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## Biodiversity Heritage Library for Europe – Towards a Global Library of Life

**T**he libraries of the world, particularly those associated with natural history museums and botanical gardens collectively hold the majority of the world's published knowledge on the discovery and subsequent description of biological diversity. As yet this wealth of knowledge is only currently available to those few people who can gain direct access to these publications. The body of biodiversity knowledge is thus effectively withheld from use for a wide range of scientific applications, which includes research, education, taxonomic study, biodiversity conservation, protected

area management, disease control and maintenance of diverse ecosystem services. Much of the early published literature is rare or has limited global distribution and is available in only very few libraries.

The project Biodiversity Heritage Library, started in the USA, is systematically attempting to remove this problem. In cooperation with colleagues from the USA, 26 European institutions have decided now to launch a project titled Biodiversity Heritage Library for Europe (BHL-Europe).



**More than 60 scientists, librarians and ICT specialists attended the Kick-off meeting held between 10-15th May, 2009 in the Berlin Natural History Museum. Altogether, 28 institutions from 14 countries are now working towards a global library of life.**