

IMA Executive Committee Meeting



IMA Executive Committee Meeting, 16 April 2011, Amsterdam.

In mid-April 2011 Amsterdam turned into an international centre of mycology, and the IMA Executive Committee met on 16 April 2011 parallel to the barcode of fungi workshop and symposium on taxonomy: one fungus = one name, both of which are reported on elsewhere in this issue of *IMA Fungus*. This was the first meeting of the Executive after the successful IMC 9 in Edinburgh, and was under the direction of John W. Taylor, the IMA President. The meeting concentrated on advancing mycology until the next conference. IMC9 was an important step towards an integrative approach to mycology addressing all fields of mycology and opening the door for numerous interdisciplinary discussions. Given all the positive feedback of IMC9, the Executive decided to launch a periodic newsletter later this year to announce all relevant mycological activities to all members of IMA. Together with *IMA Fungus* and the IMA webpage, we hope to have a higher profile not only among mycologists, but also among all scientists and a

broad public audience. Please visit the IMA webpage from time to time. We are going to restructure the website and try to make it a primary place for mycological news. News, which you think should be on the webpage should be sent to me, as IMA Secretary.

The newly elected Executive Committee agreed on the further support of the scientific community and wishes to strengthen the international network of mycologists. The Committee had a long discussion on the situation in the various regional committees and associations, and emphasized the role of IMA, and the IMA awards for young scientists. Based on the great success of IMC9, the financial situation is now robust and the Executive decided on several actions designed to support mycology on a regional or local level. We anticipate the launch of several new activities, which will be of special interest to our regional members – especially as they play an important role during our international conferences every four years.

Additionally, the IMA Executive discussed the future role of taxonomy and the collaboration in this field with IUMS and the ICTF (International Commission on the Taxonomy of Fungi), whose work complements the Nomenclature Committee for Fungi dealing with “legal” aspects of fungal nomenclature. There is no doubt that MycoBank in the ownership of IMA has already had a great impact in fungal taxonomy, and the Executive Committee wished to support the discussion of the further development of the botanical code; the majority of the Executive Committee subsequently indicated their support for the Amsterdam Declaration on Fungal Nomenclature (see *IMA Fungus* 2(1): 105–112, 2011).

Finally, Leka Manoch, the President of the next mycological congress (IMC10) in Bangkok in 2014, gave a detailed overview of the progress of their planning and discussions. The participants at the Executive Committee meeting in Amsterdam were impressed by the rapid advance in plan-

ning which had taken place in the last ten months, and acknowledged the input of Nick Read in particular during his visit to Thailand last year.

International mycology remains a great challenge, but the present Executive, togeth-

er with John Taylor and all other IMA officers, will strengthen the often already close regional and national collaborations for the wealth of mycology. Hopefully, this will encourage all mycologists to support mycology in all fields of research and beyond.

International Commission on the Taxonomy of Fungi: Roadmap to 2014



The International Commission on the Taxonomy of Fungi (ICTF) was a convener of the symposium, “One Fungus = One Name” described elsewhere in this issue of *IMA Fungus* (pp. (7)–(8)). A general meeting of the ICTF concluded the Symposium, giving the Commission the opportunity to introduce newly elected members and thank retiring members. Partly in response to the vision statement published by Hawksworth (*IMA Fungus* 1(2): 20–21, 2010), we also discussed the programme of work for the Commission leading up to IMC10 in Bangkok, Thailand in 2014. This article provides an update on our planned activities, including some of the developments that have transpired since the Amsterdam meeting.

The officers of the ICTF were established, with Keith Seifert agreeing to continue as Chair until 2014 and Andy Miller assuming the role of Secretary for the same period. The Secretary immediately established a group site on the web to facilitate communication and sharing of information among members, which will become increasingly valuable as our work accelerates. Some of the discussions will focus on mechanisms to enhance the democratic process in the election of future ICTF members, improve accountability to the IMA and IUMS, and the introduction of temporary working groups that will have responsibility for specific tasks as a means

of distributing the work load more evenly across the Commission. As is evident from the text of the Amsterdam Declaration on Fungal Nomenclature elsewhere in this issue (*IMA Fungus* 2(1): 105–112, 2011), there is the possibility that the role of the ICTF might shift from a focus on economically important groups, to a broader responsibility for fungal taxonomy as a whole. We need to consider how to adopt such a mandate in a transparent fashion and investigate the function of the Commissions for viral and bacterial taxonomy and nomenclature. There is a feeling among some mycologists that taxon-oriented committees may be a more effective way of overseeing the standardization of taxonomy and nomenclature and the maintenance of taxonomic databases such as MycoBank. The precedents established by some ICTF subcommissions suggest that the ICTF may thus assume a much broader role.

