Paper in:

The founding and early history of the International Bryozoology Association, 1965-1974

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1. Introduction

When the International Bryozoology Association (IBA) held its first conference in San Donato Milanese on the outskirts of Milan, Italy, in August 1968, the organization was already three years old. Planning for the conference had begun in Stockholm, Sweden, in May 1965, when the IBA acquired its name, adopted its purpose of ‘promoting the exchange of information, ideas, and techniques’ among bryozoologists (i.e. ‘all students engaged in research on … bryozoans’), and enrolled the first 16 of its members.¹ The founders also elected a chairman and a secretary whom they charged with enlisting the support of a sufficient number of colleagues to achieve the initial goal of the IBA—to hold its first conference approximately three years later.² By the conclusion of its third conference, in Villeurbanne, part of greater Lyon, France, in September 1974, the schedule and format of the IBA’s conferences, and the responsibilities of the officers and council in carrying them out, had become well enough established to formalise in a constitution. This sequence of events marks the IBA as intermediate among specialist societies in the formality of its organization, with extremes represented by the Society for Vertebrate Paleontology, whose constitution was drafted prior to its organization meeting,³ and the Pander Society, which has no constitution, but in which ‘a meeting could be said to take place when two or more members meet to discuss conodonts’.⁴

What follows is a personal memoir of those formative years from 1965 to 1974, during which we made up procedures as we went along, generally taking a minimalist view with
regard to organization. We felt ourselves motivated by internationalism as well as our interest in promoting the subject of our research. We had deliberately chosen ‘bryozoology’ rather than ‘bryozoologists’ for our title to put the focus on the subject, not its participants. These motives were very much in evidence in the scholarly community during the two decades following World War II, as the founding of narrowly focused scholarly societies accelerated, especially those with ‘International’ in their names (Figure 1). When we erred, it was on the side of inclusiveness and perhaps too naively misjudging the effects of international tensions.  

In many respects, the IBA’s history parallels that of other societies in which the interests of biologists and palaeobiologists were melded, such as the Society for the Study of Evolution. Unlike many of those societies, however, the IBA was never intended to define or redefine a field of study. Nevertheless, after just the first two IBA conferences, ‘a general trend toward model building and synthesis’ and ‘a renewed vigor in the study of bryozoans’ were perceived, perhaps evidence of a newly emerging synergism. The long-term effects of the twelve IBA conferences to date on directions and productivity of bryozoan research would make an interesting study. There is little question, for example, that among the papers presented at the first IBA conference, those dealing with models of growth of hard and soft tissues had an immediate impact on bryozoan studies. A proliferation of similar studies, and much spirited discussion, followed at the second conference. It also seems apparent that the IBA has fostered a ‘renaissance of interest’ in Bryozoa and ‘has been instrumental in bringing paleontologists and neontologists to a greater understanding of each other’s field of interest’. However, an assessment of the IBA’s influence on bryozoology as a science, beyond these general impressions, awaits further analysis.

2. The Stockholm meeting: enthusiasm and expectation

However unsurprising it might be that the IBA was founded in the homeland of the bryozoologists F.A. Smitt, Folke Borg, and Lars Silén, it was fortuitous from an internationalist perspective that this was also the homeland of Dag Hammarskjöld, the second secretary-general of the United Nations, who had died serving the cause of international peace just a few years before. Moreover, more than a third of those attending the Stockholm meeting (Figure 2) were affiliated with Swedish institutions (the non-bryozoologists I. Hessland, F. Adamczak, H. Mutvei, and K. Mori; plus L. Silén, S. Schager, and A.H. Cheetham). The meeting was not intended to be the founding event of a new society, but rather a gathering of a few researchers, mostly palaeobiologists, with interests in the post-Palaeozoic fauna of the areas bordering the North Sea.

Ivar Hessland, head of the Geological Institute of Stockholm University where I was guest professor that year, had given me what was then the far from inconsequential sum of 10,000 Swedish kronor (about 2,000 US dollars) to assemble a ‘think tank’ of scientists
Figure 1a. The number of new scholarly societies founded during each year of the 20th century, based on data from the Scholarly Societies Project (J. Parrott, editor, http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/overview.html, last accessed 7 December 1999). The increasing trend from 1900 to 1995 is highly significant and explains more than half of the variation. Data after 1995 may be incomplete. 1b. The percent of the new societies in graph a that include ‘International’ in their names. The 1900-1995 trend is highly significant, but explains just 12 per cent of the variation. Decreases in internationalism are evident during times of international political tension, such as the World Wars and periods during the Cold War.

interested in a subject of my choosing. At the time, I was finishing a study of Eocene bryozoans from England and beginning one on Danian bryozoans from Sweden, so the scope of the meeting seemed logical to me.

