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SHORT NOTE

Availability of electronic publications

We all know the importance of the **International Code of Zoological Nomenclature**. Currently there are attempts to change the Code and to allow electronic publications for nomenclature.

The proposal for the Amendment (http://www.mapress.com/zootaxa/2008/f/zt01908p067.pdf) was published in August 2008, followed by a 1-year period for the zoological community to comment the proposal. At the end a 2/3 majority vote by the Commissioners is needed to finally adopt the Amendment and to integrate its contents to the Code.

A critical comment, presenting sound reasons for a partial rejection of the Amendment will be published by the staff of "AnimalBase" (a service run by the University of Göttingen, which provides free access for all scientists to the old zoological literature) in the Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature 66 (3), 30 September 2009.

Some of the reasons for the rejection of the Amendment by the AnimalBase staff is outlined below:

"AnimalBase is deep inside the field of electronic literature. It is part of the consortium of the project 'Biodiversity Heritage Library for Europe' (BHL-Europe), where leading IT technologists in the field of digital archiving are currently trying to develop strategies for sustainable preservation of electronic publications.

After having worked a long time in this field we came to the conclusion that sustainably preserving electronic information is a serious problem. In contrast to printed books, the future of electronic literature files is unpredictable. After 50 years of computer technology, archiving of digital files is not yet solved.

In botany, attempts to allow electronic publications, have already been rejected for the very same reason. Zoology has basically the same background. Zoological nomenclature cannot work without availability of original publications.

We work hard to provide free access to electronic files of literature. Although we work with the most modern technology, we are always aware that its electronic files will most probably not last as long as the printed books. The paper publication will always remain the backup that counts. Paper is the only reliable storage format. We know very well that the future of our electronic files is unpredictable, we can only hope, that our work will be useful for some generations.

The Amendment is primarily proposed to allow publishing nomenclatural acts in e-only journals, open access journals which do not produce any paper outprints any more. These journals create PDF files in a variety of different versions and standards. This is much worse for sustainable archiving than what we are doing here in AnimalBase and BHL, where PDF is never used as a storage format. In our Centre of Digitisation (GDZ) only TIFF files are created and saved. If you download a PDF file from our server to print out a publication, this is always only a derivate from the original TIFF file, which is saved in the repository.

to be continued on p. 196

ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

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