

## Minutes

IAVS Council Meeting, Palermo, Italy 2017  
Wednesday, June 21, 18.45 - 20.45

### Participants

**Members present:** Martin Diekmann (President), Susan Wiser (Secretary), Alessandra Fidelis (Vice President), Monika Janišová (Vice President), Pavel Krestov (Vice President), Javier Loidi (Vice President), Peter Minchin (Vice President), Alicia Acosta, Sándor Bartha, Zoltán Botta-Dukát, Elgene Box, Andraž Čarni, Alessandro Chiarucci, Milan Chytrý, Sara Cousins, Francesco de Bello, Guillaume Decocq, Jürgen Dengler, Nikolai Ermakov, Kazue Fujiwara, Florian Jansen, Jan Lepš, Yukito Nakamura, Meelis Pärtel, Robert Peet, Valério Pillar, John Rodwell, Joop Schaminée, Nina Smits, Otto Wildi, Wolfgang Willner, David Zelený, Martin Zobel = 33 votes

**Proxy votes:** Iva Apostolova (Monika Janišová), Helge Bruelheide (Martin Diekmann), Jessica Gurevitch (Susan Wiser), Tomáš Herben (Milan Chytrý), Martin Hermy (Guillaume Decocq), Michael Palmer (Valério Pillar), János Podani (Valério Pillar), Marcel Rejmánek (Milan Chytrý) = 8 votes

Absent: Ladislav Mucina

Guests: Silvy Song (FASEB), Péter Török (EDGG Working Group), Rosie Trice (Wiley Publishing), Dave Roberts (IAVS 2018 venue; Bozeman, USA), Gerald Jurasinski (Website and Social Media Committee), Jana Michaelis, Ricarda Pätsch (Young Scientists Working Group)

### Welcome

President Diekmann brought the meeting to order at 18:45.

## 1 Announcements of proxy votes (Wiser)

Secretary Wiser read the proxy votes. Proxy representation of 8 members was reported and approved (see above). Total voting members represented:  $33 + 8 = 41$ .

## 2 Finances

### a. Report for 2016 - review (Diekmann)

[[Attachment 1: IAVS-reportfinances2016-Council.pdf](#)]

President Diekmann described that he had some difficulties in constructing the financial report because reporting from the US accounting system (Both FASEB and the US bank) is almost impossible to harmonize with the traditional way IAVS has done its reporting. The US accounting system is oriented to the type of financial reports that accountants best understand, but this is challenging for us as we are not professional accountants. He also pointed out the currency conversion error; this does not indicate a real loss, rather it is a reconciliation error. This will create some difficulties for our auditors.

The loss for 2016 largely reflects that the payments we received from Wiley were in pounds and we already suffered from the lower exchange rates that followed on from the Brexit vote.

So even though we are earning more from our journals, our income is less when we convert to Euros or US dollars.

Peet asked whether it is the job of FASEB to organize the financial reporting so that we can understand it. Song said yes it is the job of FASEB and it will be sorted out. Pillar asked whether the accounting could be done completely separate for US dollar and Euro funds and the harmonizing done at the end. Diekmann explained that this is what is done, but conversion rates change over the year and this can also cause reconciliation issues.

b. Auditing of financial report for 2016 (Wildi)

Both auditors (Wildi and Jansen) agree that they too are confused by the current reports. So they would prefer to wait to conduct their audit until we have reports that are a bit easier to interpret.

c. Update of budget for 2017 - discussion and approval (Diekmann / Song) [[Attachment 2. IAVS-updatefinances2017-Council.pdf](#)]

Diekmann explained that the main change for the 2017 budget from the projection of 2016 is because of the income loss as a result of the change in exchange rates as described for the previous item. Additionally, we need to pay for the AVS special issue this year as Wiley did not bill us on time leading to accounting confusion. These two reasons account for the negative income versus expenditure.