Subcommissions and affiliated Commissions focused on the taxonomy of particular economically important fungal groups have been particularly important to the ICTF. The International Commission on *Penicillium* and *Aspergillus*, under the leadership of Rob Samson, has organized several international symposia over the past few decades and many symposia at both IUMS and IMA meetings. The *Fusarium* subcommission, now chaired by David Geiser and shared with the International Society for Plant Pathology, developed a comprehensive nomenclatural database for all *Fusarium* names (much of it now included in MycoBank), and is usually involved with the planning of international *Fusarium* workshops at International Congresses of Plant Pathology. The International Subcommission on *Trichoderma* and *Hypocrea*, chaired by Irina Druzhinina, maintains a website (isth.info) that includes a widely used DNA sequence based identification key for *Trichoderma*

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species. The Fungal Barcoding Working Group (shared with the Consortium for the Barcode of Life) has been very active under the leadership of Conrad Schoch, and its deliberations are reported elsewhere in this issue.

The ICTF maintains a website, www.fungaltaxonomy.org, which is hosted by Irinia Druzhinina and Alexey Kopchinskiy at the Vienna University of Technology. Although this serves as a public portal for the Commission, it has not yet developed into a site that is useful for taxonomic mycologists. We will establish a website working group to develop the site so that it includes more information of relevance to taxonomic mycologists and additional information for those who wish to learn about taxonomic mycology.

One function of the ICTF is to organize sessions and symposia promoting fungal taxonomy at major international meetings such as the International Mycological Congress and the International Union of Microbiological Societies Mycology Congress. A preliminary agreement was reached with the present chair of the IUMS Mycology Division to co-organize a session at the Montreal, Canada IUMS meeting in 2014 on the interaction between genomics and taxonomy; a similar session with different speakers may also be proposed for the 2014 IMC in Thailand.

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Planning IMC10 (2014) in Thailand



Planning for such a major international event as an International Mycological Congress has to start almost before the previous one has been closed. In preparing for IMC10, to be held in Bangkok on 3–8 August 2014, the Thai Mycological Association is now meeting monthly, a national organizing committee appointed (chaired by Leka Manoch), and agreement with the National

Convention Centre in Bangkok reached. Several of the key organizers of IMC9 in Edinburgh last year visited Bangkok during November and December to share their experiences: Lynne Boddy, Nick Read, and Geoff Robson. Then, IMA President John Taylor and his wife Delia visited in January to progress development of the programme.

African Mycological Association (AMA)



Participants of the AMA western African mycological workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, during a working session.

the identification of ascomycetes and their anamorphs. The course was presented by David Minter (UK), as part of a Darwin Initiative project to raise awareness for the conservation need of ascomycetes, and to train mycologists in identifying these fungi. The course was organized by the African Workgroup for Fungal Conservation steering committee (consisting of myself, Francois Roets and Rian de Villiers, South Africa) and hosted by the Forestry & Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria. A day was also spent at the National Mycological Herbarium of South Africa, at Roodeplaat, Pretoria. During the workshop, valuable training on aspects of ascomycete and associated anamorph identification was given by David Minter and aspects of molecular work on such fungi were touched. Specimens from a diversity of fungal families he had prepared were used, as well as material collected at Roodeplaat. Issues related to fungal conservation and IUCN (International Union for Nature Conservation) criteria were also discussed. Participants included mycologists from South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.

A workshop for western Africa was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and organized mainly by Nourou Yourou (University of Munich, Germany, but originally from Benin), and André de Kesel (National Botanic Garden of Belgium). This two-day mycological workshop in November 2010 was made possible by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Research Foundation (DFG,) and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Germany). The objectives of the workshop were shortly to establish a mycological net-

At the election of the new council in 2009, the African Mycological Association (AMA) council set out goals (*Mycologia* 3(2); www.africanmycology.org). These mainly included building mycology in Africa, fostering collaboration and networking, and to promote the AMA in Africa as well as on other continents. In this report I will briefly give some feedback on some of these goals.

