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from the society

Getting to know IBS Early Career Members

The International Biogeography Society (IBS), founded just 10 years ago, is fast growing both in terms of members and activities offered (Field and Heaney 2011). Students and early-career biogeographers are also becoming increasingly involved within the IBS. From 2002 to 2010, the proportion of new members who are students joining the IBS each year has increased from 23% to 48%. Currently, student members comprise 35% of IBS's 740 members. The IBS, aware of the rising importance of these younger members, has been trying to increase the benefits available for them. In addition to the student travel grants, poster awards and discussion groups held at the IBS meetings, the IBS is trying to foster interaction among students and postdocs, which recently culminated in the first IBS Early Career conference that was held at Oxford University from 23 to 25 September 2011 (<http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/index.html>).

With the intention of getting to know its early-career members (herein ECM) and learning their opinions on the services provided by the IBS and on how these can be improved, the IBS invited ECM to participate in a survey that was held in June 2011. Of the 48 ECM that completed this survey, 11% were Junior Postdocs, 75% were PhD students, 8% were Masters students, and 6% were undergraduate students. Around 17% were aged between 20-25 years, 49% were 26-30 years, 23% were 31-35 years, and 11% were more than 35 years young; 56% were female and 44% were male. Although most ECM are currently affiliated either with North American or European institutions (50% and 33% respectively; total of 42 answers), they represent a total of 24 nationalities; 26% are from North America, 17% from Central and South America, 15% from Northern Europe, 28% from Southern Europe, and the other 12% from Australia/New Zealand, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. ECM work on a very broad range of topics, from species distribution patterns (the most mentioned topic), to evolutionary biogeography, dispersal and colonization, biogeography of

species' traits, island biogeography, phylogeography, global change biology, marine biogeography, or paleobiogeography, among others. Their broad interests are also reflected in the fact that most ECM are also affiliated with societies focusing on diverse topics, including ecology, evolution, conservation, paleontology, geography, botany, mammalogy, entomology, etc. These are indeed very encouraging results that show the IBS is reaching young researchers from a wide variety of research topics and geographic locations.

In general terms, the IBS is meeting ECM needs (25% responded that the IBS is doing this "very well", 60% "fairly well"). However, there is room for improvement (15% responded "not very well"), and several suggestions were made; responses to open-ended questions emphasized the need for more off-year meetings (regional meetings, workshops, etc.), more jobs/grant announcements, more travel grants, online teaching resources, more talks at the IBS meetings by younger researchers and more opportunities to meet other researchers. The IBS is already working towards improving the services it provides to all its members, and new actions are being made to adopt suggestions.

The first action was to support the IBS Early Career conference (for students and biogeographers who have finished their PhDs in the past five years). Almost ninety young researchers participated and had the chance to present their work, and to interact with each other and with the IBS board members. This conference was organized into ten different sessions that covered several aspects of macroecology, island biogeography, phylogeography, paleobiogeography, evolutionary biogeography and conservation biogeography.

Second, we are also working towards increasing regular communication among IBS members. One way of doing this is through online social networks, such as Facebook, and other web-based platforms (e.g. the IBS blog; <http://biogeography.blogspot.com/>). Currently, the IBS has a Facebook group with ~590 members, where

anyone can post announcements, share ideas and publications of general interest, start discussions and interact with other members. Most ECM are in fact Facebook users (80%; only 7% are Twitter users), but only 8% of these members read the IBS Facebook page on a weekly basis, and 44% actually never read it (31% read it once per month, and 17% every 3-6 months). Regarding the IBS blog, again only a small number of people read it on a weekly basis (6%), with most people reading it once per month (38%; 31% read it every 3-6 months and 25% never read it). Another platform the IBS has for communicating with its members, and to foster communication between its members, is the online journal *Frontiers of Biogeography* (<http://www.biogeography.org/html/fb.html>). This journal has a section especially devoted for this purpose – the membership corner – of which most ECM were not aware (66%). Thirty-six percent of ECM read every issue, while 31% read 2-3 issues per year (27% read it rarely and only 6% never read it). Main sections of interest to the ECM are (i) mini-reviews on a particular taxon, biogeographic topic, or question, (ii) thesis abstracts, and (iii) symposium/congress summaries. In fact, 88% showed interest in submitting a manuscript to any of these sections.

