

# Botanical Society of America

## Annual Report 2003 – 2004

### Webmaster, Botanical Society of America

To be presented to the Botanical Society of America Business Meeting  
August 3, 2004 – Snowbird, Utah

#### 1. Introduction



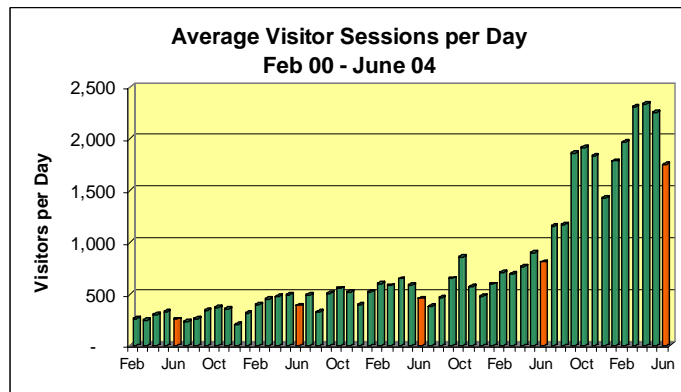
It has been a busy twelve months in the development department for the BSA's Webmaster. I'm pleased to say the progress goes well beyond the visual changes you experience when visiting the main BSA or Botany Conference websites. Wanda Lovan and Johanne Stogran have each taken on and completed projects that significantly improve our position in supporting members and institutional subscribers to the *American Journal of Botany*. We have made significant progress in placing our accounting system online, developing our database and with the continued development of the Botany Conference website and abstract submission process. We picked up a suggestion from the Education Committee and worked with the American Association for the Advancement of

Science's (AAAS) Biological Education Network (BEN) collaborative in revamping our Online Image Collection and placing links to all images on BEN website.

The website statistics for the main BSA site indicate we are meeting the goals we set last year and that we are attracting more people to the wonders of botany. I feel we are just getting started. We have strengthened the foundation and we now need to build the house so to speak. This will take member participation. The potential for reaching people interested in botany and plants, in line with our mission, is almost unlimited. The key is having the content that keeps people coming back and telling others to visit.

#### 2. Statistics – BSA site

As the "Average Visitor Session per Day" diagram indicates, the trend for people accessing the BSA website is good. Over the past few months we have had roughly 2,000 people a day logging onto the site. For the same period of last year the number was about 800 people per day. Our highest rate of visitors per day was achieved in



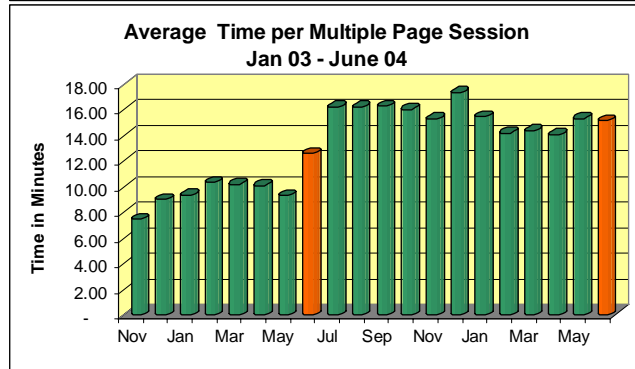
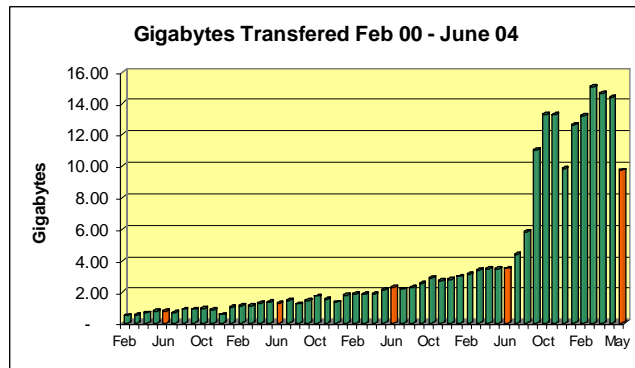
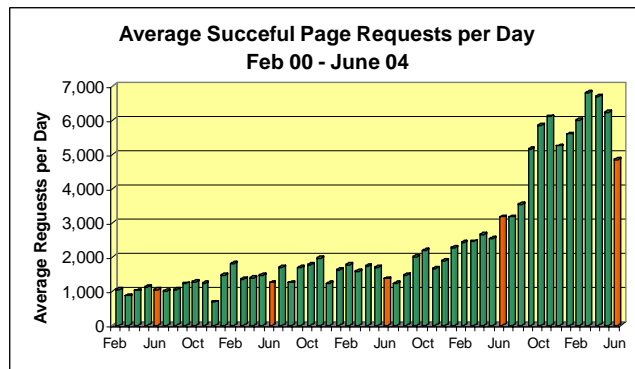
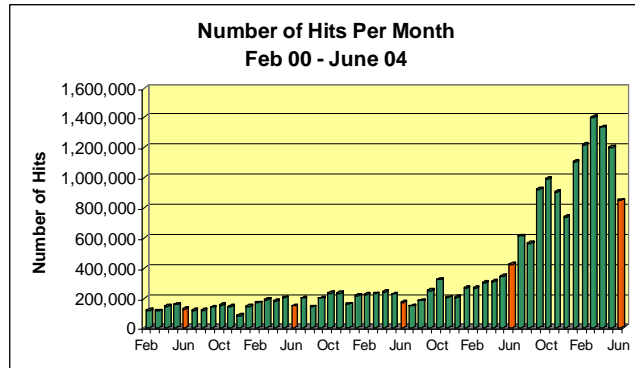
April with an average of 2,330. March 2004 was our busiest month to date with over 71,000 visitors.

