



Recorder 6 and its collection management extensions

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Introduction

The Luxembourg Natural History Museum (MNHN) studies and documents the natural heritage through the recording of biological and geological field occurrences and the collection of specimens (fig. 1). Since the 1980's various efforts have gone into the digitisation of such information at the Museum, leading to numerous 'home made databases'. Eventually, the MNHN opted for an integrated database solution in 2000 and implemented *Recorder*, a software package for the collection, collation and reporting of biological field records, developed by the Joint Nature Conservation Council in the UK. The main reasons for the Museum's choice in favour of *Recorder* were the quality of the underlying National Biodiversity Network (NBN) data model; the open, flexible build, allowing new functionality to be added, and the integrated data transfer format.



Fig. 1: Collections contain a large amount of valuable occurrence data

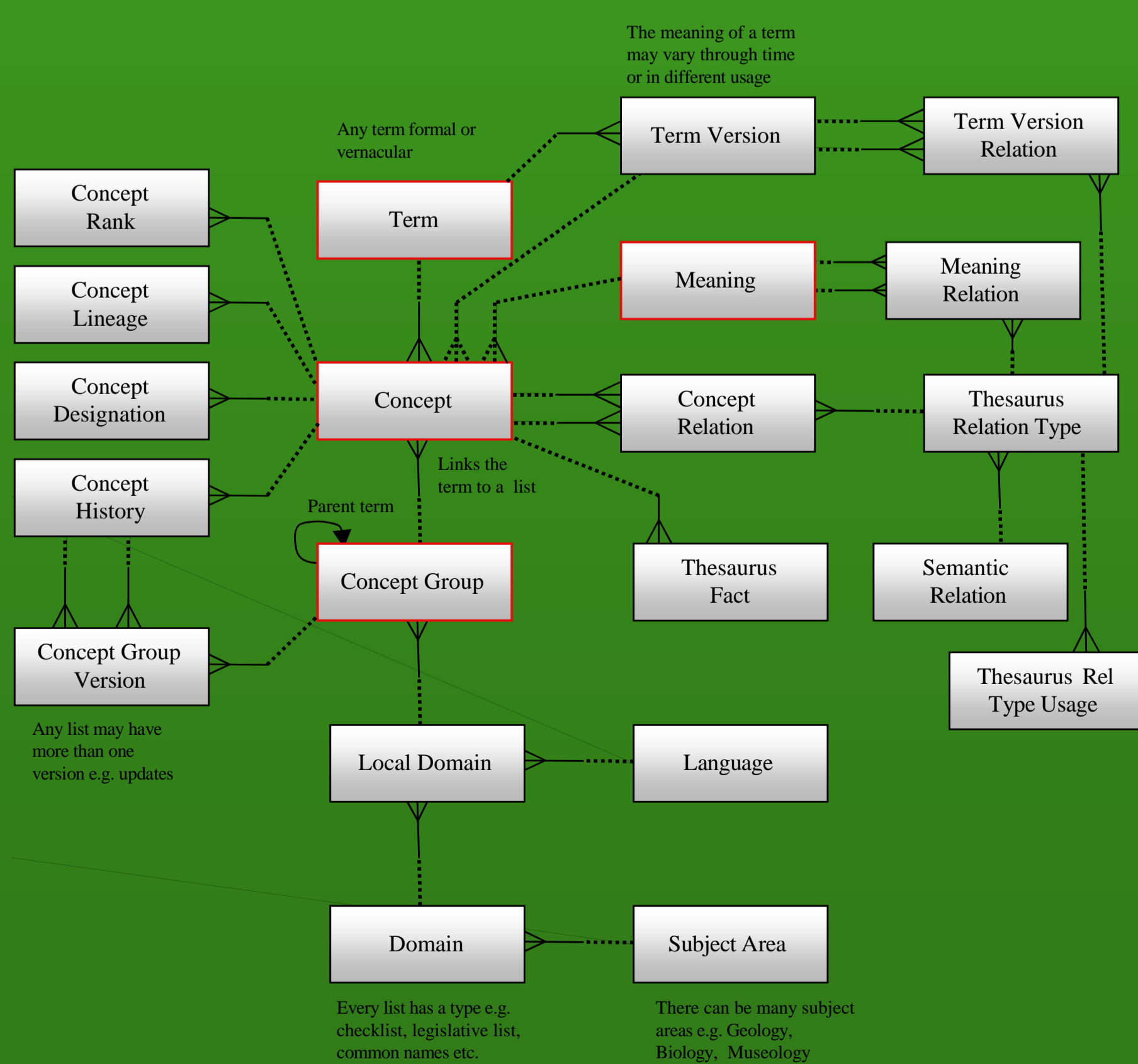


Fig.5: Logical data model of the Thesaurus.

