

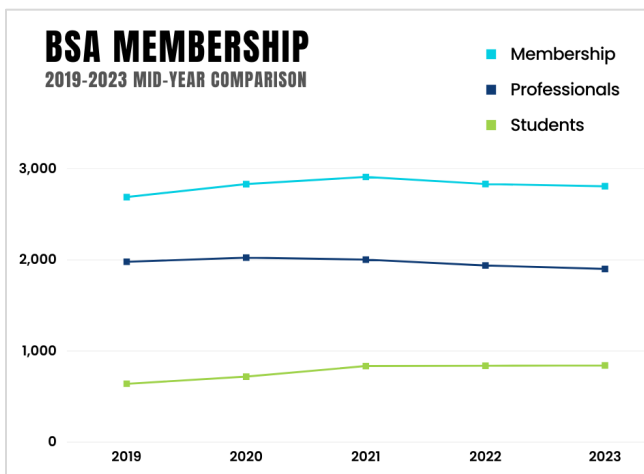
Membership and Communications Report

2023 July Board Meeting

Amelia Neely – Membership & Communications Manager

Looking at this year’s survey results, 92% of the members surveyed were satisfied, with 69% very satisfied with their membership. These numbers are very high if looking across similar organizations, and show that our current BSA benefits are appreciated by the community.

2023 mid-year membership totals are strong and similar to last year, with a slight overall decrease of 0.9%. The majority of this decrease continues to be in the professional membership categories, which has had a slow decent since 2020. Student numbers have hit a slight plateau since 2021 when comparing mid-year reports, but continue to inch up. It is worth noting that student membership has grown 31.6% since 2019, and professional memberships have decreased by 3.5% since their peak in 2020.



When looking at the graph to the left, please note several key events that took place between 2019-2023. The pandemic started in 2020, causing BSA to pivot to a virtual-only conference for two years. This caused a jump in membership, mostly students, who could join a robust virtual conference at a lower cost.

In 2022 the conference was hybrid for the first time, with a very expensive location of Alaska. While the virtual option was available in 2022, the overall experience for the virtual registrant was not as robust given the complexity of running a hybrid conference.

This year’s hybrid conference has adjusted the experience for the virtual registrants, but the virtual option has garnered much less enthusiasm, with only 85 registrants so far compared to a total of around 365 last year. The conference and conference discounts are top reasons people join or renew their memberships. As the world opens back up with a post-pandemic viewpoint, the bump in membership that was received from having a successful virtual-only conference during the pandemic has now evened out. It is worth noting that the Botany Conference organizers are considering a virtual-only meeting in the future. It will be interesting to see if that will affect membership numbers outside of the pandemic.

Membership Overview as of July 1 each year

	as of 7/1/23		as of 7/1/22		as of 7/1/21		as of 7/1/2020		as of 7/1/2019	
	2023	% of Total	2022	% of Total	2021	% of Total	2020	% of Total	2019	% of Total
Corresponding	72	2.6%	73	2.6%	69	2.4%	69	2.4%	65	2.4%
Life	118	4.2%	107	3.8%	96	3.3%	91	3.2%	82	3.1%
Emeritus	340	12.1%	311	11.0%	301	10.3%	282	10.0%	278	10.3%
E Family	46	1.6%	46	1.6%	43	1.5%	42	1.5%	39	1.5%
Retired	71	2.5%	67	2.4%	65	2.2%	63	2.2%	53	2.0%
R Family	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Professional	223	7.9%	252	8.9%	287	9.9%	275	9.7%	287	10.7%
3 Yr Prof Family	19	0.7%	18	0.6%	20	0.7%	21	0.7%	18	0.7%
Professional	640	22.8%	705	24.9%	747	25.7%	814	28.8%	813	30.2%
P Family	81	2.9%	90	3.2%	102	3.5%	101	3.6%	108	4.0%
CC Professional	26	0.9%	35	1.2%	32	1.1%	41	1.4%	32	1.2%
CC Family	4	0.1%	2	0.1%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Postdoc*	73	2.6%	46	1.6%	27	0.9%				
PostDoc	84	3.0%	103	3.6%	124	4.3%	147	5.2%	145	5.4%
PD Family	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%
3 Yr Student	270	9.6%	281	9.9%	173	5.9%	128	4.5%	0	0.0%
Student	528	18.8%	536	18.9%	648	22.3%	571	20.2%	618	23.0%
S Family	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
S Chapter	42	1.5%	17	0.6%	14	0.5%	20	0.7%	22	0.8%
K-12 Teachers	5	0.2%	6	0.2%	7	0.2%	11	0.4%	9	0.3%
Affiliate	21	0.7%	17	0.6%	18	0.6%	25	0.9%	18	0.7%
Associate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Amateur	38	1.4%	32	1.1%	47	1.6%	51	1.8%	42	1.6%
3 Tr Dev. Nat	39	1.4%	19	0.7%						
Developing Nations	62	2.2%	60	2.1%	85	2.9%	68	2.4%	51	1.9%
TOTAL	2806		2831		2909		2830		2688	

