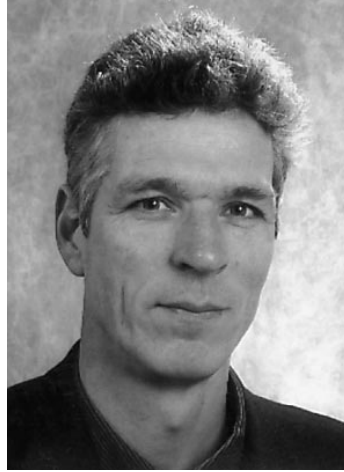
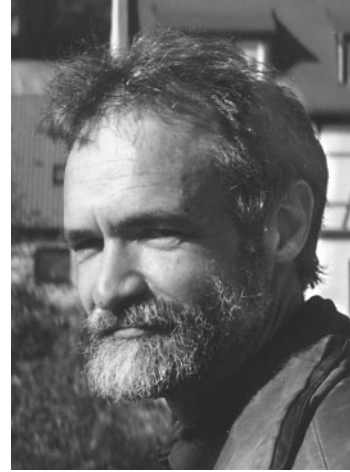




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Editorial

After having played only a marginal role in the biological sciences for many years, systematic biology has recently moved back to centre stage. This is due to three developments. First, systematics has been transformed into an objective hypothesis-driven science with the advent of repeatable methods for data collection, such as DNA-sequencing and diverse methods for quantitative data analysis, such as phylogenetic systematics. Second, researchers increasingly recognize that the findings of other biological disciplines such as physiology, biochemistry, genetics, developmental genetics, molecular evolution, ecology and biogeography cannot be fully appreciated outside a phylogenetic context. Third, a full understanding of organismal diversity is the necessary basis for any meaningful measures directed towards the preservation of biological diversity under the escalating threats posed by global environmental change.

The primary aim of the establishment of the Association of Biological Systematics (Gesellschaft für Biologische Systematik, GfBS) in 1997 was to demonstrate and promote the renewed importance of systematic biology. Further, the Association aimed to provide a new forum for all systematists irrespective of their particular organismal interests.

The foundation by the Association of Biological Systematics of its own journal - *Organisms, Diversity and Evolution* - is the second and most important step for promoting systematic biology. This new journal publishes papers of high quality on the systematics, phylogeny and evolution of all organismal groups, recent or fossil. The journal is one of only a very few which is not limited to a particular group of organisms nor to a specific method. The journal has a widely integrative approach and emphasizes aspects of general interest to all researchers in the field, it will also contain a section reserved for reports and discussion of current and relevant developments in national and international science policies. An electronic supplement to the journal will contain both data supplementary to printed papers and taxonomic treatments which for reasons of cost, technical feasibility or simply length cannot easily be printed.

We are very glad to be able to present the first issue of *Organisms, Diversity and Evolution* so soon after the idea for such a journal was first conceived. The rapid fruition of this idea was made possible mainly through the support provided by the Association and the publisher, Urban & Fischer.

We hope that the high quality and interest of the contents of this first issue will convince the reader of the need for such a journal.

The Editors-in-Chief of ODE, January 2001