One of the most important activities organized by the IBS is the biennial meeting. The next one will be held at Florida International University in Miami, Florida, in January 2013 (<http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/2013>). Most ECM are planning to attend this meeting (79%) and would prefer to give a talk (51%; 23% prefer a poster presentation and 26% have no particular preference). One of IBS' concerns is to maximize compatibility between high quality talks and fair representation of researchers from different countries, gender, and career stages. There was almost an even split among ECM on favoring a similar number of talks by established and younger researchers, and having more talks by senior researchers plus some younger ones (40%

and 43%, respectively; 11% would prefer to have mainly senior researchers and 6% showed no preference). There was no overwhelming support for student-only sessions in future meetings (55% found it important), but most respondents showed some willingness to extend their stay in order to attend this type of event (83%). In the previous meetings, students (particularly those who have been awarded with a student travel grant) have been invited to attend discussion groups, where senior biogeographers lead the discussion on several subjects, from career and publishing advice to specific research topics. Those who have attended these student discussion groups in past meetings (41%) found them helpful (63%). Suggestions for discussion topics in future meetings, other than those already covered in these discussion groups, included advanced analysis in biogeography and partnerships and international activities among researchers. There was some support for future off-year meetings (33% found it useful; 61% said it was somewhat useful, and over 90% said they would at least try to attend), especially if these are focused on specific research topics and methodologies (31% and 29%, respectively; there was a tie between meetings on specific geographic realms and on a broad scope within biogeography – 20% each). Some respondents also called for workshops and seminars, online courses, cross-society ventures to boost interaction between similarly oriented academics and excursions into biogeographically interesting regions covering a broad range of taxa. There was also a significant interest in having a showcase at the next IBS meeting of funding agencies from different countries (70%), with most respondents being willing to provide information on this matter (55%).

The long-term success of any growing society depends on the involvement and interest of its youngest members. We're fortunate that many ECM have shown willingness to get involved in promoting communication between IBS members,

Did you know that any member of the IBS may raise an issue or appeal a decision of the governing Board of Directors by placing a matter before the Board of Directors for discussion?

If there is a matter you would like discussed at the next Board meeting, write to the society's Secretary (check current list of officers at <http://www.biogeography.org/>).

to help organizing off-year activities, and to submit manuscripts to *Frontiers of Biogeography*. The IBS wants to hear and share more of the early career members' opinions and ideas; this article is intended as both thanks and encouragement for your active involvement, especially in the readily accessible platforms such as *Frontiers of Biogeography* and Facebook. Finally, we would like to thank all the members who participated in this survey, and particularly those who have shown interest in devoting some of their time to the society. We look forward to working with and for you in the coming years.

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Edited by Matthew Heard

from the society

Call for proposals for hosting 7th Biennial Conference of the IBS

We are seeking proposals for hosting the 7th biennial conference of the International Biogeography Society to be held in early January 2015. Proposals should be submitted by individuals who are interested in chairing the local (host) committee. The duties of the local host include conducting contract negotiations with the venue and the hotel as well as all local logistics including field trip organization and production of the abstract book. Minimum requirements of the venue are 1) one auditorium with a capacity of 450-550 people (2 days), 2) three or four smaller rooms with a capacity of 75-150 people (1 day), and 3) various smaller meeting rooms. The IBS is interested in holding the biennial conference in locations fairly convenient with respect to the majority of its membership base in North America and Europe. Locations of past (and upcoming) conferences can be seen here: <http://www.biogeography.org/html/Meetings/index.html>.

Please include the following information in the proposal:

1. Location of the meeting (city) and the host institution or organization.
2. What would be the benefit of hosting the conference at this location?

3. Actual site of the meeting and the capacity of the auditorium.
4. Space for poster sessions--general size and location relative to the auditorium.
5. Approximate cost for three-day use of the venue. A specific quote is not needed, but evidence of the price competitiveness is crucial.
6. Transportation infrastructure, including travel from airport.
7. Attractions in the vicinity of the conference site, including field trip potential.
8. Who would potentially serve on the local organizing committee?

Proposals from prospective hosts of the biennial conference must be received before 20 January 2012. Please send proposals by email to Daniel Gavin, IBS Vice-President for Conferences at dgavin@uoregon.edu.

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Erratum - 11 Feb 2011: The original article published on 09 Feb 2011 incorrectly identified Dan Gavin as the "IBS Student-at-Large".

If you want to announce a meeting, event or job offer that could be of interest for (some) biogeographers, or you want to make a call for manuscripts or talks, please contact us at ibs@mncn.csic.es and frontiersofbiogeography@gmail.com.