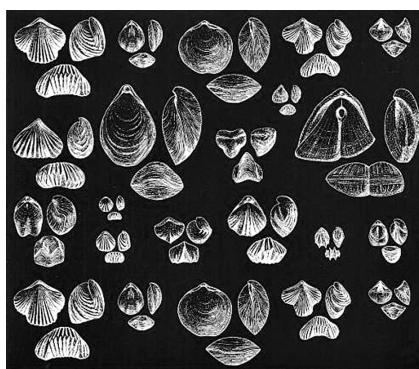


**Die fossilen Brachiopoden der Schweiz und der umliegenden Gebiete. Mit Beiträgen zur Forschungsgeschichte, Biologie und Paläoökologie der Brachiopoden. 2. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Fossil brachiopods of Switzerland and adjacent areas. With contributions to research history, biology and palaeoecology of brachiopods. 2nd revised and extended edition (in German)), by H. Sulser, 2016. Paläontologisches Institut und Museum der Universität Zürich & Schweizerische Paläontologische Gesellschaft, Zürich. Paperback, 454 pages. ISBN 978-3-033-05844-6.**



Heinz Sulser

**Die fossilen Brachiopoden der Schweiz  
und der umliegenden Gebiete**

Mit Beiträgen zur Forschungsgeschichte, Biologie und  
Paläoökologie der Brachiopoden

2. Auflage

Paläontologisches Institut und Museum der Universität Zürich  
und  
Schweizerische Paläontologische Gesellschaft

Brachiopods evolved through almost the entire Phanerozoic, and their wide palaeodistribution, diversity, facies sensitivity and abundance in Palaeozoic and Mesozoic deposits makes them excellent tools for biostratigraphical correlations and palaeo-(bio)geographical reconstructions. From what occurred in international geosciences during the past decade, a strong impression results of a “revival” in brachiopod research. New interpretations based on these fossils have allowed a better picture of the palaeoworld (e.g., Vörös, 2016). However, brachiopod research should be “fed” permanently with factual data, which stresses the importance of basin-scale syntheses of information, including taxonomic descriptions on a modern systematic basis and well-justified schemes of species distribution in geological time and space. The second edition of this wonderful book by the famous Swiss brachio-

pod specialist Heinz Sulser illustrates the very idea of what such syntheses should look like.

The reviewed book consists of two main parts. The first part presents detailed characteristics of brachiopods. Sulser describes their systematics (as well as historical changes), morphology, anatomy, physiology, ecology and stratigraphical importance. This information is systematised so well that it makes this book a prime source of general knowledge of this group. The importance of this source is comparable to that of a review just published by Carlson (2016). Of course, knowledge gathered in the first part of the present book also facilitates understanding the second portion.

The second part comprises taxonomic descriptions of several hundreds of taxa. The majority of these are of Mesozoic age, although some Cenozoic ones are also considered. At times, it is not so easy to find descriptions of all (!) representatives of regional faunas in the literature because many publications focus only on new discoveries. Fortunately, Sulser’s book is of a different kind. The author pays equal attention to both well-known and poorly known taxa. Wherever necessary and possible, he revised the taxonomy to match the newest classification of brachiopods. Importantly, he also presents valuable notes on the spatio-temporal distribution of taxa and supplies references to literature items (including old ones), in which these taxa were described. This part is like a well-wrought reference work that can be used also as a kind of field guide. Although the book is the outcome of the author’s life-long research, all descriptions seem to be “fresh” and ready for use in modern-day studies.

There is also a very important section, in which all brachiopod species are listed by ages with indication of their occurrence in the major geologi-

cal domains across Switzerland. This section is of importance not only for a quick orientation in this book, but also for further stratigraphical and palaeobiological interpretations. Undoubtedly, the knowledge of Swiss brachiopods, as summarised by Sulser, will be very useful to discussions of Mesozoic mass extinctions and biochores.

Sulser's book is organised logically, and the descriptions are concise. Explanations are highly academic and condensed, but very easy to follow. The detailed subject index facilitates search for information on particular taxa in the systematic part of the book. The list of references is very extensive and comprises as many as 60 pages – this list itself is a treasure! And so are the numerous illustrations! In the first part, these depict the morphology and anatomy of brachiopods. In the second part, the very accurate drawings show the majority of species. All illustrations are very informative and permit to use this book for the purpose of direct identification of brachiopod taxa. Finally, even the design of the book and its cover are nice and attractive!

The book is published in German, but this does not mean the readers, for whom this language is not native, should refrain from reading it. In fact, all is clear even if you are not a speaker of German! In my opinion, publishing such an important, exciting and well-written book in German only adds

a kind of flavour of classic science to modern palaeontological research, and this is really charming. Sulser builds a bridge between classic and modern science, and he shows us in an elegant way what a really good palaeontological book should look like.

Sulser's book is a genuine treasure trove for brachiopodologists, as well as for other palaeontologists who work in Switzerland. It is very informative, and its "depth" is really inspiring (as are the author's intelligence and passion). I hope this review will stimulate further brachiopod research in Switzerland and other countries. Undoubtedly, this book is of international importance, and its translation into English is eagerly awaited.

## References

- Carlson, S.J., 2016. The evolution of Brachiopoda. *Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences* 44, 409–438.
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