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Biogeographia: a brief historical outline of the Società Italiana di Biogeografia (SIB)

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EDITORIAL

On September 1954, during the 27th Congress of the Unione Zoologica Italiana (UZI), a small group of academic scholars, including one geologist, two botanists and five zoologists, gave rise to a scientific association called “Gruppo Italiano Biogeografi”, literally the Italian group of biogeographers. The team aimed at promoting research in Biogeography, and networking researchers engaged in floristic and faunal studies with emphasis on the Mediterranean Region. Starting from 41 fellows, the membership regularly increased up to 200 fellows through the following decade.

Since 1962, the association shifted its denomination into “Società Italiana di Biogeografia”, SIB, namely the Italian Society of Biogeography, and its main activity was the organization of conferences. For the most part, these conferences focused on the study of the biota of given geographic areas of Italy, or to particular habitat types. By this way the SIB initiated its great role as main organizer of systematic research of the Italian flora and fauna and results of the surveys found place in the journal that, since the year 1970, became the SIB Journal “Lavori della Società Italiana di Biogeografia”, which in 1984 turned under the name “Biogeographia”.

A great merit of the SIB has been its role in encouraging collaborative research of botanists and zoologists, stimulating joint surveys in given geographic areas, since the Executive Board anticipated the location of any conference a few years in advance. Accordingly, the journal has also served for years the main repository of the georeferenced data of biodiversity of Italy and of a few other areas investigated by Italian biogeographers.

From 1970 to 2011, 30 volumes have been published focusing on themes like the biota of the main mountain compartments of the Alps and Apennines, Sicily, Sardinia, as well as the small Tyrrhenian archipelagos. Other conference themes included the cave habitat, the inland waters, the coastal areas, and the Mediterranean Sea, the biogeographic consequences of Pleistocene climate. A few conferences with the relative volumes concerned methodological issues. Finally, some

monographic volumes of *Biogeographia* addressed biogeographically meaningful countries as Anatolia and Somalia and the Mediterranean-Southern African disjunct pattern.

The great majority of papers published prior of 2011 are now available as pdf online in the journal web site.

Henceforth *Biogeographia – The Journal of Integrative Biogeography* is online and will publish original research and reviews in biogeography. Papers dealing with clear hypotheses, convincing analyses or interesting results on the distribution of organisms will be considered for peer review. Purely descriptive studies will also be considered if embedded in a theoretical framework or if they provide unique primary data of high potential future scientific value.

Moreover, in order to maintain the heritage of *Biogeographia* and its pioneering role in collecting primary data of regional flora and fauna, valuable data sets on biodiversity are welcome. The editors acknowledge the importance of formal descriptions of data sets making the data more visible and give originators explicit credit for those data, rather than for the papers that use them. The journal is peer-reviewed and online-only, with all papers freely available for everybody to download.

Valerio Sbordoni

President of the Società Italiana di Biogeografia