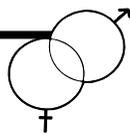


SOCIETY for the STUDY OF REPRODUCTION



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The State of the Society: Fall 2007

There is a great deal of legend in science, as there is in all fields of endeavor. One of the legends I remember hearing many years ago concerned an incoming President of the Endocrine Society who was asked to give the President's Address. The new president slowly walked up to the microphone, acknowledged that everyone in the room probably had better things to do, and merely stated: "2244 Oaklawn Boulevard, Houston, Texas." As is the case with most legends, I am not sure it really happened, nor am I sure that this is really that President's Address, but you know what I mean. Now it is my turn to present you with the President's Address or, as we call it in our Society, "The State of the Society Address." I probably won't be nearly as popular as that particular Endocrine Society President with what I have to say, but saying, "5111 Amherst Street, Lubbock, Texas," probably won't cut it either. So, let's take a crack at relaying to you what has been happening in our Society over the last year, and some of the things that will be happening in the near future.

Membership Renewal: This is the time of the year we renew our annual membership in the SSR, and I request that all of you do this as soon as possible. At present, our membership totals 2263 of which 1341 are Regular members, 591 are Trainees, 202 are Associate members, and 129 are Emeritus members. The total number represents a slight increase over last year, but is still approximately 7% below our membership total of 2003. The difficult task of maintaining the SSR membership levels is readily evident especially when one realizes that the Regular membership total has decreased by an alarming 172 members during this time. The Membership Committee is in the very capable hands of Janice Bahr; she and her hard-working committee continue to come up with innovative ideas for maintaining and even increasing the membership of the SSR, and these dedicated people most certainly deserve our help in their task. I implore each of you to help in this effort by encouraging your trainees and colleagues to join the SSR. It is imperative that we recruit new members and renew our own memberships—both essential parts of the process in maintaining a healthy and productive society. Without members, there is no SSR. The benefits of membership are considerable: for just one low price, you get the journal *Biology of Reproduction*; the SSR Newsletter; reduced registration for the Annual Meeting; reduced page charges for publication in *BOR* if the first or last author is a Regular member of SSR in good standing; waiver of color charges for the first color figure in your article if the first and last authors are SSR members in good standing—one of whom must be a Regular member; and a set of steak knives. So, I urge each and every one of you to renew your membership as soon as possible and to make every effort to recruit new members whenever the opportunity arises.

Biology of Reproduction: A source of great pride to all of us and probably the major strength of our Society is our journal, *Biology of Reproduction*. We are in the third year of the new review strategy instituted by our Editors-in-Chief (EiCs), John Eppig and Mary Ann Handel, and the results have been highly positive. You will recall that John and Mary Ann revamped our review process significantly to include eleven Associate Editors who specialize in research areas that cover the research interests of the membership and contributing authors. Recently, an additional Associate Editor,

Dick Stouffer, has been added to the cast to specialize in the solicitation and publication of high-quality minireview articles. Each of the changes initiated by the EiCs and implemented by them and the Associate Editors has had a positive impact on our journal. Although the total number of pages published in each year has decreased, I am sure that each of you will agree that the quality of manuscripts published in *BOR* has greatly increased, and the overall effect will be manifested in an increase in the impact factor of our journal. However, there are additional areas in the publication process of which we must remain wary if we are to continue to enjoy the success created by *BOR*. While open access may not materialize as the Armageddon for society publishing as was feared, nonetheless we must remain vigilant should the evolution of this process change the publishing landscape in such a way to harm journal revenue. We depend on this revenue to produce a top-quality journal. For this reason, one of my own pet projects for this year is to do everything possible to increase the corpus of the Legacy Fund. Created to fund the conversion of all back issues of *BOR* into a digital, indexed format and to sustain the archive, its main goal now is to provide income to maintain the high quality of our journal should other traditional sources of revenue be diminished, or lost, as a result of open access or decreased library subscriptions. If the quality and/or status of *BOR* declines, we will lose a significant source of pride for our Society.

Annual Meetings: Just as important as our pride in the quality of our journal, every SSR member has an equivalent level of pride in our annual meeting. Not originally trained as a reproductive biologist, I recall how amazed I was at the first SSR meeting that I attended some 25 years ago. The informality, the collegiality, the high-quality science, and the overall atmosphere of the meeting were new and quite different to me. Thankfully, I have never recovered from this euphoria. The SSR meeting is the one meeting that I absolutely look forward to every single year. While for personal reasons I could not attend the meeting in San Antonio, by all accounts it was another banner meeting. With the scientific program constructed by Marty Matzuk and his Program Committee and the work of the Local Arrangements Committee chaired by John McCarrey, San Antonio proved to be yet one more memorable meeting to add to our list of many memorable meetings. Our great hope is to continue this tradition of great meetings. We are going to give it a try in 2008...in Hawaii! This will be the very first “offshore” SSR meeting in our history, and we are sparing no effort to make it a scientifically exciting and fun meeting. The setting will be beautiful Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, at the Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort. The entire resort has been booked by the SSR for this monumental event, and you can reserve your rooms right now: <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/booking/reservation?id=0705226802&key=DAA8D>. Indeed, several of us recently spent a few days at the site and can unequivocally state that if you don’t like this venue, there is urgent need to have your pulse checked. We all took many photos of the meeting site and of other places of local interest; we plan to post many of these pictures on a web site linked to the SSR web site for your perusal. When this has been done, we will inform the entire membership on how to access these photos so that you can see what is in store for all of you in Hawaii. Trust me, this is one meeting you don’t want to miss.

