The International Palaeontological Association: Historical Perspective

by Curt Teichert and Ellis L. Yochelson

The IPA is the major international organization linking palaeontologists around the world. In this article the authors, one of whom (C.T.) was a founding member, review the historical development and activities of the Association. This is the first in a series of "profiles" of international scientific organizations affiliated to IUGS. (Ed.)

Origins

On July 27, 1933, the International Palaeontological Union (IPU) came into being in Washington, D.C., at the 16th International Geological Congress, under the name of International Paleontologic (sic) Union (IGC, 1936). This organization was the brainchild of Benjamin F. Howell (Fig. 1), then professor of geology at Princeton University. Howell, at that time secretary of the Paleontological Society, pushed this project vigorously in discussions with Curt Teichert and, no doubt, with many other colleagues. The outcome of Prof. Howell's initiative was the adoption of a constitution and by-laws at the 1933 meeting (Case et al., 1938).

The aim of the Union, as stated in the first sentence of the constitution (IGC, 1939), was "the collaboration and co-operation of international activity in palaeontology and stratigraphy." It was further stated in paragraph 2 "that members of the Union shall be all palaeontological societies and other organizations connected with palaeontology."

Rudolf Richter (Fig. 2) of the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt, Germany, was the first president and B.F. Howell the first secretary of the Union (Table 1). They also played the same roles on a committee set up to organize IPU meetings at the 1937 Moscow Geological Congress. The remainder of the committee consisted of six invertebrate palaeontologists and two palaeobotanists.

The IPU Grows

The first concrete achievement of the new Union was a symposium on Precambrian and Palaeozoic climates. This had its origin in a letter from Howell to Teichert in February 1934: "A symposium on climatic belts would make a very interesting part of the program of the next meeting of the International Palaeontological Union, which will be held in Moscow at the time of the next International Geological Congress. Do you think that we might have such a symposium at that time?" The response was favourable, and soon Howell and Teichert began to solicit contributions from geologists and palaeontologists all over the world. Support was also obtained from President Richter, and the Organizing Committee of the 17th International Geological Congress agreed to include the symposium in the official program and to publish the contributions.

Meanwhile, in mid-1936 after the Nazi government of Germany decided to boycott the Moscow congress, Richter had to resign from the chairmanship of the organizing committee for Moscow and the presidency of the IPU. He proposed Pierre Pruvost, Université de Lille, France, as his

successor, but no formal action was taken then. The symposium was, however, duly held, and the manuscripts were published as volume 6 of the Report of the Congress (IGC, 1940). Regrettably, Howell and Teichert were not identified as organizers and editors of the symposium, and the only record of sponsorship of the symposium by IPU was in the report by Case and others (1938).

A constitutional meeting of the new organization was held in Moscow on July 23, 1937, when Prof. Pruvost was elected president, with B.F. Howell continuing as secretary. Four vice-presidents and a treasurer were also elected, and the IPU membership fee was fixed at \$1.00 for the approximately 50 geological organizations then listed as members. The same fee also applied to individual members, though there were never many of these in the Union. A constitution and by-laws that filled exactly one printed page were published in the reports of the Congress (IGC, 1939), differing in wording from the constitution and by-laws published by Case and others (1938), though the substance of the two documents was identical.

Figure 1: B.F. Howell in 1957, two years prior to his retirement from Princeton University.

Figure 2: Rudolf Richter, first President of the IPU.

Figure 3: Prof. B. Bouček. IPU president from 1968 to 1972.

Table 1
List of principal officers of the International
Palaeontological Union/Association

	President	Secretary	Treasurer
1933-37	R. Richter/ (Germany) P. Pruvost (France)	B.F. Howell (U.S.A.)	
1937-48	P. Pruvost	B.F. Howell	C.E. Resser (U.S.A.)
1948-52	A.M. Davies (U.K.)	H.E. Vokes (U.S.A.)	L. Størmer (Norway)
1952-56	H. Termier (France)	H.E. Vokes	L. Størmer
1956-60			
1960-64	Ch. Poulsen (Denmark)	J. Rodgers (U.S.A.)	M. Lecompte (Belgium)
1964-68	M.R. Sahni (India)	B.S. Tewari (India)	A.L. McAlester (U.S.A.)
1968-72	B. Bouček (Czechoslovakia)	G.E.G. Westermann (Canada)	A.L. McAlester (U.S.A.)
1972-76	L. Russell (Canada)	G.E.G. Westermann	E.L. Yochelson (U.S.A.)
1976-80	C. Teichert (U.S.A.)	H.O. Walliser (F.R.G.)	R.E. Benson (U.S.A.)
1980-84	B.S. Sokolov (U.S.S.R.)	H.O. Walliser	R.E. Grant (U.S.A.)
1984-	A.J. Boucot (U.S.A.)	W.A. Oliver, Jr. (U.S.A.)	R.E. Grant

