Technical Program Committee
Chairman’s Report

2001–2005

Introduction and summary

It is pleasing to be able to report that arrangements for the presentation of the technical program and the Silver Jubilee CONGRESS in Guatemala are moving towards a successful conclusion. The only disappointment is that it has not been possible to find enough papers of an acceptable standard to fill absolutely all available time slots.

In this inter-Congress period, the Technical Program Committee has implemented several strategic improvements arising from Council and Executive decisions associated with the technical program at Congress.

The most significant of these was the appointment of a Permanent Editor. This has resulted in a marked improvement in the organisation and effectiveness of the process of preparing the proceedings for publication. The effective collaboration with the representatives of the Guatemalan Congress Organising Committee has also ensured that successful arrangements were made for printing the proceedings on the other side of the world from where the print-ready copy was prepared.

The program for the 25th Congress continues a previous practice of including sessions that focus on specific topics. However, at this Congress, the session on industry viability has, for the first time, been structured as an inter-disciplinary session rather than a session organised by an individual ISSCT Sectional Committee. In addition, there is a Managers’ Forum that the Executive hopes will initiate the formation of a Managers Section within the ISSCT sectional committee structure.

These items along with comments on the usual activities undertaken by the Technical Program Committee are covered in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Technical Program for the 25th Congress

Deadlines

For the 25th Congress, the Society sought submissions of titles and abstracts for full papers and poster papers by 15 January 2004. This is the first Congress for which an abstract was sought in addition to a title. It was hoped that the inclusion of the abstract would enable Commissioners and Section Chairmen to make better decisions about the quality of the final papers and about whether the abstract should become full papers or posters.

This deadline, just over one year ahead of the Congress, was almost exactly the same time ahead of the Congress as for the XXIVth Congress. However, the effective period was about six weeks shorter because of the Christmas holiday period just one month before the Congress during the critical period when the proceedings have to be printed. Discussions with printing companies in Guatemala City during the mid-term meeting were a deciding factor in the deadline. The subsequent deadlines for authors were:

22 February: Authors told of the decisions concerning their papers.
15 April: Deadline for receipt of manuscript for full length papers
15 May: Deadline for receipt of poster paper manuscripts.

Having received the manuscripts, the internal ISSCT deadlines for the reviewing, editing and publishing process were:

15 August: Deadline for receipt by the permanent editor of final papers.
30 October: Deadline for final print-ready copy to be despatched to Guatemala.

Like all deadlines, they were bypassed as far as a proportion of the papers were concerned, but it is to the credit of all concerned that the first volume of the proceedings was despatched to Guatemala in the first few days of November, only very slightly past the original deadline. The efforts
of the Commissioners and Section Chairmen and in particular those of the Permanent Editor, Mac Hogarth, and the Production Editor, Peter Knight, are to be specifically commended in this regard.

**Email communications**

The 25th Congress is the first for which reliance on email communication was very nearly total. This does not mean that the communication was flawless but any problems were detected early enough to prevent them becoming serious. In practice, the routine of always acknowledging receipt of an email or of checking to see that an email acknowledging receipt has been received was not always strictly adhered to. The only aspect which specifically did not rely on email was the transmission of the print-ready copy of the proceedings to Guatemala. Initial trials showed that email transmission of such a large document could not be guaranteed to achieve the absolute 100% reliability required, so compact discs were sent via air express.

**Number of papers**

The Congress timetable provides for 160 time slots of 30 minutes duration for the presentation of papers (in addition to the opening and closing ceremonies and the plenary symposia). During initial planning, when allowance was made for section meetings, poster sessions and the cross-disciplinary session, it was estimated that about 135 time slots would be available for the presentation of papers.

About 207 abstracts were received. It was assumed that the initial abstract would provide a good guide to the quality of the final papers so, after review by the Section Chairmen, 150 abstracts were selected to proceed to full papers. In other words, it was assumed that only 10% of these would either not be received as full papers or would not be of an acceptable standard.