Pillar asked how long can IAVS support this deficit. Diekmann explained that right now we have almost 400,000 Euro in the bank, so we can support this for some years. Jansen suggested we can support this level of deficit for about 10 years.

d Appointment of auditors (Diekmann)

This item was skipped as the auditing for 2016 has not yet taken place. Appointment of the new auditors will take place after the email vote to approve the 2016 audit.

e Discussion about IAVS finances and projection of budget for 2018 [[Attachment 3. IAVS-projectionfinances2018-Council.pdf](#)]

The projected 2018 budget has a negative of €15 000. Alternatively, we could reduce our future expenses.

Pärtel felt we should not cut the Associate Editors honoraria as they are the ones who do the work that earns us our income. Our aim should not be to collect and retain funds, so we can manage to have losses for a few years.

Peet pointed out that most professional associations derive income from their annual symposium. However, the 2018 budget has an expenditure of €7 000 for the symposium. Shouldn't we at least be breaking even? He suggested that FASEB should be more active in the symposium organization, including completely handling the finances and making a small profit.

Pillar said that John Hay told him that some funding for the support of the Brazil meeting has not yet been transferred by FASEB. Song explained that IAVS made a small profit the Brazil

meeting and she will meet with John Hay later in the week to discuss finalizing the financial transfers for that symposium.

Diekmann explained that one problem is that IAVS rarely receives a financial report from our symposia so we are guessing a bit as to the amount of this expenditure. In the 2018 projection we have presented a pessimistic point of view, but hope to recoup the €7 000 from the meeting.

Roberts also mentioned that for the Bozeman meeting they hope to receive an advance from IAVS for some set up expenses but this will also be reimbursed. Diekmann clarified that this is separate from the €7 000 for FASEB. Wisner asked that Roberts provide an estimate of the funds required and that this separate advance for the Bozeman meeting be listed in the 2018 financial projection.

Loidi pointed out that local organizers can sometimes get support from local authorities for organizing symposia. This would not be possible if FASEB completely took over the meeting organization and finances. He feels that the primary responsibility should remain in the hands of the local organizers; that the responsibility for the organization is fundamentally upon the organizers. IAVS could offer financial support when there are funds available, but the responsibility for having a budget that is sufficient to allow the symposium to proceed sits with the local organizers.

### **3 IAVS Business Office**

Report from FASEB (Song) [[Attachment 4. IAVS Business Office Report – FASEB June 2017](#)].

Song introduced herself and explained that she provides administrative services for three societies, of which IAVS is the largest. One of her goals this year is to make a handbook to provide detailed instructions and documentation about all the administrative processes for IAVS so that there is not a dependency on her alone.

Song then highlighted some of the achievements this year, which are described in more detail in the Business Office Report. These include

- Developed and implemented the system for assigning DOIs to the IAVS Bulletin, Working Group bulletins, symposia abstract books and excursion guides etc.
- IAVS now officially has non-profit status in the US so any donations (including corporate) are tax deductible.
- Assisted with the record number of travel award applications.

De Bello enquired about the level of confusion with communication about the Palermo symposium; there were problems in getting responses from both FASEB and the local organisers. Krestov also described how his students often received no replies to their emails.

Wiser described the intention of the Governing Board to provide more specific dates for deadlines for different organisational stages of the symposium. Critical dates will be posted on the IAVS website to both guide symposium organisers and potential participants.

Wildi felt there will always be a need for a local secretariat for our symposia; this can't be done remotely.