Recorder 6 and the collection module

The *Recorder* software was not suitable for earth science information and natural history collection management in general. *Recorder* had only limited facilities for recording details of specimens linked to records and none at all for museum specimens lacking collecting event data. *Recorder* was also unable to manage earth science data such as names of rocks, minerals or stratigraphic information about fossils. In 2001, Copp extended the NBN data model, integrating museum collections.

In 2003, the Museum engaged in the development of a collection management module for *Recorder 6*, which uses an SQL-Server database. The module was based on the extended NBN data model, and now handles the following extra classes of information: Accessions, collections, specimens, documents as objects, images as objects; storage details like buildings, rooms, specimen cabinets; loans, exchanges and valuations (figs. 2&3). It also allows museum staff to document conservation checks of specimens, describe and prioritise conservation tasks and keep track of conservation jobs and materials used. It allows documentation of funding sources for jobs or acquisitions as well as enquiries from the public. The collection module also includes a quick data entry form for specimens (fig. 4) and a powerful thesaurus to manage all kinds of term lists used in *Recorder*: for example, lists for taxonomy, geology and for collection management (specimen condition types, acquisition methods, etc.), as well as gazetteers, keyword lists, etc. (figs. 5&6)

The Recorder foundation

The addition of collection-related functionality has attracted new large-scale users in Europe and interest around the world. No single individual or organization has full ownership or Intellectual Property Rights with regard to *Recorder* software, add-ins or its theoretical basis (model and standards). *Recorder* has been developed for the public benefit and as much as possible of the project should be placed into the public and open source domains. The Recorder foundation's main role will be to simplify the management of partnerships, the coordination of initiatives and the coherence of the development path.

