

Nearly 50% of the Indian amphibians were described prior to 1900. Of these, as much as 69% were named after some morphological feature or habit of the species, and only 15.1% and 16.1% after persons and places respectively. The drastic and steady decline from 1900s to the present in the percentage of species named after some species feature is very obvious from Table 1. The percentage of species named after persons and places has increased during the same period, the former being the most striking. A very similar trend is also evident in the case of reptiles. More than 75% of nearly 500 species of Indian reptiles were described before 1900. Nearly 50% of these were named after some species feature, compared to only less than 25% after the 1950s. Compared to the amphibians, more reptiles have been named after people even prior to 1900.

There are perhaps many reasons why there has been such a change. The most obvious is that it is much more taxing to name a species on the basis of its morphological features or habit. Physical features, colouration, etc. have to be noted in detail in the field, before these are lost in preservation. These then have to be compared with other similar species in order to identify its characteristic features and an appropriate name. On the other hand, it is so easy to dedicate a

species to a person or a place! We must note that most of the Indian species (of plants, vertebrates and even invertebrates) had been described by the 1940s; e.g. as much as 85% of amphibians and reptiles. If the taxonomists of those times could have had the time and patience to describe most of the species after some species feature, why could not the later taxonomists, who only had to describe relatively very few species? Or have we lost the art of naming species? Or do the Indian taxonomists (as other Indian scientists) have too many bosses that they have to please?

Names given to species by local people (but not scientists) almost always describe the species in some way, and thus help us identify the species. Such names are very rarely after a place or persons (except many common English names of tropical species). Since most Indian reptiles do not have common English names, Das¹ has done the most laudable task of giving such names. However, what he has done is to convert the specific names into common names. As a result, most of the species are called after a place or person, just like their scientific names. For example, *Cnemaspis jerdonii* is called (guess what?) Jerdon's day gecko, *C. kandianus* is called Kandy day gecko, and *C. mysorensis* and *C. sisparensis* are called ... you should know what. This

would in no way meet one of the objectives of giving common names to species, which is to help people like us to identify them in the field to the extent possible. Maybe Das should use his tremendous taxonomic knowledge to come out with more meaningful common names! The recently suggested revision of common English names for birds of the world², and the Indian subcontinent³, however much the present birdwatchers hate them, are good examples of such an attempt. Field ecologists would be grateful if taxonomists rediscover the art of naming species and stop calling them after persons and places. The first of the species names in the title of this article is perhaps the extreme to which naming a species can, but should not, go.

1. Das, I., *Hamadryad*, 1997, 22, 32-45.
2. Sibley, C. G. and Monroe, B. L., *Distribution and Taxonomy of the Birds of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990.
3. Anonymous, Common name changes of the birds of the Indian subcontinent, *Buceros*, Bombay Natural History Society, 1997, vol. 2.

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The missing link—The mainstream-peripheral science communication

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In describing one of the sessions at the last European Association of Science Editors (EASE) Conference in Helsinki¹, Chris Zielinski explained that in his 'development-set' days, he had formed opinions about the need for a two-way flow of information, yet the 2% presence of Third World journals in *Index Medicus* and the *Science Citation Index (SCI)* was still very meagre.

In 1979 I began criticizing the SCI coverage of journals from peripheral scientific communities (see the references in 2). To cut the story short, let me say that there is quite a respectful body of

literature dealing with the problem of two-way communication between the mainstream and peripheral scientific communities. As an example of the mainstream-scientists' consciousness about this global problem is the conference held in Philadelphia in 1985 - 'Strengthening the Coverage of Third World Science'³. This problem was also covered recently by the *Scientific American*⁴.

There are two lines of development so far in the secondary/tertiary science information services of importance which are relevant to our problem. Although they are as yet completely independent

and different, they could be made quite complementary to each other after 'the missing link' has been established.

ISI's citation indexes

The Philadelphia Conference⁴ recommended a substantial expansion of the SCI journal coverage from the Third World (whatever it meant - I prefer the term 'peripheral scientific communities', independent of geopolitical notions). Although these countries were expected to submit proposals for inclusion of journal titles into SCI, nothing was done about

this for the past 12 years. Neither was the money raised as required by the producer of SCI (Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, USA - ISI) to start the journal coverage expansion, nor was any interest shown by the peripheral scientific communities.

