

Geologica Pannonica and the role of printed scientific information in the digital age

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Why to change a brand name?

Geologica Pannonica is a new name for an old journal. Formerly called *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae, Sectio Geologica*, it has been an internationally-distributed publication outlet for the earth science community residing at Eötvös University, Budapest since 1957. During fifty-two years since its foundation by László EGYED, professor of geophysics, 35 volumes have been printed.

Creating the journal was sign of the melting political climate, a lessening of isolationism after the Hungarian revolution in 1956. The somewhat longish name was given in Latin, a language deeply rooted in Hungarian culture. More than ten *Sectios* started publishing at that time, *Sectio Geologica* being the most vigorous, still living today.

The new name, Geologica Pannonica, reflects a changing editorial policy. We want to attract authors irrespective of their location, who wish to publish about the Pannonian Basin, its basement and the surrounding mountain chains, their composition and history throughout all ages. Inspiration to create this name came from *Geologica Carpathica*, in the hope that a sister journal can capitalize on its success.

This change is in line with recent developments in the region: *Geologický zborník* → *Geologica Carpathica* in Bratislava, the five series of *Dări de seamă ale sedimentelor* → *Romanian Journal of Stratigraphy, Paleontology*, etc. in Bucharest, *Geološki vjesnik* → *Geologia Croatica* in Zagreb, *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geologischen Gesellschaft* → *Austrian Journal of Earth Sciences* in Vienna. While changing names is always for betterment of a journal, the success is not guaranteed.

Survival of regional journals

Existence of regional journals is fully justified for a science where principles are invariably described in a regional context. Most European and many other countries have their own journals, describing the national area.

These journals now live with major problems. Many of them are lagged behind their publication schedule, and some have sadly disappeared (*Memorie di Scienze Geologiche* of Padova, and *Beringeria* of Würzburg are two examples known for their

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excellent quality). Lack of funding is the immediate case, but a shift in the international publishing market is the major reason.

The major threat to regional journals is globalization: the drawdown of manuscripts towards international (i.e. mostly commercial) journals, assisted by the impact factor system. However, excessive pricing makes many of these commercial journals unavailable to scientific institutions. There is a paradox that authors who publish their papers in these journals, more and more often cannot read them at their workplace.

True, global publishers cannot be beaten by distribution of information... or can be?

Open access journals (*Geologica Carpathica* and *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica* are two great examples) are available to anyone with an internet connection, while paper versions are being printed as permanent repositories of the data.

Digital for searching, print for archiving

Why to print a journal anyway? When the American Geophysical Union officially announced termination of printing its journals in 2008, it is hard to argue against this global publisher. However, we feel that an over-enthusiasm for the practical advantages of digital publishing makes their publications committee blind to the disadvantages.

The major motif to cessation of producing a printed version is to save money. When all pre-printing processes are made electronically, it is convenient to stop the production line just before the printing machines start to run and save money for the publisher. However, the printing costs are not saved, but charged to the reader.

From the user's viewpoint, the digital version is best suited for easy search of information. The paper version – besides comfortable reading – is best for archiving.

In geology and palaeontology archiving information is a must. Exposures disappear, cores of expensive boreholes are mostly not kept, fossil localities are exhausted. Published information – multiplied by the hundreds at least – takes the place of them, preserved for future generations². Therefore it is vital that printable information is being printed and distributed. Paper is a proven medium to serve permanent recording of information, if printed and distributed to at least 300 locations worldwide.

If you buy electronic subscription and give up buying paper version – you are bound to pay for access forever, without actually owning the journal issues. Rare is the publisher (Geological Society of America is an exception) who supplies you with a CD at the end of the year containing all the electronic stuff you have paid for. If you buy a printed journal, it remains on your shelf, ready for perusing in years, decades, even centuries later.

Geologica Pannonica provides the best of both worlds to its authors and readers – a printed version with offprints and an open-access electronic version at <http://paleo.elte.hu>.

² While some chemists claim that they never access information older than ten years, palaeontological information is valid and to be accounted for 250 years at least. The International Codex of Zoological Nomenclature impose the rule that every publication on certain species must be accounted for back to 1758!