



# The start of the scientific journal ‘Fossil Record’

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## Abstract

This article describes the early years of the journal *Fossil Record* and the circumstances at the Museum für Naturkunde and the Humboldt University Berlin under which the foundation of the journal took place. The former Department of Palaeontology of the Museum für Naturkunde had a strong interest to publish its own scientific journal, and this led to the foundation of the journal in 1998 which is known today as *Fossil Record*. For reasons of a corporate similar appearance it was decided that the new journal as well as the two older scientific journals of the Museum für Naturkunde use the common title *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin* (Communications from the Museum of Natural History in Berlin) with subtitles for all three journals: *Geowissenschaftliche Reihe* for the palaeontological journal, *Zoologische Reihe* for the zoological journal and *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* for the entomological journal. With volume 9 (2006), the palaeontological journal appeared under the new title *Fossil Record*. From the beginning it was a goal of the editors to reach the international community by opening the journal to authors outside the museum and by publishing mainly in English. The palaeontological journal *Fossil Record* has developed from an in-house journal with international contributions to an internationally well cited journal.

## Key Words

Department of Palaeontology, Humboldt University, *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin*, Museum für Naturkunde

The precursors of the Museum für Naturkunde (= Museum of Natural History), Berlin were the nucleus of the Universität zu Berlin at its founding in 1810 (Hoppe 1998, 1999). Geosciences were represented by the mineralogist Christian Samuel Weiss (Hoppe 2000). In 1889 the collections moved location from the main building of the university at Unter den Linden 6 to Invalidenstr. 43, which is still the present address of the museum. Only the departments of Mineralogy, Geology/Palaeontology and Zoology were established in the new building (Hoppe 2003). Palaeontology dominated geoscience over the next 43 years until the arrival of the tectonic geologist Hans Stille, who put emphasis on geology in the broad sense (Gross and Schultze 2004). The Department of Geology survived WWII, but not the university reform of the GDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) in 1968, when it lost its independence as a department, although the curatorships continued to exist as part of the Humboldt Universität, the new name of the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität after WWII.

After the German reunification in 1990, three scientific departments, Palaeontology, Mineralogy and Zoology, were reestablished at the Museum für Naturkunde; Palaeontology as Palaeobiology - and unique for Germany - with teaching duties in the Department of Biology of the Humboldt Universität (with the argument that classical geology/palaeontology already existed at the Freie Universität in Berlin and applied geology at the Technische Universität also in Berlin).

All three departments, Zoology, Palaeontology and Mineralogy, belonged to the Humboldt Universität, with one of the three directors as general director of the Museum für Naturkunde (the mineralogist Prof. Dr. Dieter Stöfler in the first years 1993–1999, followed by Hans-Peter Schultze from 1999 to 2004). The budget of the museum had to be decided between the three directors, and one item concerned publications. The Department of Zoology published three scientific journals (*Mitteilungen aus der Zoologischen Sammlung des Museums für Naturkunde in*

Berlin since 1898; *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* since 1857 [1875]; and *Annalen für Ornithologie* since 1977), whereas the other two departments published none. The Department of Palaeontology had a strong interest to change that deficiency to be able to publish monographs and volumes dedicated to single subjects like Tendaguru, whereas the Department of Mineralogy preferred to not publish in an in-house journal. The director of Zoology, Prof. Ulrich Zeller was willing to integrate the *Annalen für*

*Ornithologie* with the *Mitteilungen aus der Zoologischen Sammlung des ....* (Zeller et al. 1998), and consequently, there was basic funding available for a geoscience journal. During the discussions concerning a name of the geoscience journal, having a corporate similar appearance was the argument of the director Stöfler to use the common title *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin* (= *Communications from the Museum of Natural History in Berlin*; Fig. 1A–C) with subtitles for all three journals.



**Figure 1.** Publications of the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. A–C. *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin* in 1998; A. *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift*; B. *Zoologische Reihe*; C. *Geowissenschaftliche Reihe*; D. *Fossil Record* vol. 11(1) in 2008.

The *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin*, *Geowissenschaftliche Reihe* contain only palaeontological papers and the history of the two geoscience departments (Hoppe 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003; Gross and Schultze 2004). It was a goal to reach the international community by opening the journal to authors outside the museum and by publishing mainly in English. Managing editor Prof. Dr. Gloria Arratia worked hard towards the internationalization by approaching and inviting colleagues outside of the museum and explaining advantages to publish in the journal. A little more than half the authors were not members of the Palaeontology Department. On the other side, the assistant editor Mrs. Petra Keßling helped old colleagues of the GDR adapt to the modern publication requirements, apart from continuing to publish in German. From 1998 (volume 1) until 2005 (volume 8), 97 papers were published under the journal name *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. Geowissenschaftliche Reihe*. Volume 2 contains 14 papers on fossils from Tendaguru collected before WWI. Volume 5 is the Festband for the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of the director of the Department of Palaeontology, Hans-Peter Schultze; it contains 21 papers.

For volume 8 (2005), the new managing editor Dr. Dieter Korn prepared the journal for acceptance in the citation index with articles assigned a doi number available on line; with volume 9 (2006), the volumes appeared in two issues per year under the new title *Fossil Record*, a name suggested by Dr. Wolfgang Kiessling, and, starting with volume 11 (2008, Fig. 1D), a new color and changing design from issue to issue (Aberhan 2008). A new name and design were also given to the zoological journal (*Zoosystematics and Evolution*; Glaubrecht et al. 2008). The corporate title was omitted with the change to the new publisher Pensoft in 2014 for the *Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift* (Zimmermann and Paß 2022) and *Zoosystematics and Evolution* and in 2021 for the *Fossil Record*. The palaeontological journal *Fossil Record* has developed from an in-house journal with international contributions to an internationally well cited journal.

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