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SHORT NOTE

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PDF is a very bad format for storage. The fact that thousands of scientists use this format today does not provide security that the files will be readable in 100 years (TIFF, ASCII or XML would have a much better perspective). Our statements in the corporate AnimalBase comment about the PDF format are cited from IT specialists working in the task groups for sustainable archiving in the BHL-Europe project.

If e-only journals would use TIFF or JPEG2000 and provide strategies for long-term storage the situation would be slightly less dramatic. But it is PDF, and the ICZN has no power to change the situation and to force e-only journals to provide other formats and strategies for sustainable storage.

The whole idea behind the proposed Amendment must be rejected, it is dangerous for the future of nomenclature.

We know that it is very hard to believe that all information we currently consume electronically without thinking much about it, shall be lost some day. But indeed IT specialists in the BHL-Europe consortium consider this as a serious and realistic risk. The European Union and other funders spend millions of Euros in strategies for sustainable archiving of electronic literature files.

Hervé Colinmaire (head of the IT department of the National Library of France) said: 'The only way to reliably preserve electronic publications is to print them out on durable paper and deposit the outprints.' Printed paper is not only the best storage format we have, it is also the only reliable one.

The second point in the proposed Amendment concerns the new database ZooBank which shall be called Official Register. The goal is to make ZooBank the official database of the Code where all taxonomists must register their nomenclatural acts within one year after having published them. From our work in AnimalBase we know that creating such a database is not trivial. At the beginning there are many many bugs in such a database, and you need long test periods to see what is possible and what does not work properly. Login procedures are problematic, hackers and spam can be a problem, it is also necessary to collect experience with external users who may not know English and need to submit data from the most diverse computers of the world. One problem of ZooBank is that it has no sustainable funding, and we all know that economy does not really depend on zoological taxonomy.

AnimalBase has the same problem, much of what is done here is voluntary work. We know very well about the difficulties a database will be confronted with when you cannot pay a programmer. Or if you need to replace an experienced programmer by a new person. ZooBank will need continuously paid IT technologists working for it, without interruption and into an eternal future. If this cannot be provided, the Code should not make it official.

We appreciate the establishment of ZooBank and we are looking forward to see it working. But we reject the idea of making it an official database in the Code immediately, without any test phase and without a serious concept of its financial future."

Comments can be sent directly to the ICZN Secretary (iczn-em@nhm.ac.uk).

ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

Digitale Literatur/Digital Literature

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