NamesforLife BrowserTool takes expertise out of the database and puts it right in the browser

The list of validly published names of *Bacteria* and *Archaea* changes roughly 15 times each week. Invalid and trivial names appear in the literature and public databases at a rate more than three times higher. A small number of experts work to keep pace; meanwhile the rest of community is left alone to make sense of an onslaught of names. All agree that the correct name is essential for accurate communication, but which name is it? And if a name changed, why did it change?

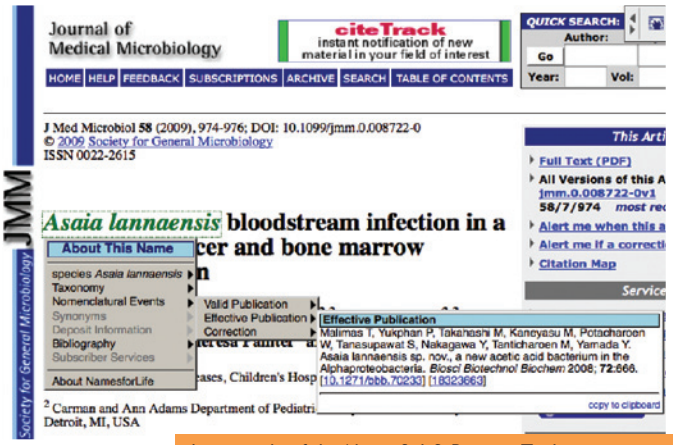
What does this mean as you read the literature? Do you stop reading to check on the taxonomic state of play? Do you look it up later? Are you sure that your knowledge is current?

There is a solution. *NamesforLife*, in partnership with the SGM and the International Committee on the Systematics of Prokaryotes, extracts all relevant information from the taxonomic literature for *Bacteria* and *Archaea*. This information is then presented, with additional annotation, for any text that is readable in a web browser (starting with Firefox, but expanding to other browsers in the near future), on-demand. Never again need a reader be ill informed about the status or meaning of a name.

The archaeon *Pyrococcus furiosus*. *Eye of Science / Science Photo Library*

The *NamesforLife* philosophy is that online annotation must be sufficiently authoritative and persistent for other systems to rely on them rather than reinvent them. Those services must work not only for the ad hoc human user, who after all has fail-safe alternatives, but also in third-party applications. *NamesforLife* identifies service objects using the now familiar digital object identifiers (DOIs) and makes them reliably citable and reusable. The objects then become formally structured micropublications. How is it done? *NamesforLife* employs expert curators to index the literature as a sequence of interrelated taxonomic, nomenclatural, and organismal events, all tied to previously recorded events and to the literature.

The result is not simply a database to search. The *NamesforLife* BrowserTool takes the expertise out of the database and puts it right in the browser! Expert annotation is presented via a menu that collocates with the occurrence of a name on a web page. The menu links to other resources and to *NamesforLife* Taxonomic Abstracts, which aggregate key information and track changes.



An example of the *NamesforLife* BrowserTool in action.

The BrowserTool will launch at the SGM Spring Meeting 2010 in Edinburgh and will be free for registered use.

Every validly published bacterial and archaeal name that is viewed in the browser is highlighted (automatically or on demand) and serves as a direct link to encapsulated information about its past and present status as well as key references and other online resources, all with the simple click of a mouse.

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