

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING November 3, 2022

In attendance:

Anna Locke, Clayton Larue, Andrew Foudree, Judy Brusslan, Karen Hicks, Kathrin Schrick, Ruth Welti, Sabrina Gilmore, Shunyuan Xiao, Youngwoo Lee

From ASBP: Shoshana Kronfeld, Linda Palmer, Crispin Taylor, Sarah Black, Jean Rosenberg, Diane McCauley

ASPB Newsletter Operational Changes

The first matter of discussion was regarding proposed changes to how the newsletter is going to be put together starting with 2023.

Sarah Black led the discussion and started by making the overarching comment that our goal should be to “really leverage the newsletter as a member resource” better than we are currently. We propose to change the development process by putting more of the onus on Sarah and her team at ASPB team to do the content planning and then disseminate out to the various committees while still working collaboratively in terms of idea generation and planning so that the Membership Committee doesn’t have to generate all the feature content and accomplish everything single-handedly. The goal will be to identify topics and generate a more specific and comprehensive plan for the year as a whole at the beginning of each year so that there is a more cohesive strategy for a cover-to-cover experience for readers. From there, Sarah and her team will be responsible for coordinating and assigning the development of content. Additionally, instead of the content being submitted directly to Diane, materials will be submitted to Sarah who will ensure that the content meets expectations and builds continuity.

There was general agreement that these proposed changes will make things more efficient and consistent and will be less burdensome for the Membership Committee and for Diane.

Also briefly discussed was the length of the newsletter. While the current issue is about 34 pages long, we may want to adjust this for future issues to something less. However, it was conceded that – as a member benefit – the newsletter must feel substantial enough that it’s not insignificant as this is the only tangible, physical thing that represents membership. So, bumping down to as low as twelve pages would be too little but 32 pages might be a good upper limit. We must keep in mind that the larger the newsletter, the more expensive it is to produce.

To round out the discussion, Sarah mentioned that another idea that is being floated is to re-evaluate the name of the newsletter. Perhaps we would decide to stay as-is if we find there is incredible recognition with the name “ASPB News,” but if updating it is more reflective of what it has become, it makes sense to consider giving it a new title. This is something to consider and will be discussed more fully at a future time.

Introductions: {There was here an interlude to do some brief introductions as we have a new member to the Committee as an Early Career Representative, Maria Clara _____. Maria is working on her master’s in plant biotechnology and did her undergraduate work in Brazil in agronomy. Maria is also an ASPB Ambassador. She stated she is very happy to be a part of the Committee.}

ASPB Newsletter - Q1 Prep

Because of the proposed changes to the overall process as discussed at the start of the meeting, an in-depth discussion of the Q1 issue will be put off to a later date to give Sarah an opportunity to begin organizing the topics based upon a predetermined plan or vision. However, the following issues were briefly discussed:

(1) With regard to reporting from the Sections, Sarah mentioned that we will have a schedule, so they don't need to necessarily report in every issue. However, in the membership issue, we may want to headline "Section News"

(2) For the membership issue, Sarah suggested that we could do a series of interview-type articles, where we highlight members describing why they became an ASPB member and how it helped them in their career, or describing meaningful connections they made at ASPB, or what they got out of volunteering at ASPB. The idea is to find a more engaging way to get people to think about the positive impacts of membership and to highlight the benefits they can tap into. Judy suggested that it might also be good to think of aspects of Plantae that people may not have considered, and she gave the mentorship program as an example.

ASPB Newsletter – Unsung Heroes

Shoshana shared that we will possibly be changing the name of the "Unsung Heroes" feature and changing the format to be more like what we did on Twitter in October, using just an image and a short blurb. Sarah shared that the reasoning for the change is due to a review of the metrics, which show that while anything highlighting an ASPB individual performs well on social (engagement is high with much "liking" and "sharing"), the metrics are in the single digits for click-throughs to the larger piece. Therefore, she contended that it doesn't make sense to spend a lot of energy and effort into developing the longer blog posts on individuals. She suggested that our time would be better spent in saving them up and doing one larger blog post to feature all that we have done in a past specific period.

Further discussion on this issue is tabled, along with more in-depth planning of the Q1 issue for a later date giving Sarah a chance to organize for us. It was suggested that a meeting would work better than collaborating by email alone about this.

