

Chapter 1

A Congress for the “Cinderella of the Biological Sciences”: I–IV International Congresses of Entomology, 1910–1928

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Background to the International Congresses of Entomology¹

The concept of convening a scientific congress, in the sense of a formal gathering of individuals within a specific discipline for the purpose of discussing shared interests, is, in a way, a product of the Industrial Revolution. The rapid accumulation of new scientific knowledge and the proliferation of new technology created a need for sharing information and for standardizing metrics across international borders. For example, as was typical of the era, Brussels, Belgium, hosted the Maritime Conference for the Adoption of a Uniform System of Meteorological Observations and the General Conference as to Statistics, with delegates from 26 countries in 1853 (Baldwin 1907).

Such gatherings were often held in conjunction with World's Fairs, the first of which was London's Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851. In 1855, the Exposition Universelle des Produits de l'Agriculture, de l'Industrie et des Beaux-Arts de Paris was held in Paris, the first international version of what had hitherto been an occasional French national exhibition of useful products of commerce.

True to the spirit of the times, wine experts from around the world converged on the Exposition Universelle at the request of Emperor Napoleon III to devise a standardized classification for Bordeaux wines. Ironically, 23 years later, in 1878, a conference with delegates from seven nations was held in Berne, Switzerland, to devise coordinated strategies to combat phylloxera, then ravaging *Vitis vinifera* vineyards in Bordeaux and elsewhere in Europe (Baldwin 1907).

The first International Congress of Zoology (ICZ), an initiative of the Société Zoologique de France, was convened in Paris in 1889 and held in conjunction with the International Exposition of Paris. The explicit aim of the zoological congress was to create an international discipline with standardized practices, literature, and taxonomic nomenclature.

¹ This chapter is based with revision on Berenbaum (2016) (MRB), with the permission of the Entomological Society of America.