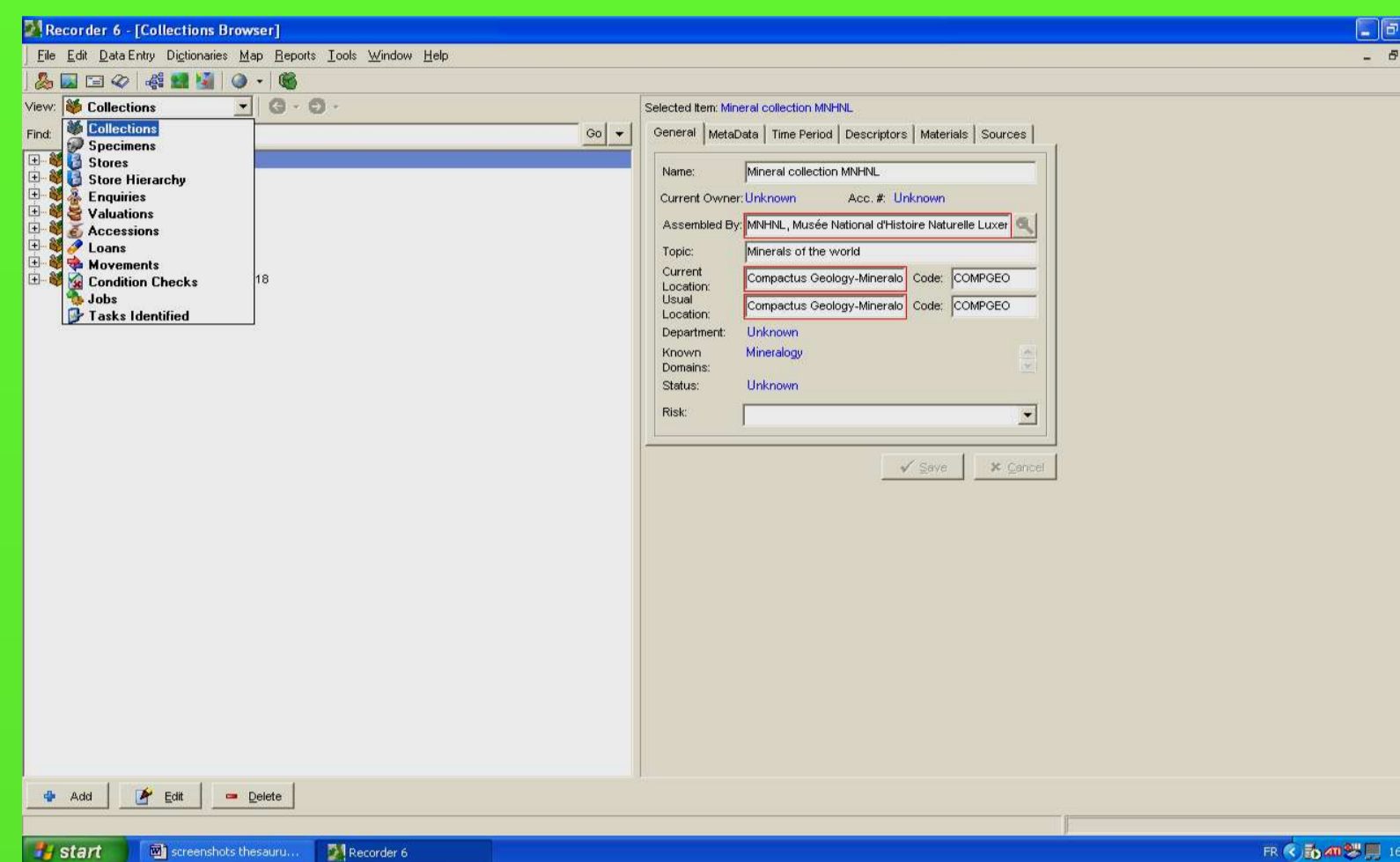


Fig. 2: General overview of the classes of information stored in the collection module which is fully integrated into Recorder 6.

