

**American Society of Plant Taxonomists**  
**President's Report 2009 (July)**  
**Bruce G. Baldwin**

In a year that most organizations have been lucky to survive, ASPT has prospered and made significant progress in its efforts to promote the research and education efforts of the plant systematics community. The enviable status of ASPT today is no accident but instead the outcome of dedication and hard work on the part of our volunteer crew of editors, officers, and council and committee members, not to mention our tireless business-office manager. Unlike some societies that rely on a few key individuals, ASPT has strength throughout its organization, which makes the job of even a highly challenged president relatively pain-free.

The dual publication pillars of ASPT, *Systematic Botany* and *Systematic Botany Monographs*, have thrived over the last year, with *Systematic Botany* receiving a record number of manuscript submissions and *Systematic Botany Monographs* with four new submissions and five published or in-press volumes. Early this year, the Special Libraries Association recognized *Systematic Botany* as one of the top-100 journals of all time in biology and medicine; one of those that have "led the way." Alan Whittemore, who will be completing his term as Editor-In-Chief in 2009, has done a tremendous job, as have our Managing and Specialist editors and Associate Editors, who toil quietly to provide invaluable service to authors and to ensure that the high standards of our journal are maintained. Tom Ranker will succeed Alan as Editor-In-Chief in January, so *Systematic Botany* will remain in very good hands. Our phenomenal, long-time editor of *Systematic Botany Monographs*, Chris Anderson, continues to give her best to ASPT, to the benefit of all. These individuals, the *SBM* editorial committee, and our many manuscript reviewers deserve a huge thank-you and congratulations for their achievements.

The health of ASPT can also be measured by its membership, which is the highest in over 20 years, with a significant increase in student members accounting for part of this growth. Students are the life-blood of our organization and were a priority of the past two presidents, Paul Berry and Vicki Funk, who I thank for their foresight and action. The ad hoc Membership Committee, established last year and chaired by past-president Lynn Clark, oversaw our first grad student travel award lottery this spring, which led to 20 students receiving \$300 each toward their expenses to attend the annual meeting and tickets to each for the ASPT banquet. The Awards and Honors Committee, chaired by Larry Hufford, presented 17 well-deserved awards in support of top-notch graduate student research proposals. As always, many more excellent proposals were received than could be funded and I thank Larry and the regular and ad hoc members of his committee for the difficult effort required to perform this critically important function of our society.

ASPT's attractive financial situation and our consequent ability to provide additional support to students is in no small part attributable to the excellent management of the Finance Committee by Chair Warren Wagner, who will be stepping down this

summer to assume the position of President of ASPT. Warren's investment experience and financial smarts have been put to the test recently and he came through with flying colors. Our income has exceeded expenditures yet again despite unavoidable loss of value of some assets. As President, Warren will remain an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee and can continue to provide sage advice as needed.

The transition to an electronic *ASPT Newsletter* has gone smoothly, thanks to the superb work of webmaster Eric Roalson, who oversaw our first electronic issue last December. Eric's continuing efforts with our website have been a big success and put us in a strong position for incorporating additional content of value to our members and the public at large. In that vein, the new ad hoc Public Relations Committee, chaired by Austin Mast, has done a fantastic job of identifying strategies for facilitating communication of press releases, news articles, and society-generated content on plant systematics. The wealth of information and ideas they have generated is remarkable and will help to lead us in productive directions. The Publicity Committee also deserves recognition for their novel incorporation of artwork from *Systematic Botany* in the beautiful, winning design of this year's ASPT t-shirts and their implementation of our 2nd student raffle at the ASPT booth.

The Environment and Public Policy Committee and Systematics Collection Committee continue to take action in support of fundamental concerns and resources of our field. This year the Environment and Public Policy Committee pushed back against efforts in two states to undermine the quality of science education in primary and secondary schools. The Systematics Collection Committee continues to promote the health and survival of herbaria during these tough economic times and to seek high standards and efficient coordination of curation and databasing of collections and integration of bioinformatics resources. Chair Mary Barkworth will be leading an ASPT-sponsored workshop at Snowbird on the US Virtual Herbarium.

Program Director Pat Herendeen and Local Representative Lynn Bohs have done a great job of organizing the Snowbird meeting, in cooperation with BSA. I am grateful to Lynn for taking on the local rep role at Snowbird a second time, after tackling that job for ASPT in 2004. Once again, she and her students have been energetic in preparation for the conference and in organizing morning walks and fieldtrips. Pat deserves many thanks for again taking on the difficult task of developing our program to avoid conflicts and working with BSA to distribute resources for symposia, among many other meeting-related activities. As always, Secretary Alan Prather has been a key player in organizing the council meeting agenda and in ensuring that reports and minutes are handled well. His good sense and thoughtful voice are highly valuable to our proceedings.

This year our Awards & Honors Committee accelerated their schedule of activity toward recommending recipients of the Asa Gray and Peter Raven awards. Consequently we were able to announce awardees Alan Graham (Asa Gray) and Sandra Knapp (Peter Raven) in advance of Botany 2009 and look forward to their well-deserved recognition at the ASPT banquet. I thank Larry Hufford and the other members his committee for their early action. We also look forward to the presentation of this year's Cooley Award.

Finally, I give special thanks to ASPT Business Manager Linda Brown and Treasurer Linda Watson for their amazing work over the last year, which has led to major progress on several critical fronts. Our electronic publishing contracts with BioOne and Ingenta have been expertly negotiated and renewed, we are now fully insured against all conceivable damages as a society, well-conceived policies are now in place to meet new IRS requirements and to safeguard ASPT, and much more, all thanks to their efforts. I have very much enjoyed working closely with them and will miss our frequent correspondence on the essential business of ASPT.