

### **Brief report on the activities of the IGSM - 1973/1992**

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First of all I would like to record the gratitude of all participants of the 7th IGSM meeting to the organisers of the 3rd International Legume Conference of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, most particularly to Roger Polhill, Lourdes Rico and Gwilym Lewis, for everything they have done in the organisation of these two meetings and for the lovely evening parties.

In the first part of this meeting, I will review briefly some of the activities of the Group over the past 19 years. I will report on the current situation and raise some problems or questions. Due to several new commitments, I am not able to carry on with the task of Secretary of the Group. So, one of our decisions today will be the nomination of a new coordinator/manager of the IGSM.

Let me go back to several years ago, more precisely to April 1972. Patrick Brenan and Theodore Monod spent a few days in Toulouse as they were Jury examiners of my Thesis. On this occasion, we had the opportunity to raise the difficult problem of coordination of research on Mimosoideae on a worldwide basis and the idea was born of an informal group which would bring together specialists on the subfamily. But first, we needed to ask several colleagues to give their opinion; valuable advice and encouragement were received, so we decided to create the Group. I remember that it was Pat Brenan who, in July 1973, during a nice journey somewhere in Surrey, suggested the name for the new organisation.

A model first issue of the Bulletin (now out of print and rare) was published in October 1973. It included the list of 30 charter members, 25 pages of literature on Mimosoideae and an English/French editorial in which P. Brenan and I restated the aims of the IGSM: to inform members of relevant research events, to promote research and to facilitate contacts between specialists.

Our first meeting was held in Geneva, in September 1974, in conjunction with the 8th Plenary Meeting of the Association for the Taxonomic Study of the Flora of Tropical Africa (AETFAT). Nine papers were read and some of them published in the AETFAT proceedings (*Origines des Flores Africaines et Malgaches nature, speciation*, vol. 1, 1975). That first meeting was immediately followed, on 1-2 July 1975, by a second meeting, organised in Kew by P. Brenan and R. Polhill, where seven papers were presented. One of the important decisions of this meeting followed from the permission of the Royal Botanic Gardens Director to include in the Bulletin, references extracted from the Kew Current Awareness List and later from the Kew Records of Taxonomic Literature. Thus, a supplementum of Bulletin 3 (now out of print) was published in 1975. It included literature on Mimosoideae from 1970 to 1975.

After the two inaugural meetings, we met again in Kew on 31 July and 1 August 1978, again thanks to the help of P. Brenan and R. Polhill. Twelve papers were read at this 3rd meeting held in conjunction with the 1st International Legume Conference. The papers were published either in the Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society or in the IGSM Bulletin 6 (1978). At the Group

meeting the results of a first programme of mapping of African Acacias were reported (publication in the IGSM Bulletin 5, 1977), a collaborative initiative involving several members of the Group. Unfortunately, this valuable programme was not continued.

The 4th IGSM meeting was held in Sydney on 21 August 1981. It was organised with the help of Mary Tindale in connection with the 13th International Botanical Congress. Eight papers were read and five of them were included in issue 9 (1981) of the IGSM Bulletin. This meeting was marked by a lovely excursion to the Hawkesbury River and environs directed by Mary Tindale.

Then we met in Mexico from 12 to 14 September 1984, in conjunction with the important Congreso Mexicano de Botanica. Eighteen papers were presented, a true record. The text of most of these contributions was included in the IGSM Bulletin 12 (1984). Rosaura Grether was very helpful. She organised also a remarkable field trip to the States of Guerrero and Michoacan with the kind collaboration of Oswaldo Tellez Valdes and Teresa Chehaibar.

The following 6th meeting was held in West Berlin in conjunction with the 14th International Botanical Congress thanks to the very valuable collaboration of Ulli Ullmann. It was also a success as 14 papers were read. The lovely meeting dinner in a typical Berliner restaurant is still in mind.