### **4 IAVS website (Song, Jurasinski)**

Song described the first strategy meeting that had been held between the Chair of the Website and Social Media Committee (Jurasinski), the head of the Membership Committee (Krestov) and herself (FASEB) earlier this week. Their goal is for the website to be constantly updated with news that is relevant to IAVS members. They want to make the website more interactive and have features to make members want to use it more frequently. They hope it can become a 'Hub' where anyone interested in vegetation science will go. Ideas include:

- Connect it with Twitter & Facebook. For example, for the Palermo symposium, there was no official hashtag. Sara Cousins started one (#IAVS2017) and now it is being used and getting more lively.
- Have sections that are more blog-like and make the website livelier. For example can have slide show of pictures of plants/ vegetation/ links to people.
- Krestov suggested our symposia could be integrated with Research Gate. For example we could issue symposium attendees with a meeting 'badge' that could be posted on one's Research Gate site.
- Improve membership area – could potentially have profiles of members on the website and provide links (urls) to member CVs.
- Improve visibility of Working Groups. The Young Scientists pages provide some good examples.

Council members (Dengler, Peet) noted that a lot of information on the website is out of date and updates have not been actioned.

Song explained that there was a problem with the FASEB IT department and it appears that historic versions of the website were overwriting updated versions. She is working with the IT department to solve this problem and asks that any suggested changes that had been sent to her in the past be sent to her again.

Song and Jurasinski explained that administrative access can be granted to different groups – such as Working Group Steering Committees to allow them more control over their areas.

Dengler asked Jurasinski to email Working Group chairs to inform them of what they can add, edit and change on their webpages.

Song finished by saying that once she, Krestov and Jurasinski built the new features into the membership area, it will be tested by the Governing Board and then rolled out to the membership. Song will then send an E-blast out to all members to advertise this feature.

## **5 Reports on publications**

- a Report from Wiley (Trice) [[Attachment 5. IAVS Publisher's Report 2016 final.pdf.](#)]

Rosie Trice introduced herself as the General Manager for the IAVS journals. She explained some of the highlights of the attached report including:

- A summary of key metrics
- Journal reach
- Types of access (the vast majority are now through a Wiley journal package license)
- Wiley has a new type of license – libraries now can subscribe to all Wiley journals. This is popular in mature markets (US, UK, much of Europe)
- IAVS needs to consider the option of stopping production of a printed version in the future

- Altmetric scores; Wiley is exploring ways to increase these. Altmetric is a system that tracks the attention that research outputs such as scholarly articles and datasets receive online.
- Impact factors.
  - JVS – number of uncited papers went down but so did the number of highly cited papers
- Marketing
  - It would be good to link in with the website/social media activities of the IAVS
  - Wiley periodically has targeted subject matter campaigns or highlights of specific articles
  - Conference attendance
  - Social media campaigns

Peet asked about how many members we have, but as FASEB now manages a membership, that is a question for Song. Song couldn't connect to internet to find out the exact number but Krestov said it is over 600.

Dengler asked about the change in journal format and expressed disappointment that the identity of IAVS is much less obvious than in the past. Trice responded that she had a meeting today with Chief Editors and they are working on improving the early version. Dengler expressed that Council needs more involvement with this decision; this should not be only a decision of the Chief Editors. Pillar expressed that the Chief Editors share and agree with this concern that a change in the journal format could reduce the distinct identity of IAVS. As such, probably the full Council does not need to be involved with the ongoing discussions with Wiley on this matter.

- b Publications officer (Minchin) [[Attachment 6 Publications Committee Report 2015-2016.pdf](#)]

Minchin provided some highlights of his report regarding JVS and AVS:

- There have been improvements in the impact factor for AVS, although this has declined slightly for JVS. There has also been increased visibility through social media.
- Readership and authorship looks good.
- Production time has increased slightly and the publications committee is following up on this with Wiley.
- There were large changes in the Wiley team over the last year.
- IAVS finally did sign a new contract with Wiley – this will last until 31 December 2020. There were no major changes from the previous contract. This contract does provide more clarity around open access and protection of personal data (e.g. names, contact details, email addresses).

Minchin also explained how now we can put DOIs on all of our publications (see section 3 above). DOIs can be made available to Working Groups, but Minchin should be contacted first about this.

Finally he thanked Monika for her great job on Bulletin. This was followed by a round of applause from everyone.

