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## Authorships of taxonomic names in malacology

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**Abstract:** The ICZN Code does not give a compact guide on the authorship of taxonomic names, only some frames. A consistent spelling of the authorship is gaining importance in the electronic age. This contribution deals with the identity and spelling of the author in a taxonomic name, and intends to give some help in the interpretation of early original sources in terms of recognising authorships. Screenshots of original descriptions are used to illustrate some typical cases.

Modern malacologists are not always aware that if the authors of a new taxonomic name shall be different from those of the work, it is important to give a clear statement concerning the responsibility for the description. Merely indicating "the author of the new name shall be Smith" is not sufficient. In such a case the authorship for the new name must be attributed to the author of the work (Code Article 50.1.1).

The use of initials for authorships in taxonomic names (O. F. MÜLLER instead of MÜLLER) contrasts the Examples given in the Code and should be avoided. Using initials is a tradition in some zoological disciplines that is not accepted by all authors. It follows inconsistent and unwritten self-made rules and in biodiversity informatics it provides more obstacles and problems than it helps.

**Key words:** nomenclature, authors, co-authors, Article 50.1, descriptions, spellings, initials

**Zusammenfassung:** Die Internationalen Regeln für die Zoologische Nomenklatur (ICZN Code) enthalten keine kompakte Anleitung zum Festlegen der Autorschaft von zoologischen Namen, sondern geben nur Rahmen-Informationen. In der heutigen Zeit der elektronischen Datenverarbeitung und Suche per Computer ist eine einheitliche Schreibweise der Autorennamen von besonders großer Bedeutung. Der vorliegende Beitrag befasst sich mit Autorschaft und Schreibweise und erklärt anhand von Beispielen Probleme der Autorenuordnung bei der Interpretation von alter Originalliteratur. Screenshots von Originalbeschreibungen werden benutzt, um einige typische Problemfälle zu illustrieren.

Für den Fall, dass die Autorschaft eines neuen Taxons von der Autorschaft der Arbeit, die die Beschreibung enthält, abweichen soll, muss die Verantwortlichkeit für die Beschreibung ausdrücklich definiert sein. Dies ist vielen Autorinnen und Autoren nicht klar. Eine bloße Aussage "der Autor der Beschreibung soll SMITH sein" reicht in aller Regel nicht aus. In solchem Fall müsste nach den Nomenklaturregeln die Autorschaft für den neuen Namen dem Autor des Gesamtwerkes zugeordnet werden (ICZN-Code Artikel 50.1.1).

Die Benutzung von Initialen für die Vornamen von Autoren zoologischer Namen (O. F. MÜLLER statt MÜLLER) steht im Gegensatz zu den im ICZN-Code vorgegebenen Beispielen und sollte vermieden werden. In einigen zoologischen Disziplinen ist die Verwendung der Initialen Tradition, wird allerdings auch von vielen Autoren nicht akzeptiert. Die Verwendung von Initialen ist oft inkonsequent und folgt nur ungeschriebenen bzw. subjektiv "erfundenen" Regeln. Sie verursacht in der Benutzung und vor allem bei der Verarbeitung und Speicherung biologischer Daten sehr große Probleme und schafft weit mehr Hindernisse, als sie hilfreich wäre.

### Introduction

Every known mollusc should have a scientific name. Preferably, one single name, spelled everywhere identically. The science behind this is called nomenclature.

Nomenclature has long been the domain of a few specialists, experts who had access to the rare works of early zoological literature, and who knew the traditions how to read and interpret the ICZN Code. Today most early literature is online and easily accessible for the broad public. Young scientists need to know how to read and understand the original sources, to form a name consistently. It can also be useful to make names of molluscs fitter for the electronic age.

The binominal name of a species consists of genus and species, to which can voluntarily be added author and year. Genus, species and year follow clear rules, the problem in zoology is the author.

The Code does not give a direct statement on the spelling of the author in a taxonomic name. Some provisions are given for the identity of the author, but it is necessary to know how the rules are interpreted. Art. 50.1 in the present form (not much modified from the 1961 version) gives only weak and surprisingly unprofessional statements of how to determine the author, rather thought as a diplomatic solution than as a useful guide:

"50.1. Identity of authors. The author of a name or nomenclatural act is the person who first publishes it [Arts. 8, 11] in a way that satisfies the criteria of availability [Arts. 10 to 20] (...)".

