Report of the President – July 2014

This has been a wonderful and exciting year for the Botanical Society of America and it has been my pleasure to serve the society as its President. Below, I summarize the various activities associated with the office of the president and then other activities and issues that have emerged over the year.

Responsibilities as President of the BSA:

• I attended the second Legacy Society dinner at New York Botanical Garden on October 18, 2013. I welcomed all of the guests on behalf of the society and introduced the evening’s host, Director of NYBG and longtime BSA member, Dennis Stevenson.
• In December 2013, in collaboration with Incoming President Tom Ranker, I met individually (via skype) with all of the BSA staff members. The goal of these meetings is to be sure we know exactly what everyone does, what their successes have been and what problems they face. Our conclusion was that we have a truly wonderful staff who are working hard every day to support and develop the BSA. One of the great rewards of this last year has been to work with them.
• Provided performance evaluation for Executive Director, Bill Dahl.
• Attended, with Past-President Toby Kellogg, President Elect Tom Ranker, and Executive Director Bill Dahl, an AIBS meeting on “Topics in Biology Leadership”. The meeting was held on December 6, 2013 in Washington DC. Historically, the three “presidents” have attended the Council of Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP). Toby and I attended CSSP in 2012 and did not find that society to be particularly useful. The focus of the AIBS meeting on Leadership was only moderately enlightening. I recommend that we re-visit whether these December meetings are a good investment of time and funding.
• Chaired the annual Spring Board Meeting held February 28 to March 1, 2014 at the Business Office in St. Louis. Major items of discussion included:
  o Search for new Plant Sciences Bulletin Editor (subsequently completed successfully with the selection of Mackenzie Taylor)
  o Changes to Botany conference format
  o Corporate sponsorship of meetings and corporate donations to BSA. Should we refuse donations from corporations with questionable ethics? I asked the BSA public policy committee to investigate policies of other societies and to make a recommendation. This will be discussed at the upcoming Board meeting
  o Need for a new Strategic Plan (more about this below).
• Participated, ex-officio, on several committees including the Investment Committee, Pelton Award committee, Merit Award committee, Darbaker Prize committee.
• Implemented the newly developed “Emerging Leaders” Award. This award was developed by the BSA Board to enhance early career development. 2014 saw the first competition and selection of an awardee, Stacey Smith of the University of Colorado.
• Reviewed changes to Highwire Press contract.
• After consultation with the BSA Board of Directors, wrote letters in support of
  o Plant Conservation Alliance
  o Funding for Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew
  o Brooklyn Botanic Garden Science Program
  o National Center for Science Education
  o Foundation of Rood and Agricultural Research (Farm Bill)
  o Frontiers in Research, Science, and Technology Act of 2014 (reauthorization of NSF)

Other major areas of involvement have been education, publications, and information technology:
• Our education efforts saw major changes in leadership this year. Education Director Claire Hemmingway took a position with the National Science Foundation and Catrina Adams was appointed Acting Director. Catrina led the effort on a resubmission of a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation to support PlantingScience. We should know the outcome of that proposal soon. In the mean time, Planting Science activities have scaled back to a level feasible with existing staff and IT capabilities. The future of this program should be a primary item of consideration at upcoming Board meetings.

• I have been deeply involved in discussions about publications. I am in awe of how well the American Journal of Botany has done in this rapidly changing time of on-line publishing and open access. The Centennial Issues, with their “Then and Now” feature articles are a terrific beginning for the next century of journal success. I thank Judy Jernstedt for her expert leadership. APPS, our newly launched on-line Journal is being able led by Teresa McCulley and Beth Prada. Marshall Sundberg will be stepping down from his editorship of the Plant Sciences Bulletin. I thank him for his great work on this beloved publication.

• Information Technology has made great progress this year with the implementation of Civi-CRM nearly complete. I am hopeful that Botany.org will begin renovation soon.

One of my goals for this year has been the initiation of a Strategic Planning Session to be held in association with the Botany 2014 meeting. I see this as a pressing issue for many reasons, the most critical of which are: 1) the previous strategic plan was developed over five years ago, and most of the initiative set out in that plan have been implemented and we need fresh ideas and directions; and 2) the financial model for our society is changing very rapidly and stability of the BSA will require thoughtful input from a diverse array of members. To this end, Toby Kellogg and I put together a list of participants that includes members from all career stages and areas of expertise, past and present board members, and to ensure fresh perspectives, many members who had never served on the Board. The Strategic Planning Session will be held on Thursday, July 31, at the conference hotel.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Diggle

Addendum: As I look back over my calendar and contemplate my year as Prez, I will also note that in the past year I have:

Moved from Boston MA back to Boulder CO
Retired
Packed up my lab (20 plus years worth of stuff to sort through!!)
Moved from Boulder CO to Storrs CT
Started a new job in EEB at UConn (yippee!!!!!!!)
Got tenure (again)
Bought a house in Boston and moved from rented flat
Bought a house in Storrs and moved from rented bungalow

(just had to share…)