The 7th meeting was initially arranged for April 1991, in Malawi (Zomba) and was to be linked to the 13th meeting of the Association for the Study of the Flora of Tropical Africa. We were forced to cancel it two months beforehand because the number of registrants was too small to justify meeting. (It is, perhaps, not necessary to remind the reader that this period was very disturbed and unfavourable to international meetings of scientists requiring extensive travel). The 3rd International Legume Conference was a logical opportunity to meet in Kew, in July 1992, and so to make up for this failure. Moreover, our 7th meeting here allows us to pay homage to the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens for the constant and decisive role it has played, throughout these last 19 years, to favour and encourage the activities of the IGSM.

What is now the current situation of the Group?

The number of members remains more or less stable: it is a little over 100. Many of them are specialists in systematics and evolution, around 20% being more especially concerned with the tribes Acacieae and Ingeae. Taxonomic approaches used are very varied: morphology and anatomy (with particular attention to ultrastructure), palynology, phytochemistry and increasingly molecular biology, as attested by the papers read at the Kew meeting. Statistical methods in data processing are generalised, with a particular effort now in using cladistics. Several disciplines are also represented: physiology and biology with, for example, specialists in cytophysiology, floral biology and breeding, pollen/pistil interactions, symbiosis, water balance, ecology and management in tropical and Mediterranean areas, productivity, in vitro cultures etc. This is a sign of the remarkable richness of our Group. Note that around 50 libraries or offices are subscribers or get the Bulletin through exchange.

The financial balance has been rather unstable through the years. The situation, in 1984, was retrieved by calling on the help of a bank to solve the problem of converting the fee payments from some countries. A solution was partly found at the Mexico meeting by adopting the principle of "sustaining contributions". The rise of contributions and subscriptions (in 1990)

and the increase of the numbers of subscriptions from libraries and booksellers helped to balance the budget which was positive after the issue of Bulletin 19 (+290.98 FF). Responsibilities for collecting funds have been partly shared. Thus, in Great Britain, the task has been successively taken on by Patrick Brenan, then Charles Stirton and it is now kindly continued by Gwilym Lewis.

In Australia Bruce Maslin collected member fees for 15 years with much efficiency; he handed on the torch to Tony Cavanagh whose collaboration is very precious. The collection of fees has always been more difficult in America and Africa. This problem should be looked into so as to facilitate the task of the Secretary/Treasurer.

The question now is: has the Group reached the objectives which were envisaged initially? I think we have partly succeeded. The existence of the Group has favoured fruitful contacts between specialists, has triggered certain initiatives and facilitated some cooperative research programmes suggested in meetings. Furthermore, our yearly Bulletin is now known as a valuable and important source of scientific literature. The collation of references remains today one of the important objectives of our yearly publication. Thanks to the participation of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the efficient collaboration of Tony Cavanagh in Deakin University, Australia, and the help of my own Laboratory in Toulouse, we have been able to publish large lists of recent references in each issue (300 in the last Bulletin N° 19). We have also, little by little, included more reports and reviews on different themes, as well as original papers. To preserve a certain standard of quality of the publications, I have sometimes consulted colleagues to evaluate papers before publication. I have always considered that the Bulletin should be both a "check point" and a sort of "permanent meeting" to promote, in particular, research of young scientists and of specialists who sometimes have difficulties to make their research known.

It is necessary now to forge ahead, to plan the future so that more research projects will be encouraged among our members and associates; we must also think about the evolution of the Bulletin (contents, creation of an editorial committee, etc). A new "manager" of the Group will have to be chosen and Leon Brimer is a willing candidate for this office. I am strongly in favour of his candidacy. If everybody agrees with this candidature, I am pleased to hand over to Leon<sup>1</sup> and I wish him much success. Long life to the IGSM! (This candidature was then approved unanimously.)

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<sup>1</sup> This role has now been assumed by Stephen Harris (Secretary) and Richard Cowan and Bruce Maslin (joint Editors).