The most constructive way to stimulate interaction, forge new collaboration and disseminate research is to actually meet in person. Even though the AMA has an e-mail list server, e-mails have constraints in not always enabling effective communication, and e-mail addresses fail or internet connections can be inactive. Recent tools such as webinars, blogs and

facebook, are also not always available for African researchers. The aim of the council was, therefore, to have at least one regional meeting in the four corners of Africa (North, East, West and South) to provide an opportunity for mycologists to meet. Obviously these meetings were not expected to immediately attract hundreds of mycologists or to provide platforms for high quality presentations (although that should be the aim in the future), but could be informal with the aim to merely initiate interaction. Such meetings also aimed to test constraints of Africans to travel or attend such meetings.

Two very successful regional meetings were organised for eastern and southern Africa. At the University of Pretoria, South Africa, a course was held in April 2010 on

work for western Africa and collaborators, to discuss collaboration strategies, to better knowledge sharing and transfer, to learn standardized field- and laboratory techniques and to identify obstacles for these goals. The sixteen participants from Benin, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Germany, Ghana, Niger, Mali, Ivory Coast and Togo had stimulating discussions and a network was forged. More details on this meeting will be published in the next issue of *Mycologia Africa*.

Although strictly no regional meetings of the AMA were held in northern parts of Africa, several mycological activities have been happening. The First International Conference on Basic and Applied Mycology was held by the Society of Basic and Applied Mycology at the Assiut University Mycological Centre (AUMC), Assiut, Egypt, in March 2010. The new Pan-Arab Mycological Society has also been put forward to represent Arab countries in Africa and southwest Asia. The 4th Pan African Medical Mycology Society (PAMMS) Conference has also been held at the AUMC in March this year, which represented a series of meetings held by the PAMMS over the past years.

The previous general meeting of the AMA, then termed as the 6th AMA Regional Mycology Meeting, was hosted by the Southern African Society of Plant Pathology (SASPP), in Gordon's Bay, South Africa in January 2009. The term "regional" obviously can no longer be applied to these larger, across Africa meetings, where the purpose is to represent a meeting for mycologists from all areas incorporated in the AMA. Such a general meeting will be held in mid-2012 and will be hosted by the Bindura University of Science Education, Zimbabwe.

A Special Interest Group meeting was

presented by the AMA at the recent IMC9 meeting in Edinburgh, UK. The theme of the SIG session was "Mycology in Africa: successes and challenges in a developing continent" and presentations around this theme were given by Joyce Jefwa (Kenya), Nourou Yourou (Germany), and myself, with more specific scientific and institutional presentations given by Karin Jacobs, Jolanda Roux (South Africa) and Joyce Jefwa. The presentations were followed by stimulating discussions. A summary of the SIG session and the conclusions derived will be submitted to a following issue of *IMA Fungus*.

A series of "Opinion" features in *Mycologia Africa* was initiated by the council. These were aimed to get the input from various members (African and non-African) on their perceived challenges and the unique advantages of African mycology. These features have been running since *Mycologia Africa* 3(2) and have revealed useful insights, supplemented by a feature by Levi Yafetto (USA, originally from Ghana) on prospects for African mycology in *Mycologia Africa* 2(4). Some of these include the difficulties of African mycologists to travel to international meetings due to visa and funding constraints, a lack of resources, infrastructure and occasional internet accessibility that vary between countries, lack of government interest, difficulty for mycology students to get funding, and brain drain out of Africa. Yet Africa has an incredible and untapped diversity and great potential for basic and applied research, with strong collaborations with other mycologists from, for instance, Europe and North America. Closer communication and networking and a voice for African mycologists is needed to address these challenges, with the help of our non-African collaborators.

