

The Organizer's personal perspective

Almost unexpectedly, the success of the 8th International Workshop has required the printing and publishing of Proceedings. Such Proceedings had always been planned in electronic form (and in colour). So it was mainly a question of cash as to if and how any printed publication would take form. The Workshop made a modest profit which would disappear when printing costs were taken into account. I'm glad to say ISCMNS stepped in with the necessary financial support.

This is my sixth consecutive Workshop and the 8th of a series starting at Asti in 1993. The 90 or so participants made it the biggest Cold Fusion meeting I've ever organized. The figure of 90 was the original participation budgeted at the initial planning stages in December 2006. Of these, half were to present papers which required a 5 day meeting on the same scale of recent ICCF conferences. I must confess I had some worrying moments as to whether or not such a target was realistic. I also worried about my ability to organize a workshop in Sicily, 1000 miles from my home in northern Italy.

I am very happy to say that the moral and financial support received from the Fulvio Frisone Foundation and from Fulvio and his mother Lucia, were a major factor in ensuring the eventual success of the enterprise. The first step was to choose a hotel and I first consulted a computer database of possible hotels with conference facilities for the appropriate number of participants. These candidates were requested to choose dates and make an offer. None of the offers were entirely satisfactory in terms of cost and quality. I soon realized that a remote foreigner would be unlikely to negotiate the hotel discount we required. And so a further trip was taken to Sicily. Using local contacts I was able to negotiate reasonable conditions (a 50% discount off normal rates!) at the Sheraton Hotel, Catania.

Having fixed major costs and dates, it was time to make official announcements on the ISCMNS website in February 2007. The pricing was structured so that participants paid for the hotel costs alone (without any contribution to other expenses). This policy ensures that the financial result is independent of the number of participants and avoids the embarrassing result of unexpected profits or losses. It also means that the cost to participants is advantageous. Because all rooms booked were doubles, the fees for multiple occupancy were particularly favourable.

I still had to consider overheads. The hotel agreed to forgo the fees for renting the common meeting rooms and office, but that still left costs for organization, publicity, printing etc. A financial breakdown will appear in the ISCMNS accounts at www.iscmns.org Also an international meeting requires international presenters and the costs for some participants are prohibitive. This problem was solved by waiving conference fees completely in deserving cases. Some 22 speakers received subsidies of this kind.

Publicity for the Workshop was made on the Internet, in Infinite Energy Magazine, and at ICCF13, in Sochi Russia by way of a short presentation. An A3 sized poster was printed and distributed at some Italian institutions. I was aided by the excellent contacts with the press through the Fulvio Frisone Foundation.

Initial organization for the workshop went quite smoothly. A simple letter of intent was signed by ISCMNS and the Foundation setting out mutual interests and responsibilities. Another trip to the Sheraton hotel was necessary to discuss detailed budgets and support. A total of four trips were made, prior to the conference itself, to make local arrangements. The fifth trip was the conference itself and I arrived on 11th October to greet early arrivals and brief “my staff” of volunteers (Antonio, Salynn, Raluca, Alessandro, Martina). A big thank you to all these brave souls who put up with an overstressed conference organizer!

A lesson learnt from Yuri Bazhutov at ICCF13 was the convenience of having the conference organization arrange transport from / to the airport. It can be quite an adventure, in a foreign country with its language problems, and the fatigue of jet lag to make ones way to the conference center. A mini-bus was hired by the Foundation and organized by Pippo Spampinato . Several people missed their flights but they telephoned warning. In this regard it’s worth mentioning that mobile phone coverage is not always perfect so it’s important to use the appropriate network. I found it necessary to stipulate a contract with “TIM” which proved quite satisfactory.

The honour of the first technical presentation on Sunday fell upon George Miley, winner of the Giuliano Preparata Medal. He amused the audience with memories and anecdotes of this Italian physicist who died in the year 2000. In the evening, the film, Figlio della Luna (Son of the Moon) made by RAI the Italian national television company was shown (with difficulty due to a scratched DVD). It portrays the difficult life of Fulvio Frisone and the extraordinary energy which he and his mother overcame. The film begins and ends with Dr Frisone attending a fictional ICCF7 in Melbourne, Australia. The conference scenes were actually filmed in the Sheraton, Catania.

It is always the case that any complex meeting program is subject to major revision “in situ” as a result of personal preferences or requirements of the presenters. The organizer too has his problems – there was a major delay in the return from the Excursion to Etna. In order to make program changes as painless as possible, it was useful to develop software which can instantly generate HTML text for printing. On the Internet or DVD, the user can simply click on a link and up comes the abstract, presentation, or full paper. Participants are generally quite cooperative in submitting electronic material.

With the introduction made by his film, Frisone in his wheel chair, aided by an interpreter, presented his paper. At question time, a “gate-crasher” shouted abuse at Fulvio apparently attempting to embarrass him at “his” international meeting. It later turned out that this intruder was a professor of physics at Catania. The Rector of the

University subsequently apologised, "... we are extremely disappointed about this disgraceful incident...". The University later investigated the affair but it is not clear if any disciplinary action was taken.

The Ladies program was managed by Raluca Tigau, a young Romanian girl living in Catania. She organized a shopping trip to the city on the Monday and an excursion to Taormina on the Tuesday. I am very sorry to say, Raluca was killed in a traffic accident 5 weeks after the Workshop. Many letters of condolence were received. She was an enthusiastic and competent staff member and will be missed by all.

In an unusual initiative for scientific conferences of this kind a number of presentations were made on financial and technical aspects of collaborative research. The workshop was particularly pleased to hear Dr Pocaterra speak on the EU's Framework Program 7. Two participants followed this up a week later with a trip to Rome for further discussions on obtaining EU funding. This funding would be available for non EU partners too, such as China and Russia.

The 8th workshop was a major success and probably the biggest Cold Fusion meeting Italy has seen since Lerici. That success was due to the very generous support of its sponsors particularly the Fulvio Frisone Foundation and the Sheraton, Catania. We all owe a great debt to these two organizations. Let's hope that success breeds more success. Let's look forward further workshops like this in the future!

Bill Collis
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