



Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa

Minutes of the 20th PSSA Meeting

Call to order

A meeting of Palaeontological Society of Southern Africa (PSSA) was held at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein from 13:45–15:30pm on 6 July 2018. Attendees included senior and junior PSSA members who gathered to discuss matters of the Society after the conclusion of the highly successful 20th PSSA Biennial Meeting that was hosted by the National Museum, Bloemfontein from 4 July to 6 July 2018.

Meeting facilitator

Dr Rose Prevec (Albany Museum) - Outgoing PSSA President

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of the previous Biennial General Meeting of the PSSA, held in 2016
2. Discussion of issues and initiatives of concern to our profession: Accreditation of palaeoscientists by SACNASP (South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions)
3. Announcements, Discussions and Decisions, including the proposals to host the 21st PSSA in 2020
4. Election of a new PSSA Executive Committee
5. Report of the Treasurer

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed. That meeting was held on 8 July 2016 after the conclusion of the 19th PSSA Biennial Meeting, which was organized by the Department of Earth Sciences of Stellenbosch University (Western Cape) from 4 to 8 July 2016.

Accreditation of palaeoscientists

The discussion on the importance and legal requirements of palaeoscientists' accreditation was led by Dr Rose Prevec who urged all PSSA members to become accredited by SACNASP (South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions). Accreditation of student members is free of charge, although accreditation as a palaeontologist by SACNASP is difficult because it is not an independently recognized discipline. The difference between BSC honours graduates with geology versus palaeontology majors was made in favour of the former due to more robust field work training. The discussion around this difference brought to the fore the need for establishing a coursework Master's, aimed at training in palaeontological impact assessments, heritage management, palaeoscientific field work, potentially to run at WITS. Members showed interest in participating in a programme like this both as students and educators. It was acknowledged that such MSc learning programme first needs to be developed and must undergo formal accreditation by Council on Higher Education and registration by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Department of Higher Education and Training.

Announcements, Discussions and Decisions

A) Professor Bruce Rubidge reminded the PSSA membership of the following matters relating to the activities around the Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences (COE PAL), which is one of the main sponsors of palaeontological research and funders of student bursaries in southern Africa:

- 1) Upcoming five-year review of the COE PAL activities by NRF (to take place in late July 2018). Several PSSA members will be interviewed by NRF on their perception of COE PAL, and Prof Rubidge urged all members to consciously partake in these interviews.
- 2) Next deadline for proposal submission for COE PAL funding: 1st October*. Outcome on funding decision can be expected by applicants in early December.
- 3) Importance of submitting applications for funding if potential applicants did submit proposal for the recently closed call by NRF AOP funding instrument.
- 4) Importance of attendance by all COE PAL grantees (students and PIs alike) the COE PAL Lecture Series which will take place at WITS from 29 to 31 August 2018.

B) A discussion was held around diminishing research outputs by South African museums (Ditsong, National, Iziko and Albany). It was acknowledged that the combined research output of SA museums is low, and while the desire to undertake more research is present, increasing research productivity by museum-based colleagues is difficult. This is because SA museum staff are expected to perform well not only in research and collection management but also in outreach and public education. The former two are appreciated only by DST NRF and not so much by the Department of Arts and Culture, which is the administrative body that ultimately governs the fiscal matters at museums.

C) Proposals were solicited from potential hosts of the 21st PSSA Biennial Meeting to be held in 2020. Expressions of interest were received from two groups:

- 1) Dr. Ricardo Araujo to convene the next PSSA meeting in Maputo, Mozambique
- 2) Dr John Almond with the assistance of Drs Emese Bordy, Madelon Tusenius, Wendy Taylor, and Ms Claire Browning to convene the next PSSA meeting in Matjiesfontein, Western Cape

The proposals were presented for both locations, discussed and then were put to vote. Although it was difficult to choose between the two proposals, the voting members accepted the proposal from Dr Almond et al. and the decision to hold the 21st PSSA meeting in Matjiesfontein in 2020 was made unanimously. Regrets were conveyed to the Mozambique group who was encouraged to submit and present a new proposal in person in 2020 to convene the 22nd PSSA meeting in Maputo, Mozambique in 2022.

D) Logistics around the 21st PSSA meeting in Matjiesfontein 2020

- 1) It was agreed that the abstract call will be made for graphical abstracts or abstract with one figure. The example given was the abstract book format of the recently held 2nd International Conference of Continental Ichnology (ICCI 2017, organized by Emese Bordy and her UCT team). It was published by Palaeontologia Africana (vol 52) in March 2018 and can be viewed here: <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/24150>
- 2) It was proposed and agreed that technical workshops should be held during the 21st PSSA meeting for mainly preparators, technicians and tour guides with the option to upgrade to talks. The practicalities around this biannual knowledge exchange event (e.g., who and how will run it) need to be worked out by the technical staff community.

E) Additional portfolios of the PSSA Executive Committee

To ensure that education and outreach activities of the PSSA become better coordinated, facilitated and less fragmented, the President motivated the creation of a new position on the PSSA Executive Committee, namely: Coordinator for education and outreach.

F) Student status of student member of the PSSA Executive Committee

It was agreed that incoming student member of the PSSA Executive Committee can be any student who has an active southern African university student registration at the time of nomination and election, and who reasonably expects to be a part of the community for the following two years.

Election of a new PSSA Executive Committee

The president shared her frustrations regarding the lack of engagement by the Society in forwarding nominations of candidates to stand for election at this BGM, to serve as PSSA officers for 2018-2020. The candidates who were nominated for election and voted in as members of the PSSA Executive Committee for the next term are as follows:

PRESIDENT: Dr. Jonah Choiniere (WITS)
VICE-PRESIDENT: Dr. Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (UCT)
SECRETARY: Dr. Emese M. Bordy (UCT)
TREASURER: Dr. Elize Butler (NASMUS)
PALNEWS EDITOR: Dr. Pia Viglietti (WITS)
STUDENT MEMBER: Ms. Aviwe Matiwane (Rhodes)
VICE-STUDENT MEMBER: Mr. Viktor Radermacher (WITS)
MEMBER-AT-LARGE: Mr. Sifelani Jirah (WITS)
EDUCATION&OUTREACH FACILITATOR: Dr. Ian McKay (WITS)

Report of the Treasurer

Mrs Butler shared the financial statements and reported on the healthy finances of the PSSA, despite the theft of funds during the 19th PSSA Biennial Meeting (organized by Dr Ryan Tucker of Stellenbosch University). Mrs Butler explained the need: a) to open an official PSSA bank account, which is now required by SARS legislation and b) increase the membership fees. The PSSA also needs to be registered with the Treasury's Central Suppliers Database to facilitate payments from government institutions. Regarding fees, the members agreed that the PSSA fees would be increased to R100 per student member and R300 per working professional.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 15.30 pm on 8 July 2018. The next meeting will be held on the last day of the 21st PSSA Biennial Meeting in Matjiesfontein in September 2020.



Secretary of PSSA:
Dr Emese M. Bordy (UCT)

Date of approval: 28-08-2018

Postscript:

*New submission deadline for COE PAL grant applications: end September 2018

** In July 2018, the PSSA Ex Co decided that the **21st PSSA Biennial Meeting** will be held in Matjiesfontein from **7 to 11 September** 2020. (Delegates to arrive on Monday 7 Sept pm and leave on Friday 11 Sept am; Conference dinner: Thurs 10 Sept.; Field trip: Fri 11 – Sat 12 Sept.)