

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Professor Mike Jeger took over from Professor Peter Lea as President of the Association from 1 January following his two years as Vice President. The new Vice President is Professor Trevor Hocking. Both the new President and Vice President played active parts at the March meeting of the Council. Dr Wayne Martindale was welcomed to Council as Convener of the new Food Systems specialist group. Professor Martin Parry remains a member of Council but as Publications Officer rather than Chairman of the Editorial Boards. Professor Jari Valkonen is now in charge of the Editorial Board of *Annals of Applied Biology* as Editor-in-Chief. The Publications Officer will be concerned with the management of both *Annals of Applied Biology* and *Plant Biotechnology Journal*. This will involve meetings at Wiley-Blackwell twice a year to consider the marketing, format and the financial position of the journals. The Publication Officer will also be concerned in the editing of the Newsletter, the publication of *Aspects of Applied Biology* and the issues surrounding the DPV CD-Rom. Fifty candidates for membership were put forward for election at the recent Council meeting. This reflected recruitment at the many conferences run by the Association in the previous three to four months and is an indication of the continuing importance of the Association in disseminating knowledge of applied biology. The Conveners and members of the specialist groups remain active in providing conferences on varied topics as shown in the list on the back page of this Newsletter. We hope that all members can find interesting conferences to attend and, as always, the Council welcomes any suggestions and comments. All members should feel free to submit an article for a future publication in the Newsletter on any matter concerned with applied biology or related sciences.

The proposal from the Institute of Biology and the Biosciences Federation for the formation of a new organisation to combine the interests of both organisations is triggering much thought among specialist learned societies concerned at the perceived financial difficulties in the future. The sharing of office accommodation and services is attracting the attention of some societies. The cost of salaries and the need to comply with many employment regulations demand consideration. Would it be more economic if societies could share office space and the needs for care of staff? It can be argued that the Association of Applied Biologists caters for a special area of scientific endeavour related to agriculture and horticulture, by bringing together many disciplines to explore improvements in the nutrition, pest, disease, and weed control in crop production. This involves

the Association in a wide range of conferences covering specialist areas alone and also bringing together specialist areas as appropriate for the challenges of preservation of the environment while maintaining production and preservation of food, fibre, biomass and other materials. This unique function of the Association must be protected for the future. The Council is fully aware of this and continuously has this in mind in its deliberations on strategy for the future.

Traditionally the publication of journals and proceedings of conferences has provided much of the finance for the running of learned societies. The advent of electronic digital storage of information and the desire for online publishing with the possibility of free access to papers online, while popular with funding agencies, is challenging societies in planning their future. In a recent issue of their Publishing News, Wiley-Blackwell explored the consequences of these advances including the dilemmas faced by librarians at universities and institutes. For many years the budgets of libraries have been cut back and painful decisions have had to be made on what subscriptions should be cancelled. Journal collections have had to be stopped permanently much to the dismay of regular users. Some librarians, when faced with having to relocate journal collections and extend shelving, have dreamed of the prospect of the electronic storage. Institutional and independent repositories for electronic copies have to consider the problems of permanence of records, copyright and peer review. The concern of publishers and learned societies is how will income be derived and how will it be distributed. There is talk of the 'Gold Road', where the author pays for published articles, the Green Road where articles are deposited in institutional repositories with free access over the internet, and a hybrid where some articles are recorded one way and others another. It is assumed that articles will all be peer reviewed. At the present, subscription-only journals remain as the traditional method of making papers available to libraries and individuals. Learned societies through their officers and publishers will have to keep on their toes to maintain appropriate financial income from publishing activities. Members of the Association can help protect their interests by submitting their best research articles to *Annals of Applied Biology* and *Plant Biotechnology Journal*, as appropriate, to maintain impact factors. Where *Aspects of Applied Biology* is produced for a conference, presenters should produce papers carefully and on time. The objective is to further increase the value of this publication as a source of overviews of important topics to government-sponsored entities, trades and producers.

Alf Keys, March 2009

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