Proposal for format of 2024 Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology

This proposal is the result of a meeting on December 6, 2021, attended by Andrea Case (SSE), Leonie Moyle (SSE), Luke Harmon (SSB), Mike Whitlock (ASN), Ophélie Ronce (ESEB), Howard Rundle, Brian Hollis, and Alex Wong. The meeting was held to decide the format for the in-person meeting, since the traditional formats of the North American and European meetings are quite different.

A few considerations:
- In the past, registration for the Joint Congress has been substantially higher than that of either individual meeting. At Ottawa 2012 and Montpellier 2018 there were about 2,450 and 2,700 participants respectively.
- We will presumably have a hybrid meeting in 2024. We hope to get a better sense of the expected numbers of in-person and virtual attendees after Cleveland 2022.
- In general there was enthusiasm for a blend of general, North American-style sessions and more focused ESEB-style symposia. There were some concerns about uptake of symposia by North American attendees.

Given these considerations, we propose the following:
- **60%** of contributed talks will be given in general sessions, loosely grouped by topic but not in formal symposia
- **40%** of contributed talks will be given in symposia.
- Hybrid meeting format, with virtual components in addition to the in-person content.
- During registration, participants will be offered the option to apply to one or several symposia (TBD). In the event that an abstract is not selected for a specific symposium, it will be transferred to the general sessions on a first-come-first-serve basis. This will allow us to maintain the inclusive ethos of the North American meeting.
- There is the potential for virtual talks to serve as a "spillover" for any additional talks.

As an example, suppose that we run 15 concurrent sessions over four days for contributed talks. This amounts to 1200 15-minute time slots. 720 of those time slots would go to general sessions, and 480 would go to symposia. This would allow for 48 half-day symposia, 24 full-day symposia, or combinations thereof. Half-day symposia are quite short (two 75 min sessions). Symposium organizers could perhaps have the option of deciding talk lengths, or we could specify these in advance.

To support this format, we will need to strike a scientific committee to select symposia topics from submitted proposals, and to oversee abstract review.

Several details will need to be worked out, including society contributions (travel for speakers and/or graduate students?), details of the virtual meeting, financing for symposia, registration mechanisms, and mechanism for selecting the scientific committee (applications? To whom?). Some or all of our 'regular' symposia could still happen along these (e.g., Mayr, Hamilton, Education/diversity/ASN presidential/etc.)

Proposed Timeline:

Spring 2022 – development of proposal

July 2022 – discussion and approval of meeting format by Joint Council at Cleveland 2022
- ESEB board consultations (Ophélie)

Fall 2022 – Strike scientific committee

Spring 2023 – Solicit symposium proposals

Summer 2023 – Scientific committee chooses symposia

Winter 2023/2024 – Registration

Spring 2024 – Talk selection by symposium organizers

July 2024 – Conference held