At this writing, the theme of the meeting has been established and the plenary lecturers have been invited. The theme, “Reproductive Biology—Basic Discoveries That Impact Our Lives” was chosen in no small part because 2008 marks the year of the 80th birthday of one of our most prestigious members, Dr. Ryuzo Yanagimachi. Dr. Yanagimachi will open the President’s Symposium with an overview of his perspectives on how Reproductive Biology has progressed during his remarkable career as a researcher in this field. He will then introduce two plenary speakers who will address current topics related to his interests: Dr. Richard Schultz, from the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Takashi Shinohara, from Kyoto University in Japan. The Keynote Address will be presented by the noted stem cell scientist, Dr. Rudolf Jaenisch, from the Whitehead Institute. In addition, we will have two truly “state-of-the-art” lectures presented by Dr. Kevin Eggan, from Harvard University, and Dr. Janet Rossant, from the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Topics for the minisymposia have been identified, and again, these topics reflect the diversity of the scientific interests pursued by our members. There will be something for everyone at the 2008 meeting, and I urge you all to make your plans to attend this history-making event for our Society.

You should also know that there is another first-ever event associated with the 2008 meeting. The Hawaii meeting will be held in conjunction with, and on the same site as, the inaugural World Congress on Reproductive Biology

(WCRB). The Congress is jointly sponsored by four sister societies—the SSR, the Australian Society for Reproductive Biology (SRB), the United Kingdom Society for Reproduction and Fertility (SRF), and the Japanese Society for Animal Reproduction (JSAR). The organizing committee for the WCRB is chaired by Joy Pate, and the program is being generated through the efforts of the sponsoring societies. The WCRB will be held 24–26 May 2008, and the SSR meeting, 27–30 May 2008. We greatly encourage all of our members to attend both of these meetings; each will be a unique event and the combination of the two promises rich scientific, cultural, and social experiences.

With further regard to the Annual Meeting, change is in the air. Given the meeting's growth in size and scope, the specific needs for accommodation (no one seems to want to sleep 6 people in a room like in the old days), audio-visual requirements (cheap student labor and carousels do not cut it any more), and access to transportation (who wants to drive 1000 miles with 12 people in a van that says "UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA" in 3-foot letters on the side?), other options are being discussed. The idea of holding our annual meetings in convention centers and not on college campuses and hosted by university departments is a viable option. Bids presented by large convention centers eager to host our meeting must be reviewed seriously. This may mean that the Local Arrangements Committees' tasks will be significantly decreased. Whether this represents the loss of a critical and endearing component of our annual meeting or merely a casualty of progress remains to be seen. To be sure, the Board of Directors will discuss in great detail SSR's response to every bid we receive. At the present time the cities being discussed as possible meeting sites beyond 2008 include Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Portland, Oregon; Baltimore, Maryland; and Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Rest assured that every effort will be made to find a suitable home for your annual meeting, as it is truly one of the jewels of our Society and must remain highly polished.

Fiscal Stuff: As you will read over and over again from people like me—Past Presidents, future Presidents, and just about anyone you ask—our Society requires a constant inflow of revenue in order to serve you, the membership, to the highest degree possible. Our revenue sources are membership dues, publications revenues, and the Annual Meeting. Under the watchful eye of Treasurer Bruce Murphy, we have indeed done very well with converting these sources of revenue into a healthy fiscal situation for the Society. That is not to say that we don't want to increase these revenues and make us even healthier, but Bruce has done an excellent job in managing the Society's money and deserves a great deal of thanks for his efforts. As of the 2007 summer meeting, the SSR investment portfolio had gains in excess of 20% for the year, and an eighth straight balanced budget is expected for this year. The total sum of the assets of the SSR's investment portfolios now stand in excess of 3 million dollars for the first time in our history, essentially a doubling of our assets since 2003. Of the \$3 million, the Endowment Fund represents \$563,000 (target is \$1 million dollars); the Legacy Fund, \$73,000 (target is \$500,000); and the combined Mahesh Funds, approximately \$160,000. This means that, at least for the short term, our financial status is sound. The Society's investment objective is to hold assets worth approximately two years of its annual budget, which would be approximately \$4 million. Every effort continues to be made amid full discussion by the Board to maintain this sound financial status with minimal additional cost to the Society's members.

