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McCown Archaeobotany Laboratory Reports

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Lab Status Report
13 October 1994

Sorting

The students are progressing nicely with their sorting. The number of seeds they leave behind is declining rapidly, and their ability to recognize taxa is improving. I would guess that in a couple of weeks we will likely be able to quit checking their remains.

Bill's familiarity with the South American taxa is also proceeding apace. Once I identify a taxon for him, he is very good at remembering and recognizing it again. I think the biggest problem with id's to date has been the quality of his microscope. There were some features of seeds that are just plainly indistinct in his scope. The arrival of the new scope will help a lot.

In terms of his own sorting, he hasn't completed that many more samples himself. I don't know whether this is because he is being particularly slow and careful because he knows he was missing seeds before, or whether he is simply spending more time on id-ing the students' samples and setting up the computer systems. The last sample of his I went over, there were some missed seeds, but I believe this may have been due to the fact of re-sieving: ie that some seeds which passed through the .5mm screen when he sieved the sample did not pass through when I sieved it, and thus appeared as missed seeds. He is going to leave his remains in the 3 size fractions for me to check next time, to eliminate that possibility.

The students had a session on stamping and weighing, and from now on each week one student will be responsible for that week's stamping and weighing. This week is Lisa's week.

Equipment

The new microscope arrived (hooray!), but it came with the new style wide eyepieces, where it was my understanding he was going to send us the old style narrow eyepieces, because many people complain that the wide eyepieces pinch their noses. Do you know anything about this? I don't mind the wide eyepieces, but I have wider-set-apart eyes than anyone in the lab.

I believe the microscope will make a tremendous difference to everyone -- the students will inherit Bill's scope which is slightly better than theirs, and Bill will have a Wild to do id's on. Now what we need is the light.

Lumina called us last week and said they were waiting on a delivery of goosenecks from the factory. They thought they should be able to ship this week, but I haven't heard from them. I will try to call Friday to check the status.

The bendy forceps arrived, and we have bought some probes at the student store, as well as wider labels (as per your request) so sorting equipment is pretty well complete. I have also ordered 2

inexpensive hand counters, because having been using Bill's these past few weeks, I really find them an extremely helpful time-saving device.

Computers

The printer arrived, minus the IBM-PC cable. So the Mac is currently hooked up just fine, and the Scholars Workstation advised us to purchase the cable elsewhere. The Bear Bytes store didn't have the proper cable either, but Matt said he was getting a cable for himself so he would pick one up for us as well (\$17). As I was typing this, he arrived with the cable and it works perfectly! So now we are all set up with respect to the lab computer hardware, with the exception of the blue lines. Oh yes, and the extra RAM Bill wants to get for the Mac. RAM costs around \$40 per megabyte these days, so 8 extra RAM will run us around \$300-350. I would suspect the scholar's workstation may be a good place to do that.

We seem to be all agreed to purchase the Microsoft Office bundle which includes Word, Excel and a couple of other less valuable products (a graphics program, I think, and maybe some communications software) for both the IBM and the Mac. Since together they are only \$276, we can just use one of those external purchase orders and pick them up at Bear Bytes.

I finally spoke with someone who knows about SAS and it seems they have a setup just like Minnesota -- you pay an annual fee and get to use it on your own machines. The annual fee is \$85 and they ask you to provide them with the blank diskettes to copy the program for you. I checked with ICCF and there is definitely no way we can share their licence, so I think we should buy it for ourselves. SAS for Windows can read the "ascii comma delimited" format created by all the modern spreadsheets and databases, so we will be fully compatible with whatever program Bill cares to use for data entry.

I suspect we may want to purchase some more sophisticated graphics and possibly even desktop publishing software in the future, depending on how much we want to be able to produce camera ready documents with graphics, but we can take some time to think about that. There is a fair amount of software available as "shareware" to the Macs through the ethernet, so once we get into the new lab, we may not even need to buy anything more.

Bill got his hands on some DOS and Windows documentation for free, which is very helpful. We also bought a mouse pad, cheap bookends for the manuals, and computer covers at the ASUC store.

Collecting

I'm missing a couple of things collected on Saturday -- do you have them? Also, I wrote to Holly Forbes at the Botanical Garden re: San Pedro seeds. Matt says there are people in Berkeley who raise it -- may be a myth, but we could try to find out!