In the 2003 report I pointed out that the website is a tool with two main purposes. It acts as: 1.) a means of storing and communicating information to the BSA membership; and 2.) a medium for the dissemination of information that supports our wider mission. I also asked that you consider the fact that the vast majority of people visiting our website are not botanists. They are coming to research, explore or find out something about botany. The website's job, if it is aimed at our mission, is to promote botany by getting people to the website and having them stay and explore what we/it has to offer. Over time our goal is to ensure:

- more people are coming to the site;
- people who visit are exploring more pages and;
- they are staying longer.

For the month of June 2004 the Botanical Society of America's website experienced 848,544 (423,993 in 2003) successful hits. The "successful hits" trend for the period February 2000 through June 2004 is highlighted in the diagram on the to the right. Our record high was achieved in March 2004 with 1,404,411 hits.

In June of 2004 we transferred 9.73 gigabytes of data to visitors (3.51 in 2003). Our highest month for data transfer was March 2004 at 15.1 gigabytes. With increased content it is also important to note that people are also spending longer at our site.



Developments over the past year have focused on the mission and appear to be producing the desired outcomes. Trends indicate more people are coming, they are visiting more pages and they are staying longer. To continue this we must develop meaningful, challenging and changing content. Again I'd like to stress the fact that our potential to reach people, including potential future botanists, is nearly unlimited but, very much related to the effort we put into the content we place for use on the site. We could reach thousands more teachers and young people by simply dropping an advertisement in the NABT or NSTA monthly magazine, but we need the content to engage them and bring them back.

Over the past year we have added significantly to the foundations of the BSA website. We have continued the task of creating a tool that provides impact on our mission (and the promotion of the science of botany). We look forward to continued developments in the year ahead.

Website statistics can be viewed online in the reports section of the website at: <http://www.botany.org/newsite/reporting/webstats.php>

### 3. Statistics & Development – Botany Conference Site

In 2004 we adopted the format of the main BSA website for the development of the Botany Conference website. Johanne has done a fantastic job at keeping the site up-to-date with information presented in a manner that makes navigation and ease of use simple and fast. Your comments on the site will be appreciated. June site access over the last four years is listed below.

#### a. Conference site activity:

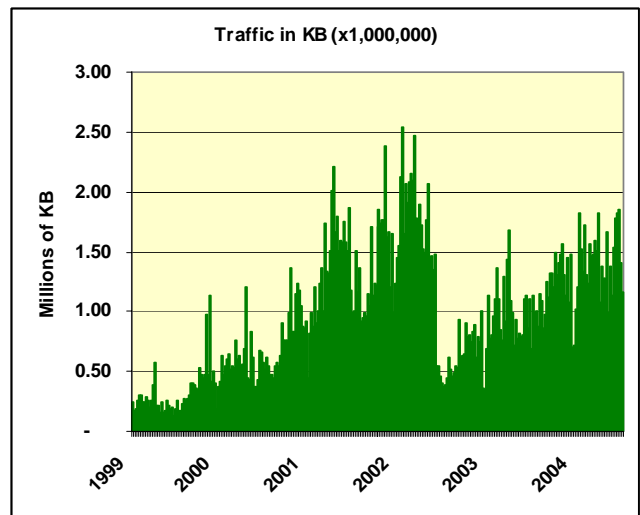
	June 2001	June 2002	June 2003	June 2004
Visitors	3,967	7,046	1,752	8,886

We have established the Botany 2005 website at: [www.2005.botanyconference.org](http://www.2005.botanyconference.org)

### 4. Statistics - American Journal of Botany

The overall trend for use of the American Journal of Botany online remains positive. Access after the introduction of paid online subscriptions continues to grow. We will monitor this closely over the coming months as we continue to add links from main site directly to AJB articles. We hope to dramatically increase traffic over the next twelve months.