At Moscow, on July 25, 1937, several commissions were set up, one of these being for the correlation of the Proterozoic, with B.F. Howell as president and C. Teichert elected member for Australia. Other commissions were set up to study the nomenclature of types, for the publication of "Palaeontologia Universalis," and to work on a few other technical problems. Unfortunately, before the youthful Union could unfold its wings, World War II intervened, putting a stop to this as well as all other endeavours of international scientific collaboration.

Eleven years passed before another meeting of the International Palaeontological Union could be called, again in connection with an International Geological Congress, the 18th in London, England, in 1948. The IPU held three meetings, and 17 papers were read. There was a discussion on palaeontological documentation, especially in micro-palaeontology (IGC, 1948), and Prof. Morley Davies of Great Britain succeeded Prof. Pruvost as president, with H.E. Vokes (U.S.A.) as secretary and L. Størmer (Norway) as treasurer.

The IPU banner was also flying high at the 19th session of the International Congress in Algiers in 1952, where five sessions were presided over by R.C. Moore, W.J. Jongmans, Leif Størmer and Teiichi Kobayashi. Among the variety of topics discussed were methods and communications in palaeontology, Precambrian organisms, palaeogeography and palaeoecology, and parallelism in evolution (IGC, 1954). For the term beginning in 1952, Henri Termier of France was elected president, and there were 12 vice-presidents, one of whom was Teichert (IGC, 1956).

After the promising activities in Algeria, the International Palaeontological Union went into a temporary eclipse. The reports of the 20th International Geological Congress, held in Mexico in 1956, contain no record of any activities of the Union, although the IPU was recognized as co-sponsor of the important two-volume symposium on the Cambrian System (Rodgers, 1956).

In 1960, the IPU convened again in Copenhagen, at a meeting during which 15 papers were presented (IGC, 1960). At the same session the Union also reorganized itself and established five regional sections called "Filials," one each for Europe, Asia, America, Africa and Oceania. Christian Poulsen of the University of Copenhagen was elected president, John Rodgers of Yale University, secretary, and M. Lecompte, Brussels, treasurer (IGC, 1960).

Although no scientific meetings of the Union were held at the 1964 Congress in Calcutta, India, a business meeting was held at which the division of the Union into the five "Filials" established in Copenhagen in 1960 was confirmed (IGC, 1972a). Several committees were also set up, including one charged with completing an inventory of fossil collections, and one to prepare a directory of palaeontologists of the world. The latter was at least partly successful, for a third edition of such a directory appeared in 1976 (Gerry, 1976). Another successful group established at this meeting as part of a committee on evolution was that on sexual dimorphism in fossils, with G.E.G. Westermann as chairman.

In 1964, the IPU had announced its desire to become affiliated with the International

Union of Geological Sciences as well as with the International Union of Biological Sciences. On September 1, 1966, Dr. van Leckwijck, then IUGS Secretary General, reported to a small group of IPU members meeting in Tokyo that the IUGS Executive Committee had accepted IPU as an affiliate, pointing out that the term "Union" should be replaced by "Association" so as "to accord with the terminology currently applied to international scientific bodies," with the former term being reserved for IUGS itself. No formal action by IPU was, however, taken at that time.

The year 1968 marked a new high point in the history of the Union, when a series of meetings were prepared on evolution, Ostracoda, palaeoecology, palaeobiogeography, and other topics to be presented during the 23rd International Geological Congress in Prague. A book of abstracts was published in advance of the meeting, with the support of Unesco (Bouček et al., 1968). Unfortunately, events still fresh in the memory of many of us led to an abrupt termination of the Congress, and few of the scientific meetings of the IPU were held. However, papers submitted for a symposium on sexual dimorphism organized by G.E.G. Westermann of McMaster University, Canada, were published the following year as an IUGS publication (Westermann, 1969b), and the proceedings of the International Palaeontological Union with the records of the stillborn symposium were published by the Geological Institute in Warsaw (Marek, 1972). One business meeting was held in Prague, an account of which was also published by Westermann (1969a). Prof. B. Bouček (Fig.3) of Czechoslovakia was elected president for the term of 1968-72, and C. Teichert was elected one of three vice-presidents.

The IPA Appears

Although the name change from IPU to IPA had been accepted in principle, the opportunity to make this official at an IPU meeting

Figure 4: Prof. Peter Sylvester-Bradley who engineered the transition from IPU to IPA.

