



From the Executive Editors

With the new academic year almost upon us, what better time for a new issue of *Palaeontologia Electronica* (PE)? In addition to working toward getting back on schedule in terms of release dates, we have made a number of changes at PE over the past few months. Perhaps most prominent among these has been the addition of new staff. This month we welcome Jason Head and Peter Roopnarine as Acquisitions Editor and Special Issues Editor, respectively. Jason's job will be to help us diversify PE's offerings while Peter's will be to work directly with the organizers of paleontological conferences and symposia to bring thematic collections of articles to your desktop. A hearty 'welcome aboard' to both Jason and Peter. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or proposals that fit into either of their areas they'd be happy to hear from you.

In this issue we break new technological ground with contributions by Michael Knappertsbusch, on how to achieve a 3D 'virtual reality' representation of fossil morphology using reflected-light optics, and Øyvind Hammer et al., on the use of reflectance transformation techniques to bring out subtle textural aspects of fossil morphology that may aid in morphological interpretation. These contributions, combined with innovative specimen-oriented analyses from Michael Polcyn et al. (on the CT analysis of an anole lizard encased in amber) and David Lazarus (on the origin and maintenance of biodiversity in Antarctic radiolaria) make up an issue that

pushes back the frontiers of paleontology—as well as paleontological publishing—in just about every direction imaginable. If you have a manuscript touching on any area of paleontology that you want published quickly in a leading-format, high-quality journal whose contributions are peer-reviewed to the highest standards, and that reaches the largest possible audience, you just can't find a better alternative than PE.

At PE we're passionately concerned with probing the boundaries of scientific communication. To that end, we've recently been discussing alternate approaches to the perennial problem of keeping the links from our articles to external information/software sources current. In discussions of electronic publication the difficulty of maintaining these links is often brought up; sometimes as a 'justification' for not publishing in electronic publications at all.

Of course, this problem is not confined just to the world of electronic publication. An increasing number of print-journal contributions contain URLs to web pages that are prone to the same problems that bedevil live links in electronic journals. Even in pre-electronic-publication days it was not unusual to see addresses, institutional affiliations, or even phone numbers in the reference list and/or 'Acknowledgement' sections of technical articles. These sources of additional information are necessary to the way scientific communication works, and the instability they often

embody is not going to go away. However, whereas print publication cannot deal effectively with URLs—much less addresses, attributions, or phone numbers—that change over time, electronic publications can.

For our part, we intend to intensify our own efforts—including working closely with our authors—to (1) minimize the external links from PE articles (e.g., by including copies of software and cited PDF files on the various PE sites—along with the original article, (2) periodically checking all PE articles for bad links, and (3) inserting clearly-identified and dated notes into article file(s) to correct any links that do die after a time. The latter will link to a

permanent and continually updated link file that will insure long-term archival access to outdated links. This is new territory for us and for electronic publication in general. Nevertheless, we view this situation as a challenge that—like all past challenges thrown up by electronic publication—can be met successfully through a combination of commitment, technology, and common sense.

Norm MacLeod & Whitey Hagadorn
Executive Editors