We currently have 1,476 (1,505 in 2003) members and 764 (182 in 2003) institutions activated for online access to the *American Journal of Botany*. We are



working with subscription agents to ensure as many institutions as possible activate and use the online component of their subscriptions.

### **5. BSA Online Teaching Images**

After Botany 2003 conference the Education committee suggested we explore becoming involved as a partner in a new AAAS project called the Biological Education Network (BEN). Involvement in BEN fit well with our mission and it was agreed our best possible contribution at this stage of our development would be updating and providing access to the BSA Online Image Collection. The major component in this work was organizing our information in a manner that was consistent with the BEN metadata and database standards. We updated our collection format and created the required information to meet the BEN standards and placed nearly 1,000 images on the BEN site in February. To do the work we were provided a \$5,000 development sub-contract. We have submitted a proposal to AAAS for funding of \$37,000 over the next four years for further developments.

Over the coming year we will work with the Education Committee to establish a “Peer Review” process for all future items moving onto the BSA and/or BEN sites. It is critical we are accurate in our portrayal of botany and the plant sciences as our contributions make the BSA the single largest supplier of resources to the BEN site,

You can view the updated BSA Online Image Collection at: <http://www.botany.org/plantimages/ajbindex.php> and the BEN site at: <http://www.bioscienet.org/portal/>.

### **6. Functional Developments**

Over the past year we have also developed the web as a center for our business and conference operations. We have streamlined our processes in an effort to improve accuracy, reduce manual input and improve timeliness of and accessibility to information.

#### **a. BSA –Email**

In 2003 we added a choice for members in terms of how they wanted to receive co-correspondences from the BSA. Roughly 18% of the membership chose email as the preferred option. Over the coming year we will monitor and test the effectiveness of this format as a means of communication.

#### **b. Financial System**

Wanda has done an excellent job in working with our accountant Mary Dawson in a two-step process in moving our entire QuickBooks financial system online. They evaluated our current position and suggested improvements to ensure future compliance with the accounting standards. It is a pleasure to report our systems are online and that totally “up-to-date reports are available at any time for the Executive Committee.

#### **c. Database upgrade**

The BSA membership & institutional subscriber database has been upgraded in conjunction with the developments of the financial system. This has

reduced our need to produce a number of time/detail intense reports in an effort to meet our accounting standards.

#### **d. Online Abstract Management Process**

We have also continued the development of the abstract submission process for the BSA conferences. This is designed to make the experience easier for conference attendees and streamline the overall conference management process.

##### **1. Abstract Editing**

In 2005 abstracts will be able to be edited by submitters up to a specific cut-off date. At present BSA staff spend a great deal of time working with submitters to “touch-up” abstracts.

##### **2. Abstract Management**

This year we moved to an online management system for sectional chairs. We will continue to fine-tune this aspect of the program as a part of the post Botany 2004 wrap-up.

##### **3. Conference Management**

Further development of the program for use in 2005 will include a single interface for the overall site administration and management.

##### **4. Conference Documentation**

This year the software allowed us to download the abstracts and program details in a manner that greatly simplified the process of producing the documents required for Botany 2004. Future development for 2005 will produce all required documentation directly as reports. In a few simple steps we’ll be able to format the entire document.

#### **7. Added Features**

Over the past twelve months we added a few more benefits for members of the Society and those seeking botanical information. Our goal for these items was to ensure members materials are searchable on the BSA website and the web in general. Specific developments include:

a. *American Journal of Botany* – Abstracts Online

<http://www.botany.org/ajb/>

b. *Plant Science Bulletin* – Online

<http://www.botany.org/PlantScienceBulletin/>

c. BSA Conservation Committee’s Ecology & Conservation Page(s)

<http://www.botany.org/newsite/conservation/>

#### **8. Future Concepts**

Developments will continue on the conference site as well as the main BSA site. We are currently working with JSTOR to retrieve all of our past meeting abstracts in an HTML format for easy access and search engine access. We also hope to have the revised version of *Careers in Botany* up sometime soon as well as additions to the popular “Carnivorous Plant” pages. We will continue work with the Conservation Committee to expand the Ecology & Conservation pages.

## **9. Summary**

We have continued developments on the main BSA website based on three concepts, moving forward with our mission, providing increased benefits for members and supporting the functional components of the Society. I believe we've made significant progress in all three areas. More importantly, we have the foundation to make significant inroads towards our mission. If we take the time to understand how, as a Society, we want to respond to the opportunities for development and develop the content, teachers, student and the general public will come to find it. Our products will be used.

I look forward to your contributions and, wherever possible, your involvement over the coming year.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bill Dahl