

Editorial

As of the current issue, *Zoologische Abhandlungen* (“Zoological Treatises”) is changing its name to *Vertebrate Zoology*. This journal has a long tradition, reaching back to the year 1875 when it was founded as *Mittheilungen aus dem Königlich Zoologischen Museum zu Dresden* (“Communications of the Royal Zoological Museum at Dresden”) by Adolf Bernhard Meyer, then director of the Royal Zoological Museum Dresden, one of Germany’s foremost natural history museums.

The journal experienced several modifications of both its scope and title over the years as indicated on the inside cover of the journal. Shortly after being founded as an exclusively zoological journal, its scope widened to include anthropology and ethnography, reflecting Meyer’s research and collection interests. This multidisciplinary continued until the museum was destroyed in 1944; luckily the museum’s soul—the collections—survived, and therefore the institution as well. After the Second World War, both the collections and scientists of the museum were housed under miserable conditions in the ruined Saxon parliament building, and during this difficult period the institution and the journal were refocused again exclusively on zoology. The post-war division of Germany, with Dresden finding itself in the socialist German Democratic Republic, meant that scientists in that part of Germany were largely isolated from the western scientific community and with restricted access to their literature. Therefore, there was a great need for exchanging journals with western libraries to keep abreast of developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Thus, *Zoologische Abhandlungen* gave birth to four additional zoological journals, enabling the library of the Museum of Zoology to obtain many western journals in exchange.

Luckily, the pendulum swung back and the Iron Curtain broke down in 1989, leading to one of the most dynamic phases in the long history of the Museum of Zoology (founded in 1728). The demolition of the museum building in 1944 had already effectively ended the tradition of a typical natural history museum with separate exhibit and research divisions, with the “museum” being increasingly focussed on research during socialist times. This trend was strengthened in 1999 when the museum moved into two new research buildings, further accelerating its evolution into a modern research institution holding important collections.

One facet of this development impacts on the transformation of the museum’s journals. Although the number of journals is again reduced, the frequency of appearance of each journal has increased from a single issue per year to two or three. Coupled with a fast and competent review process, free online access, excellent print quality and quick publication time, these changes are hoped to attract an even higher number of high-quality papers. Three journals—Arthropod Systematics & Phylogeny, Mollusca and Vertebrate Zoology—direct descendants of our original zoological journal but with explicitly narrower scopes as indicated in their titles, are set to enter the international scientific community with a greater presence than ever before.

I am confident that the first step towards this goal has already been taken and look forward to a promising future.

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