

## **Awards Report**

### **Seán Brady, Chair, SSB Awards Committee**

**SSB Council Meeting 2013**  
**Snowbird, Utah**  
**21 June 2013**

#### **Summary**

This is my first year serving as the SSB Awards Chair, beginning my term 1 January 2013. We funded 13 Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRA): 10 at the maximum allowed request of \$2,000 and 3 at reduced amounts (as requested in their budgets). We also funded two mini-ARTS (Advancing Revisionary Taxonomy and Systematics) awards (\$2,617 and \$2,996). The total amount awarded from both programs sums to \$30,213 (similar to last year's awarded amount).

The Ernst Mayr award, as usual, will include a \$1000 prize, an awards certificate, and a 2-yr subscription to *Systematic Biology*.

Last year, the \$1000 Publisher's Award was funded from OUP's "Reception and Editorial Board and Council Meetings" allotment: one-third of their \$3000 donation went for this. As far as I know, the situation remains the same for this year, but this should be verified.

#### **Awards Submission Details**

The submission deadline for the Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRA) and mini-ARTS awards was the usual date, 31 March 2013. I announced both programs on the SSB website and the EvolDir and Taxacom listserves. We received 83 GSRA and 22 mini-ARTS proposals by the 31 March deadline. The number of applications for GSRA continued a trend in increased submissions over the past several years (see below).

Ernst Mayr symposium abstracts were announced due by 19 April 2013, on the final day of early-bird registration and talk title submission; this deadline was subsequently extended about a week by the meeting organizers. I announced this symposium on the SSB website and the EvolDir listserve. This year the Snowbird organizers had all Mayr award submissions to go directly to their website. There was a strict limitation on the number of talks allowed in the Mayr Award symposium, limited to one 4-hour session with a maximum of 12 speakers (the same situation as last year). Thus, each Mayr talk will be constrained to a time maximum of 14 minutes (including questions) with the last minute used for transitioning to the next speaker. I will moderate the session in Snowbird and coordinate the judging.

#### **Trends in Application Numbers**

The number of applications for GSRA was 64 in 2011, 74 in 2012, and 83 in 2013. With the awards budget held roughly constant over the past few years, and the new mini-ARTS program also now competing for funds, the funding rate for GSRA proposals remained lower compared to the rate two years ago: the percentage funded this year was 16%; last year it was 15% and the year before 30%.

Ernst Mayr symposium applicants increased this year by 6 (total 25) from last year's 19 total applicants, representing the second straight year of increased submissions. The Mayr symposium will be held Sunday 23 June, 8 am-noon.

#### **Total Awards Funding for 2012**

This year we obligated \$31,213 on all awards (including GSRA, mini-ARTS, and the \$1,000 for the Mayr Award).

## **Reviewers and Judges**

For the GSRA applicants, I invited 12 reviewers representing a wide array of analytical and organismal expertise. As in years past, each proposal was reviewed and ranked by two reviewers. The reviewers were: Olaf Bininda-Emonds, Sean Brady, Karen Cranston, Rebecca Kimball, Laura Kubako, Shelley McMahon, Corrie Moreau, Brian O'Meara, Guillermo Orti, Alex Pyron, Rick Ree, Jessica Ware.

For the mini-ARTS, three reviewers were invited, with each proposal reviewed and ranked by two reviewers. The reviewers were: Torsten Dikow, John LaPolla, Ken Wurdack.

For the Mayr Awards, I selected the following judging committee based on those registered for the meeting: Kevin Johnson, Susana Magallon, Dave Swofford. This judging committee read through the 25 submitted abstracts and each judge ranked their top 12 choices. I tabulated this information to arrive at the list of 12 finalists for this competition. At the meeting, the above committee will judge the Mayr talks and select the awardee.

Student paper awards still to be decided; money comes from the Oxford U Press.

## **Comments**

1. I would prefer to have the GSRA and mini-ARTS application deadlines moved back a month or two. This would allow more time for both myself and the reviewers to complete business and inform the applicants before the crunch of spring/summer fieldwork, etc.
2. As in past years, each proposal was reviewed and ranked by two judges. Several reviewers for both programs commented that many of the proposals were high quality and worthy of funding, and that they had a difficult time ranking them. There were also a few cases of polar opposites in the ranking of proposals by each judge.
3. We have been able to fund ~15% of GSRA proposals over each of the past two years, due to the combination of increased applications and the new mini-ARTS program; both factors are positive developments, but are also probably resulting in the society turning down a fair number of worthy GSRA proposals.
4. We had to turn down ~50% (13 of 25 total applicants) of students interested in participating in the Mayr symposium. The committee had to make this decision within about a week after receiving the abstracts from the meeting organizers, in order to finalize the speaker list for the meeting program. If we anticipate a large number of Mayr applicants next year (and I hope that we do), more information such as a CV and a bit more time for evaluation would be helpful.
5. This is my first year as Awards Chair. I thank the previous chair, Sydney Cameron, for providing materials and assistance to get me up to speed with the duties of this position. This year I tried to run the programs in the same manner as in previous years, and I have learned greatly from experiencing everything the first time around!