The budget allowed me to invite eight ‘foreign’ bryozoologists, some of whom (e.g. J. Malecki of Poland) declined. The final list included O. Berthelsen (Denmark), P.L. Cook, G.P. Larwood, A.W. Medd, and J.S. Ryland (England), Y.-V. Gautier (Algeria), R. Lagaaij (Netherlands), and E. Voigt (Germany). How did these seven attendees, plus Silén, Schager, and Cheetham, swell into the 16 IBA founders? At least initially, news of the meeting must have spread by word of mouth, and soon E. Annoscia and G. Braga (Italy), R.S. Boardman (USA), M. Labracherie and J. Prud’homme (France), and N. Spjeldnaes (Norway) all planned to come using their own resources. Additional inquiries, some seeking funding, came from abroad. Needless to say, the scope of the discussions
that we had originally planned was significantly altered by this infusion of additional expertise.

According to my notes, the topics we discussed for three and a half days (24th-27th May 1965) included questions that resonate even today: Are the problems of bryozoan research different from those facing specialists in other taxa? Are the results of our research being communicated quickly and effectively? With what success can we determine morphological and functional relationships among different groups of Bryozoa? What should be the role of biometrical, numerical, and non-numerical methods in characterising and comparing bryozoan species? Is it possible and worthwhile to make our taxonomic methods standard and 'objective'? What principles should guide us in taxonomy at the various categorical levels? What is our knowledge of the ecological tolerances of living Bryozoa, and how can it be applied to fossil forms? With what success can Bryozoa be used in biostratigraphy? Do their ranges show major discontinuities?
What major phylogenetic trends are indicated? My recollection is that the discussions were quite informal, as befits the ‘think tank’ model, except for Rob Lagaaij’s polished presentation based on the Rhône delta paper that he and Yves Gautier had just published.13

It was the scope of these discussions, and the desire to involve workers from more bryozoological and geographic areas, that spontaneously generated the idea of forming the IBA on the last day in Stockholm (27th May 1965). Pat Cook and I were elected secretary and chairman, respectively. The year 1968 was targeted for the first IBA conference, the venue of which was to be determined by the new officers, based on maximising the participation of fellow bryozoologists (both biologists and palaeobiologists) from as many countries as possible. All 16 of us were eager to begin assembling the list of names and addresses to be used in promoting the 1968 conference. I am sure that the nearly 100 letters that I sent from Stockholm that summer represent just a fraction of the effort of the group of 16.14

3. Organizing the first conference: inventing a procedure

By the end of 1965, the list of names, which we dubbed the IBA membership list, had grown to more than 150.15,16 However, mailings to some of those on the IBA list did not elicit replies for the very fundamental reason that they were no longer alive—more about that later. We received suggestions, but only one attempting to ‘correct’ the name of the organization, with a replacement ‘such as International Association for the Study of Ectoprocts and Entoprocts’.17 Nevertheless, the IBA survived a possible identity crisis, keeping its simple, easily remembered initials intact, whatever the merits of the Bryozoa versus Ectoprocta argument.18

Tom Schopf, ever brimming with ideas, also proposed holding the IBA’s first conference in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, under the joint sponsorship of the Marine Biological Laboratory and the Smithsonian Institution (where I had moved in 1966).19 Moreover, he would have had us apply for US government funding to finance the conference and to ‘bring about 15 persons from abroad’.20 These suggestions, intended to be constructive, might very well have turned the IBA toward a more national orientation at a time when international political tensions were about to escalate in ways that we could not anticipate. At the very least, we hoped to have a much broader international representation than this proposal envisioned.

At the Stockholm meeting, Enrico Annoscia had suggested holding the IBA’s first conference in Italy, and in the fall of 1967 the management of the petroleum company AGIP formally offered its facilities in San Donato Milanese for that purpose.21 This venue promised to be excellent in every way. By April 1968, 55 people planned to attend the conference, representing Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Rumania, Spain,
Sweden, the UK, the USA, and the USSR (with five prospective attendees).\textsuperscript{22} By the time of the conference, one more country, Norway, was added, but attendance of the participants from Brazil, India, and all those from the USSR was cancelled.\textsuperscript{23} The military action ending the ‘Prague Spring’ (the political reforms undertaken by the Dubcek government in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1968) began just four days after the conference in Milan ended on 16th August, and we could not help but feel that the situation leading up to this event had prevented our colleagues from Russia and the Ukraine from attending the conference. Although discouraged, we at least had the satisfaction of seeing that our internationalist ambitions for the IBA were partly fulfilled, and we felt convinced that some further work could make prospects even more promising for the future.

