

Message from the President

John C. Wingfield

My two years as President–Elect just sped by, and now I find myself in the hot seat as President of SICB! It is indeed a wonderful honor, and one of particular significance for me because of my association with the society for almost thirty years. I feel particularly privileged to take over at this time because Past Presidents have done so much to keep the society vibrant and at the forefront of so many fields. I am indebted to the now Past President Marvalee Wake, and the just retired Past President, Martin Feder for their support, guidance and patience during my tenure as President–Elect. Marvalee was (and is still) a wonderful mentor with an amazing depth of knowledge and feeling for this society. I am profoundly grateful for her council and wisdom over the past two years. At this time, I would also like to welcome our new President–Elect, Sally Woodin, and I look forward to working with her over the next two years!

Our able and steadfast Treasurer, Ron Dimock has steered society finances extremely well over the past year. Our investments have fared very well indeed given the shortcomings of the market. Many organizations have taken much greater declines in revenues than we have. Well done Ron! More good news is that Ron will continue to serve us as Treasurer for another term. Our relationship with Burk and Associates Inc. continues to develop and I would like to thank the Executive Director, Brett Burk and everyone at BAI for their work at so many levels in the society.

The annual meeting in Toronto was a great success and I continue to be greatly impressed with quality of presentations. Particularly exciting are the creativity, quality and enthusiasm of our younger participants who now make up an ever increasing fraction of attendees. The future of the Society looks bright indeed. Many thanks too for a great meeting and organization by Program Officer Stacia Sower, all the divisional program officers, Sue Burk and everyone else involved at BAI for a terrific job. A new development the past year has been an organizational meeting of the program officers and BAI at the venue for the annual meeting. The result speaks for itself. I am looking forward to New Orleans with great anticipation.

This spring newsletter contains much information for the upcoming society–wide elections. Please take the time to go over the brief biographies of officer nominees in your division. We also have two society elections, one for Member–At–Large and the other for Chair of the Education Council. One very important issue in this year's elections is the revision of the SICB constitution. This document guides just about everything we do, and you all must look at the proposed revisions and VOTE! We are all deeply indebted to outgoing SICB Secretary Penny Hopkins who has steered the revision process, and has patiently and meticulously included our sometimes conflicting suggestions. Thank you Penny, you have done a terrific job. Our new Secretary, Sunny Boyd, is already up and running. She has some exciting new ideas for the Society and I am delighted to welcome her to office.

As incoming President I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for members of SICB to consider serving on our committees. The society cannot function without input from its members and the committees serve us well. Please do not hesitate to contact me (jwingfie@u.washington.edu) if you would like to be involved. I will be appointing members to committees that have vacancies over the next few weeks.

There are two committees that are particularly in need of volunteers. First is the Development Committee whose task is to attract donations to SICB as well as identify future avenues for raising funds for our many worthy causes. I would very much like to see members write 'white papers' outlining initiatives that need funding. These should be about a page, stating specifically the need and how funds would be used to serve that need. Examples that are always popular are promotion of diversity in SICB, and travel and research awards for students and younger faculty. Others could include development of web sites for education, research data bases (bioinformatics), travel awards for international scientists and students (e.g. from Latin

America) to attend our annual meeting, or to develop education and research collaborations with people in North America. Please use your imagination and write up your ideas. With these papers in hand, BAI can hand them out immediately if a potential donor is identified. Having these initiatives on hand also serves to impress a donor that we really are sure of where our future lies, and that we are specific in our needs. If any of you are interested in serving on this committee please let me know, or Treasurer Ron Dimock who serves ex officio on the committee.

Second is the conservation committee. On the one hand, I have heard several rumors that conservation is 'too applied' for our society. However, it is important to bear in mind that good conservation is dependent upon good science. The latter is where we can make important contributions. Similarly for research on global climate change, the implications for conservation, as well as many of the problems facing humanity in the next few decades, are enormous. Yet all of this has a foundation in basic biological research that we pride ourselves upon. Note also that younger biologists increasingly are showing great interest in conservation and global climate change. They feel compelled to combine basic research with outreach to society. At the meeting in Toronto I was impressed with how many presentations addressed these issues AND that the majority of the authors were students and younger members. The message is clear. We must develop and sustain a commitment to conservation and global climate change while sustaining excellence in basic biological research. I know many of you have a deep interest in these issues – please contact me if you feel you can serve SICB by developing and nurturing conservation biology. We have had conservation-related symposia in the past and there is one scheduled for New Orleans in January 2004. Let us take this opportunity to make our unique mark in these rapidly developing areas.

Finally, as spring and summer draw near, I wish you all an enjoyable and productive season in the laboratory, classroom and field.

Don't forget – VOTE!