



## The Harvard University Herbaria

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To the Ainsworth Medal Committee,

I am writing to nominate **Richard P. Korf** for the Ainsworth Medal in recognition of his service to the mycological community.

Korf has focused his research on taxonomy of discomycetes and on nomenclature. Most of the more than 340 papers he has published over his more than 60 active years concentrate on the taxonomy of these fungi. Few practitioners in any field can claim such a long sustained publishing career; one finds that in 2009 he produced six articles and book reviews. In his discomycete work he strived to refine and clarify concepts, particularly at the generic level. Some of his work has been surprisingly persistent. For example, his 1971 keys in “The Fungi: an advanced treatise” remain the only comprehensive keys for the inoperculate discomycetes and has been influential in training generations of systematists but also in pointing to problem areas.

Dick was always very much concerned with biodiversity and his work aimed at helping to better understand the range diversity shown by these fungi. Before it was the vogue, when tropical forests could still be explored and before urban expansion extended into his old collecting spots around Ithaca, he realized that when he collected many of the specimens he found had not been described. Realizing this he always collected and always made the most interesting discoveries. To be in the field in areas not previously well collected and so to experience new habitats was part of his goal in exploring the mycota around the world. Early in his career this quest took him to the Far East – and Japan in particular. From this period many important papers arose but so too did many lasting relationships with Japanese scientists. Later, he developed programs that concentrated in the West Indies and in Macaronesia. Both are regions that have a diversity of species but also allow exploration of disjunct distributional patterns. With verve he sought and often found names for his fungi hidden in the scattered literature. Indeed, the library was as much a hunting ground as the field. Few have the command of the literature he has and this is aided in part by his talent with languages.

No less important than his taxonomic papers are his nomenclatural papers. Here he gives insight into the intricacies of the rules of naming and has sought to stabilize the use and application of names. In his series “Nomenclatural notes,” which now number 12 contributions, he has outlined and solved various issues related to the proper application of the Code. He served on the IAPT Nomenclature Committee for Fungi and Lichens for 26 years, the last six of those years as the committee’s Secretary. He remains one of the leading figures in nomenclature and is turned to by many researchers for sound advice and practical judgment. He is not one to hide behind traditional viewpoints and is often a maverick on nomenclatural points. In one notable paper (Taxon 19:784. 1970) he expresses his disagreement with a provision of Article 63. He writes, “Though I have attempted in my work to follow the Code as fully as I was capable [footnote: I admit to having strayed from the straight path before...] I now deviate from that practice even before Article 63 is changed, on the basis that a reasonable man must come to the conclusion that superfluous names ought not be banned to limbo forever, but may be resurrected when the reason for their superfluosity is no longer present.” In this brief comment we see the

Herbarium of the Arnold Arboretum • Farlow Herbarium • Gray Herbarium • Economic  
Herbarium and Orchid Herbarium of Oakes Ames

clarity of his thought and see his desire to doing the right and logical thing. We also see the full display of his concise and witty writing style.

In 1974 he was motivated by several realities of the publication scene to found a new independent, international, mycological journal – Mycotaxon. Taking the model of a camera-ready journal of the time he improved the methods and established the journal that is now in its 111th volume accounting for about 60,000 published pages. In the early volumes he did all the editorial work and related correspondence and at the same time was the business manager. With this journal he has given the worldwide mycological community a reliable and economical way to distribute their research results. In planning the journal he instituted a system of community review and feedback that has been critical to bringing reliable taxonomical and nomenclatural papers to a large audience in a timely way. The review process for Mycotaxon shows his faith in his fellow mycologists. It is based on the supposition that they will be critical even of friends. One never gets an anonymous review from Dick Korf rather he always signs his reviews and thus lets you know that the opinions are his. This is a matter of principle for him.

Dick is at heart a teacher and devoted himself to instruction both in and out of the classroom. Of course there are Ph.D. students but there were any number of undergraduates who became biologists because of him. He has been honored as the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, given the Distinguished Teaching Award by Gamma Sigma Delta, and the William H. Weston Distinguished teaching award. Dick also supported amateur groups around the world and brings to them his keen sense of observation and passion for this field of study. Teaching and outreach build on his interest in the theatre. He has had an active career as an actor participating in local performances and in professional productions. We mycologists know him best for his impersonation of our father in mycology, Elias Fries.

He served the Mycological Society of America in many ways, as Councilor, as secretary-treasurer, as vice president and president in 1970-71. He attended nearly all of the International Mycological Congresses and before that he generally attended the International Botanical Congresses. At these he was an active participant and looked to as a leader. His is a long and distinguished career highlighted by engagement in his science, excellence in teaching, and service to the international mycological community. The Ainsworth medal would be a fitting recognition of this mycological great.

Yours truly,



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