The important statement in Art. 50.1 that the author should be the person who published a work or a name, is unprofessional. It ignores that in the process of publishing a work we are dealing with finely tuned different responsibilities of authors, editors and publishers. In these relationships the person responsible for publishing the work is the publisher (and not the author). The publisher has never been regarded as an author in the natural sciences. In a scientific context this is usually not a problem. If we say "RODRÍGUEZ published a paper on molluscs", everybody understands what is meant: RODRÍGUEZ wrote the paper and some institutional body or private company took care for actually publishing it. In a legal text such an insider slang should be avoided.

The Code's legal text in Art. 50.1 bears more problems. It fails to define exactly the requirements a person has to meet for being acknowledged as the author of a new name or nomenclatural act. By reference to Art. 8 ("What constitutes published work"), the expression "satisfying the criteria of availability" is not restricted to the content of a publication. SABROSKY (1974) saw himself forced to clarify the interpretation of Art. 50 of the Code's second edition (from 1961), to restrict authorship to the person(s) responsible for the description or diagnosis. This excluded persons who were only responsible for actually publishing the work (in the sense of Art. 8). Until today Art. 50.1 has not been aligned with SABROSKY'S (1974) interpretation, and for non-insiders who do not know zoological practice or SABROSKY'S (1974) definitions the Code's provisions are not easily intelligible.

This is not a big problem because insiders usually know more or less what is meant. It could be possible to define the author as the person who was actually responsible for writing the textual content of the description, or for having taken the decision to combine an illustration or previously published description with a new name, but such a definition does not exist.

The lack of clear guides in Art. 50.1 has resulted in a situation in which not all zoologists in all disciplines apply the same rules and accept the few precisely given provisions of the Code. Here I am trying to provide a documentation of who is currently more or less accepted in malacology as an author of a new name. The last chapter deals with their spellings.

### **Authors of illustrations**

It seems to have been widely accepted that authors of illustrations should not be recognized as authors in the sense of Art. 50.1, although some names were established exclusively as a name provided by one author combined with an illustration provided by a second author. In such cases the Code seems to be consistently interpreted in a way that an author of a name should be the author of the text, who combined the new name with the illustration. This means that the concept of an author in the sense of the Code is not in alignment with an author in the sense of legal intellectual property rights (copyright laws) which acknowledge separate authorships for images.

The person who provided the illustration would only be recognized as an author or co-author if that person also provided a name for it, for example on a plate. Since the Code has no direct provision, its interpretation depends largely on tradition.

### **Authors of previously published sources**

Most taxonomists accept Art. 50.1.1 that the author of a cited previously published source, from which text passages were copied, is not acknowledged as the author of a name. LINNÆUS (1758) gave 10,000 bibliographic references to 400 different sources, all those authors of previously published sources have never been considered in Linnean taxonomic names. In fish nomenclature previously published sources have occasionally been acknowledged by integrating the author of the previous source in the

form of *Raja manatia* BLOCH & SCHNEIDER (ex LACEPÈDE), 1801. This is not covered by the Code, and is currently not done in malacology.

### Authors of manuscript names

Prior to 1905 there was no common agreement on authorship for names in zoology. Malacologists followed a convention by which the person who provided a name, published or unpublished, was regarded as the author. Hundreds or thousands of names were attributed to ZIEGLER and PARREYSS, dealers from Vienna who sold shells and labelled them with names. These are called manuscript names.

Example:

In 1839 ROSSMÄSSLER established a name *Helix figulina* and attributed the name to PARREYSS in the headline (Fig. 1). The description was exclusively written by ROSSMÄSSLER. Until 1905 PARREYSS was regarded as the author of that name.

**Fig. 1:** *Helix figulina* from Greece (original and current combination), established in 1839 with a description and a figure (the shell was pasted in by myself from plate 44) in ROSSMÄSSLER's Iconographie, a typical example of an authorship of a manuscript name. ROSSMÄSSLER provided the description, but attributed the name of the species to the shell dealer PARREYSS (black arrow) who had provided the name. ROSSMÄSSLER confirmed this in the synonyms section: "*H. figulina* Parr in litt." Only the name was attributed to PARREYSS, not the description. Until 1905 the name was attributed to PARREYSS, after 1905 to ROSSMÄSSLER: *Helix figulina* ROSSMÄSSLER, 1839.