- c Chief Editors (Pärtel) [[Attachment 7. Report of Chief Editors 2017 to IAVS Council.pdf](#)]

Pärtel described some highlights of his report. Currently they have a well-functioning team. There is no publication backlog right now. As described by Trice in section 5a, the journals are trying to be more visible in social media and there are more plans to improve this. The Chief Editors are looking forward to improved contact with Wiley after a period of instability. Chytrý will be Chair of the Chief Editors. Pärtel and Pillar will be Chief Editors of JVS, Chiarucci of AVS.

d Bulletin (Janišová)

Janišová described some highlights of the year's activities. It was decided not to publish all the attachments of the meeting of Council; rather only the Minutes were published and the rest made available online. Selected attachments will be published in future, depending on their perceived interest to IAVS members. She then described the types of articles that have been published this year; this included some interviews and articles inspired by the 2016 Symposium (e.g. Peet's talk, Michael Palmer's summary of how to write a review (based on the workshop run by the Young Scientists), interviews with South American ecologists). The Bulletin is also the place to publish announcements of interest to the members (e.g. regarding the annual symposium, meetings of Working Groups etc.). Finally Janišová thanked her small team – Bradham (layout), Minchin and Wisser (English editing).

Diekmann described that we want to fill four issues per year so it would be good for people to submit articles.

Fujiwara thanked Janišová for her efforts on the Bulletin.

e Phytocoenologia (Dengler) [[Attachment 8. Phytocoenologia report to IAVS 2016-17 v.02 \(updated\).pdf.](#)]

Dengler provided highlights of the report. He reminded us of the agreement with IAVS. . There are now more editors and associate editors. He believes IAVS is benefiting as Phytocoenologia is working with the Working Groups to publish special issues and articles on their behalf. He also described the problem of the visibility of the journal.

f IAVS book series in vegetation science

Diekmann summarized this as a point of information. There had been an idea about this a couple of years ago, but it has not been advanced much. The Governing Board has again been approached about a new series about vegetation science and will continue to discuss this. Currently we are undecided as to whether IAVS should be involved with this or not.

## 6 Committee reports

a Suggestions from the Membership Committee (Krestov) [[Attachment 9. IAVS Membership Strategy.pdf](#)]

Krestov summarized his report.

As a background step, he did an analysis in Russia about whether vegetation scientists are members of IAVS or not. Only 7% are members of IAVS. He also contacted Chinese colleagues and found a very low membership rate. He then contacted some of these people to

find out why they are not members. He followed this up with a discussion with the Membership Committee and produced an analysis and recommendations.

- IAVS has a vision statement but no strategy; he believes that we would benefit from having a strategy. For example, other societies are involved in big global biodiversity conservation programs; we could be bolder than we are now.
- There is perception of a tight relationship with our journals; authors get offended when their papers are rejected. Those who conduct locally-focused studies in particular feel unwelcome in IAVS.
- Advertisement of IAVS needs to be done by everybody: all Committees, Working Groups etc.
- We need to connect with those who publish in more local journals and the journals themselves.
- Potential advertising mechanisms need to be explored, particularly trial membership for early career scientists

A lively discussion, including many good ideas followed.

Cousins felt that IAVS and our symposia have a slightly 'dusty' feel. For example, we need younger, more diverse keynote speakers. Pillar felt there needed to be stronger participation of the Governing Board in our symposia and in designing the program. Maybe we need a more formal agreement? Diekmann described that the problem is that we don't have a contract. We offer to assist but often local organizers don't let us help. All of these suggestions are in the Meeting guidelines. Dengler suggested maybe we need to have a contracts for future meetings. Diekmann suggested we return to this topic when we discuss future Symposia (section 6d below).

Dengler pointed out that the Global Sponsorship Committee already offers free or trial membership. What we really need is advertising. For example, there should be a downloadable flyer on the homepage that members could post or take to meetings. During membership campaigns we should be contacting all the members of the Working Groups who are not IAVS members and inviting them to be members. Finally, rather than contacting journals, we should be targeting the organizations (national, regional) that sponsor those journals.

