

President's Report July, 2004

The action plan for my term of office was:

- A) To energize key BSA committees
- B) To foster joint meetings with related societies
- C) To develop a process for evaluation of the BSA Office & Executive Director
- D) To increase BSA's national and international visibility
- E) To supply requested services to BSA members

A. Energizing key BSA committees:

As President-Elect, I responded to Executive Committee (EC) concerns about BSA committees' activity by convening three lunch meetings at the Mobile convention: New BSA Chairs, Membership Committee, and Education Committee. These meetings were well-attended and allowed officers and office staff to help key committees develop and execute new initiatives. I recommend that such meetings be continued at future BSA conferences.

As President, I built on the conference discussion with committee chairs and members by providing each 2003-4 BSA Chair with a written letter of appointment that articulated the committee's main function, listed new members, suggested missions for the year, and offered the assistance of the EC and BSA office in committee activities. I further requested that each committee Chair provide a written mid-year report for use at the April EC meeting, and followed up by email reminder in March, 2004. Several committee Chairs responded with very useful reports. I recommend that BSA Presidents continue to provide Committee Chairs with initial directives and request interim reports. The March reminder will be important.

I served as an active (and on occasion, annoying) member of the FAC and Centennial Celebration Committees and provided advice to the Education and Karling Award Committees on request. I worked with the Education Committee and the Teaching Section to transform the BSA's Bessey Teaching Award from a sectional to a society-wide award, to be presented at the annual meeting, helping to establish a selection committee and process. I am honored to present the first of these awards at the 2004 society banquet.

Recommendation for the future: Continued special attention should be paid to the Education and Membership Committees, but also the Conservation Committee, which could be more active in initiating the preparation of position papers related to societal issues. The EC has discussed taking similar actions to foster activity of the BSA sections or reorganization of sections, a matter for the future.

B. Fostering joint meetings with related societies:

Immediately after a decision was made about the location of the 2006 BSA Conference (Chico, CA), at the April, 2004 EC meeting, I wrote letters to the presidents of the

following societies inviting them to meet with BSA on this special occasion: Mycological Society of America, Society for the Study of Evolution, International Association of Wood Anatomists, Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, Asociacion Latinoamericana de Botanica, Ecological Society of America, American Society of Plant Biologists. Canadian Botanical Association, American Society of Plant Taxonomists, American Fern Society, American Bryological and Lichenological Society, Phycological Society of America. I received responses from the IAWA (yes), ESA (no), ASPB (no), ASPT (yes), AFS (yes), ABLs (yes), and PSA (no). The ESA and ASPB indicated that their process for making decisions about meeting locations occurs much earlier than ours, so sites for 2006 had long ago been determined.

I arranged for representative of societies that do plan to meet with BSA in 2006 to meet for lunch at Snowbird, where we will plan collaborative activities.

I was surprised not to receive replies from some societies. I recommend that if the BSA seriously wants to meet with ESA or ASPB, that we make decisions about sites further into the future, in collaboration with these groups. It is my opinion that we should make such decisions earlier for our own benefit as well, and that this be a major topic for discussion at future EC meetings.

C. Developing a process for annual evaluation of the BSA Office and Executive Director

Together with the Treasurer and Past President Judy Jernstedt, I planned and executed a first evaluation process, which occurred in November of 2003. We later learned that our process occurred too late to mesh well with MBG salary increase implementations. As a result, in collaboration with Executive Director Bill Dahl and Treasurer Joe Armstrong, I developed a plan to conduct the second evaluation at the Snowbird meeting, thereby saving travel costs that would have been incurred by a separate process. I incorporated an evaluation questionnaire contributed by Jeff Osborn, arranging for the questionnaire to be emailed to all EC members, BSA Committee Chairs, and Editors of AJB and PSB. Options for replying by phone or informal email were also provided. I wrote a summary report of the 2003 process, which is now part of BSA records, and will do the same for 2004. We hope that our process will evolve into an efficient and effective method for stimulating continued excellent performance and providing commensurate rewards to BSA office staff.

There is some EC concern that the evaluation process may need to occur at a different time of the year, and that we will need to refine our methods for obtaining feedback data. This will be a task for future presidents to consider.

D. Increasing visibility of the BSA on a national and international level

I have long been concerned that the BSA take its rightful position of authority in the realm of plant biology on a national and international level, and not cede this position to other societies. This concern was voiced in my election platform statement. As one method for working toward this goal, I have actively represented BSA at two meetings

(Feb. 2003, 2004) of the American Society for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the major umbrella scientific society in the world. I ensured that qualified representatives of BSA were considered for election as AAAS Fellows, and suggested several plant-related topics and BSA speakers for future AAAS Symposia and featured presentations. I thank the BSA for providing some of my travel costs to attend these AAAS meetings, and highly recommend that BSA continue to maintain a presence at AAAS and especially the process of recognizing BSA members as AAAS Fellows!

Together with Bill Dahl, I attended the November 2003 meeting of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents in Washington, D.C. Many officers of other scientific societies were also present to hear authoritative presentations on many topics of relevance to society management, journal publication, and political influences on the process of science. I recommend that BSA continue to support travel of officers to CSSP and that future Presidents take an active role in this group. The CSSP gets useful things done and seems to have considerable influence.

I commend past BSA officers and President-Elect Allison Snow for representing BSA to the AIBS. A strong presence of BSA at AIBS, AAAS, and CSSP will help maintain BSA's reputation as a premier society working in the areas of plant research and related educational initiatives.

At the request of the Editor of the Plant Science Bulletin, I provided a written version of my 2003 Banquet speech for publication. At least some members read it, because they responded with interesting emails! The research described in this banquet speech was submitted to and is now published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (July 20, 2004 issue) as a deliberate means of spreading botanical influence. I recommend that future Presidents-Elect consider extending their banquet messages to larger audiences, as a way of increasing BSA visibility.

Finally, identified as BSA President, I helped identify topics and authors and wrote the forward to a special issue of Critical Reviews in Plant Science that is focused on plant invasive species.

E. Serving the membership:

At the request of various members, I wrote ceremonial or congratulatory letters on behalf of the society. I evaluated many more tenure nominations for botanists than I normally receive, likely because of my service as President, but provided these cheerfully, to help foster plant scientists.

Things I didn't do that could have been accomplished:

I wrote only two major letters to members, each detailing ongoing BSA projects and newsworthy issues, and soliciting responses of particular types. I could have contributed more communications, but was not impressed with the level of response to the communications I did make, so am not sure that many members read the missives! I

recommend that future Presidents find a communication mode that is personally rewarding, and that provides a clear service to the membership. I did ask Bill Dahl to forward short communications from AIBS and other policy-minded groups to the readership when I felt that these were of wide interest to members.

One of my stated goals has been to foster a closer and collaborative relationship with the American Society of Plant Biologists, but my best efforts have so far been to no avail. I recommend that the BSA watch for the appearance of particularly responsive ASPB leaders who might be open to working with BSA in some limited way as a first step. As a member of both societies, I feel strongly that plant biology would be much, much stronger and influential in the larger scientific and policy arenas if these complementary groups worked together rather than separately. As I fade into the background of Past-President, I will continue to seek ways to accomplish this goal.