

Report of the BSA Publication committee – July 2004

1. Marshall Sundberg had planned to retire as editor of the Plant Science Bulletin by the end of 2004. An advertisement for the position was published in the Spring issue of Plant Science Bulletin:

BSA Seeks Editor for Plant Science Bulletin

Plant Science Bulletin needs a new editor to begin with Volume 51 (March, 2005).

Are you interested in desktop publishing? Would you like to correspond with botanical colleagues in many disciplines about books, articles, and matters of interest to the BSA? Are you looking for a meaningful way to serve the Botanical Society of America? Need more information?

If your answer to ANY of these questions is yes, please communicate your interest to Dr. Andrea Schwarzbach (Chair, BSA Publication Committee). Department of Biological Sciences, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242; telephone 330-672-3370, E-mail aschwarz@kent.edu). Applications are welcome any time and no later than July 1, 2004. The BSA Publication Committee will begin reviewing interested candidates during summer of 2004. For a description of the Plant Science Bulletin see <http://www.botany.org/newsite/publications/#pubpsb>.

We did not receive any formal applications. Marshall Sundberg asked for an extension for his term as editor. The publication committee in agreement with the executive committee have accepted his offer and extended his position for an additional year. The search for a new editor for Plant Science Bulletin will have to be repeated next year.

2. Our committee has discussed the possibility of updating the AJB's topics list. Concerns were raised that some authors cannot find their area of research in the current list and therefore decide to submit their papers to other journals. Especially, several new areas such as evo-devo or functional plant genomics are not represented in the current list.

After discussing this item we were not sure if the topic list has any influence whether a potential author decides to submit to AJB or prefers a different journal. That topic list is, at least to our knowledge, nowhere posted on the website or listed in the instructions for authors.

Some of us thought it might be best to consider inviting top-of-the-field authors in new and innovative areas to write a review paper describing the state-of-the-art of fields such as evo-devo, functional plant genomics etc. One can just hope that this will invite future submissions of papers in these fields. An even more aggressive strategy would be to publish special issues of AJB entirely on one new topic and saying clearly in an introductory statement that AJB is encouraging authors working in this field to submit

manuscripts. We have not come to a conclusion for this topic and more discussion is needed to develop a plan.

3. We also discussed the possibility that the society might enter into partnership with a major publisher to produce new plant biology books that are published by BSA. It was thought that such a partnership might be crafted in such a way as to benefit the society as well as authors and publishers. It is not clear at this moment whether this would bring a potential benefit to the society or in the contrary require extra funds for personnel to establish such a program. I have contacted the Director of Publication of ASPB, Nancy Winchester, to gather information about their book publication program. Here are her answers to my questions:

1. Are you in a partnership with a single publisher to insure timely publication of books such as "Biochemistry & Molecular Biology of Plants" or "The Arabidopsis book"?

“Since March 2002 we have partnered exclusively with John Wiley & Sons. We published Biochemistry & Molecular Biology of Plants in July 2000 but turned over the marketing and sales to Wiley in 2002. We are now developing a new title, The Molecular Life of Plants, with Wiley. They are not involved with The Arabidopsis Book...that book is free to the world, not an arrangement Wiley was interested in! We do, however, have to offer Wiley first right of refusal on any book project we want to undertake.”

2. Do the authors come to you with potential books or are you requesting certain topics from qualified authors?

“Proposals can come in over the transom, or Wiley or ASPB might approach authors with potential ideas. MLOP is being written by the editors of BMBP.”

3. Do you think publishing through the society benefits the authors AND the society? Are there any financial or personnel requirements covered by ASPB coming from publishing books or does the society benefit financially from this service?

“We won't have as much control over the development and production of the titles we'll be doing with Wiley, but BMBP cost a fortune, and with Wiley as our partner, we will bear no expenses on future books. Wiley will assume all the risk (and as such will be making the production decisions), and we will collect a small (5%) royalty. Wiley is far more sophisticated than ASPB when it comes to book-selling, and their distribution networks reach far and wide around the world. We should get great visibility, which benefits everyone involved.

We hired a consultant (John Cox) to conduct a thorough review of

potential publishers, collect and vet proposals, and establish a short list of publishers to interview. The process was expensive, but I wouldn't have gone thru it without such high-caliber guidance.”

The publication committee will need further discussions to decide whether it will be beneficial to initiate book publishing under the name of BSA.

Respectfully submitted by
Andrea Schwarzbach, Chair of the Publication Committee.