Redefining homonyms under Rule 51b (4) of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes

B. J. Tindall

Leibniz-Institut DSMZ-Deutsche Sammlung von Mikroorganismen und Zellkulturen GmbH, Inhoffenstraße 7B, 38124 Braunschweig, Germany

As currently formulated, Rule 51b (4) of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes does not fully reflect the wording of Principle 2. It is therefore important that the wording of Rule 51b (4) is updated to reflect the intent of Principle 2.

Principle 2 of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes (Parker et al., 2015) states that:

'The nomenclature of prokaryotes is not independent of botanical and zoological nomenclature. When naming new taxa in the rank of genus or higher, due consideration is to be given to avoiding names which are regulated by the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature and the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants.'

A note to the principle states:

'Note. This principle takes effect with publication of acceptance of this change by the ICSP (from November 2000) and is not retroactive.'

Previous revisions of the Code, for example the 1975 and 1990 revisions (Lapage et al., 1975, 1992), pointed to Rule 51b (4) dealing with later homonyms that were limited to the names of taxa of prokaryotes, fungi, algae, protozoa or viruses. However, Rule 51a (4) retains this limitation and does not reflect the new wording of Principle 2. Given the way the names of viruses are formed, there would appear to be little possibility of homonyms of names of viruses being created under the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes.

It is therefore proposed that the wording of Rule 51b (4) be changed to reflect the changes to the wording of Principle 2, taking into consideration that these changes are not retroactive:

Among the reasons for which a name may be illegitimate are the following.

(4) If:

a. A new name or combination validly published before 31 December 2000 is a later homonym of a name of a taxon of prokaryotes, fungi, algae, protozoa or viruses.

b. A new name or combination validly published on or after 1 January 2001 is a later homonym of a validly published name of a taxon of prokaryotes or a name or combination validly published or available under the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants or the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. This does not affect validly published names or combinations not treated as later homonyms prior to 1 January 2001.

The selection of the dates 31 December 2000 and 1 January 2001 is not in contradiction to Principle 2 because valid publication of a name can only be effected via the International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology (IJSB) and its successor the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology (IJSEM) where each volume is divided into several issues. In 2000, the last issue of volume 50 was the November issue, and the first issue in 2001 was the January issue. Consequently, the changes to the wording of the Code documented in the minutes of the International Committee on Systematic Bacteriology and the Judicial Commission meetings at the IUMS Congress in Sydney can only take effect following their publication on the last pages of the November issue of the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology (IJSEM) (Labeda, 2000; De Vos & Trüper, 2000), i.e. from the January 2001 issue onwards. By selecting the dates 31 December 2000 and 1 January 2001 the wording makes a clear break between one year and the next. Rule 18a (1) and (2) and Rule 30 (3a) and (3b) already use this construction without any detrimental effect on nomenclature, and it may also be appropriate if the note to Principle 2 were to be changed accordingly.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising the issue of the dates associated with the proposed changes to Rule 51b (4) and providing the opportunity to document the logic behind the choice. The author is employed by an organization that offers commercially both taxonomic services as well as biological material to the scientific community. This may be perceived as a potential conflict of interest. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Hans-Georg Trüper (1936–2016),
a long-serving member of the ICSB/ISCP and the Judicial Commission and champion of matters relating to nomenclature and the Code.

References