The first International Rules for Zoological Nomenclature (BLANCHARD & al. 1905) excluded authors of manuscript names. By consequence, the names of thousands of mollusc species had to change their authors. It has been since then that mollusc names were consequently attributed to ROSSMÄSSLER, PFEIFFER and other scientists who had provided the descriptions.

This provision was however not sufficiently accurate and did not provide a detailed guide to cover all cases, so that in the following decades taxonomic practice still continued to diverge among disciplines and authors. The problem with the shell dealers was not so obvious in vertebrates and other groups, so that manuscript authorships occasionally survived. PETIT (2007: 41) pointed out that in fish nomenclature manuscript names are occasionally acknowledged in the belief that the author of the work might eventually have copied a description provided by the author of the manuscript name. This has not been usual practice in malacology after 1905, and also PETIT (2007) had objections.

SABROSKY (1974) proposed to allow acknowledging a manuscript author in a form as suggested for the heteropteran insect names *Heterotis* RÜPPELL (ex EHRENBERG), 1829 and *Sudis niloticus* CUVIER (ex EHRENBERG), 1829. SABROSKY was an entomologist and was not aware of the problems such a procedure would create in malacology. We would have to write PFEIFFER (ex ZIEGLER) or ROSSMÄSSLER (ex PARREYSS), this is not done. Occasionally SHERBORN (1922-1931) used such terms for molluscs.

The process of correcting authorships of manuscript names to the true authors of the descriptions is still going on today. Continuously we observe cases where the original description of a name has probably not been consulted since 1905 and the name is still attributed to an author who was not responsible for the description. Also these authorships are aligned with the Code.

Example:

*Pisidium lilljeborgi* was established in 1886 in an article by ESMARK & HOYER. The name was originally attributed to CLESSIN, but CLESSIN was not indicated as the author of the description. Until recently CLESSIN'S authorship has been kept (FALKNER & al. 2002: 57, www.faunaeur.org 03.2011, both spelled *lilljeborgii*). Maybe I was the first after 105 years to have consulted the original source. Authors of the work were both ESMARK and HOYER. If I have not overlooked a previous description by CLESSIN the authorship must be corrected: *Pisidium lilljeborgi* ESMARK & HOYER, 1886.

### Authors of names who were not mentioned in a work

Most taxonomists accept Art. 50.1.1 that if an author is not "explicit" in the work itself, this person cannot be the author of a new name ("If the identity of that other person is not explicit in the work itself, then the author is deemed to be the person who publishes the work"). This means that only direct evidence in the original source can be taken into account. Also here we observe trends for deviating interpretations of the Code, particularly in fish nomenclature (FRICKE 2008).

### Anonymous works

Art. 50.1 has a provision "If the author, or the person who publishes the work, cannot be determined from the contents, then the name or act is deemed to be anonymous". In the Code Glossary an "anonymous" author is defined as an author "whose identity cannot be determined from the work itself". Malacological taxonomists usually work with a provision given in Recommendation 51D of the Code: "if the authorship is known or inferred from external evidence, the name of the author, if cited, should be enclosed in square brackets to show the original anonymity".

Examples:

*Bulla umbilicata* [RÖDING], 1798, *Pupa columella* [MARTENS], 1830.

### Different authors for work and description

In European terrestrial malacology it has widely been accepted since 1905 that a different authorship for a description must be expressly indicated in the original publication, either by a general statement ("all zoological descriptions in this work were written by WANG"), or by an individual statement ("the following three descriptions were provided by JIMÉNEZ", "this name shall be attributed to me and LAVOISIER because she contributed to the description"). This was a necessary consequence after 1905, when it became very important to disambiguate true different authorships from those of manuscript names as shown in the *Helix figulina* example.

If this is not done, it is logical that the same rules apply as for names before 1905. A statement "the author of the new name shall be SMITH" must be ignored if there is no clear indication concerning the responsibility for the description. In such a case the new name must consequently be attributed to the author(s) of the work. Malacologists who do not know the historical background are not always aware of this problem.

Example:

*Truncatellina cameroni* was established in 2004 in an article by TRIANTIS, POKRYSZKO, VARDINOYANNIS & MYLONAS. The name was originally attributed to TRIANTIS & POKRYSZKO alone, without any additional explanatory statement. The whole article contained nothing besides the description of the new species (an abstract, a short introduction and a list of references), so it remained totally unclear for what else the other two co-authors should have been responsible, if not for the description. Since the original statement "TRIANIS & POKRYSZKO" was not in line with the rules, all four were co-authors of the new name: *Truncatellina cameroni* TRIANTIS, POKRYSZKO, VARDINOYANNIS & MYLONAS, 2004.

