136px x 84px (submissions from Flickr will be at 360px x 225px) 4 cards across page + "labeled tab" (70px width). Images will be tagged 1: Name, 2: latin name, 3: Artist, 4: artist's website, remaining tags 5+ locales of organism (as many as artist cares to give, or none).

Clicking on card goes to post for that card.

Clicking on "more" goes to post archive for card queue.

Latest Graphic dimensions (~640 x 170): Image data pulled from Phylomon Group account "Phylomon submissions (Graphic Artist Community)"

Dimensions generally as above (4 x images, each at 136px x 84px).

Clicking on images goes to Flickr image page.

Click on "more" goes to Flickr group page.

Latest School dimensions (~640 x 170): Image data pulled from Phylomon Group account "Phylomon submissions (School Community)"

Dimensions generally as above (4 x images, each at 136px x 84px).

Clicking on images goes to Flickr image page.

Click on "more" goes to Flickr group page.

Below that, you'll have RSS comment feed from the submissions group.

Game play section will also be available so that gamers can begin to leave comments.

Essentially blog template (see pdf) - keep the html text sidebar (~160px), but split the other section into a narrow column (for categories, etc), and a wider column for content.

Card section.

Sounded like you were going to see if this (a 3 x 3 grid) can be created dynamically from the "card queue" posts. If not, can also work it whereby it gets the card images from a "complete card" Flickr set, although as you'll note in the pdf, would be great if specific sets accessed using the box.

Clicking on card goes to "card queue" post or "complete card" Flickr image.