



Editorial

Fossils—A New Open Access Journal

Eric Buffetaut

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (UMR 8538), Laboratoire de Géologie de l'École Normale Supérieure, PSL Research University, 24 Rue Lhomond, 75231 Paris Cedex 05, France; eric.buffetaut@sfr.fr

As the British author H.P. Hartley famously wrote at the beginning of his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*, 'The past is a foreign country'. For more than two centuries (the word 'palaeontology' having been coined by the French scientist Henri Marie Ducrotay de Blainville in 1822), palaeontologists have explored the farthest reaches of that foreign country, and the results of their explorations have filled thousands of scientific papers, monographs and books. Despite this tremendous amount of work, however, we are still far from having fully explored that country of the past. To take a simple example, it is estimated that about 1300 valid genera of non-avian dinosaurs are known at the present time. This is a small number, a fact which becomes more obvious when one considers that approximately 2385 living genera of avian dinosaurs (birds) have been described. Furthermore, the number of known genera of non-avian dinosaurs becomes ridiculously small when plotted against their stratigraphic distribution, which ranges from sometime in the Triassic to the end of the Cretaceous, a time span of at least 160 million years. This kind of example could be repeated for many groups of organisms: the fossil record as we know it is very, very far from complete.

What this means, of course, is that much remains to be done by palaeontologists to even fill in the gaps in that record. Naturally, palaeontology is not just about filling gaps in a record, however important that exercise may be. Describing new species of extinct organisms is in many respects just a beginning. Rather, the real fascination of palaeontology is understanding their evolutionary relationships, piecing together their distribution in space and time, reconstructing their biology and ecology, and trying to understand how and why they became extinct.

The aim of *Fossils* is to provide a new outlet for papers on all kinds of fossils, from all periods of Earth history, whatever the approach used [1]. Online publishing, with no limit on the length of papers or the number of illustrations, should prove to be an advantage for authors wishing to produce long, well-illustrated monographs, which have proved so useful to palaeontological science. However, reliable peer-review and fast open access publishing, the hallmarks of MDPI publications, will also make it easier to rapidly publish reports of new discoveries. We hope that *Fossils* will help palaeontologists, whatever their area of expertise, to disseminate the results of their explorations of that country of the past, which remains so foreign and mysterious, but also so fascinating, to us.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Reference

1. *Fossils* Home Page. Available online: <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/fossils> (accessed on 28 March 2023).

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