Close association of the AMA with other mycological associations and societies are important and should be a continuous goal. Numerous members of the AMA are also individual members of other societies such as the MSA (Mycological Society of America) and EMA (European Mycological Association), but better ties can be sought. In this regard, the AMA is grateful to be considered one of the six Regional Member Mycological Organizations (RMMOs) recently established in the IMA (International Mycological Association). The African Workgroup for Fungal Conservation has also been involved in the establishment of the new International Society for Fungal Conservation, and have three regional African representatives elected to represent Africa on the ISFC, namely Ahmed M. Abdel-Azeem (Egypt), Cathy Sharp (Zimbabwe), and George Ngala (Cameroon). African contributions to the First International meeting on 'Fungal Conservation: science, infrastructure and policies' (October 2009), held in Whitby, UK, have also been published (*Mycologica Balcanica* 7(1), 2010).

Plenty of activities and reports on goals remain for following issues of *IMA Fungus*. Each council of an association leaves a legacy and foundation on which the next council can continue to build. It is our hope that the initiatives started in the previous two years and coming third year, and the exposure those created, will provide such a foundation in future.

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Mycological Society of America

The Mycological Society of America is looking forward to its annual meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska from 31 July – 5 August 2011, on the campus of University of Alaska-Fairbanks. The meeting will open with a workshop of the Fungal Environmental Sampling and Informatics Network (FESIN), a National Science Foundation-funded research coordination network of mycologists who are interested in the development of rapid identification

methods for fungi, the cyber-infrastructure that will facilitate the exchange of biological information, and educational outreach opportunities. The annual Karling Lecture will feature Joseph Heitman who will speak on the "Evolution of sex in fungi," and Thomas Bruns will give his Presidential Address. Six symposia are being offered that explore the diversification of fungi, fungal population genomics, the molecular ecology and biodiversity of arctic

and boreal fungi, new tools for studying fungi, mechanisms of fungal-plant interactions, and the contribution of fungi to organic matter and sequestration in the soil. In addition to the symposia, there will be over 200 oral and poster presentations, many focusing on cutting edge research. The meeting will conclude with the annual foray, an all-day affair featuring a salmon bake and other local cuisine in the evening hours. More information can be ob-

tained at <http://msa.alaska.edu/schedule/index.php>.

Planning is also underway for the 2012 meeting at Yale University, and the 2013 meeting (with the American Phytopatho-

logical Society) in Austin, Texas. Keep your eye on the MSA website (<http://www.msafungi.org>) for more details! Information about membership in MSA can be found at <http://msafungi.org/membership>.

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The IMA Gavel



At the closing ceremony of IMC8 in Cairns, incoming President Pedro Crous expressed the desire for a more dramatic signal of the opening and closing of IMC Assemblies. In consultation with the members of the IMA Executive Committee, Keith Seifert suggested an official gavel to open and close meetings, inspired by the chestnut gavel used by the Mycological Society of America. He requested that members send pieces of indigenous wood that could be assembled into a gavel that would include wood from

every continent. Keith consulted with his colleague George P. White, a talented wood worker and mycologist who had once been the technician of Stanley J. Hughes. Each section in the head is nested into the adjacent section for added strength. The head is comprised of the following woods working from the obvious red Rosewood at the top, towards the other end. Brazilian rosewood (*Caesalpinia echinata*), provided by José Carmine Dianese, is known as “Pau Brazil” and is the origin of this country’s name;

it was exploited to near extinction during colonial times as source of red pigment. The second wood is Puriri (*Vitex lucens*) provided by Shaun Pennycook from a 50-70-year old fence post on his property; the tree is endemic to the northern two-thirds of the North Island of New Zealand, is tough and superbly ground-durable, and was the preferred fencepost material of pioneer farmers. Europe is represented by a block of European Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) purchased in the Netherlands by Pedro Crous, Asia by a piece of Keyaki (*Zelkova serrata*) provided by Gen Okada from Japan, and Africa by a piece of the Cape Olive (*Olea capensis*) provided by Mike Wingfield from South Africa. The handle is from an ornamental sumac (*Rhus* sp.) from Canada with a vibrant green colour and beautiful grain, and was in George White’s collection for about 15 years waiting for a special occasion application. The Antarctic has no woody trees, but Silvano Onofri provided a piece of fragile petrified wood for the tip of the handle. Because it was inspired by the MSA gavel, and both Keith and George consider the MSA their home Society, the gavel was officially presented to the President of the IMA by the President of the MSA, Tom Bruns, in the opening ceremony of IMC9 on 1 August 2010.

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