Prague was already a factor in the founding of the IBA, as we began to consider in 1965 where and when to hold the first conference. The next International Geological Congress (IGC) was scheduled to meet in Prague in August 1968. Our original plan for the three-year IBA cycle was based in part on the idea that some conferences would fall in years when the IGC meets and others in years that the International Congress of Zoology would be convened. A number of the palaeontologists attending the Milan conference went on to Prague only to find that IGC sessions were aborted, in many cases with the sound of gunfire in the background. (I missed the ‘action’ because Janine Prud’homme and Monique Labracherie had invited me to go on a most rewarding post-Milan collecting trip in the Aquitaine.) A number of others had cancelled their plans to attend the IBA conference because of involvement in some of the pre-IGC events. Interestingly, the only resignation from the IBA of which I am aware cited the IBA-IGC scheduling ‘conflict’, suggesting that it should have been resolved by consulting the IBA’s ‘only living octogenarian’. This correspondent, M.K. Elias, also said that he wished to ‘dissociate’ himself from an organization that had ‘enrolled dead members.’ Unfortunately, his letter seems to have been lost, but the IBA was not the first society from which this individual resigned in protest, although apparently for a different reason. In 1947, Elias was the first member to resign from the Society for the Study of Evolution, after his manuscript had been rejected for publication in \textit{Evolution}. ‘The actual reason for his manuscript’s rejection is unclear, though it appears that [George Gaylord] Simpson’s dislike of the manuscript and its author was part of the reason. Simpson referred to the paper as “all nonsense, and part of it malicious nonsense”. Later on he wrote, “I am already somewhat at odds with this gentleman, who has made and continues to make large demands on my time and patience.” … It appears that Elias was also in disfavour with [Wendell] Camp, who described Elias as a “sorehead”’.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, the scorn heaped on us in Elias’s missing letter may say more about its writer than the recipients.

Scheduling the Milan IBA conference in the Prague IGC year seems to have produced another interesting phenomenon. Although the number of papers presented at IBA conferences has varied relatively little (Figure 3a), the Milan conference was one of four in which palaeobiological papers outnumbered biological ones (Figure 3b), as pointed out
Figure 3a. Variation in numbers of IBA members and numbers of attendees and papers presented at conferences (data from conference programs and IBA newsletters). 3b, Percentages of papers at IBA conferences based on palaeontological material. Data are from Reguant (note 25). Two conferences, Milan 1968 and Durham 1980, were held in the same years on the same continent as International Geological Congresses (IGC). The decreasing trend in palaeontological papers accounts for more than a third of the variation, but is only marginally significant statistically.

by Reguant. 25 Only one other IBA conference (1980 in Durham) was held in proximity to an IGC meeting, and again there seems to have been a correlated, although weaker, increase in the percentage of palaeobiological offerings. However, an overall trend of decreasing contributions from palaeontology seems to have overshadowed whatever effects IGC meetings might have had (Figure 3b), despite the fact that the majority of IBA’s presidents have been palaeobiologists. Including the Milan conference, the overall 1968-1998 proportion of palaeobiological offerings has been 50 per cent, but this proportion fell to 48 per cent for the five conferences following Milan and to 47 per cent for the last five conferences (Figure 3b). The role of palaeontology in biology has been an ongoing issue in other organizations, including the Society for the Study of Evolution. 26 It would be interesting to explore whether the decline of palaeobiology at IBA conferences
is reflected in the bryozoan literature in general.

4. Milan’s aftermath: providing continuity

It had become apparent to me in the spring preceding the first conference that a procedure was needed for choosing the IBA’s next officers. A nominating committee (with representatives from England, France, Germany, Rumania, Sweden, and the USA) was empanelled to present nominees for chairman and secretary at the business meeting at the Milan conference (Table 1). Because no dues were collected for membership in the IBA, its new officers, and the electorate, would be the bryozoologists who had invested the most effort in the organization—i.e. those who attended the conference. When the new officers were elected (16th August 1968), the chairman’s title was changed to president ‘to avoid confusion with the conference chairman’. In addition, the nominating committee was reconstituted as an advisory council, with the addition of members from Japan, the Netherlands, and the USSR, plus the outgoing IBA chairman and the chairman of the Milan conference (Table 1). Thus I became the only ‘past president’ without having
Table 1—Officers and council members of the International Bryozoology Association, 1965-1974. ‘Official’ titles are italicised.

