



Out of the Mainstream: The World of Paleontology

Roy E. Plotnick

As has often been pointed out, the advent of the internet has forever changed how information and ideas are distributed. More than a decade ago, the founding editors of this journal recognized this potential and started an enterprise whose impact, both qualitative and quantitative (as evidenced by its “impact factor”) continues to grow. PE can be read anywhere in the world where there is access to the web and at no additional charge to the reader. In many ways, therefore, it is the first truly global paleontology journal.

It is for this reason that this issue begins a new series of commentaries, falling under the general concept of “the world of paleontology”. This series will focus on the status of our discipline in countries and regions across the globe and will be written by native scientists who have first-hand knowledge of the opportunities and issues facing paleontology in these areas.

The series begins in this issue with two essays that describe the situations in Germany, a long-time bastion of paleontological research, and in China, a rapidly rising powerhouse. The first essay, by Kiesling, Nützel, Korn, Kröger, and Müller focuses on the status of German paleontology in the 21st century. Many of the concerns they express should be familiar to all of us, no matter where we are, such as the closing of departments and the erosion of positions. The second essay, by Shuhai Xiao, Qun Yang, and Zhe-Xi Luo takes a critical look at what many have called a “Golden Age” for paleontology in China. Although there are many positive signs, they frankly lay out the challenges ahead.

At this point I would like to put out an open invitation for additional such essays by more of our colleagues from around the world. We would be especially interested in hearing from paleontologists in the developing world, eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union.