Article 8.1.3.2 refers to having a fixed format and gives a few examples. I guess you are right to avoid mandating specific formats here – they will change over time in any case – but then this could lead to debates over whether a particular format is 'widely accessible'. At some point someone could choose to publish a paper in a minority format which might pose issues for current and future accessibility – who is to say whether this is valid or not? To avoid such disputes you might choose to add a recommendation as to which formats would be preferred/acceptable at the date of writing, and in this instance you should probably use an external list e.g. from a suitable archive or standards body rather than dream up one of your own. **M. Jackson**

Format issues and retrievability in the future – Text content and print

Technical progress is irresistible, and the practice of biological nomenclature is not an exception. The authors of the proposed amendment well appreciate this, as well as the connected problems. These problems include the threat, first, of complete loss of irreplaceable primary documents in view of the evidently insufficient reliability of the current internet facilities, and, second, of tampering with these documents. No doubt, these threats are real and very serious, and the contradiction between them and the urgent necessity to legalise online nomenclatural activity is acute, but brooks no delay in its resolution. Is there any exit? I believe yes. We should only address our own history, I mean the history of our discipline, biological nomenclature. Long before the first Codes were established, scientists kept seeking for means to make the nomenclature of living beings stable and reliable in spite of the abundance of taxonomists, with all the diversity of their views, habits and idiosyncrasies. And the necessary device was eventually discovered, the type principle.

I don't think it is reasonable to scrutinise here the functions of the type principle. I dare to hope that the vast majority of the people interested in the present issue do understand, or at least feel subconsciously the profound importance of, the implementation of the type principle. That is why I simply propose to seek for an equivalent of the type specimen as applicable to online publications containing nomenclatural acts.

The first to come to mind is a hard (paper) copy of an online publication, kept in a scientific library or the like, which must be specified as permanently connected with the applicable name (i) in the primary publication and (ii) in at least one online depository of scientific names (Zoological Record or the like). Certainly it is preferable if several to many identical paper copies of the primary document were stored in relevant depositories. It is a subject for further discussion if these hard copies are to be considered analogues of syntypes (of equal legal virtue) or of a holotype and paratypes, and if there should be several obligatory depositories where these copies are to be kept.

Fortunately we now have widespread and quick communication tools, which make efficient discussion possible, with clear and speedy results. We have at least three years before the XXI Zoological Congress (2012). Given 2009 for discussing the basic principles and seeking for the best form of the type equivalent, 2010 for elaborating the actual Code amendments based on the consensus about the basic principles and instruments, and 2011 for discussing these specific amendments, we have a chance to meet that Congress with a finalised proposal of the amended Code. In summary, I

feel it premature to discuss the present Proposal in detail before the basic principles are sufficiently discussed. **A.P. Rasnitsyn**

With an increasing number of taxonomic publications coming to BioMed Central's open-access online journals (including both *BMC Evolutionary Biology* and *Parasites & Vectors*), I would like to reaffirm how beneficial it would be for the ICZN to update the Code as soon as possible to reflect the fact that the primary mode of scientific communication is now online, rather than print. Not only are new scientific journals (such as those from BioMed Central and PLoS) commonly online only, but I am hearing on an increasingly regular basis about traditional journals announcing plans to drop print. Without question, a serious commitment to preservation of the scientific record is vital – not just for taxonomy, but for all research. Online publishers such as BioMed Central have shown that commitment, and as long as publishers are meeting best practices for digital preservation, it seems clearly desirable that these publications should 'count' as publications from the perspective of zoological nomenclature. Note that e-publication does not, by any means, rule out the use of paper as one form of preservation for 'born-digital' content, and it is a form of preservation that libraries archiving digital content are free to use. Digital publications, incorporating the right to reuse and create derivative works, offer many benefits for taxonomy and taxonomic databases, so it would be very unfortunate for the Code to continue to act as an obstacle for taxonomists keen to work with open-access journals. **M. Cockerill**

Format issues and retrievability in the future – Images

An earlier comment said '*As long as we have binary computers, we will also have at least ASCII, and very likely also UTF-8 and XML*'. This issue is not whether it is binary or not, but how much (or how complex) technology is required to get it from the stored form to the human form, which in this case is the alphanumerpunctobet. This is something we can probably keep in our sights with textual information, but when it comes to digital images and other multimedia there is no equivalent of ASCII and we are already in *deep* trouble. **J. Croft**

Archiving issues

As far as lightning strikes, etc., destroying electronic-only publications, this is easily dealt with. If even just a few dozen major libraries, herbaria, or museums established servers to mirror each other's contents, we could rest assured that our electronic documents are at least as secure as our paper libraries. I've recently found a paper, published in 1989, that does not exist in any of my local libraries, or even in the personal library of the author! Yet I can still find usenet postings from that era, redundantly archived in a number of locations. I think this will inevitably be a big win for libraries. The cost of running a server is a fraction of the subscription fee for a major journal. And if something should happen that causes the simultaneous loss of all the servers at libraries around the world, chances are good that nomenclatural priority will not be among our most pressing concerns. That's my little rant on why open access, electronic publishing is a good and inevitable thing. **T.W. Smith**

The large (physical) libraries are handicapped by the need for ever more (expensive) physical storage space, on the one hand, and by being few and far between (and thus