2000 Annual Report
BSA Meeting Coordinator
and the Annual Meeting Coordinating Committee
Wayne Elisens, chair. Members: Peter Hoch, Barbara Schaal, Chris Haufler
Submitted: Wayne Elisens, 6 August 2000

I. GENERAL COMMITTEE ISSUES

The Annual Meeting Coordinating Committee did not confer on a regular basis during the 1999-2000 term. The numerous and diverse tasks involved in coordinating and planning annual meetings were not facilitated by standard committee design. Instead, consultations and recommendations concerning meeting logistics were conducted through professional consultations with Ed Suddath (BSA meeting consultant), Jim Goodman (Conferon BSA account representative), and Caroline Spinner (Conferon BSA account planner), and with consultations with Jeff Osborn, Carol Baskin, Scott Russell, and the remainder of the EC. Recommendations, updates, and requests were forwarded directly to the EC for review and approval.

II. BOTANY 2000 MEETING

1. General Meeting Planning and Personnel -- Numerous contracts and logistical items were reviewed, signed, and implemented in preparation for the Botany 2000 Meeting. The amount of work greatly exceeded projections and quickly superseded the personnel and clerical support of the BSA business office, committees, and officers. A recommendation was forwarded to the EC indicating that additional full-time help was required in the Business Office to assist with meetings-related items.

   Key personnel for Botany 2000 include: Clyde Calvin (BSA local rep), Keith Karoly (Botany 2000 Fieldtrip Coordinator), and Caroline Spinner (Conferon Account Planner). David Kramer coordinated staffing for the BSA booth. Since March 2000, Ms. Johanne Stogran, working out of the BSA business office, has been coordinating exhibitions and several other aspects of the meeting. Ms. Kim Hiser has been assisting with meeting logistics and, along with Ed Schneider, has been overseeing the meeting account and bookkeeping.

2. BSA contractual obligations -- BSA is the responsible financial organization for the planning and implementation of the Botany 2000 conference. In addition to the OCC and four hotel contracts signed in previous years, contracts reviewed and signed this year include: GES Expositions Inc. (decoration and exhibit preparation); Ewe, Me, & Co. (destination management company, transportation provider); Corcoran/Conferon Expositions Inc. (exhibitor sales and regulations); Portland State University housing (PSU ‘hotel’ rooms); Audio-Visual Providers (in house at OCC and Doubletree); Conferon Inc. (registration and housing); and conference providers of discounted airfares and car rental. Other items that went out for bid and resulted in signed ‘agreements’ included: Premier Press (printing of Final Program), AJL Advertising Specialties (conference giveaways), and Ed & Mary Jo Suddath (design of Final Program).

3. Meeting-related publications and giveaways -- Major publications undertaken for Botany 2000 included: Exhibitor Prospectus (600 printed in Norman, OK; mail/fax to 250 potential exhibitors), Registration Brochure (5000 printed in Columbus, OH; mailed to members of all participating societies), Abstract supplement (printed as an AJB supplement), the Final Program (1000 printed in Portland, OR; handed out on-site to conference registrants), and the Final Program Addendum. Giveaways printed for the conference included 1100 zippered tote bags with the conference logo and 1100 3-ring binders with the logo.
4. Exhibitors, advertisers, and sponsors -- There were 16 paid exhibitors; complimentary booths were provided for AFS, ASPT, and BSA (ABLS declined). There were eight advertisers; most opted for insertions to registrants. Corcoran was solicited to assist with exhibition sales and preparation of the Exhibit Space Application and exhibition Rules & Regulations. Virtually no professional contacts with exhibitors were available, although a list of over 100 potential exhibitors were compiled from various sources. Corporate sponsorship was obtained with Timber Press ($500 for Cyber Café). Portland State University allowed us to utilize rooms on the PSU campus and ‘donated’ 10 computers and a ‘consultant’ for staging the Cyber Café, whereas the Pacific Section of BSA donated $500 to offset costs of the Plenary Speaker fees. Botany 2000 and the ESA meeting were direct competitors for exhibitors.

5. Budget Preparation, Revenue Projections, and Financial Accounting -- A full meeting budget was prepared based on anticipated expenses for meeting functions. The working budget was submitted to the EC for review at their spring meeting. Meeting revenue was based on two principle sources, registration fees and exhibitor/advertiser fees. Registration fees were based on data for three meetings provided by AIBS, and were anticipated at 1100 for a meeting with these societies. To date, registration numbers and exhibition sales are at 80% of projections, although the online vs. mail/fax and student vs. regular registrant percentages were close to predictions (82% and 32% respectively). A full financial report on the conference budget will not be ready until fall 2000.

6. Conference Lodging -- Projected bookings at contracted hotels were affected by the registration shortfall. Whereas the overflow hotels had high bookings (Best Western, >90%; Holiday Inn, >60%; and Hawthorne Inn, >90%), the host hotel is projected to have a peak night shortfall in the room block. BSA is responsible for any lost revenue (the ‘attrition’ clause) on only the peak night (Monday). Although 22 PSU dorm rooms (the ‘Ondine’ campus hotel) were blocked, only 11 rooms were sold before the start of the conference. Almost 40% of all registrants indicated that they ‘did not require lodging’ using the registration forms. Peak night bookings for this meeting will be around 350; total room nights for Botany 2000 will be around 1600-1700 room nights.

7. Fall planning visit -- The fall planning visit was conducted in Portland on Sep 30 and Oct 1, 1999. In addition to society local reps and program officers, Ms. Caroline Spinner from Conferon attended the meeting. Jeff Osborn, Clyde Calvin, and myself represented the BSA.

