



HOW TO GET A REPUTATION IN PALEONTOLOGY! A TWELVE-STEP PROGRAM

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All budding paleontologists want to gain a reputation. There are two ways to do it. Here's one way.

1. Keep your eyes and ears open for ideas your paleo colleagues and friends have. Write them up and publish as soon as you can. After all, who will believe him/her when your name is on the paper?
2. When a paleontologist tells you about a new locality with significant fossils, get there fast and collect as much as you can. Publish quickly. After all, you've got the specimens, how can he/she argue?
3. When you review a manuscript or grant of a paleontologist you don't like or who has too much already, sock it to 'em. You don't even need to read it if you really think he or she is an ass. Check the reject box. Don't sign. After all, who will ever know?
4. When your student(s) tells you a neat new idea, publish it yourself. After all, she/he is just a student and may never amount to much anyway, right? If you are the student, do the reverse. A decent professor can't really squawk too much or he/she will look foolish.
5. When you work with another paleontologist, don't let him/her know what

you are really doing, then publish without him/her. If he/she is a decent person, he/she won't care. And after all, who else will know?

6. Demand that all of your students list you as an author. After all, you let them in your lab, and you let them use your beakers or maybe your own rock pick, right?
7. When planning field work with a colleague, change the dates late so that he/she can't go no matter what he/she contributed to the logistics or science. Spend the money. Use the equipment. After all, he/she can't complain without seeming to be a miser, a bad accountant or just grumpy, right?
8. If you screw up equipment or specimens, sneak them on to someone else's desk. After all, who will know?
9. When on field trips, listen carefully to the leader. He/she is the expert and chances are he/she will mention some work in progress and even tell you the conclusions. You can quickly take a sample in the exact right spot, if you ask, and then you can publish the work yourself. After all, you paid your money and he/she said you could collect, right?

10. Grab important samples whenever you can. This is easiest with unconsolidated sediment full of microfossils, so you may have to change fields for a short time. You could easily slip a handful of deep-sea sediment, for example, from the sides of a core barrel, into your pocket and publish the biota later. After all, who will ever know how you got the sample?

11. You can steal some fossils from a museum or another worker's lab, and write them up. After all, it/he/she might not even miss them, right? Probably you shouldn't do this unless you are getting desperate to improve your reputation.

12. You could just buy some nice fossils and write a paper about them. Include some stratigraphy, geology and locality data, as long as it is remote. Doesn't have to be too accurate. After all, who is likely ever to go there?

13. (Okay, I fibbed about there being 12 steps, but this one is particularly risky and I don't really recommend it. It's fine for your reputation as long as no one discovers it; after that you are

likely to be out on your ear fast, looking for a gas station job, so be real careful with this one!) If you don't want to do this 12-step program, skip it altogether and go directly to the obscure literature, preferably in another language. Find a good paper. Translate it and publish it under your own name. After all, who is likely ever to read the original? (This is the risky part: in the new on-line world the answer is "likely everybody".)

What? You wouldn't do any of these things? Ha! Someone does them. I didn't make them up—each of them has been demonstrated to me, some several times in the last few years. Some I overheard from other paleontologists who complained; two of them happened to me! Look around. You don't even need to ask. Sooner, more likely than later, you will see that others do them too, sometimes even to you. Join the group. Get your own reputation. Lots of people do it. Feel good about it. You might even get promoted. Look at Richard Nixon—he made it to the top of the world's list of most important leaders! And he did it this way, more or less.