If before 1905 a description was provided by an author other than the author of the work, this was made visible in the original source. In the 1800s it was a usual practice to set an acronym of the description's author (for example "BGT.", "PFR.") immediately below the text of the description. This has widely been accepted to indicate authorship for the description.





exceptions to the Code need be made". He estimated that there were relatively few problematic cases, and recommended authors to be careful in disseminating manuscript names to colleagues. Actually we do have some unfortunate cases in malacology.

In an essay on REEVE's "Conchologia Iconica" (1843-1878) PETIT (2007) argued that SABROSKY's (1974) proposal was not "as fair as it should be", and proposed to deviate from SABROSKY's (1974) strict application of the pure rules. The problem is that introducing fairness as a criterion in this discussion would inevitably complicate things.

Example:

In his monograph on Turkish snails SCHÜTT (1993) published a self-made description of a new species *Schileykula inversa*. The name was attributed to "HAUSDORF 1992" in the belief that HAUSDORF's publication had already appeared. HAUSDORF's (1996) publication appeared after SCHÜTT's (1993) monograph. The name of the species is commonly recognized as *Schileykula inversa* SCHÜTT, 1993.

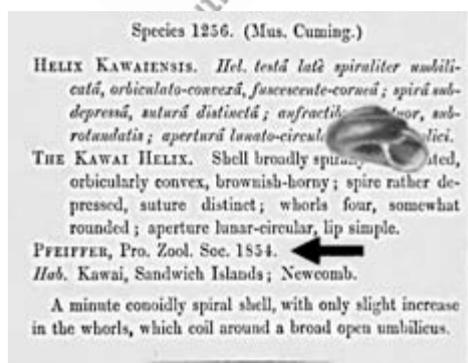
I have no example where SCHÜTT's "stolen authorship" for *Schileykula inversa* has been disputed. SABROSKY (1974) argued that authors should not distribute unpublished names before the name was made available. PETIT's (2007) argument was based on a slightly different situation because in REEVE's case PFEIFFER had no choice. To get a permission to publish in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London authors had to present their results at the Society's regular meetings. This information was subsequently used by others and the Proceedings appeared months later. J. GOULD and others escaped this threat by publishing new bird species in local newspapers before others would steal the authorship. The newspapers were subsequently regarded as published work in ornithology.

REEVE took the information from the meetings and published the names with their descriptions, perhaps slightly modified, perhaps not, and did not quote PFEIFFER's name as the responsible source for the descriptions. In PETIT's (2007) view this was unfair and these names should be attributed to PFEIFFER and not to REEVE. In SABROSKY's (1974) view not.

Examples:

REEVE (1854: Pl. 182, No. 1256) established *Helix kawaiensis*, with a description and a figure. REEVE gave a reference "PFEIFFER, Pro. Zool. Soc. 1854", but did not indicate that the description was copied from PFEIFFER's manuscript. Author under Art. 50.1.1 must be REEVE alone. PFEIFFER's article in the Proceedings appeared shortly after REEVE's work.

REEVE (1854 [1852]: Pl. 133, No. 818) established *Helix caputspinulae*, with a description and a figure (Fig. 5). REEVE gave a reference "*Helix epsilon* PFEIFFER, Pro. Zool. Soc. 1851". This reference was incorrect, it was not published in 1851. The description by PFEIFFER was published in 1853 (vol. 20 p. 57), and differed from the one given by REEVE. Author under Art. 50.1.1 must be REEVE alone.



**Fig. 5:** Original description of *Helix kawaiensis* from Hawaii (currently *Hawaiiia minuscula* (BINNEY, 1840)) in REEVE's "Conchologia Iconica" [true date 1854] (the shell was pasted in by myself from plate 182), a typical example of a probably unintended stolen authorship by REEVE. PFEIFFER's name was quoted, but only in an incomplete bibliographical reference to the Proceedings (black arrow), incomplete because the Proceedings had not appeared yet. PFEIFFER's name was not quoted for the description which we have to assume was written perhaps at least partly by REEVE, based on information provided by PFEIFFER in the Zoological Society's meeting. Under SABROSKY's 1974 interpretation of the Code authorship for this species must strictly be attributed to REEVE alone: *Helix kawaiensis* REEVE, 1854.