III. BOTANY 2001 MEETING: 12-16 August, Albuquerque Convention Center, NM

Current status -- Contracts are signed for four hotels. There are no dorm rooms available, although a motel block was obtained at $68 sgl/dbl. We are still negotiating with the Albuquerque Convention Center, with signing anticipated by September 1, 2000. Anticipated ACC fees will be similar to the OCC for 2000. Based on data from Botany 2000, we may adjust our room blocks (500 peak night vs. 509 in 2000) to reflect lower than expected hotel bookings. Unlike the Portland Doubletree, there are no attrition penalties at any hotel for the Albuquerque meeting. Hotel rates at the two primary hotels (adjacent to the ACC) are listed at $107/120 sgl/dbl for the host hotel (Hyatt) and $105 sgl/dbl for the Doubletree. Participating societies are the ABLS, AFS, ASPT, BSA, and IOPB. With IOPB, attendance projections should be greater than Botany 2000. The BSA local rep is Tim Lowrey.
IV. BOTANY 2002 MEETING: 2-7 August, University of Wisconsin Pyle & Lowell Conference Centers

Current status -- Letter of agreement is signed with University of Wisconsin conference centers for use of meeting rooms, space in the UW Union, and campus hotels and dorm space. Contracts are pending for nearby hotels. There are no room rental fees for UW rooms. Exhibit space is problematic, and exhibitors may have to be placed in several rooms in the conference center. Participating societies: AFS, ASPT, BSA, CBA/ABC. We recommend that PSA and IAWA be given renewed invitations to attend. Local rep is Ray Evert, with strong support from the UW Botany Department. Facilities are present for expanded meeting format. Lodging rates and registration fees should be lowest in years, because of low cost of staging the meeting and for lodging. Campus housing should vary between $40-$70 per night; neighboring off-campus hotels from $105-$135 per night. Because there are few hotel rooms booked, there will be limited assistance from Conferon. We will have to utilize UW conference services to assist with staging the meeting.

V. BOTANY 2003 MEETING:

Recommendation -- 27-31 July, Mobile Convention Center, AL.

Site visits for 2003 meeting venue -- Carol Baskin and I conducted site visits to Jacksonville, FL and Mobile, AL in May, 2000. Besides viewing potential meeting sites and lodging facilities, we visited with potential local representatives in Mobile and vicinity, as well as in Gainesville, FL. We conducted proposal bidding between two sites in Jacksonville and one site in Mobile.

Summary of recommendation to contract with Mobile -- The primary DISADVANTAGES may be the hot and humid weather in Mobile in July, and the relative scarcity of BSA members in and around Mobile. The ADVANTAGES of Mobile as a meeting site are the following:

1) Cost of lodging. The host hotel (Adams Mark) has rates quoted for 2003 at $99 for sgl/dbl, which is cheap for 2003 and for a hotel of this caliber. Overflows are cheaper and more distant and will have rates from the low $80s to the low $90s. Dorm space is potentially available at a satellite of the Univ. of South Alabama, although bus shuttling would be needed.

2) Placement of hotels and meeting site. The host hotel is adjacent to the Mobile CC and is connected to it via a covered causeway. Overflows are cheaper but more distant (unlike Portland).

3) Ease of staging. The Mobile CC is a new and spacious facility and has lots of room. It has a riverside placement, straddles an active railroad, and has a paddle boat moored outside. It sits adjacent to a riverside ‘park’ where outside functions (e.g., All society mixer) could be held. Costs would be similar to the OCC in Botany 2000, but are definite and could be factored into the budget.

4) Good botanical resources and interest. Mobile Bay, the Mobile-Tensaw Delta Swamp (largest freshwater delta in North America), the Gulf coast, offshore islands, Weeks Bay Estuarine Reserve, Dauphin Island Estuarine Research facilities and Estuarium, and two botanical gardens (Mobile, Bellingrath) combine for a botanically-rich and biologically-interesting venue. Local support is limited but adequate. Lots of interesting fieldtrips are possible, particularly for Gulf coastal plain and wetland habitats. This is a good meeting for a wetlands theme.

5) Outstanding potential to interface with additional societies such as PSA, AABGA, and/or the Society of Wetland Scientists. There are two phycologists in the area, two botanical gardens, and a diversity of wetland and aquatic habitats. Meeting times are one week prior to the ESA conference in Savannah, GA, which facilitates recruitment of exhibitors and others visiting the southeast for meetings.

6) Interesting history, cuisine, and attractions within walking distance of convention. The revitalized downtown is convenient to conventioneers with good restaurants and entertainment within a short walking distance. Mobile is sprucing up for its 300th anniversary in 2002. Ante-bellum homes, large live oaks with Spanish moss, old forts, and a distinctly ‘Old South’ atmosphere give Mobile a unique ‘character’, which offsets high temperature/humidity conditions.
VI.  BOTANY 2004 MEETING

Sites under consideration -- St. Paul, MN (good facilities and local support); Spokane, WA; Salt Lake City, UT; Reno, NV. Site visits have been conducted to St. Paul and Reno.

MEETING REVIEW AND PROGNOSIS

- Responsibility for organizing and planning meetings is pushing the limits of BSA personnel, office support, and expertise
- The ‘partnership’ with Conferon has been critical to the successful planning of the Botany meetings.
- The two city bidding and negotiation process is resulting in competition among proposals from cities and different hotel and meeting site providers
- Lodging rates are getting lower every year, with lower sgl/dbl rates every year at host hotels ($113 in 2000; $107 in 2001; $70 in 2002 at a campus hotel; $99 in 2003).