

Editorial comments

Stephen Harris^a, Richard Cowan^b and Bruce Maslin^b

^a Secretary IGSM: Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3RB, United Kingdom; fax: (01865) 275000; tel: (01865) 275112; email: Stephen.Harris@Plant-sciences.oxford.ac.uk

^b Joint Editors, Bull. IGSM: W.A. Herbarium, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Locked Bag 104, Bentley Delivery Centre, W.A 6983, Australia; fax: 61 89 3340515; tel: 61 89 3340500; email: richardc@calm.wa.gov.au, brucem@calm.wa.gov.au

Early in 1996 the current Secretary and Editors undertook their respective responsibilities from Leon Brimer who was elected to these positions at the Business Meeting of the 7th I.G.S.M.¹ In spite of the discussions at this Meeting of the future of the Group and its Bulletin, the passage of considerable time necessitates a re-appraisal of these issues. Our purpose here is therefore to bring you up to date and to initiate discussion on matters which are concerned with the future of the Bulletin and the Group (and to seek your opinions and advice on these).

Bulletin vol. 20.

Much of the content of vol. 20 of the Bulletin had been assembled by Leon Brimer by the time we received it in early 1996. However, in order to bring the assembled material up to date, we considered it necessary contact contributors. To this end, in April 1996 we attempted to contact each of the authors of pending manuscripts, asking whether or not their paper had perhaps been published elsewhere or, if not, whether they still wanted it published in the Bulletin. This first request was not completely successful so we asked these questions again in August, setting the cut-off date as the end of September. We apologise to any author whom we were unable to contact and we hope that in putting together this issue we have not introduced errors in standardizing formats, producing reasonable consistency among the papers, and the like.

Future of the Bulletin and the Group

There are many questions concerning the future of the Bulletin and, indeed, the Group; we hope you will help all of us by communicating your concerns, questions and opinions. One of the important issues, if the Bulletin is to continue to be assembled, printed and distributed in hard copy, is the matter of the financial support required to continue in this mode; funds will have to be available from some source and, if that is to be derived from the membership, someone will have to be willing to collect the subscriptions. An alternative for continuing the present form of publication is that one or more institutions might be interested in providing support for the publication and mailing of the Bulletin.

However, in these times of relatively inexpensive, at least at a personal level, electronic communication, it seems to us that electronic publication and/or communication by means of a web site is a possibility on which we need your advice. We assume that most of the members of the Group have direct or indirect access to e-mail and the Internet but that some percentage does not; it is of concern to us that we do not disadvantage Members who do not have such access. As we view the situation there are at least three possibilities:

¹ See below (pp. 10-12) under "Minutes of the 7th Business Meeting of the International Group for the Study of Mimosoideae" by Julia Playford.

a) One option would be to continue the Bulletin with pretty much the same content as previously but publish it on the web site: manuscripts for papers would pass through the hands of the editors for standardizing, formatting, etc. before being posted to the net. (Note: To print hard copies of an electronic Bulletin for those who do not have access raises the same financial problems alluded to above.)

b) Establish an IGSM ("new and views") web site at which publication of papers would not be anticipated, but "members" and other correspondents might post requests for materials, notices of impending research projects, newly published names of taxa, questions/answers, comments, as well as personal profiles, etc.

c) A combination of alternatives a) and b). This has the advantage that researchers studying various groups of mimosoid legumes might access the data most relevant to their needs.

We very much need your input on these issues and the enclosed questionnaire is a convenient way for you to register your opinions, wishes, etc. Please return the completed form to the Secretary at your earliest convenience and/or contact him at the e-mail address above.