Membership Totals at the End of Each Year

(Professional totals below include all categories except Student, K-12 Teachers, Affiliate, and Amateur, whereas the totals in the paragraph above only refer to the Professional and Professional Family 1 and 3-year categories)

	2022	% of Total	2021	% of Total	2020	% of Total	2019	% of Total	2018	% of Total
Professional	2065	67.0%	2139	66.6%	2161	68.8%	2130	70.4%	2161	73.5%
Student	948	30.8%	989	30.8%	878	27.9%	808	26.7%	679	23.1%
Other	69	2.2%	86	2.7%	103	3.3%	86	2.8%	101	3.4%
Total	3082		3214		3142		3024		2941	

Looking at the membership totals at the end of the last 5 years you can see an upward trend until 2022, where it dipped. In the last several years there was a bump of over 250 additional members between July and December of each year, so we can project that our year-end totals will be close to the 2022 total membership number.

With publishing revenues projected to be down or unreliable for the foreseeable future, it is important that along with an emphasis to increase the endowment, membership revenues need to increase to help cover the costs of the Society. There are several things that can be done to boost the membership total in the next few months including creating member-only events via Botany360, lapsed member efforts such as one-on-one outreach via BSA leadership, and personalized outreach to new, renewing, and lapsed members during the renewal season. **It is our opinion that a Membership Ad-Hoc Committee be formed to help strategize and implement these or similar efforts to increase membership.** The committee will need to meet monthly for the rest of 2023 starting in August and then can assess future meetings for the remainder of their time together in 2024. I will be on this committee as the Membership and Communications Manager, and look forward to working with a highly motivated and diverse representation of our community.

Membership Category Highlights June 2023 vs 2022:

- We saw an increase of 11 new **Life members** who took advantage of our one-time cost to stay members in perpetuity.
- In the 2022 renewal cycle (which began in October 2021) we started both the **3-Year Developing Nations gift membership** as well as **3-Year Developing Nations membership** options. In its second year, 39 Developing Nations members have now taken advantage of the multi-year option, up from the 19 members the first year it was offered (105.3% increase). The Developing Nations' membership categories include over 100 members, which is 22 members (or 27.8%) more than last year at this time and the largest mid-year numbers to date.
- Overall, **Postdoc Member** totals are slightly higher compared to last year at this time, with 8 more members (5.4% increase). 27 more than last year have taken advantage of the **3-Year Postdoc membership option** (73 total) which was started on October 1, 2020. This has brought stability and longevity to that group since 46.5% are now multi-year members. This will be the first year that multi-year Postdoc members will need to renew, so special attention will be given to this group to inspire them to renew at the multi-year level once again.