Diekmann pointed out that all of these ideas require people doing things so people need to volunteer.

Fujiwara informed us of the difficulties for Asian people in paying for their membership. They typically do not want to pay by credit cards over the internet as they are concerned about security. So we need another payment mechanism.

Fidelis reiterated that people are not applying for free membership. People become members to come to the conference. She also described how when she joined the Society for Restoration Ecology she received a greeting email that was very nice. So this is an idea for us. She also asked how many of the people who have received travel grants in the past renewed their membership again. We need to find out why they are not renewing. For example, do they require free membership?

Lepš described how students attending the British Ecological Society conference get a much higher reduction in the fee than at IAVS. In the past, an advantage of being a member was a

reduced price for the journal subscription but now most of us have institutional access [only 3 Council members did not], so this is no longer much of an enticement.

Török suggested there be a Membership option to pay for 5 years and for lifelong membership. Wisner suggested recurring payments that auto-renew until cancelled.

Zelený expressed how membership spreads personally, so perhaps we need to target people who will then get their students to join. The impression in Asia is that IAVS is a European society, especially with every other meeting held in Europe.

Diekmann asked everyone to send their ideas to Krestov and Krestov will revise the document.

Krestov also asked for administrative rights to the website and ability to see all memberships and statistics (e.g. by country.). Dengler felt we should have a yearly summary about the membership (e.g. country representation etc.).

Krestov asked for a couple of minutes at the General Assembly to talk about website etc.

- b Global Sponsorship Committee (Fidelis) [[Attachment 10 ReportGlobalSponsorshipCommittee2017.pdf](#)].

Fidelis summarized her report and urged people to tell their students and others to apply. She pointed out that she and Valerio are getting many Brazilian students to apply.

- c Awards Committee (Schaminée) [[Attachment 11. Report Awards Committee 2017.pdf](#)]

Joop summarized his report and requested nominations for Honorary membership

- d Meetings Committee (Loidi) [[Attachment 12. MeetingsCommitteeReportLoidiPalermo2017.pdf](#)]

Loidi summarized his report. He also mentioned how two days ago he received a proposal from Diekmann for Bremen in 2019. There is also an informal proposal from Madrid for sometime in the future (ca. 2021). Diekmann's proposal will be sent to Council.

Diekmann then raised the issue of whether we want to have a more formal contract with Symposium organizers in the future. We will need to see example contracts from other societies. Entering into such an arrangement could put an obligation on IAVS to cover costs.

Lepš pointed out that any contract with Roberts (Bozeman) will have to be flexible because this symposium has already been agreed upon. Also, the contract might not always be the same depending on the organizer.

Wiser asked whether FASEB could provide us sample contracts from some of their other societies.

Roberts (Bozeman) explained how he is on a steep learning curve now. His university will not officially front any funds to support the symposium without a contract. But at the same time, we probably won't be able to rush a contract as IAVS has not had formal contracts for symposia before. Currently Roberts has found an unofficial way to deal with the funding

issue. Roberts does not expect to run completely autonomously from IAVS. It would be useful to improve this process in the future.

Roberts raised two other concerns:

- No one anticipated Donald Trump. The US Supreme Court will rule on travel ban in next few months. It is possible that some people from IAVS will not be able to attend because of this. He is hopeful that the Supreme Court will do the right thing. Unfortunately, this is beyond his control.
- There is an individual who is responsible for several monographs on vegetation of the Rockies. Could we acknowledge this person? Diekmann said we could discuss.

Diekmann will progress the idea of contracts and when needed will contact Council for a vote on this matter.

## 7 Reports of Working groups / Regional sections

The reports were tabled and Council was given an opportunity to ask questions.

