

Preface

It is with a sense of great satisfaction that I introduce this issue of *Acta Botanica Croatica* that contains twenty-two papers presented at 20th International Diatom Symposium (IDS), held from 7–13 September 2008 at the Grand Hotel Park in Dubrovnik, Croatia. As Editor of this issue, I first must extend my sincere thanks to the authors who provided the contributions that formed the essential content of the symposium and to the referees who applied their professional expertise to review these contributions in such a short time. The results of this joint effort are contained in the present publication.

It was in May 2006 that I first discussed the idea of hosting the 20th International Diatom Symposium with my colleagues at the Institute. This quickly coalesced into a concrete proposal that was submitted to our Rectorate. After review, I was very pleased to receive the full support of our Rector, Professor Mateo Milković, and of our Scientific Board. I also solicited and received the support of the Algology Group of the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Science and of the Croatian Botanical Society. Organizing the 20th IDS symposium in Dubrovnik thus became our common task.

In September 2006 I introduced my country, hometown, university, and institute at the general meeting of the International Society for Diatom Research (ISDR) in Lystvianka, Baikal, Russia. I submitted our proposal to host ISDR's 20th anniversary symposium, which the Council accepted in December 2007. The 20th International Diatom Symposium thus would be convened in Dubrovnik in September 2008.

When September finally arrived, I had the pleasure, as Symposium Chair, of delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Institute for Marine and Coastal Research and the University of Dubrovnik. Professor Vjekoslav Damić, Pro-Rector of the University, then welcomed the assembled participants and Professor Dražen Vikić Topić, State Secretary of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, officially declared the symposium's opening. Delegates were received afterwards by local officials at Sponza Palace, one of the landmarks of Dubrovnik's historic center.

A total of 204 participants (exclusive of accompanying persons) representing 41 countries attended the 20th International Diatom Symposium (Fig. 1). Of these, 103 were ISDR members and one-fourth students. The break-down was: USA (22), UK (16), Poland (15), Russia (15), Croatia (14), Japan (13), Italy (12), Germany (11), France (8), Belgium (7), Canada (6), The Netherlands (6), Spain (5), Czech Republic (4), Australia (3), Hungary (3), India (3), Iran (3), Republic of Macedonia (3), Serbia (3), South Africa (3), Ukraine (3), Argentina (2), Austria (2), Estonia (2), Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg (2), Israel (2), Portugal (2), Sweden (2), Bolivia (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Brazil (1), Greece (1), Kuwait (1), Mexico (1), New Zealand (1), PR China (1), Republic of Belarus (1), Republic of Kosovo (1), Taiwan (1), and Turkey (1).



Fig. 1. Participants of the 20th International Diatom Symposium.

Oral presentations were assigned to one of the following categories: Paleocology and Biostratigraphy (Freshwater and Marine); Methodology, Biotechnology, and Astrobiology; Ecology of Marine and Estuarine Diatoms; Ecology of Freshwater Diatoms; Taxonomy, Morphology and Ultrastructure of Diatoms; Biodiversity and Biogeography; Genetic Variability, Phylogeny, Molecular Data, and Evolution; EU DIATOMICS Project; Application of Diatoms in Water Quality Assessment.

While it is customary to have no more than 65 oral presentations over the four working days, we received more than 80 requests. The Croatian Organizing Committee worked to accommodate as many of these as possible, given the time constraints. In the end, we succeeded in having 72 oral presentations, of which ten were made by students. Some of the remaining requests had to be transferred to poster sessions.

The Plenary Address, »Revealing the molecular secrets of diatoms through the whole genome«, was delivered by Dr. Chris Bowler of the Département de Biologie, École Normale Supérieure, Paris.

One hundred and forty posters, of which 40 were prepared by students, were presented in the following sessions: Paleocology and Sediment Record; Ecology of Marine and Estuarine Diatoms; Biodiversity and Biogeography of Marine Diatoms; Diatoms of Terrestrial Ecosystems; Ecology and Water-Quality Assessment; Biodiversity and Biogeography of Terrestrial Water Bodies; Taxonomy, Morphology, and Ultrastructure; Genetics, Phylogeny and Evolution; and Methodology and Collections.

The symposium also included two workshops: »Use of diatoms in forensic science« and »DNA bar-coding«. The former, moderated by Stefan Uitdehaag of The Netherlands Forensic Institute (The Hague), and Dr. Herman van Dam, Consultancy for Water and Nature (Amsterdam), highlighted the successful application of diatoms studies, particularly systematics and taxonomy, in forensic investigations.

Professor David G. Mann of The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, moderated the bar-coding workshop and also presented »The Tree of Life Website Project« (<http://www.tolweb.org/tree/>), a multi-author encyclopedia of biodiversity that aims to provide a complete guide to the world's species and their interrelationships.

A roundtable, »Functional morphology and diatom nanotechnology«, was moderated by Professor Mario De Stefano of the Environmental Science Department of the 2nd University of Naples; and a meeting for Nordic and Baltic phycologists, »Nordic Network for Benthic Algae in Freshwater (NORBAF)«, was convened by Dr. Maria Kahlert of the Department of Environmental Assessment of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.

I was especially pleased to see students play such an active role in the symposium. This is very encouraging for the future of diatom research. The best student presentations were recognized at the closing banquet. The committee chose Lourenço Ribeiro of the Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon, for the best student oral presentation: »Benthic diatom communities in contrasting sandy and muddy shores: a spatiotemporal study in two intertidal flats of the Tagus Estuary, Portugal«. Elizabeth C. Ruck, Department of Botany, University of Texas, received the award for the best student poster: »Estimating the phylogeny of the order Surirellales with morphological and multi-gene sequence data«.

I express my sincere thanks to all our sponsors: the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports; the City of Dubrovnik; the Croatian Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund; Dubrovnik Airport Ltd.; Koeltz Scientific Books, Koenigstein, Germany; and Fluid Imaging Technologies, Yarmouth, Maine (USA); and, of course, the Institute for Marine and Coastal Research of the University of Dubrovnik.

I owe special thanks to the then-mayor of Dubrovnik, Mme. Dubravka Šuica, who hosted our opening reception in Sponza Palace. Members of her staff, especially Mmes. Nike Sudarević and Marija Crnčević, also made valuable contributions to the organization of the symposium.

I thank Mr. Ranko Filipović of ATLAS Travel Agency, the official partner of the symposium, for making his very important contribution to the symposium with the highest professional competence.

Thanks to Mr. Željko Schnattinger, who designed the attractive symposium logo, the cover of the Abstract Book, and other official materials.

My thanks also go to Dr. Nick Staresinic, who offered his unselfish support and advice throughout.

I reserve special thanks for Professor Andrzej Witkowski of the University of Szczecin, Poland. Dr. Witkowski was president of the International Society for Diatom Research during the preparation of the Dubrovnik Symposium and was extremely generous in offering his kind help and very useful advice.

I must, of course, warmly thank all of my colleagues at the Institute for Marine and Coastal Research in Dubrovnik, and Division of Biology, University of Zagreb. They are very well aware of my genuine gratitude for their exceptional support and hard work, without which we never could have realized this symposium.

Finally, it is my sincere hope that the Dubrovnik Symposium was as intellectually stimulating and scientifically valuable for the participants as it was for the organizers. I very much look forward to the 21st International Diatom Symposium to be held in the USA. I am confident that it will provide a venue that continues to assemble students and experienced researchers in an open and productive scientific climate.



Nenad Jasprica

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