Trainees: I think I can say without too much fear of contradiction that the SSR is the premier society in reproductive biology, and perhaps all of science, with regard to the significance it attaches to the development and training of its student and postdoctoral members. Every effort is made on the part of the membership, the Board, and staff to accommodate the needs of our outstanding group of trainees. As such, there are two Trainee Representatives on the SSR Board of Directors who are nominated and elected by the Trainee members. They participate in all Board Meetings. The Trainees also maintain an SSR Trainee Affairs Committee, which oversees and manages Trainee projects and functions at the annual meetings. Furthermore, at least one Trainee has been appointed to serve on most SSR standing and ad hoc committees. As stated above, SSR currently has 591 Trainee members, and we would like to continue to increase this number. The Trainees are truly the future of our Society. Indeed, trainees are such an active and integral part of our Society that little of what we do would be possible without them. Trainees deliver the majority of the platform and poster presentations at the Annual Meeting; they

serve as co-chairs of many of the platform sessions; they administer the Larry Ewing Memorial Trainee Travel Fund; they organize and host the Trainee/Mentor Luncheon and the Trainee Forum; and they manage the Trainee Placement Service and Career Development Center; and they are just plain fun to have at the Annual Meeting. The SSR Trainees are one of our greatest strengths; as such, we should recognize them for all they do for the SSR and for all that they mean to the future of our Society.

Thanks: During the course of doing the business of the SSR, we have many individuals to thank. In this past year, right at the top of the list is our President for 2006–2007, Mitch Eddy. Mitch has been an excellent President for our Society in that he tirelessly and selflessly did the work of the Society in about as competent a manner as I have ever witnessed. We all owe Mitch a great debt of gratitude for his efforts, and I want him to know that I have requested a big raise for him as a reward for his hard work. Thanks Mitch—our Society is so much better for the job you did this past year. Equally tireless in their efforts on your behalf is the entire Board of Directors who meet twice a year and email constantly in between those meetings to discuss the business of the SSR. Volunteers as good as we have in our Society are hard to find, but we have found a bunch of them. Considerable thanks also go to all of our members who have agreed to chair the various committees of the SSR and to those members who serve on these committees. Again, the work of the Society would be impossible without your efforts; I only wish I had the space to list each of you by name and to thank you personally, as you are all so deserving of our recognition. (I invite you to check the SSR Service List for a peek at the hundreds and hundreds of members who have volunteered to serve SSR since its inception in 1967: <http://www.ssr.org/ServiceList.shtml>.) Money is always important to any society, and very special thanks go to those agencies that support our mission with generous donations. These include the NICHD/NIH, the USDA CSREES NRI, the Foote Lectureship Fund, CONRAD, the Lalor Foundation, the Burroughs-Wellcome Fund, the Mahesh Neuroendocrine Program Fund, and the Mahesh New Investigator Award Fund. Lastly, great thanks go to the capable staff in the SSR office for all they do in running both the business aspects and virtually all of the logistical aspects of the Society. We are indeed fortunate to have had their service for such an extended time, and we hope this will continue for many more years.

Summary: Your Society is in good shape. Financially, we are sound—for the short term. The Annual Meeting continues to be a showcase for our efforts to promote and present excellent science. No expense is spared to bring to you the best data and speakers available in reproductive biology in the world. The journal is thriving. I continue to marvel at the dedication, inspiration, and demand for excellence that John and Mary Ann bring to the workings of *BOR*. It is such a source of pride to our Society that we must remain ever vigilant in keeping it that way. The Trainees continue to be an integral part of what we are and what we do; every effort must be made to maintain their inclusion in all things SSR. I am confident this will be done. I now call for significant efforts to be made in two important areas. First, I ask that each of you make a solid effort to recruit new members to our Society. I once heard it said at a Board meeting that "...it simply looks like there are about 2400 reproductive biologists in the world who want to belong to the SSR, and that is what we can expect to have as members." Perhaps, but I do not accept this statement as fact, and I would like to see if we can prove it not to be the case. Please try to recruit new members who will contribute to the strength of the SSR. Lastly, I request that each of you make a gift to the Society, no matter how small, so that we can continue to increase the range of benefits that the Society can bring to all of us. More money means more travel awards for Trainees, better educational programs, increased flexibility for social planning at the Annual Meeting, continued excellence of our journal in the changing world of digital publication, and a host of other things that will all serve to improve your SSR. We have a wonderful society; I ask all of you to continue to volunteer to serve it and support it in any way that you can.



Doug Stocco