Time showed that this assumption was optimistic. Eventually only 121 were accepted for publication – a shortfall of 19% compared to the requested 150 papers. The shortfall was partially countered by expanding the cross-disciplinary session from an afternoon to an all day session (i.e. from 6 to 10 time slots) and introducing a Managers’ Forum (4 time slots) on the Tuesday morning. Unfortunately, this still left eight empty time slots in the program.

The overall situation is summarised in the following table. Note that some papers were transferred between sections at various times. In addition to the 121 full papers, another 14 papers were accepted for the cross disciplinary session. These were nominally poster-length papers but many of them are worthy of being full papers. This compares with 142 papers for the Brisbane Congress (plus 87 brief presentations at the two workshops), 137 in India at the 23rd Congress and 164 in Colombia (at the last Congress to be held in Latin America).

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<td>Abstracts received</td>
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<td>Agriculture Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agronomy</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>Agricultural Engineering</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Biology Commission</td>
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<td>Breeding</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entomology</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molecular Biology</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Pathology</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factory Commission</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-products Commission</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special sessions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross disciplinary</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Managers’ Forum</td>
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The format of the Proceedings – compact disc or hard printed copy

As the Chairman indicates in his report, the intention at the mid-term meeting was to produce the Congress proceedings on a compact disc (CD) with the only hard copy being a book of the paper abstracts (in three languages).

Planning continued on this basis until April 2004. At that time, the Australian technologists published their second set of conference proceedings in CD plus hard copy abstract format. While this format produced no problems in the first year, significant problems associated with incompatibility between some versions of the Windows operating system and the Acrobat document software occurred in the second year.

As a result, a decision was made to change the format of the ISSCT proceedings to a full hard copy document. If more time had been available to address the incompatibility issues, it may have been possible to retain the CD format. Potential options for overcoming the problem were certainly identified in subsequent weeks. Unfortunately, time to investigate those options and become certain that the problems could be overcome was not available.

However, the CD format remains an option that will probably be considered for future congresses. Apart from the technical problems, the principal objection to the CD format comes from a widespread preference for the printed format and a concern that the CDs will become unreadable in a few years because of changing computer technology.

The greatest incentive to move to a CD format is the saving in the sheer weight of the printed copy with a consequential reduction in the associated postal and transportation costs (including the overloading of delegates’ baggage).

Permanent Editor and the Production of the Proceedings

At the XXIVth Congress in Brisbane, the ISSCT Executive decided that the Society would benefit significantly from the appointment of a Permanent Editor. The Chairman’s report outlines this process and its benefits and compliments Dr Mac Hogarth on his appointment and the excellent manner in which he has undertaken the somewhat daunting task of editing papers from around the world.

As Chairman of the committee ultimately responsible for the production of the Congress proceedings, I can only compliment the Executive on their decision and acknowledge with gratitude Dr Hogarth’s very considerable efforts in bringing the production of the proceedings to a successful conclusion. As Permanent Editor, he quickly became a most effective focal point for the whole process of preparing the proceedings, for Guatemala.

The other benefit from Dr Hogarth’s appointment is the excellent working relationship he has with Mr Peter Knight, the Production Editor. The Production Editor takes the papers as finalised by the editor and converts them into print ready format. The magnitude of this task should not be underestimated and requires skills that cannot be appreciated fully until a discussion takes place on the detail required to ensure that the final printed copy is of an acceptable standard. The production process involved three people for the Brisbane Congress. This time the whole process was carried out by Peter Knight.

The final step in the production process is the printing of the proceedings. This will take place in Guatemala City. The assistance of Jorge Sanchez in Guatemala with this process is gratefully acknowledged. The arrangements for printing the proceedings on the other side of the world from where the print-ready copy is produced has presented its challenges, but the checks and trial runs with the process should have eliminated any major problems. The co-operation from Guatemala could not have been better.

