

June 15, 2007

Everyone:

We are pleased to announce that we have put up a new build of PaleoStrat that focuses on enhancements to make the use of the system easier and enhances what we provide the user.

Media management:

We now have the capability that allows users to upload images and photographs. Using the tools on the "Media Management" tab you can easily upload images, tag them with a particular sample, section, drill hole, outcrop, annotate them with explanations/captions and then allow the public to view them via the Quick Search downloads or via GoogleEarth interface. This capability will be enhanced in the next build to make it even easier to use and we will be working on new ways to allow you to display the images.

GoogleEarth:

We have enhanced the use of GoogleEarth to include images & photographs tied to points on the map. Download all the KLM files (Home Page) and use GoogleEarth as a way to survey all the data in PaleoStrat.

Tutorial:

We have placed a new tutorial on line that we hope explains how to use the PaleoStrat system. If you have questions - please contact us.

Using the Excel Workbooks:

We now have workbooks for stratigraphic sections and field area/regions, and are working on one for drill holes. You continue download and upload these via the workbook tab once you've registered. It's a great way to gather data when you are not online. It is important to remember (and outlined in the tutorial), that you can easily make the complex-looking Excel workbooks much easier. We make it easy to hide entire worksheets, and columns; in essence you can customize the workbooks to your needs. Do that, give in a name and save it, and your personalized version will be what you see when you open a new workbook or download data from an existing project.

Taxonomy Personal List:

You can now build a personal list of taxonomic names via "List Management" that makes it easier for you to associate a taxon with other data (e.g., a sample, stratigraphic interval, etc.).

Need new data types?:

Do you need new data types in the workbooks. These are the column headings in the workbooks. If you need to add data types not now included in the workbook - contact us. We will add that to the workbook template and to the database structure and have it ready within one week of your request. Just tell us what you need, where it should go into the workbook - that's it.

Data Loading:

PaleoStrat has spent its resources on developing a comprehensive data system, and we have not been able to put in a significant amount of data into the system. This reflects a decision to use available resources to accomplish the difficult task of building a user-focused system first and then, in collaboration with the community load it with data. Our hope is that PaleoStrat becomes a part of your daily work flow for new data - but that does not address the issue of all of our legacy data. To address that, we have set up "Data Upload" page that allows you to deposit any electronic data you have. We will then ingest those data into the system, working with you as necessary to resolve various issues. As is normal when using the PaleoStrat system, you would be the "owner" of those data, you will have exclusive access to them until you publish them. But once ingested, you would download the data into an Excel workbook, and you would have the responsibility to quality check the data. Using the workbooks this should be reasonably easy to do.

There are lots of little changes, improvement & enhancements that we can't (or really, should not) mention here.

What is next?:

The list of "what's next" is long - but here are a few highlights.

Finally, all software has its bugs and problems - so please, if the system breaks, be patient. If something is chronically wrong - let us know. If you think of improvements to make it better for you - they may be exactly what others need as well - tell us about them and be part of the community. Keep in mind that PaleoStrat is a service for the community - and the community must provide constructive feedback to make it an even better community resource. We rely on you!

Wait!

One other exciting development. Most of the existing sedimentary geology and paleontology/paleobiology databases have agreed to form a "Sed-Paleo Geoinformatics Alliance". This is huge as it ensures we all move forward in a mutually supportive way and facilitate the development of standards and protocols that will allow all of us to work together while supporting the independence and vibrancy of each database. Furthermore, from a March, 2007 workshop sponsored by NSF, the concept of a "National Earth Science Information System" has emerged that will be, in effect, the same as the Sed-Paleo Alliance, but include all databases and geoinformatics activities for the Earth sciences (NESIS). The Sed-Paleo Alliance will remain independent but be, in effect, a working group within NESIS. So, the geoinformatics paradigm is moving forward and PaleoStrat is happy to be a part of that larger effort.

Explore, play with the system - but above all - contact us with your thoughts and ideas!

The PaleoStrat Development Team