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<th>Triennium</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Council</th>
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<td>1965-1968</td>
<td>A.H. Cheetham, <em>Chairman</em></td>
<td>(Nominating Committee)</td>
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<td>P.L. Cook, <em>Secretary</em></td>
<td>R.S. Boardman</td>
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<td>E. Annoscia, <em>Conference Chairman</em></td>
<td>V. Ghiurca</td>
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<td>J. Prud’homme</td>
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<td>S. Schager</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968-1971</td>
<td>N. Spjeldnæs, <em>President</em></td>
<td>E. Annoscia (<em>past Conference Chairman</em>)</td>
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<td>P.L. Cook, <em>Secretary</em></td>
<td>G.G. Astrová</td>
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<td>G.P. Larwood, <em>Conference Chairman</em></td>
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<td>A.H. Cheetham (<em>past President</em>)</td>
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<td>P.L. Cook, <em>Secretary</em></td>
<td>G.P. Larwood (<em>past Conference Chairman</em>)</td>
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<td>L. David, <em>Conference Host</em></td>
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<td>N. Spjeldnæs (<em>past President</em>)</td>
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<td>E. Voigt</td>
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been ‘president’.³⁰

While I was occupied with these procedural matters, Enrico Annoscia was diligently inventing the responsibilities of conference chairman. In addition to organizing the conference’s logistics, he established the tradition of obtaining backing for publishing the conference papers.³¹ For the most part, the conference chairmen (or ‘conference hosts’ as they became known by the time of the Lyon conference) found their ‘reward’ in being the editors of the conference volumes. Despite the magnitude of their accomplishments in ensuring a written record of the conferences, only three of the 16 conference organizers or co-organizers have been elected to the IBA presidency. Worries to the contrary notwithstanding, successive editors of the IBA proceedings volumes were able to
maintain an ‘open’ policy with regard to inclusion of papers presented at the conferences, rather than concentrating on just those with ‘marketable value’ for publishers.\textsuperscript{32}

A different approach to publication was suggested by Schopf.\textsuperscript{33} In a page and cost analysis of a number of ‘secondary taxon’ journals (e.g. \textit{Crustacea} and \textit{Herpetologica}), he suggested that an IBA journal of about 350 pages per year could be viable. It seems instructive to consider here the experience of organizations, such as the Society for the Study of Evolution, founded largely to publish a journal. Originally visualised as being published simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, \textit{Evolution} (subtitled ‘International Journal of Organic Evolution’) ended up in the USA at least in part because of the post-World War II paper shortage in Britain.\textsuperscript{34} Today, approximately three-fourths of the society’s membership and most of its journal’s authors (65 and 66 per cent, respectively, in the October and December 2000 issues) have US or Canadian addresses. In 1974, Schopf became co-editor of a new journal, \textit{Paleobiology}, published by the Palaeontological Society, more than 70 per cent of whose membership is in the USA.\textsuperscript{35}

5. Durham 1971 and Lyon 1974: the IBA as we know it

Nils Spjeldnæs also took international participation as a keynote of his 1968-1971 presidency, negotiating IBA membership in both the International Union of Biological Sciences and the International Union of Geological Sciences (the latter as a ‘working group’ of the International Palaeontological Association). As many as 12 bryozoologists from the USSR were scheduled to attend the conference in Durham, UK, in September 1971, but in the end, perhaps because of renewed tensions during the last two years of US involvement in the war in Vietnam, only three were able to do so.\textsuperscript{36} Nevertheless, the 1971 Durham conference is still remembered by its participants as one of the high points in the history of the IBA, at least in part because of the participation of our colleagues from the USSR.\textsuperscript{37} In addition, the size of the conferences, in terms of both numbers of attendees and numbers of papers, seems to have been firmly established, despite significant fluctuations in the total numbers of IBA members (Figure 3a).

