



International Association of Botanic Gardens

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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Taxon*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Feb., 1967), pp. 42-45

Published by: [International Association for Plant Taxonomy \(IAPT\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1217105>

Accessed: 26/10/2012 06:28

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOTANIC GARDENS

Meeting - Maryland, U.S.A., August 1966

The fifth meeting of the International Association of Botanic Gardens, splendidly attended, was held in Maryland, U.S.A., on 16th August, 1966, during the XVII International Horticultural Congress. The President, Dr. H. R. Fletcher, Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland, opened the meeting by explaining that, although this meeting was not a Business Meeting of the Association (Business Meetings can be held only at International Botanical Congresses), it was necessary to transact some business, for clearly it would not be prudent to delay certain matters until 1969 when the XI International Botanical Congress meets in Seattle and when a Business Meeting would be held. Moreover, the Association's meeting in Edinburgh in 1964 had charged the present meeting with the undertaking of certain tasks, one of which was the ratification of the Association's Constitution.

The President explained that until 1964 the I.A.B.G. had been without a formal Constitution and that in large measure the one the meeting was asked to ratify was the work of the former Secretary of the Association, Mr. P. S. Green, and was modelled on the Constitution of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy and of the International Association for Plant Biosystematics. Before being published in *Taxon* (October 1965), the Constitution had been accepted by the Council of I.A.B.G. and the Executive Committee of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy. The Constitution was duly ratified.

The President spoke of the splendid work Mr. Green had done on behalf of the Association and regretted that, as Mr. Green was now working at Kew, he had thought fit to resign from the post of Secretary of I.A.B.G. The President further explained that, as he believed it desirable to have a Secretary as close to him as possible, he had taken the liberty of suggesting, some months ago, to the members of the Executive Committee and Council, that Mr. D. M. Henderson, of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, should be appointed to the post of Secretary made vacant by Mr. Green's resignation. The Executive Committee and Council had agreed to this proposal and Mr. Henderson was now the Association's Secretary. Unfortunately he was unable to be present in Maryland, and Dr. Richard Howard, Past President, generously agreed to act as Secretary for this meeting. All present agreed that a letter be sent to Mr. Green expressing to him the Association's appreciation of all the splendid work he had done on its behalf and wishing him good fortune in his new post.

A vacancy on the Council was filled by Dr. Leslie Laking, Royal Botanic Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Another task with which the Association's meeting in Edinburgh had charged the present meeting was the setting up of a "special Committee to consider how best the scientific study of the taxonomy of cultivated plants, as well as the assemblage of authentically named and documented plant collections, could be stimulated" (minutes of Edinburgh meeting, August 1964). After considerable discussion it was decided that a Committee comprising the following members be appointed:

Dr. H. R. Fletcher - Chairman (U.K.); Dr. H. Moore (U.S.A.); Mr. P. S. Green (U.K.); Dr. P. Yeo (U.K.); Dr. B. K. Boom (Netherlands); Mr. C. Brickell (U.K.); Dr. E. MacClintock (U.S.A.); Dr. Lange (Denmark); Mr. G. Krüssmann (W.

Germany); Mr. H. Hillier (U.K.); Mr. R. White (U.S.A.); Mr. D. M. Henderson - Secretary (U.K.).

The President then explained that one duty of this Committee — *to study how best the assemblage of authentically named and documented plant collections can be stimulated* — was closely tied up with the recommendation which was submitted by the Executive Committee of I.A.B.G. to the X International Botanical Congress in Edinburgh in 1964 and which was passed by the Congress at its final plenary session and which is as follows:

“The X International Botanical Congress, recognising the increasing role of botanic gardens and arboreta in supplying material and information for research in all botanical disciplines, recommends the expansion of such activities and the development of documented collections of authenticated taxa in botanic gardens throughout the world.”

The President stated that he, and Mr. Henderson, without waiting for the setting up of any Committee, had already gone to work in an attempt to implement this resolution. A short paper and questionnaire had been circulated — twice — to all Botanic Gardens listed in the *International Directory of Botanic Gardens* as well as to some 80 others — some 600 in all. The response to this questionnaire had not been very good; only about a third of those in charge of Botanic Gardens had replied to it; of these, only some 125 Gardens possessed authentically named and documented plant collections of any kind. Dr. Fletcher presented to the meeting a summary, in two parts, of the information relating to these 125 Gardens. Part I listed, in alphabetical order, under countries, the various institutions. Each institution was allocated a number and under each was listed the group(s) of plants, the name of the botanist(s) working on the group(s), and the particular discipline on which they were working. Part II listed the genera (or families) which were being studied, in the alphabetical order of the families, followed by the institutional reference number. The summary made clear that some 125 Botanic Gardens do have documented collections of authentically named living plants; the summary made clear what these collections are, the particular points of view from which they are being studied and the names of the scientists making these various studies. The President felt that this information was important, that it would be useful for workers in botanic gardens to have the information and that the information was worth publishing. With this the meeting agreed. It was decided to leave the matter with the above Committee with a recommendation that the Committee explore the desirability of publishing the information as Part II of a new revised edition of the *International Directory of Botanic Gardens* for the Association's meeting at the XI International Botanical Congress in Seattle in 1969.

