

Society of Systematic Biologists Mid-Year Executive Council Meeting  
03/30/12 – 04/01/12  
Stanyan Park Hotel/Tides, San Francisco

**Saturday 3/31**

Attendance: Jack Sullivan (President), David Mindell (Past President), David Penny (Past President), Sidney Cameron (Awards Chair), Vicky Funk (Past President/Trustee), Jim Whitfield (Treasurer), Keith Crandall (Past President), Cathy Kennedy (Oxford Press) Visitors. John Huelsenbeck (Past president), Tracy Heath (Current Council)  
Absent: Susanne Renner (Executive Vice President), Kelly Zamudio/Bryan Carstens (Program Chair), Lacey Knowles (President-elect).

**8:00 Introduction and President's Comments (Jack Sullivan)**

Overview – The State of the Society is decidedly mixed. On the one hand, the journal continues to excel (in terms of impact and difficult-measure prestige) and we're financially solid. The problem is that we continue to bleed members, and this should be a main focus of our efforts this weekend.

**8:10 Treasurer's Report: (through 2012) Jim Whitfield**

Three sources of revenue. Oxford agreement, meeting profits and investment income from the endowment. Discussion of awards and reporting to be revisited during Awards Report.

Discussion of expense for midyear meetings (\$13,000); it's high compared to historical practices, but we all feel it's important and worth the cost.. First in three years. We need to keep doing this. The main expense is airfare.

AIBS contribution.

Evolution meetings in Norman, OK. Check just arrived.

Discussion of Rob Clayton's (accountant) fee. Con is cost (\$9,000 per year). Alternatives were discussed. We'll solicit input from SMBE and SSE regarding their expenses. After sending inquiries, we're getting a good price.

AAAS meetings. Our rep (David Baum) needs to find someone to attend every year. Keith Crandall is the rep for AIBS meetings. Discussion of merging these positions into a Liaison Chair for three years (potentially renewable); we'll address in Ottawa.

Ideas for replacement Treasurer. Brad Schaeffer, Pete Lockhart, David Hibbett. We need to place this on the Nominating Committee's agenda. (JS will e-mail David Mindell the Nominating Committee Chair).

**9:00 Trustees' Report – Conference call to Joel Cracraft. Trouble connecting.**

Market fluctuations – finish 2011 where it started. Rate smoothing allows us to make predictable distribution to SSB. ~\$22K check will come very soon. 2012 looks to be starting out well, but the increase may only be 2-3%.

Let's stay the course with our 5-year average, rate-smoothed distributions.

We pay funds-manager a fee based on size of portfolio. Joel will clarify the fee (flat rate). Also will try to get all Trustees together with funds manager.

**9:10 Awards Committee Report: (Sydney Cameron)**

\$26K funding level. Change our Mini-PEET to Mini-ART and include a bioinformatics component.

GSRA's will be funded at about the same rate (~30%).

Discussion of Membership Issues – students request conformation from Jim. He doesn't know because OUP runs the membership. Defer further discussion to Publisher's Report.

International awards discussion. Even small amounts permit matching from external international sources. Re-allocate awards to bring international students to meeting? Maybe \$1500-2000. Require a talk. *We'll reallocate awards funds for 2 international student travel.*

Need to improve web site – get rid of 2005 dates.

Ernst Mayer award – We had seven applicants last year and poor attendance at symposium. The level of sciences was uneven. How do we promote this award and encourage attendance at symposium?

Discussion of Joint Awards Symposium. Unanimous decision to support going forward.

Discussion of other non-monetary awards for postdocs: Young investigator awards. Best (overall) paper.

**9:40 Program Report: (through 2012)**

Bryan Carstens is absent so we had a group discussion.

Symposia for 2012 are great.

We've had to decouple Business Meeting from Presidential Address.

We have a mixer after P.A. and e-mail Rundle regarding beer at mixer.

Sullivan will e-mail membership regarding meetings (mixer, Myer symp, business meeting, plenary address, mixer announcement).

Discussion of conference center vs. campus venues. Should encourage meeting on campus venues to Joint Council. It's very expensive to stay at hotel and dorms usually end up being too far from Conference Center.

### **10:15 Strategic Planning: The role of scientific societies. – Letter to NSF**

Long range planning committee. David Hibbett has agreed to be Chair. We need to get more of our membership involved in Society business.

