

Message from the President

John C. Wingfield

Another year has gone by and we look forward to the annual meeting in January 2005 in San Diego. Just a few weeks ago we held the annual planning meeting of core officers that overlapped one day with the program officers meeting. This was the first time that we have held these meetings conjointly and it was a great success. Our new S.I.C.B. Program Officer, Kate Loudon, the Divisional Program Officers, Sue Burk and Burk Associates did an impressive job putting the program together in just two days. It is also a great advantage to do this at the venue of our annual meeting in San Diego. The facilities are terrific and the hotel is located on extensive grounds – very pleasant. The meeting is shaping up to be terrific with symposia, oral contributed sessions and posters coordinated on a broad spectrum of themes. We have deviated a little from the pattern of past meetings with a plenary symposium instead of an invited speaker at the start of the proceedings on the evening before the first full day. This session is in honor of one of our most distinguished members, Professor Ted Bullock. Many thanks to Bob Josephson and Kate Loudon for organizing this symposium that includes outstanding neuroscientists in a tribute to Professor Bullock, who had a huge influence on emergence of neurobiology, particularly comparative aspects, as one of the major foci of biology today. The plenary session will begin on the afternoon of January 4, so please plan to arrive in time to attend.

The meeting in San Diego will also be an important one for reasons pertaining to the future of our society. The strategic plan and a list of goals for the society have been on the web site now for several months. The most pressing concerns should be implemented as soon as we are able. Some of these I refer to below and they will be brought to the general business meeting in San Diego, so please plan on attending. It is very important that you do so and bring your ideas!

Our financial situation continues to be good despite a fluctuating market. Once again I thank our outstanding Treasurer, Ron Dimock, and Burk and Associates for shepherding us through the past few years. We are very fortunate indeed to have Ron for a second term as Treasurer! Although we are in the black, we do need to increase donations to the society further and begin building endowments to fund many projects dear to our hearts. It is highly important that we expand our funding for grants-in-aid-of-research to students and postdoctoral fellows spanning everything from travel to research sites and meetings, to new exciting areas of investigation, attracting minorities to research and education and bringing them to our annual meeting. Divisions within the society also have their own funds to provide research awards or support symposia. We should plan future ways in which we can attract donations to expand these further. Our web site has a special link for donations – please take a look at it! Of course we will be happy to hear of any ideas from you concerning development.

A fun project over the past year has been the overhaul of the S.I.C.B. website – or at least the first steps toward doing so. Several members have already made some recommendations, or pointed out where some things need to be updated and re-organized. This is inevitable given how times change so rapidly and our society evolves. So, we have begun working with our terrific webmaster, Ruedi Birenheide, and hopefully we will have a new and attractive website ready for testing in the weeks leading up to our gathering in San Diego.

Integrative biology continues to be a central issue in modern biology, indeed it will likely be critical for addressing global problems in the future. Few societies can claim such a broad continuum of members who are actively working to bring together disparate topics in biology in creative new ways. I think most of you, if not all, agree that there is nothing quite like S.I.C.B. anywhere in the world and we should continue to work toward being the leading integrative biology society internationally. Given that we consistently attract foreign participants, it is clear we are in a position to be an even larger international influence than ever. Our society is home for several disciplines (e.g. evolutionary developmental biology, biomechanics) and others for which we provide a home base and a regular meeting venue. We should build on this and promote the society

accordingly, especially outreach toward Latin American countries. Having said this, it is also unfortunate that we live in a very troubled world with increasing restrictions on visits of foreigners to this country and funding of them. The next few years will be telling, and we should work hard to not just maintain, but also expand our international outlook.

One thorny issue that needs immediate attention is the state of our journal, Integrative and Comparative Biology. The Editor, John Edwards, our core officers and I have been discussing this at length over the past two years. The main problem is a continuing decline of institutional subscriptions – a major source of income for S.I.C.B. The good news is that the journal is otherwise flourishing and symposia are being published at a steady rate. However, the trend of declining subscriptions needs to be stopped, indeed reversed. I have asked the Editorial Board and the Advisory Committee to report to us in San Diego where the journal issue will be a major item on the general business meeting agenda (another reason for you to attend). Any recommendations will be brought to the Executive Committee for action.

Finally, it is with some amazement that I realize I am coming to the end of my two-year term as President. There have been some trying times, but overwhelmingly I have enjoyed being President and the opportunity to serve the society. My fortunate experience is in no small part to the truly outstanding officers and membership in general who have always had the society's best interests at heart. It is remarkable how many people work so hard to keep this society the mix of integrative biologists that it is, and we have much to look forward to. I am also most grateful to Burk and Associates for their unflagging support of so many of our society operations, their thoughts and experience concerning future plans, and the excellent choices in hotels for our annual meetings.

At the end of the San Diego meeting I will hand over the Presidency to Sally Woodin. Working with her over the past two years has been delightful and I know you will have an outstanding President in 2005 and 2006. Congratulations to John Pearse who will become President Elect in San Diego. Clearly the leadership of our society is in excellent hands for several years to come.

See you in San Diego!