

Minutes of the General Assembly of the SEA held on Thursday 25th July 2002 at Szombathely, Hungary as part of the 20th European Colloquium of Arachnology

Held in the Berzsényi College Main Building, with 44 people in attendance.

The meeting was opened at 16.00 by Alain Canard who proposed to act as chairperson with Christine Rollard and Jason Dunlop as secretaries. These proposals were accepted.

1. President's report

The President (Alain Canard) stated that the main activity of the society is the support of the colloquia, but that there are problems in obtaining financial support. The two possible ways of achieving this are internal support (via members) and external support (via national or regional bodies). Currently most of our money comes from internal sources. Alain Canard stated that the role of the President was to secure external funding and as an example of this drew attention to a € 5000 grant from REFTAX (MNHN, Paris) for compiling a Europe-wide spider taxon list, which would be available to members on the Society's homepage. Peter van Helsdingen noted that he would talk about a similar project for compiling taxa lists later in the colloquium. Alain Canard presented the society homepage in its current state, noting the aim of making it multilingual and appealing for assistance in making translations – especially of the introductory page – from French. Examples of how searches by species will bring up printable distributional data covering the whole western Palearctic were given and the possible use of the list for detailing bioindicator species was mentioned. Alain Canard noted that the list is currently incomplete, but that accepting the € 5000 grant to complete it would be equivalent to several years worth of membership fees.

Discussion

Joachim Haupt asked if the homepage was currently accessible and Alain Canard provided the web site address. Gernot Bergthaler asked if this address is in the current Bulletin but according to Samuel Zschokke it is not. Peter van Helsdingen again mentioned an alternative project with similar aims to the SEA database to which Alain Canard commented that the SEA project was not obligatory, but would bring money into the society. The President's report was then accepted by general consent.

2. Treasurer's report

Léon Baert reported that he had been treasurer for two years (2000-2001). In 2000 the society began with assets of [ca.] € 904, had an income of € 3819 and an expenditure of € 4043, giving a deficit of income over expenditure for the year of € 224. Thus, in 2001 (an international congress year with no European colloquium to support) the society began with € 680, had an income of € 496 and expenses (due to tax) of € 16, giving an overall balance € 1065 in credit. Figures for up to July 2002 were also provided with an income so far of € 688 and expenses of € 1065, but with expected costs of postage and Bulletin production of € 735, the predicted end of year assets will only be about € 48. The treasurer reminded members of the importance of paying their dues.

Discussion

Samuel Zschokke raised a question about expenses paid for the administration of the society's

homepage, given that money was paid in 2002 while the last update was in 2000. Alain Canard confirmed that previously a student had been paid to administer the homepage, but that this arrangement proved ineffective and agreed that this would have to change in future. There were no further questions.

3. Auditors' report

Peter van Helsdingen reported on behalf of himself and Christian Kropf and began by stating that in future this job should *not* be carried out by members of council. Peter van Helsdingen confirmed that the bank accounts had been checked and were in agreement with the Treasurer's report. Hand-written documents had been examined, but original invoices were not available to the auditors; though adding that there had been only three payments made since 2000. Peter van Helsdingen made three recommendations for the future: (1) Council members should not audit their own accounts, (2) a computer-based spreadsheet should be used to facilitate the financial administration, and (3) cheque numbers should be included in the accounts. Peter van Helsdingen confirmed that, in the auditors' opinion, the accounts for 2000-2001 were in order (with the exception of a € 0.08 discrepancy) and recommended that the Treasurer's report be accepted. The Treasurer's report was duly accepted by general consent.

4. Elections to council

Christine Rollard reported the election results. Six people had been proposed as council members of the SEA, based on nominations from council. Of 131 eligible members, 51 voted with up to six votes per person. Three people from outside the council counted the votes and all six nominated candidates were returned with votes of: Léon Baert (46), Maciej Bartos (47), Alain Canard (36), Mark Judson (42), Christine Rollard (45) and Ferenc Samu (47). All six remain on, or join (Bartos, Samu), the council. Other candidates nominated during the election process did not receive sufficient votes.

5. New members

The President welcomed Siegfried Huber (Oberuhldingen), Beatrice Lüscher (Bern), Stoyan Lazarov (Sofia), Ivan Lukashevich (Minsk) and Boris Striffler (Bonn) as new members of the society.

