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Authors

Field, Richard
Heaney, Lawrence R.

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from the society

Looking to the future of the IBS: the 2011 IBS membership survey

The International Biogeography Society (IBS) was founded 10 years ago, with the goal of promoting biogeographical research, fostering communication among biogeographers, and increasing knowledge of and appreciation for biogeography among the general public. As a neonatal society, growth and stability were crucial: the first practical goals were to organize the first conference (held in 2003) and begin to build a membership base. Five IBS conferences have now been held, the membership has grown to 796 members representing 54 countries, an on-line IBS journal has been established (*Frontiers of Biogeography*; <http://www.biogeography.org/html/fb.html>), and the first IBS off-year conference (a young investigators conference scheduled for 23-25 September 2011 at the University of Oxford; <http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/index.html>) will be held quite soon. Enthusiasm for the January 2013 IBS conference in Miami, Florida (<http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/2013/index.html>) is quite high, and we may see record-high attendance. Overall, the IBS is now a strong and healthy 10-year-old.

We all recognize, of course, that we need to maintain regular communication with the members about the details of just how well the IBS is doing: where are there strengths, where are there weaknesses, and where would growth be most effective? Not long after the IBS conference on Crete in January 2011, the Board of Directors of the IBS, newly reconstituted after the meeting, was keen to look to the future immediately. We resolved to perform a survey of members and to use this opportunity to ask important questions about the biennial meetings, the role of *Frontiers of Biogeography*, the other services the society provides (or does not), and the level of enthusiasm among members for getting more involved in the society. In February, with the Crete meeting still fresh in our memory, the survey went live and IBS members were invited to respond.

Background: the IBS membership. The number of members who took the time to respond was, in itself, very encouraging. In total 285 members completed the survey, about 60% of whom had attended the meeting in Crete. Around 30% were students, 3% retired and 67% professionals. About 11% were under 30, 63% were 30–49 and 15% were 50–65; 64% of them were male and 36% female. Of the 274 people who responded, about 30% identified themselves as coming from North America, 11% from Central and South America, 18% from northern Europe, 26% from southern Europe, and 5% or less from each of Australia/New Zealand, the Middle East and Africa, and Asia. A little over 40% of the survey respondents said that the IBS was their primary professional society. The range of “other conceptual affiliations” of our members is very broad, ranging from evolutionary aspects of genetics and phylogeography, vertebrate biology (mammalogy, ornithology, etc.), systematics, botany, paleontology, and conservation biology to ecology, which was the single most-frequently mentioned topic. Clearly, geographic and conceptual breadth is a hallmark of the IBS membership.

Importance of contact from the IBS. While the danger of communication overload must always be considered, members clearly appreciate communications from the IBS. This was how many learned about the Crete meeting (58% from IBS e-mails or website). Responses to open-ended questions about making IBS better and possible web-based member benefits all highlighted the value of information flowing from the IBS to members (also among members).

The Crete meeting was deemed a success, with 77% rating the meeting as “great” or “very good”; only 0.5% rated it as “not so good”, and none as “poor”. While most respondents (72%) thought the balance between posters and oral presenta-

tions was about right, 35% preferred more concurrent oral presentations, but many expressed appreciation of the plenary approach (with not too many concurrent sessions). Respondents were nearly evenly split on preferring oral presentations from established researchers (46%) and young investigators (54%). There was much praise for the quality of the posters and the way they were taken seriously, but also recognition that the last-minute need for a change in venue in Crete imposed cramped, split rooms for the posters. Some respondents called for more workshops (on many different topics), for repeats of oversubscribed workshops, and for more time for each workshop (allowing more depth). A few people also called for an extra day to be added to the conference, to allow more time for networking, etc.

Content for future IBS meetings. Of the eleven listed symposium suggestions, all were reasonably popular, but those on species distribution models and climate refuges were most favored, followed by ‘Search for interdisciplinary congruence from the fossil record, genetics and models’. There was good support for symposia on disturbance regimes, experiments (planned, natural and accidental), the biogeography of traits and island biogeography, but also many suggestions for other topics. All of the seven workshop topics were received well, with especially strong support for “Phylogenetic analysis in macroecology” and “Spatial analysis in macroecology”. Respondents tended to think that gender, ethnicity, and geographic origin should all be considered in selecting speakers, with geographic origin clearly ranking highest among these.

