**ZRA Takes Three Decades of Training Online with its
Training Certificate Program (TCP)**

As the Zoological Registrars Association (ZRA) celebrates its 35th Anniversary this year, it seems a good time to review its history of advancing the zoological registrar profession and highlight recent achievements.

In 1984, the foundations of ZRA were laid as 12 zoo professionals met at the Brookfield Zoo to discuss their common problems and solutions. At that time only two or three members of that original group were registrars; the majority of them were record keepers. By 1990, this loose association formalized and elected its first Chairman. Two short years later, the 1992 publication of *Animal Records-Keeping*, created by two ZRA members and supported by an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Conservation Endowment Fund grant, provided an early foundation for standardized data entry.

In 1996, several members proposed a course on zoological records keeping for AZA. As a result of those efforts, the Institutional Records Keeping course (the first comprehensive training for zoological records keepers and registrars) was offered in Wheeling, WV in 1998 as part of AZA's Professional Development curriculum. Currently and historically, instructors and/or administrators of the AZA Institutional Records Keeping (IRK) course have been members of ZRA. The course was significant in helping to professionalize the registrar role and to garner institutional support for training. AZA implemented a new accreditation standard during this same time period, requiring members to have a role with oversight for the animal record keeping function, and citing the IRK course as an option for training.

At about the same time, AZA approved the creation of a scientific advisory group, the Institutional Data Management Scientific Advisory Group (IDMAG). This was proposed by ZRA members to assist in the standardization of data entry in the existing computer program. Since its inception, IDMAG has published 30 documents. Approximately half of the IDMAG membership is made up of ZRA members, a notable number of which have served on its steering committee.

Also in 1998, several ZRA members and data specialists began working with the International Species Information System (ISIS), now called Species360, to discuss a revolutionary computer program for animal records. The Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS) would later become the vision for an industry-specific, global, web-based, real-time collection of animal data. The number of ZRA members aiding in its development continued to grow in the years prior to the program's initial release in 2011.

In 2007, ZRA created committees for Training, Standards, and Professional Development, thereby establishing a structure and expanded platform for fulfilling its mission in these three core areas.

The work of these committees over the last 12 years includes developing presentations and workshops for delivery at ZRA Annual Conferences, as well as the administration of several scholarships implemented to support members with their training and professional development goals.

ZRA provides scholarships for the AZA Institutional Records Keeping course, for Records and Information Management (RIM) certifications managed by the Institute of Certified Records Managers (ICRM), and a Professional Development Scholarship for activities not covered by the other scholarships.

Training presentations and workshops have been a part of every ZRA Annual Conference for the better part of its history. Topics represented included new and evolving data entry standards, shipping and transport, governmental regulations, records management, and conservation.

Despite the many projects centered on training, all of them were place-based education and required the learner to travel. In 2016, a formal proposal to create an online comprehensive training program for the registrar position was submitted to the ZRA Professional Development Committee. The proposal was approved by the membership on March 8, 2017 and is now called the ZRA Training Certificate Program (TCP). The first of six modules was presented at the 2017 Annual Conference to an audience of 49 attendees (ZRA members and non-members). At that same conference, the membership also approved a contract with San Diego Zoo Global Academy and CypherWorx to provide the means for ZRA to deliver and administer the entire program online.

ZRA's goals of providing a training program for zoological registrars (or any job that includes the same duties regardless of title) included being able to offer members on-demand resources for professional development. The TCP provides an affordable, flexible, and accessible resource for training and professional development without the requirement to be a ZRA member or to travel. The program is software neutral and focuses on core principles, standards, and best practices that are relevant to registrar duties (despite title or role) and regardless of the choice of record keeping system.

The entire process, beginning with membership approval to the full deployment of the Training Certificate Program, took approximately 14 months and involved many ZRA members as well as agencies, association partners, and special advisors who had an interest in the initiative.

The Training, Standards, and Professional Development Committees shared in the workload and collaborated with many volunteers to put together course outlines, develop educational content in the Academy's Learning Management System, create a Marketing plan, build new and expanding partnerships, and ultimately deliver a product that can be embraced by the zoological community.

Since the TCP's initial deployment on 22 October 2018, an average of 5 learners per month representing a diverse audience including and beyond ZRA members, have registered to take individual modules and/or the entire Program.

The TCP has been 35 years in the making as we look at the preceding milestones achieved through countless hours of volunteerism provided by dedicated members of ZRA and partners with an interest and passion for the zoological registrar profession. The following list of those individuals, agencies, and special advisors is provided to acknowledge the professionals that committed their time, skills, and talent to making the ZRA Training Certificate Program a reality. Thank you all!

The TCP module descriptions and registration information for the individual modules or the entire Training Certificate Program can be found at www.zooregistrars.org/training.

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