Figure 5: Participants at the first International Symposium of Fossil Cnidaria, Novosibirsk, U.S.S.R., August 1971. From this meeting came what is now one of the IPA research groups.

at the 23rd IGC was thwarted by the events in Prague. Not long afterwards, President Bouček appointed a committee for the reform of the IPU constitution under the chairmanship of the late Prof. P.C. Sylvester-Bradley (Fig. 4) of Leicester University, England.

At a committee meeting in Teichert's office at the University of Kansas in December 1968, Sylvester-Bradley almost single-handedly wrote a first draft of a new constitution. A second draft was prepared by twelve members of this committee including Teichert, at Liblice, Czechoslovakia, on May 17, 1969. A final version by Sylvester-Bradley and Teichert was completed in Lawrence, Kansas, in September 1970, (Sylvester-Bradley and Gerry, 1971). In the by-laws, the IPU was re-named as the International Palaeontological Association (IPA), and the journal *Lethaia* was adopted as its official journal. Additional changes to the constitution and by-laws, proposed by Bouček were also published (Bouček,

1972), together with details of the palaeontological program that had been arranged for the 24th International Geological Congress to be held in Montreal in 1972 (Westermann, 1972).

The IPU General Assembly met at Montreal on August 25, 1972. At this meeting the name change was finally approved, the new statutes were adopted, and Loris Russell of Canada was elected president. Liaison with *Lethaia* was made official, with membership in IPA including a discounted subscription to this journal. A brief account of the proceedings, together with the text of the new constitution, was published by Westermann (1973).

IPA Activities

At the 1972, 1976, and 1980 Congresses, the Association organized scientific sessions, though these were not recognized as such by the IGC committees. The reasons for this apparent weakening of the functions of the Association may perhaps be sought in a peculiar omission in its constitution. This does not specifically charge the IPA with the

preparation of symposia and colloquia, as had been done by the old International Palaeontological Union, though admittedly not on a regular basis.

Nevertheless, article A II of the IPA constitution refers to one of the aims of the Association as "collaboration with the officers responsible for programs of International Congresses to ensure that items of palaeontological interest are included in the program of such congresses." The officers of IPA since 1972 have faithfully observed the spirit of this declared aim by offering collaboration to the organizing committees of subsequent congresses. For example, in the 1968-72 period, Teichert and B.L. Mamet (University of Montreal, Canada) were invited to organize a symposium on evolutionary rates, extinctions and stratigraphic breaks; this was held at Montreal (IGC, 1972b).

Similar cooperation took place in preparation for Section 7 of the 25th International Geological Congress in Sydney in 1976, and for the 26th IGC in Paris in 1980 a substantial palaeontological program was put together as Section 3 of the Congress. Again the IPA was not identified in the Proceedings of any of these congresses as contributor to or originator of any part of the palaeontological program, though the General Proceedings volume for Montreal does list the International Paleontological (sic) Union as one of the participating noncongress organizations (Armstrong, 1973).

Both in 1976 and 1980, general assemblies of IPA were convened at which ordinary business was conducted (Anon, 1976; Walliser, 1980), including a decision to compile the fourth edition of the World Directory of Paleontologists, which was published in 1984 (Berg-Madsen).

The IPA General Assembly met also during the 26th International Geological Congress in Moscow on August 9, 1984, when A.J. Boucot (Oregon State University) was elected president and W.H. Oliver, Jr. (U.S. Geological Survey) secretary-general, with R.E. Grant

Figure 6: Field meeting of the IPA Research Group on Ostracoda, Shizuoka, Japan, August 1985. Photo by T.M. Cronin.