6. Proposed changes to colloquium proceedings

The President invited Ferenc Samu to present a proposal to develop the colloquium proceedings into either a journal or a book series. Ferenc Samu reported on previous discussions between council and the colloquium organisers in which a desire was expressed to move away from colloquium proceedings which are published locally in different places and formats and only sent to conference attendees. The basic proposal was for the SEA to develop a scientific journal sent to all members through which the quality and stability of the publication would be improved along with its chances of being included in literature databases and by which it would become more widely available through libraries and other institutions. A second argument in favour of the proposal is that a niche clearly exists, namely the current colloquium proceedings, which the proposed journal would effectively replace. Ferenc Samu noted that most previous colloquium volumes run to ca. 320 pages and have improved in quality over the years.

The proposal was to turn the current proceedings into a serial publication, the name of which is not of critical importance, and which to begin with would not necessarily have to be specified as either a journal

or a book series. Søren Tofft's use of the name *European Arachnology 2000* for the Århus proceedings was noted as something which could be adapted and numbered serially. Such a publication could have both ISBN (book) and ISSN (journal) numbers allowing it to evolve into either a full journal or a stable colloquium proceedings series. Financially this may mean raising membership fees slightly to, say, € 20, such that ca. 100 members would contribute € 2000. Ferenc Samu presented a quote from a Hungarian publisher of € 3600 + postage + tax for 400 copies. He noted that previous colloquium proceedings were subsidised by registration fees and in this example the journal would only be viable if printing was subsidised from the colloquia by some € 2000. In this proposal membership fees need not be raised much and the benefit would be a regular journal with an editorial board and good future potential.

The President then invited Peter van Helsdingen to outline an alternative suggestion already hinted at in the previous proposal. Peter van Helsdingen pointed out that a high-aiming journal would require many subscribers and there is a problem with intervening International Congress years. A book series, like the current colloquium publications, could include all presentations allowing students to get papers published. Costs for a book series would be about the same as for the current proceedings, but would become more uniform and all members of the SEA would receive this publication. Most institutions can ill afford a new journal subscription.

Discussion

Samuel Zschokke asked about the essential difference between a book and a journal, to which Peter van Helsdingen responded that the layouts of both could be similar and uniform, but a book would not need additional manuscripts outside colloquium years. A journal would need such outside manuscripts, but a book title could convert to a full journal later. Alain Canard added that a book series could accept all manuscripts whereas a journal would be expected to reject weaker papers and asked whether the initial scientific level would be too high and what would happen to these weaker papers. Ambros Hänggi asked whether the editorial board would be stable and who would serve on it. Alain Canard replied that it would be stable and Peter van Helsdingen added that potential names had been mentioned, but no decisions had yet been taken. Ferenc Samu volunteered to act as one editor, but stressed the need for co-editors with expertise in other fields of research and the need for external referees, and raised the possibility that an editorial board could change over time. Joachim Haupt suggested that the question of external referees was not so important, but that this is easier with a journal, which has continuity.

Christian Kropf noted that the journal could come out annually, whereas a book could come out twice in three years. Joachim Haupt pointed out that some journals are irregular. Alain Canard raised the question of non-payment by members and the possibility that receiving the proposed book/journal could be linked to payment of subscriptions. Joachim Haupt noted a previous criticism that SEA members get little for their money and encounter practical difficulties in paying and Peter van Helsdingen reiterated the point that paid-up members would get the book/journal. Kirill Mikhailov raised doubts about the proposal, noting that there are numerous arachnological journals and that local sponsors of colloquia might prefer to support a locally-produced publication rather than a European journal. He asked whether the present system should be retained to encourage local editors from among colloquium organisers, with the SEA continuing to produce the newsletter.

Karin Schütt commented that a book should not accept all manuscripts and said that she would prefer one with a stronger scientific content. Jakob Walter questioned the strict division into a book or journal

and asked whether it would only be for colloquium papers and whether we need another arachnid journal, drawing comparisons with limnological societies. Joachim Haupt pointed out that data from a new journal would not necessarily go into Current Contents or Biological Abstracts, which cover some 60% of the literature. Alain Canard replied that we do not know how the situation will develop in future and that the BAS Bulletin was not accepted in such databases, to which Joachim Haupt added that only the *Journal of Arachnology* has an Impact Factor rating among arachnological journals. Peter van Helsdingen reminded the meeting that a final decision could be postponed, that we would be taking a risk and, citing an example from a faunistic journal, that a book series containing all colloquium papers is the lower risk option, whereas if we get external interest we could gradually move towards a journal.

