

Council Minutes - Perth, Australia

IAVS Council Meeting

Perth, Australia

Time: Tuesday, September 2, 2014, 17:30-20:20

Location: Botany Building

Participants

Members present: Martin Diekmann (President), Susan Wisser (Secretary), Alicia Acosta (Vice President), Javier Loidi (Vice President), Robert Peet (Vice President), Valério Pillar (Vice President), Sándor Bartha, Alessandro Chiarucci, Milan Chytrý, Guillaume Decocq, Ulrich Deil, Jürgen Dengler, Kazue Fujiwara, Pavel Krestov, Ladislav Mucina, Yukito Nakamura, Meelis Pärtel, János Podani, Otto Wildi, J. Bastow Wilson, Martin Zobel = 21 votes

Proxy votes: Michael Barbour (Susan Wisser), Renée Bekker (Martin Diekmann), Erwin Bergmeier (Ulrich Deil), Elgene Box (Kazue Fujiwara), Helge Bruelheide (Martin Diekmann), Sara Cousins (Alicia Acosta), Deborah Goldberg (Martin Zobel), Jessica Gurevitch (Susan Wisser), Tomáš Herben (Milan Chytrý), Martin Hermy (Guillaume Decocq), Jan Lepš (Milan Chytrý), Michael Palmer (Valério Pillar), Marcel Rejmánek (Robert Peet), John Rodwell (Ulrich Deil), Joop Schaminée (Susan Wisser), Angelika Schwabe-Kratochwil (Ulrich Deil), Nina Smits (Martin Diekmann) = 17 votes

Absent: Sandra Díaz, Klaus Dierssen

Guests: John Hay (Proposed IAVS 2016 venue: Brasilia, Brasil), Monika Janišová (EDGG), Alessandra Fidelis (Global Sponsorship Committee), Michael Lee (IAVS Administrator and proposed Young Scientist section), Stefan Bradham (FASEB), Peter Minchin (North American Section).

Welcome

President Diekmann brought the meeting to order at 17:33.

1 Announcements of proxy votes (Wisser)

Proxy representation of 17 members was reported and approved (see above). Total voting members represented: 21 + 17 = 38.

2 Bylaws of Working Groups / Regional Sections

(a) Bylaws of the North American Section (Minchin)

The Governing Board submitted a proposal to approve the proposed bylaws of the North American Section (see Attachment 1). Minchin was present to answer questions. No questions were asked.

Approved unanimously, 0 abstentions.

Bylaws of the *North American Section* passed.

(b) Bylaws of the Young Scientist Section (Michael Lee)

Michael Lee provided background on the petition as to why there is interest in having a young scientists section (see Attachment 2). This section will be open to all IAVS members. The goals of the section will be to promote coordination and communication among young scientists, in part in an effort to promote collaboration among more junior vegetation scientists.

The discussion that followed raised the following issues:

- Is this a response to a feeling that IAVS is currently falling short in meeting the needs of younger scientists? (Mucina) [No, this is not case (Lee)]
- IAVS is already doing a lot to help young scientists so this section is not really needed (Mucina). Lee agreed that IAVS is doing a lot for young scientists while suggesting that in addition a more formal section may help collaboration and facilitate connection especially with young scientists new to IAVS.
- An upper age limit would violate IAVS bylaws. Also the group may attract both early career scientists who are not 'young' and senior scientists who wish to join in a mentorship role. Terms like 'novel' and 'early career' were discussed, but the group feels the current name is simple; the bylaws make it clear that there is no exclusivity. Similar discussions has gone on in other professional societies that subsequently opted for the term 'young' owing to simplicity (Podani, Peet, Loidi, Chytrý, Lee, Diekmann, Mucina)

Wilson moved that Council vote on the petition.

37 votes in favour, 1 vote against, 0 abstentions.

Michael Lee introduced the bylaws of the section (see Attachment 3).

Peet moved that the bylaws be accepted conditional upon addition of one sentence to clarify that membership is open to anyone regardless of career stage. Governing Board will need to approve the wording of the sentence.

37 votes in favour, 1 vote against, 0 abstentions.

Bylaws of Young Scientist Section were passed with the above condition.