- a European Vegetation Survey (EVS) (Chytrý) [[Attachment 13 EVS Report 2017.pdf](#)]
- b Group for Phytosociological Nomenclature (GPN) (Willner) [[Attachment 14 2017 GPN Report 20170606.pdf](#)]
- c Vegetation Classification (VCWG) (Krestov/Dengler) [[Attachment 15 IAVS VCWG annual report 2017.pdf](#)]
- e Ecoinformatics (Wiser) [[Attachment 17 EcoinformaticsWG Annual Report to IAVS -2017.pdf](#)]
- f North American Section (Minchin) [[Attachment 18 North American Section Report 2017.pdf](#)]
- g Young Scientists (Jana Michaelis) [[Attachment 19 Young Scientists Report 2016-2017.pdf](#)]

Michaelis requested an opportunity to raise some issues that emerged at the Young Scientists Working Group meeting at the symposium. First, the Young Scientists WG would like closer association with all the other working groups. They can definitely contribute to membership, social media, etc. Many members can't attend symposium every year; can we consider broadcasting on the internet, live streaming, or posting plenary talks on YouTube [Roberts responded very favorably]. The Young Scientists have ideas for workshops for the next two symposia

- stress meets bad science
- open access publishing and open data

She then asked if it is possible for IAVS to organize special issues (JVS, AVS) for early career scientists; could young scientists comment on what is current in society – forum, invited views. Chytrý explained that there are rules for Special Issues; they need to have a topic that is attractive. If someone wants to organize a Special Issue it requires a formal proposal, including having already approached potential authors and having abstracts. This is then evaluated by the Chief Editors. Chytrý will send guidelines to Michaelis.

Pillar suggested they could have a vegetation science blog. Michaelis pointed out that this is simply additional work; they need to focus on their research and publications.

Chiarucci thought that because students are deep into their research topic they would have the ability to write a Forum paper. Michaelis was receptive to this idea and admitted they hadn't considered this because they were intimidated by the description in the journal guidelines.

Lepš described how *Oecologia* has special headings that indicate a paper was based on a Master's thesis, but this can also be a negative.

Michaelis also suggested that representatives of the Young Scientists WG could contribute "invited views", "hot topics for Young Scientists" or "comments on specific topics". Council members expressed that such contributions may be most appropriate for the Bulletin.

Dengler suggested the idea of a potential prize for best paper by an early career researcher. Chytrý was receptive to this and said it would be discussed by the Chief Editors. Pärtel suggested that maybe the Young Scientists want to select the best paper of the young scientists. So this would be the Young Scientists award.

Wiser described the approach used by the NZ Ecological Society. It awards a prize annually to the best paper in Ecology published anywhere by an early career researcher. There would need to be an evaluation committee.

de Bello suggested putting dissertations (or links to them) on the IAVS website.

- h Professional Ethics Committee Report – tabled only [[Attachment 20 Professional Ethics Committee Report.pdf](#)]
- i Bylaws of a new Regional section "South / Latin America" [[Attachment 21. Bylaws of the IAVS South American Working Group.pdf](#)]

Fidelis described the process to create this new Working Group. They discussed whether it should be the Latin American group and include Central America, but decided for now to restrict it to South America.

Minchin raised the point that the Bylaws section about election of a Chair is a bit odd and probably needs to be revised. He will send the suggested change in wording to Wiser. The Governing Board will contact the group and ask for a revision. We will then have an email vote by Council.

- j Eurasian Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) (Torok) [[Attachment 22 IAVS-Report-EDGG\\_2017.pdf](#)]

## **8 Other business**

Pillar raised concern about the recent fires in Portugal in conifer and eucalypt plantations that have killed many people. He asked whether IAVS could make a statement on this matter.

Chytrý asked what we would do with this statement. Should we publish this on our website? Or have a Press Release?

Fidelis thought it could be sent to all members.

Diekmann – asked Pillar to contact our Portuguese members and follow up on this.

The Council meeting was adjourned at 21:35