- For the second year in a row, **Student membership** numbers have plateaued at this mid-year time period being nearly identical to 2022 with 842 student members (compared to 838 in 2022).
 - 270 Student members have taken advantage of the **3-Year Student membership category** so far this year compared to 281 in 2022, which shows a slight decrease. Three-year student memberships significantly help us retain those student members, so efforts during the renewal cycle to promote multi-year memberships will continue this fall.
 - There have been 315 **new Student members** so far this renewal season (October 2022 to June 30, 2023), which is an increase of 10.5% compared to last year, and is 37.4% of our current student member total. This percentage typically increases by the end of the calendar year. We continue to have challenges renewing our student members at a high rate, but are hopeful that the three-year memberships, and three-year gift memberships, will continue to help stabilize this group.
 - This year we are continuing to ask people to **“donate” gift memberships** so we can have free Student and Developing Nations’ memberships available when people ask for financial assistance. If you would like to donate one-, or three-year gift memberships visit: <https://crm.botany.org/giftmemberships> and put your name/email in the recipient fields or contact me if you have any questions (aneely@botany.org).
- **Professional Members** (Professional, 3-Year Professional, and Professional Family) decreased by 102 members (about an 9.6% decrease) in 2023 compared to 2022 YTD, which is a slightly higher decrease percentage than the year before, which was about 8%. As seen in past years, this category renews at a very high rate but we do not have the new members needed to keep this category growing (only 6.3% were new members so far this renewal season, October 1, 2022-June 30, 2023, slightly higher than 5% seen last year).
 - Professional members are asked each year to consider **a membership fee increase of \$25 per year**. This additional amount goes toward the **Graduate Student Research Award fund**. So far, this fiscal year (Oct 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023) \$16,125 was raised by Professional members opting-in to this membership fee increase including 408 1-Year and 79 3-Year Professional members. Through these dues, and other available funds, we were very excited to be able to give out **32 Grad Student Research Awards** for 2023.

Membership Recommendations:

1. **A Membership Ad-Hoc Committee to be formed to help strategize and implement efforts to increase membership numbers, focusing on year-end 2023, early 2024.**
2. **Increase in student membership fees from \$20 to \$25 (1-year membership) and \$50 to \$60 (3-year membership).**
3. **Increase Affiliate Memberships from \$50 to \$55.**
4. **Increase in student and developing nations’ gift membership price from \$10 to \$20 (1-year membership) and \$30 to \$55 (3-year membership).**

5. **Printing and shipping the *Plant Science Bulletin* costs the Society between \$9,000 to \$10,000 annually. We recommend that print copies become a paid membership benefit with a cost of \$10/year to purchase print copies starting October 1, 2023.**

BSA eCommunications

The first six 2023 *Membership Matters* eNewsletters had an **average open rate of 52.5%**, which is outstanding compared to the industry standard of around 30%. This high interest indicates that the monthly eNewsletter is seen as a great benefit to our members and has consistently included relevant and useful information to our member base. The membership survey taken this year echoes this finding. 76% of those surveyed found the newsletter to sometimes or always have information that is relevant to them.

New this year, we have added a **BSA Professional Highlight** to each newsletter. This is in addition to the monthly early career **Spotlight Series**. These features serve to highlight our members and the variety of careers and research topics in our community. If you know someone to include for either of these programs, email me at aneely@botany.org.

In 2023 we continue to send **monthly eTocs for *AJB* and *APPS***. *AJB* eTocs had an average open rate 63.9% and *APPS* eTocs had an average open rate of 66.9%. Special issues garnered even more attention. The January *AJB* special issue had an open rate of 68.4% and the *APPS* May-June special issue had an open rate of 72.7%! The spring **eToc for the *Plant Science Bulletin*** was also well received garnering an impressive 59.5% open rate.

Other types of emails sent include: Botany Conference updates, 2023 membership survey, BSA awards notifications, BSA statements on DEI, BSA officer nominations and elections, Botany360 advertisements, PlantingScience notifications, Endangered Species Day celebration notifications, AJ Harris fundraising emails, emails to specific BSA sections, education announcements, renewals, and publications call for papers.

Botany360

Botany360 is a series of programming that connects our botanical community during the 360 days outside of Botany Conferences. The Botany360 event calendar is a tool to highlight those events. The goal of this program is to connect the plant science community throughout the year with professional development, discussion sessions, and networking and social opportunities.