I find myself in agreement with SABROSKY (1974). PETIT (2007) admitted that it was often impossible to state which parts of the description were by REEVE and which ones by the other author, and proposed to acknowledge the cited persons as the authors of the names regardless of their role in the description. This of course, was a weak proposal, the problems are obvious.

In the case of *Helix caputspinulae*, we would begin discussions if the reference to PFEIFFER's description for *Helix epsilon* should also count for this purpose? What about if REEVE copied an already published description? Every single case would have to be examined closely and individually, using many many secondary sources.

These exceptions would unnecessarily enhance our workload, and would provide undesired obstacles for many malacologists. Various taxonomists would come to different results concerning the authorship, an undesired effect. REEVE would certainly not be the only case where fairness would come into effect, and every other case would bear other problems. Art. 50.1.1 demands that a different authorship must be "clear from the contents". This is a good rule because it is easy to apply and gives always the same simple result: REEVE in all cases.

### Order of co-authors in overlooked joint authorships

In some cases in malacology the analysis of the original source results in more than one author having contributed to the description, but the authorship of both authors was not acknowledged in the original source. So we have no guide who should be the first and who the second co-author in the taxonomic name. These constellations are not frequent and have often been overlooked or avoided by taxonomists.

An overlooked co-author interferes always if the author of the work provided a description and in addition cited a descriptive text from an unpublished manuscript attributed to another person (not from a published source!). That person is the overlooked co-author under Art. 50.1.1. I only know cases where two co-authors were involved.

The Code provides no help. I would propose a rule that in such a case the author of the work should be the first co-author, and the other person the second co-author.

This is only a proposal. Another proposal could be to select the alphabetical order, or that of the First Reviser. I would generally avoid to invoke a First Reviser decision if a solution can be found by using the original source alone.

Examples:

WESTERLUND (1873) established *Pisidium globulare* with a description and without attributing the name to a special person. Author of the main description was WESTERLUND, but below this, a text "Anm[ärkningar]." containing some descriptive elements was added and (only this passage) attributed to CLESSIN. This passage formed part of the original description, so CLESSIN was undisputedly a co-author of the description under Art. 50.1.1. WESTERLUND was the author of the work, so if my proposal is accepted the name would be cited as *Pisidium globulare* WESTERLUND & CLESSIN, 1873.

ROSSMÄSSLER (1835) established *Clausilia cattaroensis* and attributed the name in the headline of the presentation to ZIEGLER (Fig. 6). ZIEGLER was the author of a manuscript name. Usually ZIEGLER's name would be simply ignored like in hundreds of other cases. But in this special case ROSSMÄSSLER gave a brief description and added in quotation marks a short unpublished passage attributed to ZIEGLER. In this short text ZIEGLER talked about shell characters of the species. Consequently both persons were responsible for the description. ROSSMÄSSLER did not propose who should be the first co-author (ZIEGLER alone, as proposed in the headline, would be incorrect). ROSSMÄSSLER was the author of the work, so if my proposal is accepted the name would be *Clausilia cattaroensis* ROSSMÄSSLER & ZIEGLER, 1835.



**Fig. 6:** Original description of *Clausilia cattaroensis* from Montenegro (currently *Montenegrina cattaroensis*) in ROSSMÄSSLER's Iconographie [true date 1835] (the shell was pasted in by myself from plate 7), a very rare example of a descriptive text provided by a shell dealer. ROSSMÄSSLER wrote the Latin diagnosis and a relatively long German description (only partly shown in the figure), and attributed the name in the headline to ZIEGLER (upper black arrow), the author of the manuscript name. ROSSMÄSSLER confirmed that he regarded the shell dealer as the author of the name (middle arrow). At the end of the chapter ROSSMÄSSLER cited in quotes (black circles) a short text attributed to ZIEGLER (lower arrow). Both were co-authors of the original description and of the new name under Art. 50.1.1: *Clausilia cattaroensis* ROSSMÄSSLER & ZIEGLER, 1835.

### Spelling of the author

The spelling of the name of the author in a scientific name of an animal has never been an issue of the Code. This is in contrast to the spellings of the names of taxa for which exact provisions are given. Inconsistent spellings of authors never provided a problem prior to the electronic age of bioinformatics. Since the 1990s inconsistent spellings of authors in zoological species are known to provide serious obstacles to integrating electronic database resources, much more than in botany where near-standard abbreviations of authors' names are widely used.