3 Finances

(a) Report for 2013 - review (Diekmann)

Diekmann presented the 2013 IAVS Financial report (see Attachment 4). He then described a series of issues discovered this year through discussions with the Dutch Tax Authority regarding the legal liabilities of IAVS. Because IAVS has accumulated funds in recent years (2010–2013), IAVS

did not meet Dutch requirements for being fully tax exempt in those years. The payment of back taxes was made in the 2014 year, so does not affect the 2013 financial statement. In future, the way to avoid having tax liabilities is to have a balance between expenditures and income on an annual basis.

To reduce our tax liability for the 2013 year, in November 2013 the Governing Board approved the administrator salary payment for the period October 2013 through June 2014.

Peet asked for clarification: the IAVS statutes (Statute 11) stipulate that IAVS must be non-profit, have we lost our tax-exempt status?

Diekmann said we have not lost our status as tax exempt, but we will have to pay taxes when there is a large imbalance between income and expenses.

Wilson asked for more detailed accounting of Wiley Blackwell income.

Peet (Publications Officer) replied that he will distribute this on request. Anyone who receives it must respect that it is a confidential document and that needs to stay within the Association.

Dengler asked what happens when a working group does not spend all the funds allocated to it in a given year. Diekmann replied some expenses are incurred in the year promised, but may not actually be paid until the following year. Peet suggested IAVS needs to improve the bookkeeping so that the IAVS financial report can distinguish 'promised' monies from actual expenditure.

(b) Auditing of the financial report for 2013 (Wildi)

Otto Wildi and Ulrich Deil audited the financial report and stated that the bookkeeping is very well done with both bookkeeping and expenditures matching the goals of the society. There was sufficient clarity around the higher expenditure made to meet the tax problem. The auditors felt that these expenditures matched the goals of the society, but that a downside of the current system is that the President is very involved in the process, which is not the best way to have things set up. They also pointed out that they are not professional bookkeepers and do not know if everything being presented matches the expectations of Dutch tax law.

(c) Update of budget for 2014 - discussion and approval (Diekmann)

Diekmann presented the updated 2014 budget (see Attachment 5). He pointed out that there were large departures from the original projection. These included:

- The tax bill of nearly 50,000€ (but note that we will get a tax refund in 2015 as our expenditures will exceed



Laco Mucina, the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee of the 2014 IAVS symposium in Perth

income for 2014).

- Increased allocation to Global Fund to support attendance at the annual symposium and working group activities (30,000€ for travel to Perth, 13,000€ to support EVS and EDGG working group meetings).

The balance is negative 50,000€, which is primarily a consequence of tax bill.

Wilson asked why IAVS funds are not invested for maximum return.

Diekmann replied that the Governing Board does not feel confident of its ability to make sound investments decisions, but hopes to explore options in the future via consultation with FASEB, our new Business Office. One decision that the Governing Board did make was to split our funds between two accounts because of the level of insurance coverage on Dutch banks.

Wildi expressed that because interest rates are currently low, it is better to ensure that IAVS funds are safe than trying to invest. Efforts would be more usefully spent on deciding how we should spend the funds we currently have.

Vote to adopt updated budget:

Approved unanimously; no abstentions.

(d) Appointment of auditors for 2014 (Diekmann)

Diekmann suggested that IAVS reappoint Otto Wildi and Ulrich Deil as our society auditors.

Approved unanimously.

(e) Budget projection for 2015

Diekmann presented the budget projection for 2015 (**See Attachment 6**). He also suggested that IAVS allocate 30,000€ to Global fund for travel to Brno symposium and Working group meetings

Minchin suggested that the allotment to working groups should be increased since at this meeting we have approved two new ones.

The ensuing discussion concluded by stating that the allotment had already been increased, and as this is only a projection it can be increased by GB if there is demand.

Wilson asked whether there has been an increase in income from Wiley Blackwell, as the projection has been the same for several years.

The ensuing discussion (Peet, Diekmann, Dengler) indicated that there had been, but as currently the expenses are bigger than income, being conservative in the income projection makes sense. As this is only a projection, the Governing Board can send out a revised budget to Council later in the year as the true values become clearer. Some Council members would like to be kept informed as these changes are made and be consulted on how any increased income could be spent.

