

From Gutenberg to Internet: Computer-aided tools for identifying biodiversity

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Most "classical" tools for discovering the name of an organism were written in the precomputer era. They are printed on paper and are usually "difficult", as they organise the data following the schemes of biological classification. The advent of the computer and of the internet allows us to create very different, much easier tools, where identification is disentangled from classification. These e-tools are available online, also on mobile devices, and can be easily customized to different types of users (e.g. school children vs. specialists). They can make use of a

wealth of multimedial resources (digital images, sounds, videos) which are sometimes impossible to print on paper, and can be corrected/modified in real time. This makes identification, a difficult job once reserved for specialists, something enjoyable for everyone. The main features of the hundreds of identification tools created by the Dept. of Life Sciences of the University of Trieste will be discussed, with some practical examples of their use carried out by the audience.

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