Organizational Memberships

Shoshana shared that following a previous Membership Committee meeting where the possibility of organization membership was raised, it has been suggested by staff that we directly ask industry representatives – the people we hope to serve -- what benefits they would be interested in having from an organizational membership and how it might work for them.

Clayton responded by saying that, while he was originally enthusiastic about the idea, he has concluded after looking more closely at the idea, that the logistics might be hard to implement. He mentioned that industries may have difficulty deciding which "bucket" the membership will come from as they are often divided into different cost centers and there is often no "gatekeeper" to oversee it. Also, while it would be cheaper for members and organizations, most industries are not buying membership because they are pinching pennies but because they want to support the society.

Andrew then mentioned that what might drive industry participation would be in seeing what “collaborations” there are available. There was then some discussion led by Jean as to the value of giving institutional discounts for the annual meeting. We didn’t do it for the Portland meeting last year except when specifically asked by organizations. Karen suggested that this is problematic and should be more transparent and everyone seemed to agree with that. Different types of group discounts were then very briefly discussed (i.e., having a series of multiples and having the flexibility to put groups together from different organizations) and Jean stated that this is all in consideration, making the point, however, that fixed costs vs. variable costs must be looked at. More discussion will be had by the Program Committee about this issue.

PB23 – Workshop Proposal

Discussion then turned to plans for the PB23 workshop which is planned to be very similar to last year’s mock interview workshop, as it was very successful in PB22. For PB22, there were 19 participants and 13 interviewers. Ruth mentioned that we need to find more interviewers for PB23 and Crispin suggested that perhaps some of the donors and Legacy members who get a registration waiver might be called upon to help.

Ruth suggested that we might have had more participation in 2022 if so many other great workshops were not going on at the same time and Jean then shared that the Program Committee has heard that feedback and are proposing a whole day of Friday *virtual* workshops and only 15 in-person workshops throughout the 3 days in Savannah.

If the Membership Committee would like to have a virtual component added on to their workshop, Jean said to let her know and she will try to make that work.

About workshops, Crispin also shared that they are encouraging workshops based on affinity groups (i.e., a particular component of identity, a particular aspect of plant biology or a particular geographic or career stage).

Shoshana suggested that this will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Reports from Sections

Southern Section – (not present) but Shoshana relayed a brief report: They will be in person in Fayetteville, AR on March 25-27, 2023. The venue has not been confirmed yet, but they will have graduate student floor presentation competitions as well as undergraduate poster competitions. Not confirmed yet.

Mexico Section – (not present) but Shoshana relayed a brief report: They will meet in October next year. Their priority is in getting more members because their section is small.

Early Career Section – (not present) but Shoshana relayed a brief report: They are planning a Precon for the Saturday of the PB23 meeting and they also are working with some of the other sections to help with their workshops, including with Membership Committee. They are also going to do the 3-minute thesis thing again and, hopefully, a trivia night.

Mid-Atlantic Section – Shunyuan reported: They are putting together an annual plant biology symposium together with UMB plant biology community. They will have an organizational meeting soon and will have a new Chair and Vice-Chair to organize such a symposium. They normally have 100-120 participants. Hopefully, they will meet next spring, possibly May.

Western Section – Judy reported: They are having a meeting April 28-29 at the University of Puget Sound. It will be Friday and Saturday and include evening and a lunch. There will be graduate student prizes. The organizers are looking for some external funding.

Mid-west Section – Kathrin reported: Mid-west Section has historically had their meetings in February or March of every year, but the last meeting was in 2019. The current leadership is in question and there is one person who should be taking over the Chair, although that person is on sabbatical currently. However, there is hope that a meeting can be put together for next year. Kathrin hopes to have better news next month.

PUI Section – Karen reported: The PUI section has been continuing the activities they have been doing for the last couple of years. They are having a monthly networking session online and are planning the traditional Saturday morning 3 ½ hour professional development workshop in person in Savannah. They are in the process of asking NSF for some funding for that. Every other year, they do a career workshop (what it's like to be a faculty member at a PUI). They are talking about maybe coordinating with Early Career on that but not sure if they have reached out or not yet.

EEPP – Anna reported: There are no major updates from EEPP. They are continuing to try and brainstorm ways to get more early and later career members more involved because their section has largely been carried by Assistant Professor levels. This is not sustainable. They are continuing to plan webinar series and are trying to reach out especially to early career members to become more involved there.

Shoshana then concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and input and effort both at this meeting and throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Palmer