A Beginner's Guide to the ROCEEH Out of Africa Database

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In 2009, ROCEEH began integrating archaeological, paleoanthropological, paleontological and paleobotanical information into the ROCEEH Out of Africa Database (ROAD). As of June 2020, the team has compiled information on more than 1800 localities in Africa and Eurasia. ROAD now contains over 11,000 assemblages dated between about three million and 20,000 years before present. In this talk, I will present some of the achievements that ROAD has made over the last 12 years. In keeping with the framework of this conference, I refer each point to one of the five sessions of the conference, namely S1 (Databases), S2 (Methods), S3 (Applications), S4 (Products), and S5 (Perspectives). In some cases, I draw attention to other members of ROCEEH who will present further details about our work during the conference.

One of ROAD's main functions is to preserve our human past as a resource for digital heritage in the future (Perspectives). It also serves as an educational tool in prehistory and the Quaternary sciences (Products). As part of our outreach, we sponsor workshops to acquaint users directly with the database and its many functions (Products). Furthermore, ROAD is a research tool with which a user can explore ideas and formulate hypotheses about human migration (Applications). Outputs from ROAD can be further tested using advanced techniques such as agent-based modeling (E. Hölzchen–Applications) and machine learning (C. Sommer–Methods).

While this talk provides a brief overview of the basic logical structure and semantics of ROAD (Databases), it will focus mainly on what the database can do. I will mention the benefits ROAD offers its users, such as querying data, visualizing results with the Map Module (C. Hertler–Applications), and conducting time series analysis with the Time Slice Tool (Methods). I will introduce the Summary Data Sheet, which provides an overview of each locality entered in ROAD (Z. Kanaeva–Applications) and show how data and maps from other large databases can be linked to ROAD. I will also discuss some ongoing research projects which collaborate using the data from ROAD (Applications). In sum, I hope to demonstrate how this database works as a powerful tool for researchers and the public alike.

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