It was appropriate that the remainder of the morning session should be occupied by a discussion on methods of documentation of plants in Botanic Gardens. R. Henry Norweb, Jr., Director of the Holden Arboretum, Mentor, Ohio, was the first to speak. Earlier in the year, Mr. Norweb and Mr. R. M. Lewis, Curator of the Cornell Plantations, by means of a questionnaire on plant record-keeping in Botanic Gardens, sent to all members of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums, as well as to a selected group of other institutions, had endeavoured to determine how Botanic Gardens and Arboreta kept their records. An analysis of 88 completed questionnaires had been published in the April 1966 issue of the Quarterly Newsletter of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums. Mr. Norweb discussed this analysis from which it was clear that, although, with very few exceptions, Botanic Gardens do keep records of their living plants, there is very great divergence of opinion, amongst those responsible for record-keeping, as to how

much information should be accumulated on any one accession; obviously some records are not detailed enough; obviously, also, to many present at the meeting, some records are far too detailed. From the accounts given by Mr. Roland Jefferson and by Mr. Paul Hutchison of record-keeping at the United States National Arboretum, Washington D.C., and at the University of California Botanical Garden, Berkeley, respectively, it would appear that these institutions, at least, have most excellent systems of record-keeping which many Botanic Gardens could well emulate; the records at Berkeley are as detailed as are the usual records for wild-collected herbarium specimens and the living collections at Berkeley function in the same way as do herbarium specimens but with the advantage that they can be propagated, distributed as living plants, used to provide a continuous flow of valuable herbarium specimens for exchange purposes, and used in multiple research projects requiring living material.

At the afternoon session Dr. Robert MacDonald, Director, The University of Tennessee Arboretum, Oak Ridge, spoke on plant record keeping at the Tennessee Arboretum, using electronic data processing equipment and procedures. Dr. MacDonald's talk proved so stimulating that it was agreed to set up a Committee to investigate further the application of these methods to the needs of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta. This Committee, comprising Dr. MacDonald (Chairman), Dr. R. A. Howard (Arnold Arboretum), Dr. H. R. Fletcher, Mr. J. S. L. Gilmour and Dr. S. M. Walters (University Botanic Garden, Cambridge, U.K.), Mr. Paul C. Hutchison (University of California Botanic Garden), Dr. L. W. Lenz (Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont, California), Dr. W. S. Stewart (Los Angeles State & County Arboretum, Arcadia, California), and Mr. W. R. Howley (Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois), with other interested parties, decided to meet following the end of the formal I.A.B.G. meeting.

From all the above discussions it was very clear that in recent years there has been much new thinking in the matter of Botanic Gardens and of their functions and that, if Botanic Gardens are to play the important role in the future development of plant science that they can and ought to play, this new thinking must be put into practice; many record-keeping systems will have to be reorganised and many living collections which are of little or no scientific value will have to be replaced by plant material which *is* of scientific value. From these points of view, lucky are the Botanic Gardens which will be established in the future, for they will be in the position of being able to avoid the mistakes of the past. One such Garden will be the projected Pacific Tropical Botanic Garden in the Hawaiian Islands, about which Dr. Henry Skinner, the Director of the United States National Arboretum, spoke for the rest of the meeting. Dr. Skinner has led two surveys of the Islands with the object of finding the best possible site for the proposed Garden. Many of these sites, with their advantages and disadvantages, he illustrated by means of splendid kodachrome slides. The money for the purchase of the most advantageous site has yet to be procured. Mrs. Lester Marks, who attended the afternoon session and who is keenly interested in the Hawaiian project, voiced her enthusiasm and confidence that the necessary financial aid would be forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned.



Those interested in Dr. MacDonald's electronic data processing of plant records then had an informal discussion with him. As a result it was agreed that the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta should be asked to sponsor a programme to determine and to demonstrate the role of electronic data

processing of botanic garden records. Dr. MacDonald volunteered the use of the University of Tennessee equipment and Dr. Howard to act as fund co-ordinator. Dr. Howard suggested that perhaps 10 Gardens would subscribe the "shares" to finance a trial programme not only to determine the costs of the data processing but also the local costs of preparing record cards from local plant record files (see also *Taxon* 15: 291-295, 332. 1966).

It is now known that the A.A.B.G.A. have accepted the sponsorship of this trial programme and that 10 subscribers have agreed to participate in the exercise.

H. R. FLETCHER