Although major international tensions seemed to have lessened by 1974, all of the potential participants from the USSR cancelled their plans to attend the September conference in Lyon, France.\textsuperscript{38} Frank Maturo focused his attention on formalising the IBA’s plan of organization as the hallmark of his 1971-1974 presidency, presenting a draft constitution that was revised and adopted at the business meeting on 11th September 1974.\textsuperscript{39} Frank felt that this level of formality was a necessity for ‘dealing with funding committees and affiliated associations, etc.’. Some aspects of the draft constitution elicited much thought and discussion (Figure 4), and for the first (and perhaps only) time, an IBA business meeting continued into a second half-day session. In an important sense, this event marked the end of the formative phase of the IBA’s history, although the shifting balance away from palaeobiology (Figure 3b) may also prove to be an important factor
as IBA's history runs its course.

6. In retrospect: “Our dear child”

Whatever the preservation of an internationalist orientation may or may not have done for the advancement of bryozoology as a science, it did much to ‘put a human face’ on its practise. Perhaps the following excerpt from a letter from Geneviève Lutaud, cancelling her participation in the Milan conference for medical reasons, says it best: ‘I am very much disappointed in losing this opportunity of talking with bryozoologists I already know by their published papers and I very much wished to meet’.\textsuperscript{40} The opportunities the IBA gave us to develop friendships, I cannot help thinking, fostered our interest in bryozoology (see, for example, Giampietro Braga’s account of his interaction with Salvador Reguant at IBA conferences).\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, the IBA even began to take on ‘human’ qualities of its own, as so poignantly put by Yves Gautier, ‘our dear I.B.A. (our child, born 1965 in Stockholm)’.\textsuperscript{42}

Still another ‘face’ of IBA’s internationalism has been the experience of a diversity of social aspects afforded to us by meeting in different places. Not the least of these has been the variety of culinary customs we were privileged to experience. Only once, however, did social events seem to overshadow the scientific side of our meetings. At the meeting in Stockholm, we were visited by representatives of the press, not to note what we had to say about Bryozoa, but rather to interview Gunilla Schager who, with the assistance of Marge Cheetham, had prepared a Swedish smörgåsbord in the old traditional way. The recipe for ‘Jonsson’s temptation’, made with herrings, potatoes, and dill, elicited particular comment in the press, although smoked reindeer and other Scandinavian delicacies proved just as memorable to many of the diners. When it came time to wash up the four sets of antique china, silver, and crystal in the elegant apartment of Sten Schager’s parents overlooking one of Stockholm’s principal squares, it was Rob Lagaaij, ever the consummate gentleman, who was the first to roll up his sleeves and plunge his hands into the dishwasher. He, as all of our departed friends, continues to live in our thoughts.

7. Acknowledgements

This account is intended as homage to all of those who contributed to the founding and evolution of the IBA, especially fellow members of the ‘group of 16.’ I thank Patrick Wyse Jackson and Mary Spencer Jones for inviting me to participate in the session on the history of bryozoan studies, and Enrico Annoscia, Giampietro Braga, Richard Boardman, Patricia Cook, Sten Schager, and Nils Spjældnæs for comments on the manuscript. Mary Spencer Jones also kindly provided copies of the IBA constitution and other documents.

I plan to place my correspondence, notes, and other documents on which this brief history has been based in a suitable archive. Perhaps others who possess pertinent documents will join me in determining which archive might be most appropriate.
Notes

2 Somewhat misleadingly referred to as ‘a second conference’ (note 1).
5 Here I include such factors as currency restrictions, as well as the more obvious confrontations of an overtly political nature.
12 John Ryland had to cancel because of illness.
15 Cook and Cheetham, note 14.
16 Thus the ratio of ‘members’ to ‘founders’ was almost exactly the same as in the first year of the Society for the Study of Evolution, an organization almost four times our size (see note 6).
20 Schopf, note 19.
24 Smocovitis, note 6, p. 289.
26 Smocovitis, note 6, pp. 288-289.
27 Cook and Cheetham, note 14; until the 1970s, there was relatively little disagreement with the traditional usage of ‘chairman’ to include individuals of either sex.
28 Membership of the nominating committee had also been determined with this criterion in mind
29 Ascoli and Cook, note 23, p. 16.
30 Ascoli and Cook, note 23, p. 18.
32 N. Spjeldnæs, letter to members of the IBA advisory council ('board'), dated 17th March 1970.
34 Smocovitis, note 6, p. 255.
40 G. Lutaud, letter to A.H. Cheetham, dated 20th June 1968; Geneviève did attend later conferences, including those in 1971 and 1974.