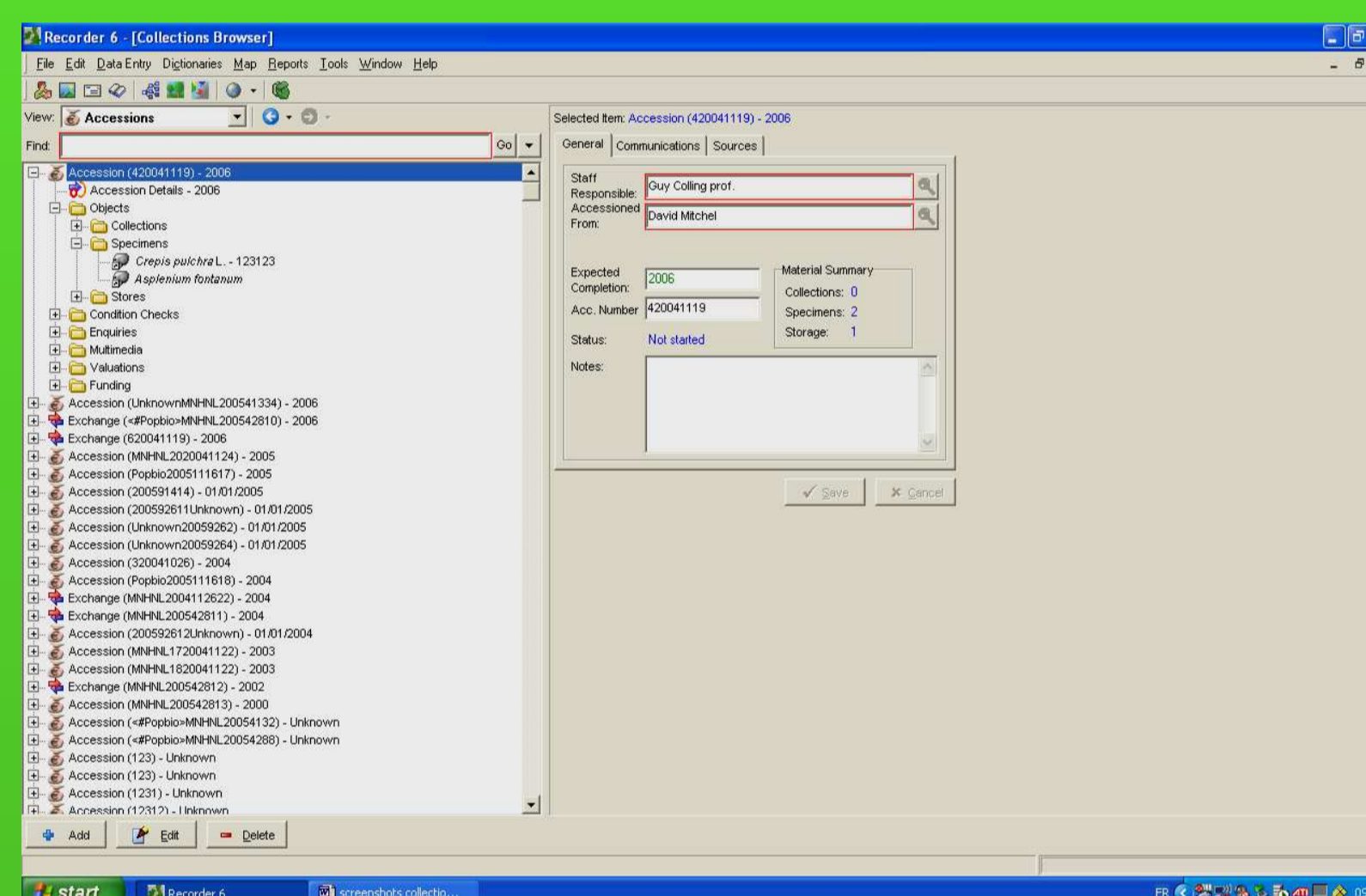


Fig 3: The collection browser allows to explore information in various ways.

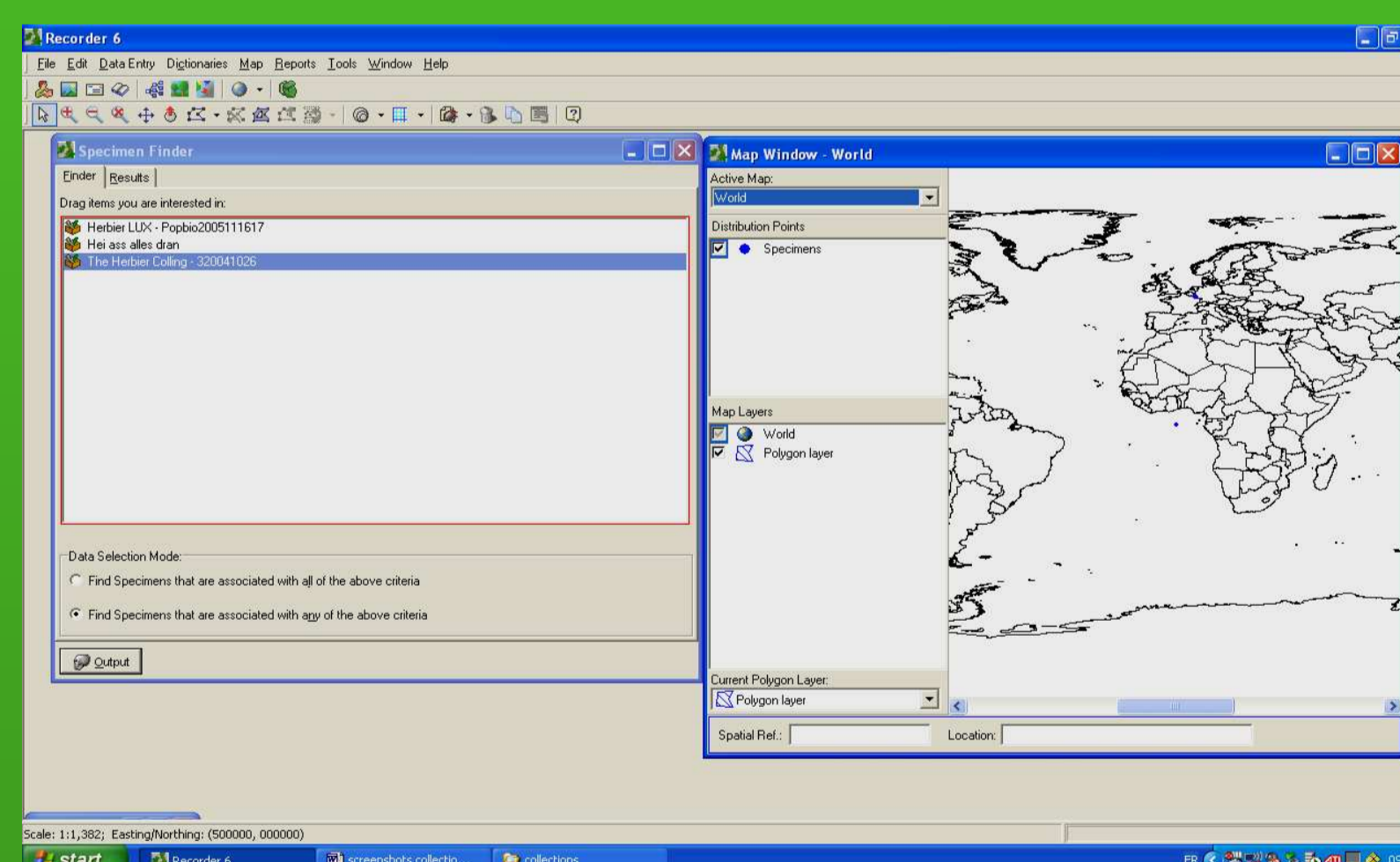


Fig 4: The specimen finder allows to select specimens based on any criteria.

