

Reorganisation of IUGG

- A discussion and some proposals.

By

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1, Introduction.

The world has changed a lot since the establishment of IUGG. But its organisation is still very much the same.

National or regional societies have been created in parallel with IUGG, which organize many scientific activities such as workshops, seminars and conferences. They publish journals and support young scientists or scientists from developing countries. Furthermore more and more international scientific activities are organized around “projects” e.g. related to announcement of opportunities (AO) issued in connection with space missions or in preparation of such missions.

In several areas “new” international organisations have been established (WMO, IOC), which cover important IUGG areas. ICSU also creates structures, dealing with important problems areas formally belonging to the IUGG sphere (IGBP, ICRP).

The - still important - difference with respect to IUGG is that IUGG is truly international, and organise scientists from universities, government organisations and private companies.

The private life of scientists have changed. More women are involved. Younger scientists of both sexes, who have chosen to form a family, have responsibilities in their families, which they share with their partner. Middle aged scientists frequently have responsibilities towards aging parents. And it is not anymore common to bring your “spouse” to a meeting, thereby obtaining apology for your sins of not participating in the family activities.

Consequently meetings of 2 weeks duration, as the IUGG General Assembly, are too long. As a consequence many scientists do not attend more than 4 - 5 days. Scientists from developing countries or countries in need, can not afford the cost of staying 14 days. On a minimum budget one need USD 50 per day, and the airfare from a developing country is typically USD 1000. This accumulates to something larger than the yearly salary of many scientists from

countries in need.

For the officers the long duration and the many overlapping activities are very tiresome. Few have time to attend IUGG and association council and EC - and to listen to presentations at a symposium.

IUGG is poor. The budgets are so small that only the most necessary activities can be supported. We have to send applications to UNESCO for USD 2000, and deliver a detailed report for the use of the money.

2. The future role of IUGG and the Associations.

What is then the role of the IUGG and the Associations ? Here the important thing is, as mentioned in the introduction, that IUGG is truly international, and that it organises scientists from both academia, government and the private sector.

Now this is what is also doing the American Geophysical Union (AGU). It organizes better meetings than IUGG, attended by more scientists. It involves scientists from developing countries, and gives away free subscriptions to journals.

But here we must realize that not all countries are happy for the dominance of USA, and still feel that IUGG and the Associations are better frames around their international activities. Furthermore AGU does not (yet) organise scientific projects, sets up international (data) services or organises international schools. However, I shall come back to the role of AGU (and the European Geophysical Society (EGS)) later.

It is deep into the fundament of geophysics that an international collaboration is needed. A large part of the issues we deal with are global in character, and even the solution of local problems may need data from other countries. Geoid determination and weather prediction are examples from two very different areas.

So in my opinion the main (old and new) role of IUGG is

- collecting and making available data from and to the whole world
- bringing scientific methods and results out to the whole world
- to hold truly international meetings
- organise schools of scientific as well as practical character
- help having international participation in project groups or in answers to AO's
- create a framework for "feed-back" to scientists who are not in the "boiling water"
- support the use of WWW, forming interest groups, and making available CSCW systems.

However, to achieve these goals IUGG needs a more effective structure and more money.

3. Raising more money - using the money better.

Money must be used as well as possible, which for me means non-administrative purposes. (I do not intend to criticize the old and new IUGG administrations. They have followed or follows the established rules).

A full time IUGG Secretary General (SG), supported by a professional staff, is needed. Just like AGU. How do we get the money without then using more of our money for administrative purposes ?

Here are a few proposals:

- merge position as treasurer and SG
- abolish finance committee
- create administrative collaboration with AGU/EGS/JGS for contractual periods of 8 years
- reduce association allocation with 20 % (to a start only, The money will come back !)
- cut length of general assembly (GA)
- cut number of bureau members to 3, so EC = President+ Vice .Pres.(VP)+SG+Ass. President. (VP is also president elect)
- streamline administrative procedures

I have above given arguments for several of these proposals. The reduction of the EC is now possible since the cold war has ended, and we do not anymore need that all sides are represented. Also I have noted that many of the bureau members does work, which would be better organized within a project or working group. Continuity, now assured by having the old president as a member of the EC, is in the above proposal assured by having the VP as the president elect. The finance committee today have functions, which much better are carried out by the EC. The delicate matter about membership categories could be dealt with by e-mail discussion between the Council members (National representatives).

A professional SC should be able to attract new funds, and should be elected based on he(r)s track record as a fund raiser. The fundraising should after a couple of years make a profit to the associations, which is larger than the 20 % which I propose their budget should be reduced with.

Having a shorter GA and a smaller EC, and abolishing the finance committee will reduce costs very much. More funds will be available to help young scientists and scientists from developing countries and countries in need.

But a special problem is how to reduce the length of the GA.

4. Reducing the length of the General Assembly.

First of all, if we did not have a general assembly only every 4 year, we would not have so many things to do during the assemblies. We could have assemblies in conjunction with meetings of the larger organisations like AGU or EGS. And we could take advantage of their activities, by having IUGG/Association sponsored sessions at their meetings - a thing which is already happening. Many people are anyway presenting the same paper at the IUGG GA as they have just presented at the spring AGU meeting or the EGS after-easter meeting. (AGU and EGS will be happy, because it brings more people to their meetings).

The administrative functions at the GA need to be reduced:

- reports from various representatives to external bodies are (as now) send out in advance. But now also open for comments, questions and criticism.
- elections are done by mail. Nominations are done in two rounds, where the second round is add-ins by the National Committees. Note that only 3 elections need to be made, and one of these only every 8 year.
- SC report and proposed budget available in advance. Proposals for change of category and of new members are also send out in advance. Such changes may also be made by e-mail vote.

If these proposals are implemented, the Council need only to meet one day ! Similar procedures could be followed and are to a certain extend followed) by the associations.

The program of the GA must be better prepared. All proposals for work-shops or symposia must be submitted before the meeting of the program committee, with the name of a convenor who has agreed to organise the activity. The associations must shorten their programs by having symposia or meetings organized before the GA. (Preferably the year before, or in connection with the EGS or AGU meeting the same year as the GA).

The screening of papers must be much better. Too many bad papers are accepted. And too many do not show up for a presentation. A charge must be made for submitting an abstract, which is a deposit lost if no show. Preferably proceedings should be printed in advance (like IAHS). This would generate extra income.

5. Implementation.

Several of the above proposals require changes in the IUGG statutes and by-laws. But many not. For example the improved collaboration between the national/regional societies and IUGG should have a high priority. The GA in 2003 can not be much reduced, since this would change the conditions on which our Japanese colleagues issued their invitation. But the administrative functions could be stream-lined. And for sure IAG will only have scientific meetings over days (4 + 3) as in Birmingham.

However, some smaller changes - such as reducing the size of the EC - could be voted upon by e-mail before the nomination committee starts it work. Slightly reducing the time span of the GA and of improving the quality of papers is also in our own hands. And making more funds available for young scientists and scientists from developing countries is also up to us.

I hope the IUGG EC and the NC will take these proposal serious, so that the first changes can be made in 2003. If I get good response, I will establish a page on my home-page with the contributions to the discussion.