



International Commission on Stratigraphy website rejuvenation

(by Philip Gibbard, Secretary General ICS, Cambridge)

As we all know, keeping a website up to date is a continuous labour that requires a dedicated person responsible for the daily task of making the often minor but significant changes that are regularly required. This is particularly important for the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) whose website (<https://stratigraphy.org/>) is a vital reference for everyone interested in the current state of the Geological Timescale (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – Current front page of the ICS website.

The increasing workload and responsibilities on our previous webmaster Dr Junxuan Fan (Nanjing, China), who did a fine job of establishing and maintaining the website, had recently resulted in him being no longer able to keep the site current. We are most grateful to him for his work for the Commission, but we are indeed fortunate to have recruited Dr Nick Car (Canberra, Australia) who has replaced him.

This changeover is timely in several ways. Firstly it would be normal for ICS officers to be handing over to their successors at the International Geological Congress. Secondly, since the site required updating to add the details of the officer changes, a rejuvenation of the site could be undertaken at this time with the minimum of disruption.

With this in mind Dr Car has energetically taken up the challenge of updating and remodelling the site. Our initial approach is to ensure that the content is current. However, once that information is included, we are planning some new designs to rejuvenate the site further.

The most significant new initiative, which could prove to be potentially a major improvement of ICS' web-presence, concerns our constituent subcommissions each of which is responsible for a specific division of geological time, as well as stratigraphic classification and timescale calibration. At present each of our 17 subcommissions maintains their own, independent sites. Whilst this has worked well it has led to variation in both the content and appearance of the individual sites. The changeover of officers planned for 1 August 2020, coincident with the revamping of the site has encouraged the Executive to move to incorporate the subcommission websites to the main ICS site. This provides a timely opportunity to revise the way that the subcommissions organise their sites and importantly provide a measure of uniformity in their appearance and content. Whilst we are not proposing a 'straight-jacket' approach, it potentially provides a major advantage since it will encourage both continuity of content, as well as compatibility between different time-period information, etc.

Once established each subcommission will continue to be responsible for their pages' content as well as appointing their own web person. Each subcommission will populate their pages with information from their existing sites - updated as appropriate. Individual subcommissions may wish to maintain their independent sites, but bringing these sites together has obvious advantages which it is hoped the subcommissions will recognise.

Other exciting new developments are planned but one is already in place. A new, interactive, version of the International Chronostratigraphic Chart! Students and staff at the Geological Survey of Queensland and the CSIRO (Australia) have produced this version of the chart which uses data from its Semantic Web representation. The chart can be seen here: <https://stratigraphy.org/news/130>. We welcome feedback from users for further improvements or additions to the ICS site.