The Examples given in the Code can be used for a weak guide.

- Authors are given in the nominative case, even if originally published in the genitive or another case.
- Authors are given in Latin script, even if originally published in a different script (the Examples follow Recommendation 51B).
- Authors are spelled with special characters (Müller, not Muller or Mueller), suggesting that UTF-8 character encoding is desired.
- Authors who used variant spellings in original sources are not always spelled as in the original work, but it is unclear which guide or list is used.
- No initials of authors' first names are used.

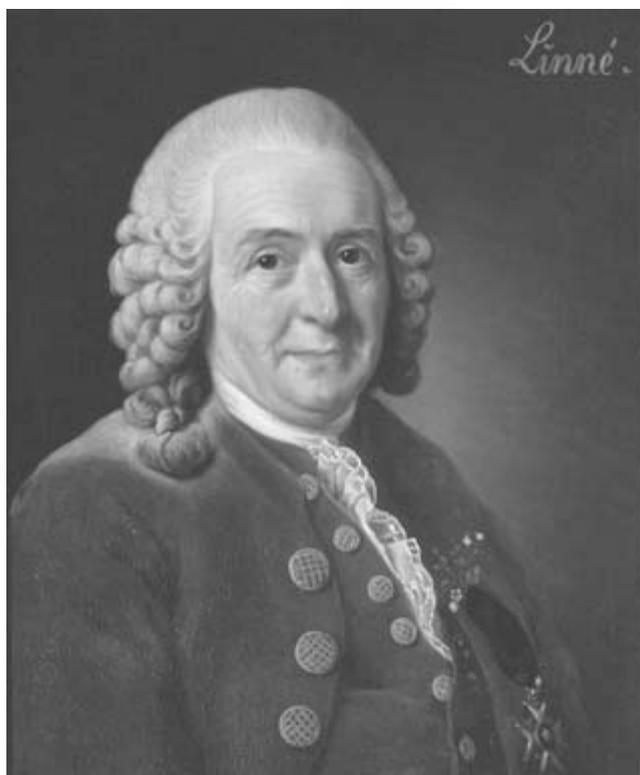
These are only weak guidelines. The first three bullet points are commonly accepted. Initials are a problem, the correct spelling is another problem.

It is very difficult to search for generally or widely accepted usages, every discipline and subdiscipline has its own internal rules, which again are not universally applied by all authors of those disciplines.

### Authors with variant spellings

Some taxonomists argue that the identity of the author longs for a single spelling of the author's name in all names of taxa, and that variant spellings must not be accepted. This involves proposals that authors who married or otherwise changed their names should take a decision which one should be the one and single name to be used in names of taxa (SCHULTES or WELTER-SCHULTES), that for dead authors this decision must be taken later (LINNÆUS and not LINNÆUS or LINNÉ, FORSSKÅL and not FORSKÅL), or that authors who published under a pseudonym must be cited with their true name (not FRA PIERO but ARBANASICH). The most extreme example is Catalog of Fishes (<http://www.calacademy.org/research/ichthyology/catalog/fishcatmain.asp>) where the database provider wrote e-mails to all authors who ever published under variant names on fishes to select a non-variant spelling for their name. Persons who divorced were not allowed to change their non-variant surname again. Pseudonyms were corrected where the true name was known.

This extreme view is not consistently adopted outside ichthyology. Most seem to respect the choice of an author to publish under a pseudonym. It also would create confusion if a taxon is attributed to an author whose name does not appear in the original source because later the person married or divorced and someone else selected another non-variant surname for that author.



**Fig. 7:** CARL VON LINNÉ, painted by ALEXANDER ROSLIN in 1775 (Oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm, Swedish National Museum). The founder of zoological nomenclature was also the first author who provoked problems with variant spellings of his surname: LINNÆUS until 1761, LINNÉ after 1761. Until 1761 the Swedish citizen had spelled his own name with æ and not with ae, as can be verified in preserved handwritten documents and in his publications.

In AnimalBase ([www.animalbase.org](http://www.animalbase.org)) a rule is consistently applied by which the spelling of the author is strictly adopted from the original source: LINNÆUS until 1761, LINNÉ after 1761, BOETTGER and BÖTTGER following the spellings in the original sources. The original spelling can be consulted quickly, most literature is already online.

