

SSB Awards Report - February 2021

Awards Committee

- Awards Director: Liliana M. Dávalos (awards@systematicsbiologists.org)
- Committee members: Emily Jane McTavish, Brett Aiello, Melissa DeBiasse, Hannah Owens

Overview

This report provides details on each of the awards managed by the Awards Director and Awards Committee.

Award Committee Members

Given the heavy load and multiple obligations of all members of the awards committee, we recruited first Dr. Hannah Owens, then Dr. Brett Aiello.

Administrative Assistance

For handling submissions and reviews, we implemented a file handling system by Rob Brandt, Heather Cacanindin. The system has been operational since November 2020. There is one important disadvantage, however, as this system only allows SSB members to review. After discussing various alternatives, we asked the Council to provide complimentary memberships to entice reviewers who are not members. Another area of improvement is for the system to not spirit away submissions and instead show submitters their submission is in, as this makes submitters worry their submission did not go through. All submitters with this concern have been contacted to assure them of their submission is under consideration. Finally, there is no way at the moment to anonymously submit an adviser letter.

2020 GSRA

We received 114 applications through the system and recruited 45 reviewers for the evaluation process. Review assignments await the inclusion of ~8 new members. In any case the committee expects to notify all submitters of decisions by April 2021. One topic of discussion should be whether we consider adviser letters to be indispensable for the GSRA.

2021 Mini-ARTS Awards

At the last 2020 meeting, we decided to change this schedule to the Spring. We expect to open this competition in April 2021.

2020 Mayr Award

Although we discussed this, without the Evolution infrastructure, there was no clear path to setting the competition up. For consideration for the 2021 Evolution online, these are the main points from our previous discussion:

To improve access and equity among potential participants and in the absence of the Evolution meetings we had proposed over the summer of 2020:

- Open to all eligible presenters (contingent on having the usual 40-50 submissions),
- Asynchronous online presentations,
- Over multiple weeks,
- Extending into the Fall.

These were the issues to be defined that, ultimately, prevented our committee from translating this vision into a symposium.

- Submission platform for handling the abstracts,
- Exact dates on which Mayr will be held,
- Platform for online talks,
- Composition of panel judges and video watching burden,
- Any changes to Mayr award rubric for online format.