

## **PaleoBase, Paleoinformatics and the Emerging Electronic Stratigraphical Community**

1Norman MacLeod 1Department of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD, N.MacLeod@nhm.ac.uk.

The past decade has borne witness to unprecedented levels of cooperation and integration within the stratigraphical community, principally as a result of the electronic communications revolution. In addition, the continuing revolution in computing power has provided stratigraphers with the tools necessary to begin the task of migrating their data to the electronic repositories that will form the nodes of a distributed system for accessing and analysing stratigraphical research results. Given the both paleontological resources and expertise are dwindling at alarming rates (especially in industrial, museum, and government sectors) the need for initiating such a project soon and ensuring its success cannot be overestimated if stratigraphy is to maintain its position in the face of demands for resources and personnel from other earth-science fields.

The PaleoBase Project is a Natural History Museum (London) – Blackwell Science sponsored commercial initiative in which many of the problems attendant to the development of a comprehensive data repository & communications system are being solved. These include problems associated with infrastructure, technology, expertise, programming & software, data models, finance, copyright, and project management. Although intended as a biostratigraphical resource of limited scope, the PaleoBase Project software design also allows ample room for expansion to include enhanced data synthesis and integration capabilities (e.g., via graphic correlation). Use of the experiences gained by PaleoBase staff should enable organizers of similar projects to capitalize on PaleoBase's successes, avoid its initial failures, and incorporate several of its technical & managerial innovations into their structure.