4 IAVS Business Office

(a) Contract with FASEB - report and discussion (Peet, Wiser, Diekmann)

Wiser reviewed the process by which IAVS had reached the decision to contract with FASEB (discussed with Council at previous Council meetings and via email over the last year; **see Attachment 7**).

Peet introduced Stephan Bradham, our FASEB representative, who was present at the Perth meeting to learn more about IAVS and about how FASEB can work with IAVS. Peet stated that this is an important step for IAVS as the

complexity of managing professional societies is increasing with time and calls for both time commitment and expertise not commonly available from active scientists.

(b) Report from FASEB (Bradham)

Bradham described FASEB and how it originated as an advocacy group for scientific societies and in so doing discovered these societies needed administrative support. He described the types of support that they will provide to IAVS: Management of communication both inside and outside the membership, membership management, marketing support to members, and accounting services. Reporting on these activities will be to the Governing Board. FASEB will help with creation of the IAVS Bulletin. The Governing Board will continue to consider additional services that FASEB might be contracted to perform, but are moving gently, one step at a time.

Pärtel asked how similar IAVS is to other organizations they interact with.

Bradham replied that many are like IAVS in that they are run by volunteers. He can see that the officers want to be more strategic and pass on the administrative load to someone else. Different organizations use different level of services.

Pärtel asked whether these societies publish scholarly journals.

Bradham replied that FASEB works with societies publishing with the major publishers (Wiley, Taylor and Francis) and also publishes its own journal.

Mucina asked whether any of the societies they support have international membership and run their annual symposia in different countries.

Bradham replied that most have international membership, although only one other has 'International' in its name. ISAP, for example, holds meetings in different places every year.

FASEB also runs their meetings abroad.

Chytrý asked whether they could take over our website.

Bradham replied that this is possible, but not happening yet. Peet described how the services around which Wiley administers websites are currently in transition and it is unclear whether IAVS should stay with Wiley for website provision or not.

Pärtel asked about the experience of FASEB with social media.

Bradham replied that FASEB has experience with Linked in, Twitter and Facebook. The use of these platforms will depend on what IAVS wants.

(c) Transition process (Peet)

Peet described how different GB members and the current administrator (Michael Lee) have had a series of Skype meetings on different topics to facilitate the transition from Michael and Nina to FASEB. We are also developing a manual to describe the administrative procedures. Michael Lee's role will be complete after the Perth symposium and FASEB will be in the administrative role.

The Council thanked Michael Lee for serving so effectively in the role as IAVS Administrator for the last year.

(d) Future symposium organization by FASEB (e.g. website for registration, abstract submission)

Peet introduced some potential options for how FASEB could help with organization of meetings – e.g. a one-time development of website for abstract submission that could apply to future meetings etc. The Governing Board has spoken to John Hay about how FASEB can best support the Brazil meeting and it is anticipated that he will use these services. For the time being, use of FASEB services will be *a la carte* according to the needs of the symposium organizers.

Diekmann described how the Governing Board believes it would be good for some components of the annual symposium organization to be centralized, with the primary goal being to make it easier for local organizers. As such, the Brazil meeting will be test run. For the Brno meeting, if they need help FASEB can be approached.

Chytrý indicated that the Brno meeting may need help with some aspects, such as processing applications for support of the Global Sponsorship Committee.

Dengler indicated that working groups might also benefit from having a standard registration template that could be used for their annual meetings (e.g. EVS, EDGG).

5 Future legal incorporation of the IAVS (Peet, Diekmann, Bradham)

Peet described the three options under consideration for the future legal status of IAVS (**see Attachment 8**) and opened the floor for discussion. These options can be summarized as:

1. Remain in The Netherlands entirely. Register with US as doing business there, as tax exempt. Pros and Cons discussed.
2. Legally organize in US as a corporate entity, and arrange for the entity to be owned by IAVS in The Netherlands. Income in the US might not be taxable by the Dutch parent company. Pros and cons were discussed, as outlined in Attachment 8. This option was recommended by the Governing Board.
3. Create a legal entity in the US. Slowly transfer all operations in The Netherlands to the US.

In the ensuing discussion (Wilson, Mucina) it was expressed that option 3 seems simpler, whereas option 2, gives us more options in the future and that potential members from certain countries will be more comfortable with option 2.

Peet moved that Council vote on option 2

Mucina seconded.

One against, all the rest in support, no abstentions.

