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LithoLex - a lithostratigraphic database for Germany

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The formal lithostratigraphic definition of rock units belongs to the basic principles of geosciences and is of paramount importance to each of its sub-disciplines, be it pure geological mapping, sedimentary geology, stratigraphic correlation, paleontology and so on. Despite considerable efforts needed to describe and define formal lithostratigraphic units, the existence of thousands of different lithostratigraphic units as well as the high number of related publications and viewpoints can be confusing even for specialists.

As a consequence, the German Stratigraphic Commission has decided to initiate a data base project networking specialists from different geo-scientific German institutions with the aim to establish a freely accessible internet database, named LithoLex.

Persons of four institutions are integrated in the strategic planning: (1) the German Stratigraphic Commission, responsible for basic planning of data content, (2) the “Geologischer Dienst NRW” (Geological Survey of North Rhine-Westphalia) in Krefeld, responsible for detailed elaboration of data content and structure, (3) the “Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe” (Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources) in Hannover, responsible for hosting of the SQL-internet database, and (4) the “Staatliches Naturkundemuseum” (National Museum of Natural History) in Stuttgart, responsible for programming of a local MS-Access database. The data base structure is compiled by the latter three institutions. After implementation, the eight German Stratigraphic Subcommissions will represent the main nodes that synchronize specialists from different German institutions (e.g., universities, geological surveys, museums) responsible for data entry.

Currently, a local MS-Access database is being programmed at the National Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart which will be distributed to the nodes for data entry. The distribution of local databases was found to be a more practicable solution than data entry into an internet database. The completed data sets will be sent to the German Stratigraphic Subcommission, which is responsible for the approval of data (i.e., contents and accuracy of lithostratigraphic units). The approved data will then be submitted to the Geological Survey in Hannover, where they will be incorporated into an SQL-internet database, the structure of which mirrors the local database. This internet database will then be accessible for the public.