We need to communicate the importance of Professional networking and social considerations in building a career in Systematics.

Huelsenbeck has an internet forum in place but not turned on. He'll be Web Advisor for LRPC.

Looking for information on website (an OUP url) needs to be easier.

We need to make our membership list downloadable from OUP website.

We should allocate funds for undergraduate student diversity mixer to increase participation (and such mixers need a good-sized room).

Mentoring programs – pair people up. SSB program for students. This should go to LRP committee.

Membership committee – Green membership for students. Students join for awards so we need advertise those awards more.

Career development sessions – lunch time? What jobs are available?

How to publish in Systematic Biology. We'll discuss this at the mixer and try to establish a session in Snowbird.

LRPC - Rod, Chris, JH

New – JH, David Hibbett, Chris Simon. Tracey Heath. Mindell. Student

I'll charge the committee. Chair will submit report at annual meeting.

### **10:10 Nominating Committee report (Sydney Cameron)**

Ballot is done and approved.

Should open nominations to membership (bylaws) 6 months before the annual meetings.

Ballot will go out April 9<sup>th</sup>.

New Treasurer – Mindell will contact nominating committee with Brad Shaffer's name.  
Discussion is on-going.

### **11:45 Lunch**

### **12:30 Editor's in Chief's Report: (Ron DeBry)**

Discussion of submission numbers – going back up.

Discussion of editorial rejection.

Changes in editorial structure and procedures.

Lots of discussion regarding Managing Editor position and its role in the changing publishing climate. We have decided to terminate the position and use OUP's Virtual Editorial Office. Honorarium of \$12K after June 1.

We need to think about a way to honor her.

### **1:30 Publisher's Report (Cathy Kennedy)**

Discussion on institutional subscription rate. *Systematic Biology* has an incredibly low (even ridiculously low) cost per Impact Factor.

We unanimously voted to increase institutional rate by 7%.

### **2:00 - Declining membership – Led by Mindell & Sullivan**

Tree thinking has won the day, but our numbers are declining.

Membership committee Corrie Morueax, Ruth Timme, Tracy Heath has not been very active lately.

Questions from Vicky Funk (Trustee).

Age structure of SSB?

Integrate graduate students to reach out to schools.

BioOne.

Officers duties booklet.

Membership drive. Sponsorship – buy your students.

Donations from senior members.

Graduate representatives on committees.

Social networking.

Independent meeting – let's discuss this at the next Council Meeting.

Add SSB to undergraduate diversity program. Fund an undergrad social.

### **2:30 Possible new SSB publications (Mindell & Penny)**

Discussion of whether scientific societies v. for-profit companies should be the drivers of scientific publication. Diverse views. What would role of a second SSB journal be? Perhaps large data sets and biodiversity informatics; perhaps phylogenetic applications.

### **Sunday 4/01**

7:30 Meet van in lobby for trip to Tides.

Approval of \$13K in 2013 and \$12K in 2014, 2015 (maybe 2016) for Andy Anderson as incoming EiC. His role as Editor-elect will be voted on in Ottawa.

Revisit possible new journal for SSB. Taxonomic inclusivity, systematics across life, especially groups not represented in the journal (microbes).

Would the role be for papers that are not sufficiently general interest? Need to be not in competition with SB.

Potential growth vehicle – perhaps publishing review articles.

Is a new field of Systematic Biology emerging?

If we have two, they need to cooperate and collaborate for the good of the society. We'll need EiCs with good relationship.

Is the society large enough for two journals versus a new journal bringing in new membership.

*Let's have an e-mail conversation in June as to if we're interested in pursuing the option.*

Discussion on making empirical systematists aware that we embrace their approach. This can be addressed by nominating committee, but a new journal could address this as well.

At council meeting, we could emphasize that the second journal is a response to declining membership.

Benefits of membership needs to be elucidated.

Website – great content. A little stodgy on aesthetics.

Let's ask each officer to update the job descriptions/timelines and send them to Rod to post on website.

Ad hoc Committee on second journal – Mindell & Penny.

**- Letter to NSF** – Discussion to support a letter to NSF arguing against cuts to collections.

**10:00 - Wrap up** – Review of action items.

Mindell Mixer – e-mail Rundle – Cathy for posters. Set up mentoring.

JS- E-mail society regarding meeting events (Mixer, Business meeting, PresAddy)

SSB members forum – Huelsenbeck turn on switch for Member Forum.