

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear colleagues, readers and librarians,

when this journal was founded in 1827 (as the »Abhandlungen der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft zu Görlitz«) it was a journal covering different fields of natural sciences and originally mostly informed the members of the Natural History Society about recent results and trends in natural sciences. In those early days, new scientific results in the form of what nowadays is called an »original paper« were of minor importance.

Later, mainly research articles presenting new results were published. These articles covered a wide field ranging from zoology, botany, forestry to geology, chemistry and geography with a focus on the region but also from abroad. This concept of a journal for miscellaneous topics was retained over the years and the title of the journal was modified to »Abhandlungen und Berichte des Naturkundemuseums Görlitz«. Within the last decade further changes took place: The journal was no longer published as sequentially numbered single articles but rather as two annual volumes (as of 1999) and a peer review system (in 1998) as well as an international editorial board (in 2003) were introduced. The demand for further changes with regard to the focus of the journal, however, became more and more obvious.

This was mainly due to three trends:

Recent evaluations of nearly all natural history museums in Germany recommended a transformation of the »traditional museum journals« into journals meeting the standards of ISI-ranking to increase their reputations among potential authors as well as within the scientific community.

Over the last years the scope of the submitted articles had changed. The vast majority dealt with soil organisms, thus reflecting the scientific focus of the museum.

The number of submitted articles dealing with other subjects decreased. Non-soil zoologists preferred to submit their contributions to journals which have a closer scientific scope and thus making them more easily accessible to colleagues from their specific field. Thus, as a general trend it is more and more difficult for a journal for miscellaneous topics such as the »Abhandlungen« to obtain high-quality original research papers from a broad spectrum despite its long tradition, highly recognised editorial board, peer-review system and worldwide accessibility in about 500 institutional libraries in more than 70 countries.

This in mind, the editors met several times in 2006 and 2007 with scientists of the museum to discuss these problems. During these discussions, we stayed in close contact with the members of the Editorial Board. Our common strategy to overcome the challenges mentioned above was to discard the concept of a journal for miscellaneous topics and to focus on soil biology – a research field in which our museum has a high reputation within the scientific community. As a consequence of these considerations, we decided to change the name of the journal to »Soil Organisms«. It will be the successor of the »Abhandlungen und Berichte des Naturkundemuseums Görlitz«. The first issue will appear in late spring 2008.

The editorial duties will principally be organised as previously for the »Abhandlungen«: I will be the Editor-in-Chief, Herbert Boyle the Executive Editor. International specialists representing the different fields of soil biology will support us as the new Editorial Board. Soil biologists from the museum will form an Editorial Committee and take over the organisation of single volumes.

»Soil Organisms« will cover the complete field of soil biology, including taxonomy and systematics, soil ecology, biogeography, morphology and evolution with a special (but not exclusive) focus on soil animals. In contrast to existing soil biology journals, our journal will provide a forum for all aspects of organismic soil biology.

Mainly original papers will be published, but reviews are also welcome. All contributions must be in English with an English and a German summary (we will translate the English summary into German for non-German speaking contributors if recommended). The journal will start with 3 to 4 issues; all articles submitted will be reviewed by – at least – two international referees prior to acceptance. Our aim is to receive an ISI listing as soon as possible.

We hope that not only the scientific community – the readers as well the contributors – will acknowledge our decisions and efforts but also the libraries. All will receive a new, modern, high quality international journal on soil organisms which will be of interest for scientists of different fields such as biology, soil science, agriculture, forestry geography and biomathematics.

With my best wishes,

Willi Xylander
Editor-in-Chief of
Soil Organisms