The term ‘papyrologist’ may at first conjure up an image of a narrow specialist whose horizons extend only as far as the next wormhole in the tattered manuscript immediately in front of him. In fact the most recent international congress of papyrology, held in Brussels and Leuven (Louvain), demonstrated once again just how wide ranging in their interests papyrologists really are.

Delegates to this fifteenth triennial meeting were given an opportunity to hear papers on such diverse topics as the political role of Alexandria in Ptolemaic times (A. Swiderek: Warsaw); the uncanonical correspondence between St Paul and the Corinthians in *P.Bodm.* X (T.W. MacKay: Brigham Young, Utah); the relationship between magical amulets and the magical papyri (Morton Smith: Columbia, N.Y.); or how to make a papyrus hat (J.R. Rea: Oxford).

The Congrès opened in customary fashion with an address to the plenary session by the past president of the last congress, which had been held in Oxford in 1974. E.G. Turner took as his subject the format of the papyrus book and how best to describe its physical characteristics. In so doing, he touched upon matters of basic concern to all working papyrologists, for the correct reconstruction of a papyrus text often depends ultimately upon a correct understanding of the way in which the roll or codex was originally put together.

The papers which followed were divided up among three sections which ran concurrently, with each section corresponding roughly to a particular area of interest. Sessions were devoted for instance to particular authors (e.g. Menander, Philodemus), or to particular topics (e.g. the topography or coinage of Roman Egypt), or to papyri from a particular period.

The study of non-Greek material was also well represented, with sessions on demotic and Coptic, as well as Latin, texts. Indeed one of the most interesting points to note at the Congrès was the growing realisation among the majority of papyrologists, who confine themselves to texts written in Greek, that there is a wealth of material, particularly in demotic, which they will have to take into account if they are to give a full picture of the society and history of Greco-Roman Egypt.

Several papers featured the presentation of new texts from a number of different collections. Of particular note were the report by A. Wouters on a codex in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, containing a Greco-Latin lexicon to four of the Pauline epistles; J.F. Oates’ account of the new Ptolemaic papyri

acquired by Duke University; and a Virgilian writing exercise from Oxyrhynchus, which W.E.H. Cockle argued is to be dated to the first century A.D. This would make it, with *P. Hawara 24*, the oldest surviving MS of Virgil.

From these papers and others like them one was able to gain some idea of the vast bulk of papyrological material still awaiting publication. No one knows for sure how many papyri there are yet to be published, but it is clear that in some centres at least there is work enough not only for this generation of scholars but for several more generations to come.

Belgium itself is only modestly endowed with collections of papyri. A small but well presented and documented display of material from all periods was mounted by the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Elisabeth in conjunction with the Congrès, but the strength of the country’s papyrologists is concentrated more on the analysis and interpretation of papyri, particularly by statistical means. This important aspect of Belgian papyrology was well represented on the congress programme by the visits arranged to L.A.S.L.A. (Laboratoire d’Analyse statistique des Langues anciennes) at Liège, and to the I.B.M. Centre just outside Brussels, and in particular by the day spent by delegates at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Louvain), where that indispensable tool of Ptolemaic history, the *Prosopographia Ptolemaica*, has been compiled over the last thirty years under the guiding hand of W. Peremans.

The skill of our hosts in utilising the various types of information which papyri offer the historian was well demonstrated, too, in the address of Mlle. Cl. Préaux, the congress president, to the closing plenary session. Her paper on the tensions and ambivalences inherent in Hellenistic civilization provided a fitting counterweight to Turner’s opening address, for both papers were informed — albeit in different ways — by that breadth of vision which characterises all good scholarship, whatever field it may be in. The XVe. Congrès showed that modern papyrology happily retains at least its fair share of this desirable quality.