Table 2

List of Research Groups sponsored by IPA and their principal contact persons.	
<u>International Fossil Algae Association</u> - Dr. Robert Riding, Department of Geology, University College, P.O. Box 78, Cardiff CF1 1XL, U.K.	<u>Research Group on Ostracoda</u> - Prof. R.C. Whatley, Department of Geology, The University College of Wales, Llandinam Bldg., Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DB, U.K.
<u>International Bryozoology Association</u> - Prof. J.D. Soule, School of Dentistry, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90007, U.S.A.	<u>Research Group on Palaeozoic Ostracoda</u> - Dr. M.J. Copeland, Geological Survey of Canada, 106 Geological Survey of Canada Bldg., 601 Booth Street, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0E8.
<u>International Association for the Study of Fossil Cnidaria</u> - Dr. William A. Oliver, Jr., U.S. Geological Survey, E-305, U.S. National Museum of Natural History (Natural History Bldg.), Washington D.C. 20560, U.S.A.	<u>Research Group on Neogene Ostracoda</u> - Prof. Dr. Ana Sokac, Rudarskogeolosko-naftni Fakultet, Pierottijeva 6, 4100 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.
<u>Pander Society</u> - Dr. Carl B. Rexroad, Indiana Geological Survey, 611 N. Walnut Grove, Bloomington, IN 47405, U.S.A.	<u>Euro-rad</u> - Dr. P. De Wever, Université de Paris VI, Laboratoire de Stratigraphie, T. 15-16/E4, 4 place Jussieu, 75230 Paris Cédex 05, France.
<u>Palaeozoic Foraminiferal Research Group of the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists (SEPM)</u> - Dr. Betty Skipp, U.S. Geological Survey, M.S. 913, Box 25046, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO. 80225, U.S.A.	<u>Research Group on Fossil and Living Rodents</u> - Prof. Dr. J. Chaline, Institut des Sciences de la Terre, Université de Dijon, 6 Bvd. Gabriel, 21000 Dijon, France.
<u>Graptolite Research Group</u> - Dr. Merete Bjerreskov, Institute of Historical Geology and Palaeontology, University of Copenhagen, Øster Voldgade 10, DK-1350 Copenhagen K., Denmark.	<u>Research Group on Trace Fossils</u> - Prof. T.P. Crimes, Jane Herdman Laboratories of Geology, Brownlow Str., Liverpool L69 3BX, U.K.
<u>Research Group on Littorinids</u> - Dr. Ch. Pettitt, Manchester Museum, The University, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K.	<u>Research Group on Precambrian Biostratigraphy</u> - Prof. Stanley M. Awramik, Department of Geological Sciences, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106, U.S.A.

In recent years the emphasis of the IPA has been shifting, and much of the current activity is devoted to fostering smaller research groups (Figs. 5 and 6) listed in Table 2. IPA supports their activities with modest amounts of money, especially for postage and distribution of initial mailings, but once a group is established, it must be self sustaining. IPA also provides an important forum for international cooperation between the various special interest groups. From time to time, the Association also co-sponsors other meetings such as the First International Congress of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology in 1973 held in Boulder, Colorado, and the First International Congress of Paleocology held in 1983 in Lyon, France.

The IPA today links, as its Corporate Members, 22 societies, committees and institutions in 20 countries (Table 3). There are also some 470 individual members, nearly all of whom adhere to the Association through subscriptions to *Lethaia*.

Acknowledgements

This article is based in part on an address by Teichert as out-going President of IPA in Paris, 1980.

(Smithsonian Institution) continuing as treasurer. It was reported that during 1980-84 IPA had given financial support to about a dozen international meetings of working and special interest groups. In addition, a major international project, "Global Biological Events in Earth History," had been accepted by the IGCP Board as Project 216. This is now in its organizational stage under project leader H.O. Walliser, a past secretary of IPA. Preparations are also underway for a fifth edition of the World Directory of paleontologists, now a widely used tool for the global paleontological community (Anon, 1985).

Table 3: Societies Adhering to IPA

Asociación Paleontología Argentina.
Association of Australasian Palaeontologists.
Paleontological Division of the Geological Association of Canada.
Palaeontological Society of China.
Geología Academia de Ciencias de Cuba.
Palaeontological Section of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences.
Association Paléontologique Française.
Paläontologische Gesellschaft (F.R.G.).
Palaeontological Society of India.
Società Paleontologica Italiana.
Palaeontological Society of Japan.
Palaeontological Section of the Geological Society of Poland.
Société Paléontologique Suisse.
Palaeontological Association (U.K.).
The Paleontological Society (U.S.A.).
All-Union Paleontological Society (Vsesoyuznoe Paleontologicheskoe Obshchestvo, U.S.S.R.).
Society of Vertebrate Paleontologists (U.S.A.).

Curt Teichert is Adjunct Professor in the Dept. of Geological Sciences of the University of Rochester (Rochester, N.Y. 14627), and Emeritus Professor of the University of Kansas. His principal interest is fossil cephalopods, but he has also worked widely on Ordovician and Silurian stratigraphy, on sedimentary basins of western Australia, and coral reefs of the Indian Ocean and Great Barrier Reef.

Ellis Yochelson (E-501, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. 20560, U.S.A.) retired recently from the USGS, where he specialized on Paleozoic gastropods and the early evolution of mollusks. He was the first Treasurer of the IPA following its reorganization from the IPU and is current secretary of the History of Earth Sciences Society.

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