Examples:

*Melanopsis praemorsa* (LINNÆUS, 1758) and *Melanopsis cariosa* (LINNÉ, 1767).  
*Euchondrus* BÖTTGER, 1883 and *Granopupa* BOETTGER, 1889.

In this method all information can be derived from the original source. It has the advantage that taxonomists who are not interested in the persons do not need to research the reason why the spelling was inconsistent, and if the same persons (BOETTGER or BÖTTGER) were involved or not. Marriage and problems with variant spellings of Spanish surnames can also be skipped if the original source is decisive.

The correct spellings of some early authors have since long been disputed, also these cases can easily be solved by using the original source. An outstanding example is FORSKÅL's (1775) work "Descriptiones animalium" (the original source spelled FORSKÅL) in which 400 new names of various different animal groups from the Red Sea region were established. FRICKE (2008) insisted in the spelling FORSSKÅL for fishes because the person spelled himself only FORSSKÅL and FORSSKAHL during lifetime. I screened Google and Google Scholar in 2009 and 2010 and found that both spellings were used: FORSSKÅL was mostly used in fish names, FORSKÅL by weak majorities in cnidarians, mammals and amphibians, and by stronger majorities in insects, crustaceans, birds, and also in molluscs.

Examples:

*Pterotrachea* FORSKÅL, 1775, *Pterotrachea coronata* FORSKÅL, 1775, *Rubritrochus declivis* (FORSKÅL, 1775).

Consulting the original source for the author's spelling is not commonly accepted. Taxonomists do not always like to use variant spellings for the same authors. In the case of LINNAEUS the æ is rarely used. Many authors do not know how to create æ with their keyboard, and think that in Scandinavia the æ ligature is regarded as equivalent with ae. The argument that the original source cannot be easily consulted is still brought forward, but seems increasingly unsubstantiated.

These are the two extreme currently applied concepts concerning treatment of variant spellings. They are also the only two concepts that follow consistent rules. There are many intermediate concepts in between, using undefined and inconsistent rules.

### Initials

BANK & al. (2007: 51) argued that in the names of taxa, the initials should be given for authors in those cases where identical surnames of authors appear "in malacology". They argued that this would facilitate the work and allow to determine the correct author.

This was in contrast to the Code's Examples. But the Examples are not part of the Code's legal text, so everyone has a free choice. The question is, why would we use initials, which kind of work is facilitated and which one not?

The Code does not give a statement why the author is cited in a taxonomic name. All seem to agree that the author is useful, but for the reason there are basically two views. Some scientists say, to acknowledge the person who did the work. The others say, to have one more component to convert a taxonomic name into a unique identifier.

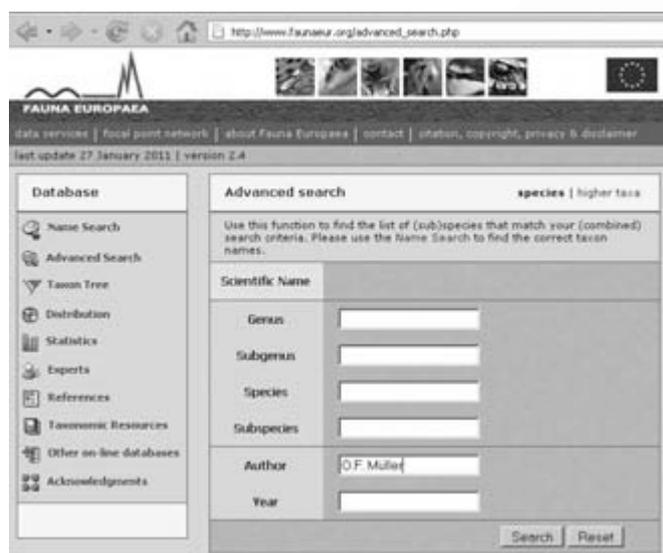
Finding the original source is also a point often mentioned in this discussion.

Determining the correct person is one possible interpretation. I would not agree that this is the superior interpretation, or the only one worth to be acknowledged. The identity of the person behind the name of the author is interesting for some people, but not for all. Not for all ecologists, molecular biologists or administrative bodies involved in nature conservation.

The definition "in malacology" (BANK & al. 2007) was not precise and their proposal left numerous questions open. If we look closer on the subject and compare traditions in other disciplines we can get the impression to have a situation in which many experts use their own definitions and unwritten self-made rules for the formation of names.

