Latin America and the Caribbean: Annual report 2023

Steering committee: Marius Bottin (Chair), Glenda Mendieta-Leiva (Membership administrator), Cloe Xochitl Pérez Valladares, Gabriella Damasceno and Gwendolyn Peyre.

Membership and communication

There are 9 new members in the section this year, which makes a total of 104 members. Most of the new members contacted us from the IAVS website (group webpage). Most of our members are from Argentina and Brazil, but also from various countries of Latin America and Europe. For the communication with the group, we are still managing various communication channels (mainly the Google group and the IAVS website), and we unfortunately did not switch completely to the website. There is still a bit of work to do for us to get a completely working system in the group webpages.

VCS special collection on Neotropical Vegetation

The special collection “Neotropical Vegetation” for Vegetation Classification and Survey edited by Gwendolyn Peyre, Bianca Andrade, Alejandro Velazquez and Melisa Giorgis, and supported by the LAC group, was launched in February 2022. A wide call was made to all LAC-group members, resulting in more than ten abstracts submitted. As of July 2023, the special collection has reached a total of 6 research papers on Latin American and Caribbean vegetation.

Meeting in Madrid

During the 64th Annual Symposium of the IAVS in Madrid, in June/July 2022, we co-organized a special session on “Threatened Vegetation of Latin America and the Caribbean: prospects and approaches”. With a wide response to the call, we hosted a total of 15 oral contributions (3 virtual and 12 in person), from researchers from Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay. We also held, together with our annual meeting, conversations about Latin American databases, and functional diversity studies in our region. From the discussions emerged the idea of a workshop on the data management and analysis tools for Latin-American researchers. Miguel Alvarez proposed to organize such an event (see next part) as part of the activities of the section.

Two members of our community were recognized for their outstanding participation at the symposium, Marco Chimirazzo from Brazil, won the Oral Presentation Award, and Vladimir Minorta from Colombia was awarded an honorable mention.

Workshop: From the field to the desk

After the proposal of Miguel Alvarez during the Madrid symposium, we organized a workshop around the tools that he developed in R (vegetable, taxlist etc). The idea was to
present the good practices that these tools facilitate in between the field and the beginning of the statistical analyses (hence the name “From the field to the desk”). The workshop took place between 21st of April and 19th of May, as 5 sessions of 2 hours. João Costa helped us in the organization of the workshop and in the technical questions and issues during the sessions. The use of various software (GitHub, GitHub pages, Slack and Zoom) helped us communicate with the participants. The prices were 30€ for IAVS members and 70€ for non-members (which made it less expensive to register as a member than to pay the non-member fee). While we planned to offer 5 fee waivers, we received various applications that justified the waivers and demonstrated interest, so we finally offered 9 fee waivers. We also had 8 paying participants (all are now members of the IAVS). While we actually spent more money than what we obtained from the registration fees, it has been a very positive experience, and we had very good feedback from the participants. We think that the section and its members could benefit from organizing such workshops in the future, even though it might be important to review our advertising strategy to make it more efficient financially.

We are at the disposal of any other working group which would like to organize such an event, to share our experience on the organizational and technical details!

**Finances**

In 2022, the 500€ help was used to organize the workshop “From the field to the desk”, as allowances to Miguel Alvarez (350€) and João Costa (150€). There were 8 paying participants (and 9 participants with fee waivers), so we received 240€ back. We also received 1000€ from IAVS to help for the participation of two members of the steering committee in the Madrid Symposium and the organization of the section events.

**Projects and future activities of the section**

*Flash talk session during IAVS Symposium in Australia*

Together with our annual group meeting at the IAVS 2023 Symposium, we are organizing a hybrid session with flash talks (5 minutes) from IAVS-LAC members. Our objective, despite the difficulties for the Latin-American scientists to participate this year, is for participants to share their latest work, expand their network and get the latest news on the IAVS-LAC group. As of August 15, we have six potential speakers from Argentina, Colombia and Germany.

*The place of Latin America and the Caribbean in the vegetation science literature*

We are currently preparing a collaborative work on the place of Latin America and the Caribbean in the vegetation science literature, in particular in the journal edited by the IAVS. By using co-citation network and co-occurrence of words in the abstracts of the papers, we hope to better understand:

- the connectivity of LAC vegetation scientists to other parts of the world
- the specificity of the topics studied in our region

We will build a collaborative group from the LAC section in order to write a manuscript on the subject. This project will be built on the first analyses which were conducted in 2021, by
some of the members of the section, led by Marius Bottin. The results were presented in the Reunion Argentina de Ecologia 2021 and the virtual IAVS symposium 2021. We are currently looking for potential funds to make complementary analyses and to organize the collaboration on the manuscript.

**Elections**

The current 4 year term of the Steering Committee comes to an end in March 2024. We will start calling for new candidates during the Coffs Harbour Symposium. We will also try to find some people who are not candidates to organize the elections.