

Free Market Theory and Sequence Stratigraphy

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The idea of unconformity-bounded stratigraphic units has been around for over 50 years. In the last quarter century, numerous geoscientists unencumbered by the shackles of standardization have pushed the envelope of stratigraphic research to new frontiers. These researchers developed depositional sequences, genetic sequences, T-R sequences, synthems, and allostratigraphy. Clearly all of these methodologies serve some purpose, but like most technologies, some will be abandoned, some will find niche roles, and the one that works best, will gain market dominance. To date, depositional sequences have gained the dominant market position in sequence stratigraphy. However, healthy debate over sequence boundary placement, system tract interpretation and terminology, the exact roles and magnitudes of subaerial and/or transgressive erosion within sequences, and condensed sections as disconformities illustrates that the Utopian goal of objectively defined disconformable-bounded units, or “generic sequences”, does not presently exist. With free and open markets, stratigraphic researchers may develop and propose new radical stratigraphic ideas, which in turn, may cause depositional sequences to loose their dominant market position. However, this will not occur by legislative fiat, but by free market forces driven by the end users who continue to push the frontiers of stratigraphic research.