

THE STATUS OF MICROFORM AS PUBLICATION

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I feel that "microform" (especially microfiche, but also other potential computer-generated methods) should be accepted as valid publication as long as they satisfy the criteria of availability and distribution. Most of them are infinitely better than some of the "ink on paper" publications that are accepted as valid at present. Admittedly they may not be quite as convenient to use but this is not an argument against their acceptability.

2. I do not feel that theses on microfilm should be acceptable because to my mind they do not fulfil the criteria of availability and distribution. I feel similarly about storage of materials in computers without prior publication (in the usual sense).

3. I feel that some processes, e.g. "hectograph", which do not employ a "reasonably permanent" ink should be excepted. On the other hand "Xerox" as we know it around the University here is as permanent as any of the regular good quality "ink on paper" methods.

4. I do not see how one can restrict the number of vehicles of publication - modern technology might come up with some unsuspected technique that is better than any currently available.

5. I think that the Commission should give major attention to the goals that need to be satisfied in legal "publication" and try to establish rules which will serve as legal "guidelines" rather than prescribing certain techniques and proscribing others.

6. I don't feel that "first distribution" to a listed set of libraries should be accepted. However, first distribution to certain categories (such as all copyright libraries), together with a published notice of such action, might be.

(2) By W.A.S. Sarjeant (*Department of Geological
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I understand that the Commission is seeking the views of taxonomists concerning the admissibility of microfiche and microfilm as an avenue of publication? May I register my vote *against* this, please? My reasoning is along a number of lines:

(i) Expense. The cost of one microfilm viewer is not great, but it is entirely outside the reach of scientists in the less wealthy countries; they would be forced to leave a specimen in the laboratory, go to the library to see the microfilm and return to the specimen relying on a possibly inaccurate retinal image. In wealthier countries one could be purchased, but for accurate identification one often needs to be able to compare simultaneously several illustrations in several separate papers with each other and with a specimen.

One could scarcely purchase a series of viewers; even if one could, the comparison of the images on several viewers would remain impracticable, if the viewers are always as poor as those available here.

One can have full-size prints made from microfilms, but this would mean a vast escalation of costs in these days. It is cheaper by far to buy more journals.

(ii) Ready reading. Many papers are discovered by chance rather than by specific advance knowledge of their appearance. Microfilm/microfiche purchase presupposes advance knowledge of what one is looking for. One would quickly learn of crucial papers in which first descriptions were made; one would learn less easily of, and be less likely to purchase, other papers in which supplementary details (perhaps of crucial importance) were noted.

Microfilms and microfiche preclude casual reading; to sit at a viewer requires strong motivation and is visually and mentally very tiring. These forms of reproduction should be retained only as a means of making available material otherwise inaccessible.

(iii) Quality. The quality of microfilm and microfiche is by no means uniform; some will take considerable enlargement, others emphatically will not. In some I have seen, the illustrations have suffered a serious loss of quality by the time they are enlarged, to the point of virtual uselessness. One cannot legislate for quality.

(3) By Ellis L. Yochelson (*U.S. Geological Survey,
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Quality and breadth of first distribution are of prime importance in defining publication. Technology cannot be regulated by the Code in any meaningful way, so no rules should proscribe a particular process. Who can say what technology will be tomorrow?

Production of copies on demand from a master deposited in a library can be proscribed. The Code might note the need for permanency and good reproduction and on this basis recommend that taxonomists not use hectograph, xerograph, mimeograph, or other such reproduction which is not conventionally employed by a majority of journals. It is a fact that printing processes are changing rapidly and it may be that in the near future journals will move to xerography. By urging that systematists follow what most journals do, perhaps individuals will think twice about starting their own private journal. However, the present Code does not preclude an inferior journal, privately distributed.

I do not judge that the Code can control quality; at best it can urge and recommend. Any attempt to restrict the number of vehicles of publication would be retrograde.

I know of a feeling among some systematists that 50 copies or more are needed to constitute publication, but I know of no basis for this. Perhaps a minimum number of identical copies should be specified. If so one might also specify a minimum number of countries, let us say five, to which a journal or monograph should be distributed. Obviously this cannot be retroactive. It might lead to national repositories for systematic literature and ultimately greater accessibility. To list "official" libraries might be an affront to systematists in those countries not on the list.



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