

SSB AWARDS REPORT - JUNE 2021

1) Awards Committee

- Awards Director: Liliana M. Dávalos (awards@systematicsbio.org)
- Committee members: Brett Aiello, Melissa DeBiasse, Hannah Owens, Anne Yoder

2) Overview

This report outlines activities managed by the Awards Director and Awards Committee, including calls for proposals, proposal evaluations, and awards.

3) Award Committee Members

To keep the perspectives of the committee fresh, we will routinely rotate new members onto the committee. Accordingly, after several years of service to the committee, Dr. Emily Jane McTavish has rotated off the committee and has been replaced by Dr. Anne D. Yoder.

4) Online System

Our award handling system continues to improve, yet there is room for streamlining. Despite the lack of functionality for uploading letters of support, the GSRA 2020 was submitted, evaluated and ultimately awarded using this system. We have requested this functionality and expect it to become available Fall 2021.

One positive feature of the system is the ability to make anonymized reviews available to submitters, which worked for the GSRA. The system is now open for the 2021 Mini-ARTS.

5) Providing rubrics and guidelines for submitters

One point of discussion should be how to provide guidelines to submitters. Although we have left guidelines broad, this generates variance in submission that can then influence how proposals are reviewed. For example, for the GSRA, some submitters present line-item details while others just list broad categories. The committee has generated rubrics for evaluating both the GSRA and Mayr abstracts and will likely build on these for the Mini-ARTS. We believe these, along with some guidelines or examples of a good budget will be useful for leveling the playing field for a diverse and international pool. Three rubrics are available as appendices at the end of this report.

6) 2020 GSRA

We received 114 applications through the system and recruited 45 reviewers for the evaluation process. Based on those reviews, we made 39 awards totaling \$114,427.40, a record for our society. Both submitters and reviewers have been notified of the results and disbursements began in early May. We are now gearing up for GSRA 2021 and, as ever, welcome reviewer volunteers. Additionally, winners were announced on our [website](#).

In addition to making the rubric available to submitters, we propose to include the following guidelines for the 2021 competition:

Format: 3 pages (8.5"X11"), 1" margins, 1.5 line spacing, text Times New Roman font no smaller than 12 pt. Figure captions can be Arial, no smaller than 10 pt.

Suggested section headings: "Background on System", "Proposed Approach", "Anticipated Outcomes", "Project Significance", "Anticipated Project Timeline" (Gantt Chart), "References". Optional: "Special qualifications of applicant", "Contingencies."

7) 2021 Mayr Award

We received 107 submissions from which the committee and reviewers identified 19 talks, 10 for the Mayr and 9 for the new SSB Excellence Award Symposium. The latter is expected to run only this year and its goal was to double the opportunities for submitters who did not have a

chance because of the 2020 meeting that never was. Almost 30% of submissions were not deemed to be about systematics, lacked results, or both.

To help guide evaluations, the committee defined systematics as: phylogenetics, historical biogeography, phylogenetic comparative methods, taxonomy, speciation (including species delimitation), and trait diversification. The council should weigh in on these criteria for future reference: there were many molecular evolution and evolutionary ecology submissions without a clear systematics link.

8) 2021 Mini-ARTS Awards

After a long hiatus, this submission is now open through August via the online system. To streamline the process, we propose to consider giving a NSF-style template for these letters (i.e., make them simply state the name of the project and the submitter without any embellishment or detail). This will make it easier for submitters to directly include their letter in the submission portal. We also attach a proposed rubric.

In addition to making the rubric available to submitters, we propose to include the following guidelines for the 2021 competition:

Format: 2 pages (8.5”X11”), 1” margins, 1.5 line spacing, text Times New Roman font no smaller than 12 pt. Figure captions can be Arial, no smaller than 10 pt.

Suggested section headings: “Background on System”, “Proposed Goals and Approach”, “Significance” and “References”?

RUBRIC FOR RANKING PROPOSALS FOR THE 2021 MINI-ARTS

Goals of this award program are to: 1) address constraints on our knowledge of undescribed biodiversity, 2) assist in passing on taxonomic expertise before it is lost, 3) increase the number of students with broad training in organismal biology and systematics, and 4) support projects in biodiversity and taxonomy informatics as well as monographic and revisionary taxonomy.

