

**American Society of Plant Taxonomists
President's Report 2008 (July 11, 2008)
Paul E. Berry**

ASPT is essentially an all-volunteer society, and as such, it does a remarkable job in furthering its goals to “promote research and teaching of taxonomy, systematics, and phylogeny of vascular and nonvascular plants.”

We do this by publishing two well regarded publications, *Systematic Botany* and *Systematic Botany Monographs*. We also publish the ASPT Newsletter for members, and we maintain a web site (aspt.net) that provides a gateway to the society for members and the general public. We help organize and conduct a scientific meeting each summer, and we use this as an opportunity to gather and honor both students and professionals with a variety of prizes and awards to recognize their achievements. Furthermore, we maintain an array of committees to deal with specific issues, such as finance, publicity, systematic collections, environment and public policy, and awards.

In terms of our main publication output, this was a banner year. Chris Anderson oversaw the publication of three volumes of *Systematic Botany Monographs*, two of which were entirely subsidized by the authors. There are three more volumes in the pipeline, and Chris just keeps on thumping like the Energizer Bunny. Wonderful job! Alan Whittmore and Leigh Johnson oversaw the tricky transition of switching publishers of *Systematic Botany* from Allen Press to Sheridan Press. Concomitant with this change, effective Jan. 1 2008, we changed to a larger journal format with a newly designed cover with color images that feature the included articles. This was a gargantuan task for the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor, and we heartily thank Alan and Leigh for their great efforts in making this work. I think it has been a real success and a big improvement. After almost three years of service, Leigh will be stepping down this year as Managing Editor, and we hope we can find a suitable replacement for him. By the way, Volumes 32 and 33 of *Systematic Botany* are perfectly on schedule, and the waiting period for publication from acceptance is only four to eight months.

We never seem to acknowledge enough the key role of our ten Associate Editors, two Editorial specialists, and numerous reviewers for *Systematic Botany*. The same goes for the Editorial Committee and individual reviewers of *Systematic Botany Monographs*. I'm sorry I can't name each one of you individually, but you above all allow us to carry forth our mission of publishing quality articles and monographs.

Our revenues from JSTOR, Ingenta, and BioOne seem to be paying off very nicely, so I think that the society has made wise decisions on how to market *Systematic Botany* in electronic format.

After many years as editor of the ASPT Newsletter, Ken Robertson is stepping down this summer, and our current plan is to roll over the coverage of the newsletter into the functions of the webmaster, Eric Roalson. We need to resolve if there will continue to be a print version of the newsletter, but we believe we can achieve some savings of time and effort in combining these functions under the aegis of the web committee.

You have heard this before from previous presidents, but ASPT Business Manager Linda Brown continues to be the glue that holds our organization together.

Without her dedication, we just wouldn't be able to function as we do. She puts in more than her allotted time to the society and is always responsive to our many demands. Linda won't be making the trek to Vancouver this year, and we'll miss her presence there. This is Alan Prather's first year as Secretary of ASPT, and he has so far lived up to the very high standards set by Michael Vincent in previous years.

Our Systematics Collections Committee and Environment and Public Policy Committee have been attentive to issues that affect the health of our profession, and we have expressed our society's position on a number of different issues. At the Council meeting this summer we plan to discuss what we can do about the decline in training opportunities in systematic biology nationwide, the reduction in faculty positions, and the threat to the ongoing operation of many university collections. The Systematics Collections Committee took the initiative to organize a workshop in Vancouver, entitled "Virtual Herbaria: Regional progress in organizing, fundraising, and delivering content".

We agreed this summer to be a partner in supporting the Planting Science initiative (plantingscience.org) that BSA has created to target middle school and high school students to become engaged in botanical studies with the help of professional mentors. As an all-volunteer society, we need to be strategic and ally ourselves with larger and better funded organizations such as BSA.

Eric Roalson oversaw our first online voting for president and council members. With a 38% voting return, this outshined previous years' mail-in ballots, which averaged less than 20% response. So this was a very successful venture into online voting.

Despite a move from DC to his new position at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, Program Manager Pat Herendeen was able to pull things together very nicely for the program and meeting arrangements in Vancouver. Likewise, Sean Graham has been of invaluable help as our local representative for ASPT in Vancouver. Rob Naczi had to quickly learn the ropes of the Awards and Honors Committee, which included the first Grady L. Webster Plant Systematics Publication Award to be awarded this summer. We also look forward to the student research grant winners, the Cooley Prize winner, and the recipients of the Asa Gray Award and the Peter H. Raven Service Award.

The current financial situation of the society is sound, thanks to wise investing by our Finance Committee chaired by Warren Wagner and sound management by Treasurer Linda Watson. We have nearly half a million dollars in assets, this has increased over the past year, and we have funds that we could dedicate to strategic initiatives. We will be examining the budget for the coming year at our Council meeting, but all signs are that we can continue to operate at our current level and even increase our expenditures in needed areas.

In closing, I thank Past-President Vicki Funk and President-Elect Bruce Baldwin for backing me up when I was in the field on several occasions. You'll be in great hands this coming year when Bruce takes over, and Warren Wagner is waiting in the wings as President-Elect. New Council members Ken Cameron and Carolyn Ferguson will be on board officially in September. Congratulations to you all, and best wishes for a successful year at the helm of ASPT.