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COMMUNICATION

GeoArchive Marburg moved to Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum Frankfurt

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In 2004, the government of the State of Hesse (Germany) decided to close down the Faculty of Geosciences at Philipps University of Marburg. As one of many consequences, a solution for the storage of the important and extensive collections of the former Institute of Geology and Palaeontology as a part of the faculty had to be sought. Consequently, another institution rooted in Hesse was considered - the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum Frankfurt. Here, extensive biological and geological/palaeontological collections are housed and continuous curation of the numerous specimens is guaranteed in the future.

View into a drawer of the GeoArchive Marburg - ceratitid ammonoids in the macropalaeontological collection.

Therefore, in 2013 the transfer of the collections was agreed by contract between the Philipps University Marburg and the Senckenberg Research Society and carried out in the same year. It was also agreed that the material should have the status of a 'permanent loan' for 15 years and thereafter be owned by Senckenberg. The material comprises almost the entire collections of the GeoArchive Marburg which, following sorting prior to transportation, resulted in the abiotic Quaternary collections being transferred to the Museum of Natural History "Ottoneum" in Kassel.

Specimens for the GeoArchive Marburg have been collected for more than 200 years - the oldest dating from the end of the 18th century. The collections are subdivided into four main parts:

1. type material of fossil animals and plants formally described and published (all the specimens carrying the acronym Mbg. plus a specimen number),
2. systematic comparative collections of fossils (invertebrates, vertebrates, palaeobotanical material),
3. stratigraphical and regional geological collections, and
4. collections of microfossils.

In summary, the collections of the GeoArchive Marburg include about 142000 specimens. They fill 125 cabinets with ca 6000 drawers plus 600 microfossil trays with some 11500 micropalaeontological slides. Although the material is derived from all parts of the world and all systems of Earth History, the focus clearly lies on the Palaeozoic (especially Devonian). In the regional collections, material from the Alps is well-documented in addition to classical Palaeozoic areas.

The collection of type material is the most important part. It consists of 8200 specimens kept in five metal cabinets belonging to ca 300 publications on macrofossils. The oldest type material was deposited in the early 19th century (Ullmann, 1803). Many famous palaeontologists have deposited their specimens in this collection - including E. Kayser, O.H. Schindewolf, F. Drevermann, R. Richter and W. Ziegler.

The systematic macrofossil collection and the stratigraphic/regional collection make up by far the most numerous parts of the collection. In the first, specimens are subdivided into invertebrates, vertebrates, palaeobotany, and ichnofossils. The latter contains all kinds of samples (e.g., again fossils, but also rock specimens for facies/sedimentology samples, etc.).

Microfossils are kept separately and include material for some 50 micropalaeontological publications, especially on conodonts.

The integration of the GeoArchive Marburg into the Senckenberg database system 'SeSam' has already started. First, the type material is added to the system. As specified in the contract, the source of the material is maintained by including the prefix of the original Marburg collection numbers (Mbg) in the database as well as on the labels.

Access to the material of the GeoArchive Marburg is provided via the regular loan system of Senckenberg. All collections of macrofossils and stratigraphy/regional geology are accessible via Dieter Uhl (dieter.uhl@senckenberg.de) and the microfossil collection is available via Peter Königshof (peter.koenigshof@senckenberg.de).

The transfer of the outstanding collection of the GeoArchive Marburg to Senckenberg guarantees that more than 200 years of collecting palaeontological/geological material are safeguarded in the future and that accessibility will be maintained. More details about the collection can be found in Oppl et al. (2014). In the near future, type material of diploma theses and dissertations carried out at Marburg University will also be transferred to Frankfurt.

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