



## Editorial

### ***Sherbornia*: “From want of a system which prevents ... false dates”**

*“I have received this exceedingly important publication ... and have found it invaluable in verifying references to the literature of Singapore. It is curious that we have to go to one of our smallest colonies ... in order to find such information registered—information which, in older countries, is most difficult to obtain, from want of a system which prevents the false dates often placed upon books by authors and by publishers ...”*

—Charles Davies Sherborn (*Natural Science*, vol. 9, no. 56, p. 280, 1896)

It is perhaps that as we enter an age where publications of consequence to the nomenclature of zoology now come delivered ‘over the air’ and often have their exact dates of publication on them that the contrast with the dating problems associated with the previous two-and-a-half centuries’ of printed work becomes exceedingly apparent.

It was to minimize these problems that Charles Davies Sherborn (1861–1942) first began the task that would produce the most important works for all zoological taxonomy and nomenclature. For more than 50 years of his life, Sherborn made bibliographies, indexes of species and genera, and found dates of publications for works in which no dates or only vague dates were previously known. Noting the importance of such bibliographic work, it is no surprise then that we name our journal *Sherbornia* in honor of this man and his work.

Of all the studies published by Sherborn, his greatest achievement by far was his *Index Animalium*, a list of all names of animals proposed from 1758–1850. In conducting this work, it became necessary for him to procure or have access to all the zoological literature in which new taxa were proposed. Many of the works that he consulted for the *Index Animalium* were either not well-known or were published in parts for which accurate dates were not known. He soon found that further research on these works was necessary in order to find accurate dates of publication, dates which would pinpoint priority between homonyms and synonyms. In order to do this, sometimes researching the history of a

publisher or printer and consulting book publisher’s newsletters and journals became necessary. Sherborn published a number of these dating works in the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* and, later, in the *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, the society of which he helped found with its primary purpose to disseminate the results of bibliographic research.

After Sherborn’s death in 1942, the task of finding accurate dates of publication has been continued by others, who to this day assist taxonomists and nomenclaturists by providing a historical context for names by helping to restrict otherwise vague or unknown dates to an exact date or a range of dates in which a name was published.

*Sherbornia* is not the first of its kind to support the dissemination of such research and it will probably not be the last. There is a great deal of work still to be done on providing accurate dates for many taxonomic works. *Sherbornia* provides a peer-reviewed and open access medium for this research in which all articles will be available for free to anyone as soon as they are published. *Sherbornia* is an electronic-only publication, and all requirements for publication of electronic publications according to the *International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature* (ICZN) Code of zoological nomenclature have been met.

In some cases, when finding an accurate date of publication that may change previously known priority of taxa in that work, novel nomenclatural actions result including reversal of priority, new synonymies, and possibly new replacement names, new combinations, or even authorship. By complying with the requirements of the ICZN Code, novel nomenclatural acts can be published in *Sherbornia*.

In addition to publishing articles as soon as they are completed and allowing novel nomenclatural actions,

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<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/dating/sherbornia/index.html>

one of the more appealing reasons to publish in *Sherbornia* is that, in providing published files in PDF format instead of a printed medium, there are no restrictions to page size. This is most useful for large tables that provide information on dates of publications for text and/or plates of large, complex publications in parts taking place over many years. We do not restrict the size of such tables and will publish them in the format and original size in which they were submitted once they are approved by the editors.

The future of *Sherbornia* also has exciting features that we plan to introduce. We are working closely with ZooBank, the registry for all publications of animal names. Currently, research results of older names (pre-1923) in ZooBank give the author, publication, and page upon which a name was first proposed; and will often provide the original page on which the name was proposed. This last feature is because of ZooBank is working with the Biodiversity Heritage Library to provide such links to pages of publications they have

digitized. We are working with ZooBank to additionally provide accurate dates of publication for names that are entered into ZooBank. This will be achieved through online templates, that when filled out, will accompany submitted manuscripts and, upon publication, will be ported directly to the ZooBank database for inclusion into search results.

We look forward to a long and successful life of *Sherbornia* and encourage all persons with an interest in bibliographic research to submit their manuscripts to us. All studies covering zoological bibliography and dating will be considered. No fees are levied to authors for publication and copyright lies with the author via Creative Commons licensing.

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