



Introducing the *Draft BioCode* (2011)

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Abbreviations

- IAPT. International Association for Plant Taxonomy.
ICB. International Committee on Bionomenclature.
ICSEB. International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology.
IUBS. International Union of Biological Sciences.
IUMS. International Union of Microbiological Societies.

As information on the world's biota becomes increasingly integrated across different groups of organisms, from bacteria and fungi to animals and plants, there is a concomitant rising need for a consistent and harmonized approach to the regulation of scientific names. The *BioCode* initiative represents a concerted effort, by biologists intimately involved in the operation of the current system of separate codes, to devise a unified approach to the future naming of organisms of all kinds. This need has become pressing in view of common issues that the separate organismal codes now have to address, consequent on the rapid changes taking place in global informatics, database architecture, molecular systematics and ecology, and electronic publication.

The *Draft BioCode* (2011) is most appropriately viewed as a framework over-arching the practices of the current series of codes, but which also addresses ways in which some of the key issues of current concern in systematics could be handled by all codes, for example the registration of new names and electronic publication. In addition, it has been drawn up so that its provisions can be adopted at the appropriate time for any particular group of organisms, at any rank or range of ranks. Such adoption is to be determined by the appropriately mandated international body if and when the necessary structures exist and are operational.

The advantages of moving towards a more harmonized system were realized at a Systematics Association-sponsored symposium held at the Third International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology (ICSEB III) in Brighton (UK) in 1985. IUBS then established a standing committee on biological nomenclature after debates at the 22nd IUBS General Assembly in Budapest (Hungary) later that year. In 1988, following discussions during the XIVth International Botanical Congress in Berlin (Germany) in 1987, and with the support of IUBS and the International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT), an *ad hoc* group including representatives of all five representatives of the committees in charge of the five current codes met in Kew (UK) to consider a common approach towards the protection of names then in use. Following from the report of that meeting, further meetings of the *ad hoc* group, and discussions and debates at the 23rd IUBS General Assembly in Canberra (Australia) in 1988 and ICSEB IV at College Park (Maryland, USA) in 1989, led to a major conference on *Improving the Stability of Names* being convened in Kew in 1991—with the support of IUBS, IAPT and the Systematics Association. Later in 1991, the 24th IUBS General Assembly,