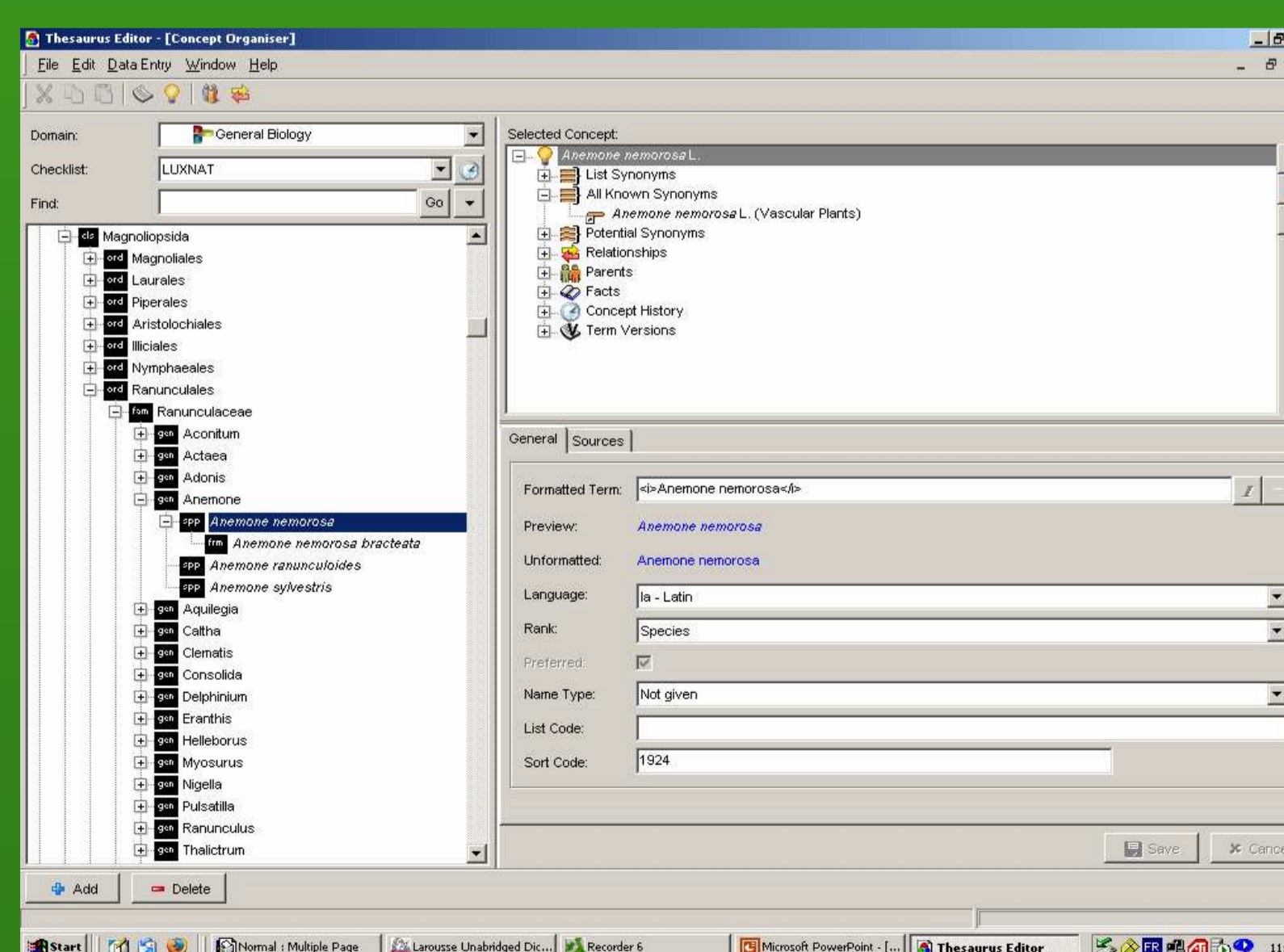


Fig. 6: Thesaurus editor which manages all standardised concept lists used in the collection module including taxonomic lists, descriptors, specimen types, preservation methods etc...