Possible 2015 and 2017 meeting locations. When presented with a list of nine geographic regions where future meetings might be held, members collectively expressed a clear preference for the location of a future meeting: tropical America,

followed closely by the Czech Republic and Denmark. California, Australia/New Zealand, Hawaii, and South Africa were not far behind. The good support for the two European destinations may have been partly because more respondents were at the Crete meeting (in Europe) than not. Most who attended the Crete meeting said they would go to any of the top six locations (i.e. those listed above). Many of those who did not go to Crete (which included many respondents from North America) said they were unlikely to go to the European destinations or Australia/NZ or South Africa; they tended to prefer California or tropical America.

Meeting timing and frequency. All IBS meetings have been held in early January. While there are advantages to maintaining a consistent time for the meetings, the survey investigated the strength of interest in shifting the time. The result was ambiguous, with no clear message about a preference. Predictably, there was some tendency for those who made it to Crete to oppose different timings and those who did not make it to Crete to support them. There is interest in holding more meetings, with some calls for the main IBS meeting to be held every year, and clear support for additional IBS workshops, symposia, regional chapters, etc. This has already led to the organization of the IBS Early Career Conference in Oxford, UK, September, as mentioned earlier (<http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/index.html>).

Frontiers of Biogeography. Over two-thirds of respondents regularly read the IBS on-line journal. There were many calls for more alerts about when new issues are published, and 85% said that IBS should expand/strengthen *Frontiers* because of its importance for the future of the IBS. There was also a great deal of enthusiasm about helping to edit the journal.

Did you know that any member of the IBS may raise an issue or appeal a decision of the governing Board of Directors by placing a matter before the Board of Directors for discussion?

If there is a matter you would like discussed at the next Board meeting, write to the society's Secretary (check current list of officers at <http://www.biogeography.org/>).

Financial issues. The IBS is a young society with very limited income and very limited reserves. When asked if they would support modestly increased membership fees to expand *Frontiers* and/or provide funding for off-year conferences or workshops, over three-quarters replied affirmatively. Similarly, about three-quarters also supported increasing conference registration fees by 10% to provide funding for students or to increase international participation. About two-thirds of respondents said they are willing to donate or buy an item for an auction at future meetings, so that the proceeds could go to support IBS activities.

Training and techniques, networking, etc. Much interest was expressed in web-based activities, with more than half of respondents saying they would take part in 'on-line conferences' in chat rooms with senior biogeographers; there was also strong interest in blogs, online networking, online presentations, regular updates from the IBS, more job advertisements, online teaching resources, etc.

Volunteers. While there is much satisfaction with the IBS among the members, there is clearly room for growth. Many members stated a willingness to get involved with promoting membership, editing *Frontiers*, and organizing regional IBS chapters or off-year activities.

The results of this survey give us a fairly detailed and nuanced picture of our IBS membership: as a group, we are young, excited about our society, pleased with the conferences we have held and the journal we have established, and willing to have active involvement in expanding our programs and activities. Biogeography is clearly perceived as an exciting field of research, with great potential to make important conceptual and practical contributions to human society. As the Board of Directors of the IBS prepares for its annual administrative and planning meeting, to be held concurrently with the young investigators' conference at Oxford, this survey will provide a rich source of information and ideas on how best to direct our future growth. We would like to thank all the members who took part in this survey, those who are so supportive of our society, and particularly those so willing to give their time to help make improvements. We look to the future with considerable optimism.

Richard Field¹ & Lawrence R. Heaney²

¹IBS Secretary; School of Geography, University of Nottingham, UK. e-mail: richard.field@nottingham.ac.uk

²IBS President; Department of Zoology, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA. e-mail: lheaney@fieldmuseum.org

Job announcements

2-year postdoc position

Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre, Germany

The Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre (BiK-F; Macroecology Group) is a new interdisciplinary institute with the mission to carry out internationally outstanding research on the interactions of biodiversity and climate change on the organism level. It integrates a variety of disciplines from both natural and social sciences. The Project Area B "Biodiversity Dynamics and Climate" invites applications for the position of a Post-doctoral researcher in "Macroecology". The successful applicant will investigate the impact of climatic factors and other drivers of global change on population dynamics of organisms. We aim at trait-based, comparative analyses of long-term data sets across multiple

taxa (e.g. epizoobenthos, fish, birds, butterflies, plants) from the terrestrial, limnic and marine realm. The applicant will take responsibility in study design, statistical analyses and publication of the results in close collaboration with data owners.

The applicant should hold a Ph.D. in ecology or a related field, and have a solid background in comparative, macroecological analyses and in advanced statistical methods. Experience in analyses of species' traits and in population dynamics of organisms will be of advantage. The applicant is expected to work independently, to have an interest in a wide range of taxonomic groups, very strong oral and written communication skills and willingness to develop joint projects with multiple partners. Salary and benefits are according to