President’s Report for 2010-2011

Judith E. Skog

The Botanical Society of America continues to thrive and be a society that supports the best in research, education, and policy for botany. That is due to all of the members who give time and effort and to the fabulous staff we have in our office. This report will highlight some of the year’s accomplishments, but to see everything going on in this society requires reading all the council reports, the sections reports, and the web site.

Last year in my talk, I noted that botanists needed to become embedded across the sciences and to become more visible as a viable and critically important field of science. It has been a positive year for BSA in several areas across the sciences. AJB has been accepted into PubMed and will be on MedLine listings, which will increase our visibility across biology. Primer Notes and Protocols has been receiving increasing numbers of papers and we have begun to enlist appropriate graduate students to help with the review process of these notes, thus providing our overworked editors with a little help and our graduate students with some editorial mentoring experience. In addition we will try to add a staff member to help with this part of the publications. PlantingScience has received the SPORE prize from Science Magazine as an important online resource supporting science education.

The BSA board decided that we needed to keep abreast of policy decisions that were important and critical for science in general and plant biology in particular, and we have worked with AIBS, Society for the Study of Evolution, American Society for Limnology and Oceanography, and Association of Ecosystem Research Centers to help support the AIBS Legislative Action Center. We responded with letters on several critical areas for science to help inform lawmakers and policy analysts. Our students actively engaged and wrote a response to Congress on the importance of federal funding for basic research – a letter which AIBS helped them put out to students in all other biological societies and which has garnered huge support. Having engaged and concerned students is the heart of the society, and all of us are proud that they were the impetus of this nationwide student response. We have commented on policies in the Department of Interior, the importance of seed banks and botanical institutions, the critical need to increase the botanical expertise available to all government agencies in support of good science, etc.

We have strongly supported activities for undergraduate biological education, highlighted by our success in obtaining NSF funding for our PLANTS program to bring students from underrepresented groups to the meetings over the next five years. We are hoping that next year this will allow us to increase the number of student participants at the BSA meeting. We have initiated two awards to be presented at the SACNAS meetings for student presentations in botany.

Collaborations with sister societies continue through the annual meetings – this year SBE is meeting with us. We are now collaborating with the Phycological Society of America on the award of the Darbaker Prize and this award will now be announced at both of our annual meetings to highlight our connections with sister societies. Through the joint efforts of ASPT and AFS with us, we were awarded a grant from NSF to support early career botanists travel funds to attend the International Botanical Congress in
Australia. The Canadian Botanical Association students can now be linked to BSA and receive electronic copies of our publications and our students are linked to them. And we will be sending a note to Acta Botanica Brasilica as they publish their 50th journal volume.

We have celebrated some milestones, such as the 100th birthday of one of our long time members, Dr. Elsie Quarterman, who received a birthday message from BSA. Our investments have done well in spite of the continuing economic downturn and this year we have been able to devote some funds to bring a full time development officer to BSA. This was a recommendation of the Development Committee and the program organizers, and we hope we will see increasing support that will allow us to provide better and lower cost to the publications and meetings. For the first time ever, we had a record investment account under the watchful eye of Jack Horner and the Investment Committee.

Overall BSA has had a great year as a society. We are increasing our activities with our sister botanical societies, have had success in obtaining NSF support for our students and early career botanists for meeting attendance, have had an impact in the public policy arena, the education endeavors, and enjoyed increasing interest from other scientific areas. I look forward to continuing involvement over the next year as past President and I thank the society for the wonderful opportunity to serve as President this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Skog, President