Konrad Thaler asked about responsibilities and pointed out that colloquium organisers might like the job of putting a proceedings volume together, while external editors could introduce delays in publication. Ambros Hänggi raised criticisms that the prospective editors will have to do a lot of work, that the finances of the proposal seem unclear and supported the earlier point that local funding may only be available for locally produced colloquium proceedings. He also asked if previous colloquium proceedings could be made available and/or stocked somewhere. He suggested that the proposal of a more "centralised" publication offers less incentive for local organisers and that they should go onto the editorial board. Léon Baert agreed that local organisers and prospective editors should work together. Jakob Walter noted that future volumes should be homogenous in presentation and would thus need a single editor/publisher. Alain Canard added that people should want to join the society in order to receive the proposed publication and that the costs would be about the same as in the current system; Theo Blick reiterated that all members would get the volume.

Alain Canard proposed putting the matter to a vote and Theo Blick clarified the four options: (1) the status quo, (2) a colloquium proceedings which all members receive, (3) a book series or (4) a full-blown journal. The votes were 29 in favour of all members receiving the colloquium proceedings in some form with two votes against. Further attempts to vote on the subsequent form of the proceedings became confused. Vlastimil Ruzicka asked for clarification about an editor, Christian Riegelsen was unsure about how things should proceed, Gunnar Alroth asked what the new volume would look like and Alain Canard replied that details would be decided later. Elke Jantscher stated that colloquium organisers should join the editors for each new volume and Søren Toft replied that editing is hard work and that organisers may be more willing to host colloquia if there is editorial assistance. Konrad Thaler asked who would serve on the editorial board and Ambros Hänggi suggested that the committee was not currently fully prepared for Ferenc Samu's idea and suggested that they return to the next colloquium with more concrete proposals. Ferenc Samu conceded that the idea could wait until the next colloquium and that in the meantime the Hungary proceedings could be given to all current SEA members while additional copies could be printed to try to attract new members. Christian Kropf felt that a year was too long to delay a decision, but that the council should prepare a detailed proposal. This was met with general approval. Ambros Hänggi felt it was important that all members be involved in the decision-making via a postal vote; although Gunnar Alroth noted this gave no opportunity for discussion. Kirill Mikhailov asked Ferenc Samu who would be responsible for future distribution, Ferenc replying that at this stage this was not crucial.

6. Subscriptions

Alain Canard proposed that SEA membership subscriptions should be raised to € 20 for normal members

and € 10 for students. This was accepted by general agreement from the membership and Ferenc Samu added that the increase should relate to receiving the proceedings, with Robert Bosmans commenting that only paid-up members should get it.

7. Next Colloquium (2003)

Alain Canard invited Yuri Marusik to present a proposal for hosting the next colloquium. The proposed location was St. Petersburg in Russia, which will celebrate its 300th anniversary next year with various special events. The proposed venue is at the university, which is close to the historical centre, the Hermitage, etc. It would be held in July or August. Yuri Marusik explained that St. Petersburg is easy to reach, offers easy access to Moscow and that accommodation could range from student hostels at € 10 a night to hotels from € 30+ a night. The meeting was assured that St. Petersburg is a safe city and that Kirill Mikhailov, Dimitri Logunov and Vladimir Ovtsharenko have offered to help with organisation. Local, technical organisation would be by a professor of entomology from St. Petersburg with experience of conference organisation and a team of students to assist him.

In a lighter note of support, Christian Kropf commented that if the arachnologists could survive Chicago they should have no fear of St Petersburg and Peter van Helsdingen added that the city had been developed by Dutch architects. Yuri Marusik pointed out that St. Petersburg boasts beautiful architecture. Ferenc Samu raised concerns about local organisation, adding that Csaba Szinetár's local connections allowed the organisers in Szombathely to get much for free, while pointing out that in terms of financial calculations less than half of the Szombathely delegates paid the full conference registration fee. Yuri Marusik noted that both he and Kirill Mikhailov regularly visit St. Petersburg. Konrad Thaler asked if the proceedings could be published in *Arthropoda Selecta* and Kirill Mikhailov confirmed that this is possible. No other proposals were for 2003 were received. Konrad Thaler asked about an earlier proposal from Portugal, which Karin Schütt said could only have been held in May. The Portugal offer is apparently still active for some stage in the future. Alain Canard asked about the exact dates of the St. Petersburg proposal and Yuri Marusik said this could be early August and promised to consult people about dates. St. Petersburg was then accepted as the host of the 2003 colloquium to general acclaim and Yuri was thanked for his offer.

Other business

The President invited any other business to which Konrad Thaler proposed a vote of special thanks to the editors of the various proceedings volumes over the years. This was greeted with general applause.

The President closed the meeting at about 18.00.

Jason Dunlop, Berlin, 29th July 2002