So far this year there have been 4 events, 2 of which have recordings made available for the public, and 1 has a slideshow available for review. If you have ideas for Botany360 events, or you want to coordinate an event, please contact me at aneely@botany.org.

- [How to be a Successful BSA Student Representative](#) (January 18, 2023)
(*The above link is to the event slideshow - no recording was made of this event.*)
Student Representatives, Ioana Anghel and Eli Hartung, led a Q&A on the position description, requirements, the election process, and examples of candidate bios submitted.
- [Prepping for PLANTS: An Informational Webinar about the PLANTS Underrepresented Undergrads](#) (March 10, 2023)
Want to know more about the PLANTS Undergraduate Travel Awards and a mentored

Botany conference experience? This webinar allows you to hear about the program from past PLANTS scholars and get direction about the application process.

- **Careers in Botany: Collections and Gardens** – (April 5, 2023) - No Recording
The Early Career Professional Development Committee is hosting this Careers in Botany panel, featuring botanists in positions at collections, including herbaria and gardens. Panelists will talk about their career paths and discuss pathways to similar careers, with a Q&A from the audience.
- [Making the most out of Botany 2023 - A Student Conference Guide](#) (May 26, 2023)
Workshop presented by BSA Student Representatives, Ioana Anghel and Eli Hartung. Are you attending the Botany Conference for the first time this July? Or are you looking for tips on how to make the best of the conference as a student? This workshop goes over student-specific events, how to organize your time, how to make your trip as affordable as possible, and how to successfully network. It also goes over ways to make the best out of attending virtually.

Social Media Report

It is exciting to announce that the BSA's Social Media Platforms have **60,425 followers combined**, an increase of almost 10% at the same time last year. Due to budgetary constraints, there will not be a BSA Student Liaison for the 2023-2024 time period. The BSA publications team has taken over social media promotion for the BSA journals, and I have taken on all other BSA social media responsibilities. Posts have included Botany Conference updates, award notifications, award winners, Botany360 advertisements, early career Spotlights and Professional Highlights, the Endangered Species "Takeover", and Society updates and news.

Looking at the 2023 survey results, Twitter is still used widely by our community despite the turmoil within that company. The majority of those surveyed do not have a strong opinion as to whether BSA should stop using Twitter or are waiting to see what happens. This could easily shift as Twitter goes through changes that may or may not align with the mission of BSA. At this time, the survey results show that the majority of those surveyed believe no steps need to be taken to stop using Twitter at this time. When asked where we should migrate if no longer on Twitter, there was not really a consensus on where that would be.

The survey also showed that WhatsApp, which is very popular globally, is also very popular with our members and might be worth investigating as a new avenue for the Society to do outreach and support members. Utilizing LinkedIn could also be something to explore, though the data was not nearly as strong as it was for WhatsApp.

We ask that you please continue to use BSA's hashtags when you post on social media.
#BSAMembers #BSAStudents #BSAAwards

Instagram – 4,323 followers (up 400 since the February report)

Twitter – 20,656 followers (up 1446 since the February report)

Facebook – 35,446 followers (up 1298 since the February report)

Total Followers on all three platforms: 60425 followers (up 3144 since the February report)

Other Updates

- I spent a significant amount of time working with Heather on the awards for BSA this award season including organizing the shared doc to assist Tricia with payments, updating awards in the awards portal, assisting applicants, gathering photos, updating the award pages on the BSA website, and helping with the awards slideshow that will be presented at Botany 2023.
- I supported and promoted the BSA publications efforts through email campaigns, creation and updating of website pages, social media promotion, and creating graphic design for ads.
- I updated BSA and SEB websites as needed including a website-wide Society name change for SEB.
- I worked with SEB and SSE on their eCommunications and renewal needs.
- This was a particularly heavy year working with SEB due to their many conference needs and Society name change efforts. It was by far the most time spent on an organization outside of BSA.