Governing Board will proceed with legal counsel on option 2 and will update Council if things change or new knowledge comes up.

6 Planning for the Council elections in 2015 (Diekmann)

(a) Assembling nominations

Diekmann explained that the four-year term for Council members will be over in mid-2015. As such, we need a Nominations Committee that will receive solicit suggestions for Council members from the membership of the Association and that will organize the election. It would be desirable to have 80-120 nominees on the ballot. The Committee will be comprised of two Governing Board members and two Council members.

(b) Timing of the election and announcements of the results

Diekmann described that the election should take place in January to allow planning for the next Council meeting (Brno, July 2015) and that there needs to be input from both the old and new Council (if we follow tradition, at Brno there will first be a meeting of the old Council, and later a shorter meeting of the new Council at which the new Governing Board will be elected).

Ensnung discussion (Dengler, Mucina, Diekmann) raised points of geographic spread, representation of working groups and regional sections, the need for nominee profiles



Welcome reception at the Perth symposium

to describe service activity for IAVS (including during time served on Council). When the vote is announced, it could be useful for there to be a cover letter to IAVS members asking them to consider the aspects of the Association (e.g. geographic spread, gender representativeness) described in the IAVS bylaws. The Council has tried many times to increase diversity and geographic scope of the Council, but to date success has been limited.

Mucina suggested that Diekmann form the Nomination Committee.

Diekmann agreed to approach two Council members to join the Nomination Committee.

7 Reports on publications

a. Publications Officer (Peet)

i. Status of the journals

Peet described how both journals are doing very well (**see Attachments 9 & 10**). Both journals are at an all-time high in their impact factors. Downloads are increasing, income is increasing and subscriptions are increasing. The article backlog has been cleared and now the time between acceptance and appearance in print is down to 5 months (there is only 45 days between acceptance and publication online).

ii. Issues raised with respect to the Chief Editors

Some concerns about quality control in the production phase have been raised and the Chief Editors are working with Wiley to fix this problem.

Peet and Wilson indicated that there has been discussion about better compensation for Chief Editors with the suggestion of a modest honorarium (in addition to travel) of ~1,500€/year. This has not yet been raised with the Governing Board. This may be included in a revised budget for consideration by Council.

iii. Other IAVS-related publications: Bulletin, Book series, Phytocoenologia, Website

The Book series is on hold and suggestions for a new Chief Editor would be appreciated. Wiley is still interested in publishing such a series.

The relationship between Phytocoenologia and IAVS has been formalized. In exchange for permission to state on the cover of the journal "published in collaboration with the International Association for Vegetation Science," IAVS will approve the appointment of Phytocoenologia editors with the goals of maximizing quality while minimizing competition between IAVS journals and Phytocoenologia. In the ensuing discussion (Mucina, Wilson, Peet, Diekmann) concern that the Governing Board approved this without Council consent or discussion was expressed. This was seen by some as

conflicting with current policy because it is the IAVS Council that approves Chief Editors for JVS and AVS, not the Governing Board. Also, although the Publications Committee was consulted about this in the past (2010), the final agreement was not circulated to them. This was acknowledged, although there is ambiguity in that the editors of Phytocoenologia are not Chief Editors for IAVS-owned journals. It was agreed that in the future the Council would be consulted on such appointments.

iv. Publications Committee

The Publications Committee has not met in the last year, partly due to Peet's extensive involvement in FASEB and Governing Board activities. They will meet later this year (Dec) or early next year (Jan). Mucina has agreed to join the Committee upon Peet's invitation. Peet described that it is time to review Chief Editors and the journals. This will be undertaken by the Publications Committee with a report to the Governing Board and Council.

v. Relationship with Wiley: membership and renewal management, contract renewal

The new contract with Wiley has been reviewed by an outside consultant and the Publications Committee. It is now near ready to be signed, but we should first consult with FASEB regards services we may transfer to them from Wiley.

Wilson raised the issue of the free access to 20% of the journals that has been in the contract. Peet replied that it is very complicated because of changing rules of numerous countries requiring that certain papers be open access versus the need for journals to get subscriptions to remain financially viable. Further discussions with Wiley on this issue are required. The ensuing discussion explored consequences of open access – will IAVS still get some profit share? Will the payment method for publication change (e.g. author charges versus subscriptions)?

