

Chair Report

Working Group on Information Systems and Services

21-24 April 2020

Robert Woodcock, CSIRO, WGISS Chair

WGISS Chair reports are usually presented on the first day of each WGISS meeting. They have always been an important time to reflect on the achievements of the WGISS community since our last meeting, rejoicing in successes, learning from failures, reflecting on how to better to achieve our joint objective of coordinating access to Earth observation data and collaborating to develop the systems and services that supply this data across our planet. The reality that during my first WGISS meeting as Chair I am writing and not presenting this report as we prepare for a completely virtual 49th meeting is unfortunately a stark reminder of the reality of the COVID19 pandemic which is impacting all of us. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. I also wish to acknowledge and thank the Comisión Nacional de Actividades Espaciales (CONAE) for their efforts in preparing for hosting us for WGISS 49 in Buenos Aires. It is unfortunate we are unable to visit, and I hope we will have opportunity again for a future meeting.

Whilst the pandemic is certainly disruptive it has not stopped CEOS activities nor WGISS. The way we work, and meet may have changed but our goal remains the same. Our WGISS Action tracking spreadsheet for this period shows 81 actions, 67 have been completed and 14 are in progress. A few highlights:

- The WGISS Connected Data Assets team continues its excellent support for IDN/CWIC/FedEO CEOS Services with updates to consistent branding, discovery data and collections.
- Jupyter Notebooks for EO analytics is a new arrival gaining broader interest across the CEOS community and Esther Conway (UKSA) is actively engaged in helping our community share Best Practices.
- Interoperability has once again gained momentum in response to the CEOS ARD Strategy and Future Data Architectures activities which are placing new demands on our systems and creating new opportunities. A draft CEOS Interoperability Terminology report has been developed by LSI-VC and WGISS to provide a clearer vocabulary across CEOS.
- Collaboration with other CEOS Working Groups and Virtual Constellations remains very high and is growing under the ARD strategy: Joint work on ARD with LSI-VC; Ongoing collaboration with the CEOS SEO; An FDA webinar with WGCapD.

Many of the remaining actions will be reported on during WGISS49 and I look forward to hearing the many results from across the community.

Looking forward it is clear all CEOS meetings for 2020 will be held virtually. CEOS SIT35 was one of the first to embrace the new format and CEOS COAST even managed to hold their planned SIT35 side-meeting. In general, these virtual meetings are successful though with a significantly shortened and focussed agenda. For SIT 35 the focus was on:

- CEOS-COAST Study Team: Progress report, including on forward work plan for the Study Team.
- CEOS Work Plan 'Deep Dive': Ensuring Principals have visibility of the breadth and depth of CEOS activities; Opportunity for 'deep dives' in to key updates/requests/issues for specific Work Plan items that require Principal attention.
- Working Team Status Review: A Review of Working Team issues not addressed by other topics and

sessions.

- GEO Flagships/Initiatives and CEOS-GEO Coordination: Update from GEO Secretariat, CEOS support to GEO Flagships/Initiatives (GEOGLAM, GFOI, GEO-LDN), debrief from the CEOS-GEO bilateral, and consideration of additional support Working Teams may be able to offer to GEO.
- CEOS Chair Priorities: Hear from CEOS Chair on the status of their priorities, GTOS status, and priorities and plans for Plenary.
- Technical Workshop 2020: Brief update on plans and format, discussion of Principal support for key topics.

There is a clear opportunity for WGISS apparent from the meeting reports that did occur. Specifically, the work programs for Sustainable Development Goals, CEOS COAST, WGClimate, CEOS ARD Strategy and GEO collaboration all point towards a need for, often subtle, improvements in interoperability for both data discovery and analytics and a way to test that interoperability. WGISS has been exploring these trends in the FDA and Technology Exploration areas so this will be no surprise to WGISS members. What is useful though is the users of WGISS services in the other WG and VCs are now starting to express more clearly what they require.

Unfortunately, this observation highlighted one of the drawbacks of virtual meetings – no discussions over coffee breaks to consider new initiatives with colleagues. A more deliberate approach will be required to progress such ideas and with that in mind WGISS members are encouraged to *write short proposals* and share them with colleagues via email or as part of an ad hoc video conference rather than wait for group meetings. As an example, once such proposal for a CEOS Earth Analytics Science and Innovation Hub intended to support the CEOS ARD, WG and VC needs identify during the past few weeks of CEOS virtual meetings has been discussed with the CEOS SEO, WGCapD and CEOS COAST over email and in short bursts of video conferencing. It is awkward and often feels less collaborative than it should. It has however led to some excitement, refinement of ideas and even tentative commitment of resources. Work continues though differently. WGISS will hear more about the proposal over the coming weeks.

Finally, I would like to finish this report with a thank you to two of our WGISS colleagues. Yonsook Enloe who for many years successfully led the WGISS Connected Data Assets System Level Team has retired. Her commitment and presence will be surely missed by the SLT and by WGISS broadly though her impact will continue to be seen for some time. Typical of Yonsook her departure has been well managed and we welcome Damiano Guerrucci (ESA) as the new lead of the SLT.

In addition, Chris Lynnes (NASA) has taken on new opportunities within NASA and unfortunately will no longer be able to co-lead the Technology Exploration Interest Group. As many of you will know Chris has successfully identified and organised presentations on a variety of new technologies that are of potential relevance to the CEOS community. Whilst Chris has formally stepped down from the co-leadership role, I am certain he will remain an active member of CEOS and the WGISS community – as is evident by his involvement in WGISS 49 organisation. It seems passion for something is not easily stopped, thank you Chris!

I look forward to WGISS 49 and to hearing about all our community has been achieving since our last meeting.

Robert Woodcock

WGISS Chair