- Only European malacologists? Or also North American or Australian malacologists?
- Only recent molluscs, marine and non-marine? Or also authors of fossil species?
- Authors of fossil Australian cephalopods and bivalves should be disambiguated from authors of European recent terrestrial slugs, but not from authors of fossil Australian foraminiferans, ostracods and brachiopods?

- Should names of all authors who published any malacological works be taken into account, including the innumerable co-authors of molecular works? Or only those who published new names? What about nomenclatural acts?
- Authors with identical initials are not disambiguated by this method. The name C. PFEIFFER in the very example given by BANK & al. (2007) corresponds to two different persons: one acting as an author of mollusc names in the 1820s, the other one in the 1890s. The three G. B. SOWERBYS were called G. B. SOWERBY I, II and III. What about the two C. PFEIFFERS?
- Should authors who lived in different centuries be disambiguated (L. PFEIFFER and K. L. PFEIFFER)? In some disciplines initials are not used for this kind of cases because correct identification is possible by the year.
- Who shall define which ones and how many should be the initials to be used for authors like O. F. MÜLLER, J. B. L. D'AUDEBARD DE FÉRUSSAC, A. E. J. P. J. F. D'AUDEBARD DE FÉRUSSAC?
- Surname and year give usually a fairly good link to the original source. The interested taxonomist can find the correct author in the bibliographical record, where the initials are always cited in the lists of references.
- If a new author starts publishing, all previous names must be updated. When A. GITTENBERGER once acted as a co-author of a new name, database providers saw themselves forced to add the initial "E." to all the many names established by EDMUND GITTENBERGER (example: Fauna Europaea). Who cares about the workload and costs this creates for museum curators to update all their data files?



**Fig. 8:** Fauna Europaea web portal at [www.faunaeur.org](http://www.faunaeur.org), a typical online database with mixed standards in terms of authors. Some contributors from 2004 have used initials, others not, and those who used initials did not do it consistently. If you search for O.F. MÜLLER without space you will neither find O. F. MÜLLER with space, nor O. MÜLLER nor MÜLLER (the 2011 version replaced ü by u and ä by a by etc., possibly a temporary bug and unusual for a modern database which should work with UTF-8 character encoding).

Having two more components for a unique identifier is another possible interpretation why author and year can be added to genus and species. I would not say either that this is the superior interpretation, or the only one worth to be acknowledged. But it is clear that if large quantities of names are aggregated in electronic data resources, genus and species alone would not suffice. Author and year are needed in biodiversity informatics, in various situations. An aggregated electronic resource containing *Helix aspersa* and *Cantareus aspersus* without authors and years can hardly see that the same animals might be meant. Adding "MÜLLER 1774" to both will make it easier.

For these purposes initials are not needed, in the contrary. Initials are problematic in that they create conflicts between taxonomists whose job is to provide unique names for animals, and other bioscientists who have to use these names and work with them in electronic environments.

Inconsistent application of initials provide serious obstacles to electronic environments. For a human person *Helix aspersa* MÜLLER, 1774 and *Helix aspersa* O.F. MÜLLER, 1774 are the same. For a computer program not. These are different strings, and for data integration the program needs to be informed what to do. This costs money. The damage caused by the presence of initials is considerably higher than its benefit it has for some taxonomists.

Fauna Europaea ([www.faunaeur.org](http://www.faunaeur.org), Fig. 8) is a typical example of a database in which authors with and without initials are read as entirely different strings - if you try to search for all names established

by O. F. MÜLLER in [www.faunaeur.org](http://www.faunaeur.org) you have to know (1) that the submitted data by various providers contained several versions (MÜLLER, O. MÜLLER, O. F. MÜLLER with space and O.F. MÜLLER without space), and (2) that the search function will not find O. F. MÜLLER with space if you search for O.F. MÜLLER without space, O. MÜLLER or MÜLLER.

A uniform and commonly applied practice is necessary if connecting electronic biodiversity related information should work more efficiently.

Some databases use initials, some partly, some not. Those who use initials can quickly remove them. Those who don't use initials, cannot add them, because they don't know them. So the only possible solution is to remove them everywhere.

Finally, the use of initials tends to give the impression to reflect a low horizon of a closed circle of experts working in their own discipline and their own region, without knowing much on other animals. Such an impression would ignore that malacology is also able to look beyond.

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# Mitteilungen der Deutschen Malakozologischen Gesellschaft

Heft 85



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