

Dear Community,

Times are good for NOW, and there are two big news (three actually). Hold on.

If future historians happen to pick up this circular, they will be surprised to find no mention of COVID-19, so here it is. Here in Helsinki we work remotely and will continue remote teaching until the end of this year, it seems. NOW is very well, not much affected and continues business as usual. There is a lot of it, for your amusement I'm attaching a screenshot (as of now) from NOW task management system, called Trello. This keeps track of data curation tasks as well as the database infrastructure. Tasks first come into the most left column as new suggestions and then are sorted out, taken forward, or postponed by me, Kari and others of NOW development team.

Which brings name to the first big news. NOW Advisory Board now has three dedicated data curators: Melike Bilgin, Otto Oksanen, Diana Pushkina. Melike is based in the Netherlands and Otto and Diana are in Helsinki. They have been helping a lot already, a few weeks ago the role was formalized.

This is a different role from Coordinators for taxonomic groups or geographic regions, which most of you are, as members of NOW Advisory Board. Coordinators are in charge of interpretations within their jurisdiction (taxonomic, stratigraphic or other). Some Coordinators do pro-active work in curating data in their areas of responsibility in NOW (most welcome, please do more!) but primary interactions with taxonomic or regional Coordinators come via queries – an issue comes up, and somebody from NOW management contacts you and asks how this should be represented in NOW.

Data curators will be those asking questions. They work primarily as investigators of issues with existing data, they may need to track where the existing interpretation comes from, track literature, contact the relevant Coordinators asking for interpretations. The role of Data curator is similar to that of collection curators at museums.

This is another opportunity to remind – please write to either of the curators, Kari, Lars or me if you notice any errors while browsing NOW data, even very small ones. Those issues will come on the task list and even if they are not investigated immediately, due to overall task load in NOW, they will be investigated eventually. Important is to flag issues when noticed. And if you are a taxonomic or regional coordinator, consider browsing NOW data within your jurisdiction from time to time, and flagging any issues or fixing directly. Hands on fixes within your jurisdiction are most welcome. Most of you have NOW logins and can do that, for example change family affiliation of a species within your taxonomic responsibility. NOW strictly follows interpretations of Coordinators, if you are the coordinator responsible for that group, your interpretation is what NOW follows, even if the General or Associate Coordinators do not share the same opinion. If you lost your password, contact Kari.

The second big news -- the Emeritus Board is now implemented. Several long-time active members of NOW joined this board: Pierre-Olivier Antoine, Elmar Heizmann, Christine Janis, Jordi Agustí, Sevket Sen, George Koufos, Constantin Doukas, Tony Barnosky, Mikael Fortelius. This is a

way to step down from active curatorial responsibilities, but stay within the NOW community. The Emeritus Board is still an operational role, but without explicit responsibilities. Curatorial questions may come, and probably will, but you can say “no” more often 😊 If anyone else would like to join the Emeritus Board, let me know, and suggest who could be the expert to replace you in the previous role. A regular term for NOW coordinators is 5 years, but in most cases the roles continue. NOW is for the long run and long-term consistency of interpretations is important.

Which brings me to the highlight news. To recognize outstanding contributions, it is my pleasure on behalf of NOW Steering group to announce the first Honorary NOW Members:

Ray Bernor, Hans de Bruijn, Mikael Fortelius, Sevket Sen and Lars Werdelin.

These titles are forever and carry no operational duties.

Thank you. An official ceremony will take place later, hopefully when the virus clears.

All be well and I really hope that we can meet in person in Barcelona for the 25th anniversary of NOW in 2021 as planned.

Indré