

Phylogeny and the Classification of Fossil and Recent Organisms.
Edited by Norbert Schmidt-Kittler and Rainer Willmann. 1989.
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This volume contains the results of a round-table discussion on phylogenetic systematics sponsored by the German Research Council in March, 1988. The main purpose of the meeting was to bring together leading German biosystematists, both neontologists and paleontologists, in an effort to bridge the gap between the systematization of fossil and recent organisms and to critically discuss the present state of phylogenetic systematics in the land of its founder. Towards this goal 17 participants considered general theoretical aspects and specific case studies. That gaps still remain between the positions of neontologists and paleontologists and traditional and cladistic systematics is evidenced by disagreement for example over the place of fossils in a phylogenetic system (mere administration in "stem groups" or full incorporation despite increased instability of the resulting classification), the applicability of the biospecies to paleontology, theoretical deficiency in regards to botany or the utility of Linnaean classification. In addition to the immediate scientific value of the contributions the book also reveals the important fact that the present distinction between fossil and recent systematics is superfluous and counterproductive.

Although the book reports on talks given by German scientists in Germany and in German, the book is printed in English, a case of scientific Realpolitik because the editors knew that otherwise the book would not be read outside of the German-speaking area. Review of the various literature lists reveals how many significant works have been published in languages other than English and how much information remains unregarded because one cannot read them.

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