Inter-Congress workshops

It is pleasing to note that workshops were held by all ISSCT Sectional Committees during the inter-Congress period.
**Biology Commission**

Entomology 'Pest management – new techniques'.
Hosts: Sugar Industry Research Institute of the Sugar Industry Authority of Jamaica.
23-29 November 2003 – 32 participants
Pathology: 'Advances and challenges in sugarcane pathology.'
Hosts: The American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists in association with the LSU Agriculture Center and the USDA Sugarcane Research Unit.
11-16 May 2003 – 32 participants
Breeding: 'Sugarcane breeding: Basic elements and practical applications.'
Hosts: The South African Sugar Association Experiment Station.
4-9 May 2003 – 49 participants
Molecular Biology: 'Genome analysis and molecular physiology.'
Hosts: Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Development.
7-11 April 2003 – 65 participants

**Agriculture Commission**

Agronomy: 'Opportunities in sugar cane agronomy to confront new realities emerging in the 21st century.'
Hosts: Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute.
21 – 25 July 2003 – 47 participants
Agricultural Engineering: 'Burnt vs green cane mechanisation – Agricultural engineering challenges.'
Hosts: American Sugar Cane League and the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists.
12 – 17 October 2003 – 49 participants

**Factory Commission**

Engineering: 'Energy management in raw cane sugar factories.'
Hosts: Berlin Sugar Institute
7 – 12 October 2002 – 65 participants
Process: 'New technologies for the manufacture of quality sugar.'
Hosts: The Sugar Technologists Association of India.
8 – 12 November 2003 – 45 participants

**Co-products Commission**

Topic: 'Ethanol production and use'.
Hosts: Copersucar Technology Center, Brazil
12 – 17 October 2003 – 58 participants.

Inter-Congress workshops continue to be one of the most effective components of ISSCT activities. The Society's thanks must go to all who took part in organising these above workshops. They were all successful and appreciated by the attendees. Workshop reports from seven of these workshops were posted on the ISSCT web site soon after the completion of the workshops and full Congress papers on eight of the nine workshops will be presented during the Congress in Guatemala.

**Congress Workshops and special sessions during Congress**

Two workshops were held as an integral component of the XXIVth Congress in Brisbane as part of the Society's continuing effort to improve the technical standard and attractiveness of Congress. Delegates paid an additional registration to attend these workshops. In terms of attendance, the workshops were successful but the drawbacks led to a subsequent review deciding against continuing the practice.

Workshops are intended to provide a congenial forum for Society members with a specialist interest in the workshop topic to discuss and interchange knowledge, ideas and experiences. In the Congress environment, they lost that clear focus because of the 'distraction' of the other papers being presented. Particularly in the case of the Process Section workshop, there was no well defined group of
specialists. The workshop became just another of the options that delegates could consider when deciding which paper they would attend next (irrespective of whether they had paid the additional fee to be involved in the workshop).

Nevertheless, the Technical Program Committee agreed with a decision of the Executive that there would be continued benefit in the concept of Congress sessions that focus on specific topics as long as those sessions were open to all delegates. For the Guatemalan Congress, as outlined in the Chairman’s Report, two such focussed sessions have been arranged.

For the Wednesday of the Congress, a cross disciplinary session will address ‘The sustainability of the cane sugar industry’. In previous Congresses, such sessions had focussed on a well defined topic within the confines of an individual Commission or Section. They were generally very successful. For the Guatemalan Congress, this concept has been modified by selecting a topic that crosses the disciplinary boundaries of the individual sections. While it is too early to be certain of the success of the concept, there is no doubt that the topics being presented cover a technological range that is certainly cross disciplinary in nature. The 14 papers to be presented cover six basic topics.

- The viability of the industry as a whole.
- Genetic engineering
- Farm water run-off and farm input losses
- Agricultural sustainability.
- Greenhouse gases and the cane sugar industry.
- The effects of climate change on the industry

The initial concept was that this session should occupy just three hours one afternoon with short, concise presentations supported by poster-length papers. However, most of the papers that were received were of sufficient standard to warrant additional presentation time, so the opportunity has been taken to extend the session to a full day.

