

**The Seventh General Assembly (Business Meeting) of the
International Association for Biological Oceanography held on
Wednesday, 24 October, 2001, at 14.30 hrs in the Sheraton Hotel,
Mar del Plata, Argentina, in the course of the Joint IAPSO/IABO
Assembly, 2001: An Ocean Odyssey, Mar del Plata**

MINUTES

Present: J.F. Grassle (President), J.B.L. Matthews (Secretary), A.D McIntyre (Past Secretary), R. Bastida (Argentina), P. Burkill (UK), N. Correo (representing D. Boltovskoy, NC Argentina), R. Damodaran (NC India), N.P. Nezlin (Russia), C. Daponte (Argentina), G. Esnal (Argentina), (J.G. Field (S. Africa), V.A. Gallardo (Chile), G. Gorsky (representing P.Nival NC, France), C.T. Griffiths (NC S. Africa), J.S. Hwang (representing K.T. Shao NC, Taiwan), A. Kostianoy (Russia), B.G.Kulkarni (India), A. Malej (Slovenia), E. Morozov (Russia), N.P. Nezlin (Russia), A.C. Pierrot-Bults (Netherlands), R. Rivkin (Canada), S. Shanmugan (India), J.-O Strömberg (NC Sweden), Ü. Unluata (IOC/UNESCO), W.S. Wooster (USA),

Apologies: A.H. Al-Harbi (Saudi Arabia), M. Estrada (Spain), M.T. Gomoiu (Romania), J. Ogden (USA), E.C. de Oliveira (Brazil), S. Rakusa-Suszczewski (Poland),

Minutes of 6th General Assembly of IABO

Minutes of the previous General Assembly, held in Manchester, UK, on 25 August 1994, were presented by the Secretary and approved.

Report on IABO activities since the previous Assembly

The combined report for the period 1994 to 2001 was distributed at the meeting. There had been continued efforts to make the membership of IABO, currently comprising the Executive and the National Correspondents, as representative as possible and a survey had been carried out to The Secretary drew attention to the meetings that had been held in conjunction with other events relevant to IABO objectives and publications that had arisen from these. In accordance with the previously identified scientific priorities of IABO, these activities had been mainly in the field of Marine Biodiversity, and led directly to the next item on the agenda

Census of Marine Life (CoML)

The President gave a summary of the Census of Marine Life (CoML) activities. CoML is a major international research programme to assess and explain the diversity, distribution, and abundance of organisms in the world's oceans. CoML is developing collaborative research projects around the world to study marine species in many habitats, both coastal and deep-water. The President is the Chair of the International Scientific Steering Committee and the Past President, Prof Pierre Lasserre, represents CoML Europe.

The CoML seeks to understand the role of diversity, not only in the oceans today, but also in the past, through retroactive analyses, and in the future, through conceptual and numerical ecosystem models. Most of the Initial Field Programs are in the planning phase and will be collecting new data before the end of 2002. These programs include:

- Pilot Census of Marine Life Gulf of Maine; Ken Foote, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, USA (<http://www.whoi.edu/marinecensus/>)
- Patterns and Processes of the Ecosystem of the Northern Mid-Atlantic (MAR-ECO); Odd Aksel Berstad, Institute of Marine Research, Norway
- Pacific Ocean Salmon Tracking (POST); David Welch, Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada
- Tagging of Pacific Pelagics (TOPP); Barbara Block, Stanford University, USA
- Chemosynthetic ecosystems in the Arctic and Northern Atlantic Oceans (ChEss); Cindy Lee Van Dover, College of William and Mary, USA
- Coastal Survey of the Western Pacific; Yoshihisa Shirayama, Seto marine Biological Laboratory, Kyoto University, Japan

The historical component of CoML, History of Marine Populations (HMAP), comprises research collaboration between marine biologists and environmental historians to study marine communities 500-1000 years in the past, at a time when humans became significant predators in the ocean. A disturbed database system for CoML, the Ocean Biogeographical Information System (OBIS) will be a dynamic, on-line, open-access, globally-distributed, network of systematic, ecological, and environmental information system. Collectively, these systems are a comprehensive global digital atlas of the marine environment. Most of the primary biological data will be both geo-referenced so that data can, through use of GIS and other analytical tools, be readily integrated with environmental data and dynamically interact with the community of data users to provide user-defined maps, visualizations, and model outputs.

Initial funding support for CoML and OBIS has come from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the U.S. National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), with contributions from the U.S. Office of Naval Research and National Science Foundation.

The Program is to be fully presented and discussed at the forthcoming Symposium, IBO 3, which was held on 26th October.

The future role for IABO

The Secretary introduced the discussion on the future role for IABO. By summarizing what he perceived as the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for IABO in the present international structure of science, as it relates to biological oceanography. This was followed by a wide-ranging discussion during which major issues were identified.

1. *Financial* IABO has no funding base, which is a severe constraint on embarking on and supporting new initiatives. The possibility of funding a modest secretariat, perhaps in conjunction with a scientific venture such as CoML, should be investigated
2. *Scientific* The successful initiation of CoML was warmly welcomed. There was good reason for marine biodiversity to continue to be a priority topic, but this might be extended to encompass wider aspects of marine biogeography. The importance of taxonomic expertise was emphasized.
3. *Operational* Given the changed circumstances, with the growth of project-orientated international bodies (IGBP) and the infrequency of large assemblies, IABO could play a similar role to that of SCOR, in support of international projects such as GLOBEC
4. *Representational* Given the delays and frustrations often encountered when working through national academies, the need for world-wide representation could be satisfied by personal nomination, e.g. by National Correspondents in neighbouring countries. Full use should be made of IT for cheap, fast and reliable communication
5. *Membership* While retaining the position of National Correspondents for the dissemination of information throughout participating countries, there was general agreement that “membership” could be widened: individual scientists could now be included in the electronic mailing list at no extra cost and little extra secretarial effort. The international community of biological oceanographers should be made aware of this as soon as the service could be made available
6. *Action* In the light of 4 and 5 above, the Executive should develop a communication strategy and aim to fill NC gaps, such as presently exist in Africa and the Middle East. Every effort should be made, by the Executive and the National Correspondents together and separately, to capitalize on the momentum engendered by “2001: An Ocean Odyssey” and ensure that IABO continues as **the** international scientific body in its field, led by scientists and visionary in its approach.

Election of Office Bearers:

The President, Secretary and members of the Executive were due to retire at the Assembly. Professor Griffiths proposed Professor Anneliese Pierrot-Bults for President, seconded by Professor Field. Professor Pierrot-Bults was duly elected by acclamation. No nominations for the post of Secretary had been received before the meeting, though it was known that Dr Mark Costello had been approached; it was thought likely that he would be willing to accept in due course, once he had settled into his new post in Canada. Professor Matthews stated that he was willing to continue in the post for a limited time and it was agreed that he should do so until Dr Costello was ready to take over. Professors Grassle and Matthews would be continuing on the Executive as Past President and Secretary respectively, and it was agreed that the other two members of the Executive would be co-opted at an early opportunity to be agreed by the incoming Officers; it was suggested that one of these members might come from South Africa

There being no other business, the President closed the meeting at 16.15 hrs with thanks to all present for their attendance and contributions to the discussions.

J.B.L. Matthews
Secretary