

# PRESENT DAY AND FUTURE OF FOSSIL CORALS RESEARCH

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Responses to enquiry „where we are?” (Wrzolek 2002b), sent by about 50 students of fossil cnidarians and sponges, reflect pessimistic opinions of our community on future of our research area. The respondents generally express low expectations of improved funding, but still worse is the fact, they confirm generally low or null number of our scientific successors. This is sad: we are a very small community, and as paleontologists we know that small populations are prone for extinctions. Are there any chances of recovery?

In my opinion our best hope is not so much in what we can get from the society and from the politicians, but in establishing and implementing some improved standards of our scientific activities. At the core of this question is the protection and accessibility of our collections. So many times in the past we witnessed destruction, either malicious or accidental, of valuable material, so many times the material we are looking for happens to be „misplaced or lost”. This occurred in the past, this will certainly happen in the future, we like it or not, but now we have a chance to give extra protection to our collections by carefully illustrating all the material studied and by sharing it in digitalized version. We may easily immortalize our fragile thin sections by using a scanner of high resolution, with device for transmitted light (nota bene scanners can also be used for obtaining fairly good photographs of fossils exteriors). Archivisation and sharing of data thus obtained may be the main factor of survival (or future revival) of paleontology. Therefore let us accept the idea: no new papers without attached library of good illustrations!

Moreover, I think we can easily agree upon standards of digitalization of our data, so we can collectively create the new „supertreatise” with as much data and as high resolution – in any aspect: taxonomy, geography, stratigraphy, ecology - as we only want to have (Wrzolek 2002a). This task will only benefit if we will be able to upgrade our past papers to these new standards.

Another question worth considering might be digitalization of older paleontological literature. Logical consequence of such a step would be revision of these papers and review of historical collections, with good chance for recovery of some „misplaced or lost” specimens.

## References

- Wrzolek T. 2002a. Databases and fossil corals. *Fossil Cnidaria & Porifera* **31.1-2**, pp 80-81.  
Wrzolek T. 2002b. Where we are? *Fossil Cnidaria & Porifera* **31.2-1**, p. 9.