MICHEL, Ellinor (editor). *Anchoring biodiversity information: from Sherborn to the 21st century and beyond*. Pensoft Publishers, Sofia: 2016. ISBN 9789546428066 (paperback).

The nature of the work conducted by a biological bibliographer is unlikely to set the pulse racing. Yet it is vital work nonetheless, requiring a combination of traits: dedication, orderliness and meticulousness. These qualities were combined in the person of Charles Davies Sherborn (1861-1942), author of the magisterial *Index Animalium*. Ellinor Michel's edited collection builds upon a 2011 meeting acknowledging Sherborn's accomplishments, creating a permanent tribute to Sherborn's life, work and lasting contribution to biodiversity information. *Anchoring Biodiversity Information* is divided into three sections, on the past, present and future of biological nomenclature. The first delves into Sherborn's bibliographic and scientific work. The second discusses contemporary databases, archives and modern analysis of Sherborn's *Index*. The final section introduces new digital tools and taxonomic resources.

For anyone with even a fleeting interest in the history of taxonomy and bibliography, the first – and largest – part of *Anchoring Biodiversity Information* is an excellent read, as its authors bring Sherborn and his fellow indexers to life. Neal L. Evenhuis introduces the reader to members of the 'Indexer's Club' (p. 14), including ornithologist Elliott Coues (1842-1899), who described the habit of biological bibliography as 'as dangerous a gift as the appetite of the gambler or dipsomaniac.' (p. 20). Indeed, *Index Animalium* – an attempt to provide zoologists with a list of generic and specific animal names since 1758 (p. 34) – would occupy 43 years of Sherborn's life (p. 48). Karolyn Shindler notes that Sherborn's mammoth labour was made all the more difficult by an 'explosion in scientific literature' during the nineteenth century (p. 49). It therefore comes as something of a relief to read that Sherborn's *Index* was gratefully received by the scientific community; even more so that Edward C. Dickinson considers the *Index* to have provided an important base for modern ornithological nomenclature (p. 109).

The 'Current tools and innovations' segment faces a difficult challenge: exploring modern indexing tools while maintaining a sense of cohesion with the past. Digital tools provide one means of accomplishing this task. Francisco Welter-Schultes et al. analyse the accuracy of

entries in Sherborn's *Index*, which prove remarkably precise (p. 179). Yet although Sherborn is still used by researchers today, 'Taxonomists should probably not consult Sherborn to verify the correct authorship for a name.' (p. 184). Editor Ellinor Michel strongly recommends David Remsen's paper on scientific names and biological informatics, which she suggests 'should become required reading for all taxonomists.' (p. 6). Remsen does construct an insightful model of the difficult relationship between scientific names, specimens and concepts. Effective communication, he notes, can occur in biological taxonomy only when biologists share fundamental concepts: for instance, of what constitutes a species (p. 211).

What of the future of biodiversity information? In the closing section of the book, a great deal of attention is given to computerisation and digitisation. Databases and digital tools can be used to streamline access to taxonomic data, or help unlock previously inaccessible information. Richard L. Pyle notes that 'the nomenclatural system used by taxonomists during the past two and a half centuries has been remarkably consistent, universal and stable.' (p. 263). What has changed is the means by which taxonomic data is gathered and distributed. The 'crude maps' of early naturalists have been replaced by GPS; illustration by digital photography; microscopes and dissections by DNA sequencing (pp. 263-265). This 'electronic information revolution' (p. 268), will undoubtedly prove fruitful for both scientists and future histories of biological nomenclature.