However, I believe this is wrong approach. How should one decide on the extended SCI - journal coverage? Coverage expansion would mean an arbitrary intervention into the body of SCI which is, after all, in some state of 'information ecology equilibrium' attained for the past thirty-odd years. As in ecology proper, no arbitrary intervention is ever entirely beneficial. I therefore propounded (first within an Internet conference⁵ and then in *Technoscience*) a 'value-added' approach through annual directories of all those journal titles (with their pertinent citing data) which are not within the SCI journal coverage, but which have nevertheless been recorded therein because they have been cited by the very SCI-journals. Thus, there would be no interference with the present and ongoing state of 'SCI-equilibrium', and yet an independent pointer to the so-far neglected journals pool would be created (for the benefit of both the mainstream and the peripheral scientific communities).

The ISI people noticed my contribution⁵ and approached me (in 1997). However, no action was taken. Because of the copyright act, no-one other than ISI themselves can undertake this. Apparently, they do not find this profitable, although they already have the pertinent 'raw' data base (see ref. 6).

Extra SCI

To quote again from ref. 1, Zielinski mentioned that in an attempt to counter-balance this he (Ch. Z.) had launched

the ExtraMED project, in which full text of some 300 biomedical journals from developing countries was being included as page images on a monthly CD-ROM. An independent evaluation by Dirk Schoonbaert of the first two years of ExtraMED has been published⁷, and the endeavour has also been described in ref. 4.

There is no apparent reason why ExtraMED should not be extended to ExtraSCI, that is, covering the entire science spectrum, and not only the biomedical field. Zielinski's initiative has already included this, too (in particular for the agricultural field and some of the sciences). It would be good if ExtraSCI could materialize as ExtraMED did. Besides, as the strongest barriers to scientific communication in social sciences and humanities are the cultural ones, it would also be advisable to have in mind an ExtraSOCHUM.

The most important advantage of ExtraSCI would be (judging by ExtraMED) that it is textual (not only bibliographical), bringing the articles on the scientist's desk, with a generally adequate retrieval software (including powerful truncation, proximity searching and automatic synonym look-up⁷). ExtraSCI is thus a very good candidate not only for the CD-ROM technique (as it has been so far for the ExtraMED), but also to put an appearance on the Internet.

Complementarity of the non SCI annual directories and ExtraSCI

In one very important aspect the two approaches complement each other. Namely, whatever is the secondary/tertiary science information service, it has to deal with the problem of selecting the journals for their coverage. The coverage of journals from peripheral scientific com-

munities for the ExtraSCI may be expected to be somewhat broader than that unearthed by the nonSCI directory. However, to start with ExtraSCI, nonSCI titles (from the envisaged annual directories) would serve very well, and would do so continually in 'trimming' the journal selection for ExtraSCI.

1. Zielinski Ch, Teaching scientific writing in Eastern Europe and developing countries (Report of the B4 session, moderator Ch. Z.), *European Science Editing*, July 1997, 23(2)/(No. 61), pp. 45-46.
2. Maricic, S., The mainstream-peripheral science communication, *Technoscience*, 1997, 10, accessible at <<http://www.cis.vt.edu/technoscience/97win/comm.htm>>
3. Strengthening the coverage of Third World science - The bibliographic indicators of the Third World's contribution to science (Deliberations, Conclusions, and Initiatives of an adhoc International Task Force for Assessing the Scientific Output of the Third World, 1985) - The Final Report of the Philadelphia Workshop and of the Discussions Preceding and Following that Workshop. Issued by Michael J. Moravesik, Institute of Theoretical Science, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 USA February 1986, 16 pp.
4. Gibbs, W. W., Lost Science in the Third World, *Sci. Am.*, August 1995, pp. 76-83.
5. <<http://www.vita.org/technet/founarch/index.html>> The relevant parts can be found in 'Information & Communication' under 'Topics of the Discussion'.
6. ISI journal selection, in <<http://www.isinet/whatshot/essays/essay9701.html>>
7. Schoonbaert, D., Experiences with ExtraMED, an electronic full-text biomedical journal collection on CDROM, *The Electronic Library*, 1996/June, 14(3), pp. 251-255.

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