Category	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Goals, objectives, question	Includes achievable goals and a timeline. Objectives appropriate for the proposed goal.	Same as for excellent but perhaps one objective less clear than others.	One or more objectives seem disconnected from goal.	Lacking goal or objectives. Objectives not related to proposed research question.	Project's purpose is unclear, objectives are not appropriate for meeting proposed goal.
Plan, methods, schedule	Clearly outlined plan, activities are well defined, strongly link to project goals, and coherent with schedule.	Plans, use of funds, and schedule are stated. Methods are generally sufficient for meeting project goals.	One of plans, use of funds, or schedule is missing or unconnected to goals.	Design is vague, proposer's grasp of methods is unclear/insufficient, schedule lacking.	Methods are not clearly linked to, or are not appropriate for, project goals. Plan unlikely to lead to success.
Significance	Proposal overtly addresses two or more of the goals of the program (above).	Proposal overtly addresses one of the goals of the program (above).	Relationship between program goal/s and proposal is implied but not completely clear.	It is difficult to tell whether the proposal addresses any of the goals or not.	Unrelated to program goals.
Relationship to taxonomy & systematics	Proposal clearly addresses how the project is related to taxonomy & systematics.	Project fits broadly within taxonomy & systematics but proposal does not strongly make this link.	Project fits within taxonomy & systematics but this link is not stated.	Proposal is only incidentally related to taxonomy & systematics.	Unrelated to taxonomy or systematics.

RUBRIC FOR RANKING PROPOSALS FOR THE 2020 GSRA

Do the proposed activities have the potential to lead to successful data collection/analysis and support the initialization or completion of the applicant's graduate research in systematics?

Category	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Goals, objectives, hypothesis	Includes achievable goals and a timeline. Objectives appropriate for testing the hypotheses proposed.	Same as for excellent but perhaps one objective less clear than others.	One or more objectives seem disconnected from goal and hypothesis.	Lacking goals or objectives. Objectives not related to proposed hypotheses/questions.	Project's purpose is unclear, objectives are not appropriate for meeting proposed goal.
Plan, methods, schedule	Clearly outlined plan, activities are well defined, strongly link to project goals, and coherent with schedule.	Plans, use of funds, and schedule are stated. Methods are generally sufficient for meeting project goals.	One of plans, use of funds, or schedule is missing or unconnected to goals.	Design is vague, proposer's grasp of methods is unclear/insufficient, schedule lacking.	Methods are not clearly linked to, or are not appropriate for, project goals. Plan unlikely to lead to success.
Significance	Proposal addresses a consequential question in the field of systematics.	Proposal addresses an interesting, but less novel/critical, question in systematics.	Proposal is somewhat novel/critical but presented as taxon-specific.	Significance is narrow, completely taxon-specific, or is not stated clearly.	Significance is not stated.
Relationship to systematics	Proposal clearly addresses how the project is related to systematics.	Project fits broadly within systematics but proposal does not strongly make this link.	Project fits within systematics but this link is not stated.	Proposal is only incidentally related to systematics.	Unrelated to systematics.

RUBRIC FOR RANKING ABSTRACTS FOR THE MAYR SYMPOSIA 2021

Systematics: phylogenetics, historical biogeography, phylogenetic comparative methods, taxonomy, speciation (including species delimitation), and trait diversification.

Category	Excellent (5)	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Relationship to systematics	Clearly demonstrates connection to systematics as defined above.	Fits broadly within systematics but does not strongly describe this link.	Indirectly related to systematics.	Tangentially related to systematics.	Unrelated to systematics.
Completeness	Tells a complete story, with a beginning, middle, and end.	Includes findings and these are connected to both the context statement(s) and methods.	Includes findings and these are connected to either the context statement(s) or methods but not both.	Includes some findings, but these are vague and/or weakly connected to context statement(s) and methods.	No findings reported (e.g., 'results will be shown').
Organization	Clearly organized, story easy to read and follow.	As in excellent, but with perhaps one sentence out of place.	Story present but requires the reader to read several times to grasp.	Story implied, but hard to parse and follow.	Disorganized and no story emerges, hard to follow.
Significance	Addresses a consequential question in systematics, of general interest	Addresses an interesting, but less novel/critical, question in systematics.	Systematics question is implied but not overtly stated.	Systematics question is narrow, or overly taxon-specific without contextualizing more broadly.	Significance is not stated or implied.