The second focussed session will be a Managers’ Forum that will address the topic ‘Improving industry viability’. This is scheduled for the first two hours of the Tuesday morning. Six managers from Australia, Barbados, Colombia, India, Mauritius and South Africa will speak for about 15 minutes each as a prelude to discussion about the formation of a Managers’ Section.

Concerns about the format of these sessions

The main concern about these two sessions is that they move the format of Congress away from the standard 30 minute time slot for paper presentation. This can make it awkward for delegates as they move from one session to another to hear the papers of interest.

The initial concept for the sustainability session was that 14 brief presentations would be given over three hours one afternoon. That implies that each presentation would be only about 10 minutes long. When the session was changed to a whole day, the available time per speaker becomes about 20 minutes. A similar concern arises with the Managers’ Forum because the presentations in that session will be of 15 minutes duration. Only time will tell whether this distinct disconnect with the standard 30 minute paper format will cause a noticeable problem.

Publications

There have been no publications released by the Society since the last Congress, although there has been some discussion during the inter-Congress period about plans for a regional guide to pests in Africa (including Reunion and Mauritius) and about a book on plant nutrition. It is thought that no significant progress has been made on these. However, the Agricultural Engineering Section has moved towards the production of a ‘Machinery costing and standards’ protocol. This was proposed at the last Agricultural Engineering Workshop in Louisiana. It has reached the stage where it has been circulated to all the delegates that attended that Workshop for comment. To that end it is also available on the ISSCT web site. The Chairman of the Agricultural Engineering Section, Eddie Meyer, and his committee members are to be congratulated on this initiative.

The main reasons for proposing such a protocol was the need to adopt a uniform machinery costing method when reporting machinery and machinery systems so that effective comparisons and benchmarking of various farming operations can be made, not only between growers within an
industry but more importantly between sugarcane growing industries. The protocol describes the 'classical' costing method, which provides a standard procedure for estimating the fixed and variable costs of owning and operating new agricultural machinery and equipment.

The Technical Sections

The strength of the ISSCT depends on the strength and vitality of its technical sections. In this regard it is pleasing to note that all Sectional Committees held successful workshops during the inter-Congress period. As the Chairman noted in his report, it is particularly pleasing that the Co-products Commission held a workshop for the first time since the Colombian Congress in 1995. The challenge facing the Technical Program Committee is to continue this high standard at a time when the time pressures on senior industry researchers who take on Commissioner and Section Chair responsibilities are increasingly severe. Unfortunately, there will be a high turnover of these positions at the Guatemala Congress, so the Society will be seeking the involvement of some new and enthusiastic members to fill these vacancies. Our thanks go to the people who accept these responsibilities.

Concluding remarks and acknowledgements

It has been my pleasure to serve ISSCT in the role of Chairman of the Technical Program Committee for the last three years, although it has been a challenging activity at times. However, the challenges have been eased by the very significant advice and assistance provided by Dr Jean Claude Autrey, Chairman, ISSCT Executive, Dr Claude Ricaud, Permanent Secretary, Dr Mac Hogarth, Permanent Editor, and Past Chairman, Dr Peter Rein.

The Society also owes a debt of gratitude to the Commissioners and Section Chairmen for their roles in organising the inter-Congress workshops and the very time consuming task of reviewing of the papers.

There is no doubt that the very considerable effort that the Guatemalan Congress Organising Committee have put into arrangements for that Congress will result in satisfactory arrangements for the presentation of the technical program. In that regard, I would particularly acknowledge the unfailing assistance provided by Jorge Sanchez associated with printing the proceedings and by Dr Mario Melgar for the general arrangements for the presentation of papers at Congress.

Dr V. Mason
Chairman,
Technical Program Committee
12 November, 2004