The need for DOIs on other IAVS publications was expressed.

(b) Chief Editors (Pärtel)

Pärtel that confirmed that the journals are doing well and their profiles are increasing.

8 Reports of Working groups / Regional sections

(a) European Dry Grassland Group (EDGG) (Janišová) (see Attachment 11)

(b) European Vegetation Survey (EVS) (Chytrý) (see Attachment 12)

(c) Ecoinformatics (Wiser) (see Attachment 13)

(d) Circumboreal Vegetation Map (Krestov) – will provide a report

(e) Group for Phytosociological Nomenclature (GPN) (Willner) (see Attachment 14)

(f) Regional Section of North America (Minchin) (see Attachment 15)

Working group reports were distributed in advance and questions were solicited. There were none.

Peet urged any of these groups to contact FASEB about help in coordinating activities.

Frustration was expressed about inactive groups/sections continuing to be listed on the website.

9 Reports of Committees

(a) Awards Committee (Diekmann)

Diekmann described the issue that the difference between the criteria for awarding the Alexander von Humboldt Medal versus the Honorary Membership Award is not completely clear, despite their descriptions in the bylaws.

In response the following points were raised (Loidi, Wiser, Wilson, Chytrý). The intent of the Alexander von Humboldt award was to recognize those whose work resulted in a paradigm shift in vegetation science. Nominations should include both a description of the merits of the work as well as metrics such as H indices. The scope of this award is not clear. Does it pertain only to vegetation science in a narrow sense or to all of plant community ecology? Most participants in the discussion felt it applied to all of plant community ecology. The process around awards could be improved by more formal announcement of the awards and the solicitation of nominations through various IAVS communication media. FASEB could assist with these logistics.

A motion was made for the Awards Committee to develop a white paper on this. Diekmann will communicate this to Schaminée.

(b) Global Sponsorship Committee (Fidelis) [Attachment 16]

A series of issues around reimbursement of award recipient travel by GSC were discussed (Mucina, Dengler, Pillar, Chytrý). For some recipients, a reimbursement after the travel has been completed is not a workable solution as these people may not have sufficient funds to pay for the travel at the outset. How can we fund students ahead of time when they cannot afford to front the funds? Could IAVS get a credit card to help with these? Could IAVS give the funds to the local organizers to make the arrangements?

There was also a discussion about logistics of coordinating awards. It would be useful for the GSC (with input from the symposium organizers) to produce a summary report of what worked and what didn't with the Perth symposium.

For the Brno symposium, a partnership with FASEB may

help resolve these difficulties.

(c) Membership Committee (Fidelis)

There was no report presented.

10 Future meetings

(a) Brno meeting 2015 - Understanding Broad-scale Vegetation Patterns

Chytrý described the arrangements with a presentation and handed out information sheets. The structure will be similar to IAVS symposia in the past, with two additions. There will be shorter 1-day field trips before and after the symposium. There will also be three 2-day courses on data analysis offered taught by David Zelený, Lubomír Tichý and Viktoria Wagner.

(b) Brazil meeting 2016 – June 13-17

Hay provided some preliminary information. The symposium will be held in a town 160 km from Brasília. There will be excursions into Cerrado, and also into the Amazon! Brazil requires visas and it is a good idea to get a yellow fever vaccine.

(c) Proposal for the 2017 meeting in Palermo, Sicily (Riccardo Guarino)

- Pre-Symposium – June 11-18
- Meeting – June 20-24
- Post-Symposium – June 25-July 1

A brief summary of dates and activities was presented. The symposium venue is likely to be in an 18th century botanical garden.

Mucina moved approval of the proposal for Sicily.

All approved; one abstention.

A discussion ensued (Wilson, Diekmann, Loidi) about whether it is still necessary that symposia be located in Europe in alternating years (answer is that it is not required). Is there a possibility of holding a symposium soon in China or the US? It would be good to attract more scientists from the China to IAVS. At present the US has the highest number of IAVS members of any country. There is a possibility of a Chinese proposal. IAVS is open to all proposals and considers experience in organizing such symposia when evaluating proposals.

11 Other business

None

President Diekmann adjourned the Council meeting at 8:20pm.

Submitted by Susan Wiser, IAVS Secretary