ASPS President's Annual Report 2012

This is my last report as President. When I started in 2009, my to-do list included raising the profile of plant sciences in Australia; improving engagement with policy makers; developing a sense of belonging in the Society by expanding the responsibilities of the disciplines representative and through the use of social media; and developing some systems to simplify the administration of the society. So, how far have we come?

Fascination of Plants Day (18th May), inaugurated by the Global Plant Council, presented an opportunity to talk about plants. It was co-ordinated locally by the Australian Centre for Plant Functional Genomics, and I thank them and especially their communication manager, Arwen Cross. See http://www.plantday12.eu/australia.htm for a list of institutions, activities and media reports. The videos made by school children were fantastic! The ASPS photo competition was not exactly over-subscribed but it is something that I think we could really develop. Thank you to Elizabeth Finkel and CSIRO for donating the book prizes.

In terms of engaging with policy makers, Chris Cazzonelli attended *Science meets Policymakers* at the Australian Academy of Science on our behalf (see his report in the latest Phytoge). As President, I have been contacted by the media a few times to comment on plant-related research in the media, so at least some journalists know we exist. We send two people each year to *Science meets Parliament* (organised by Science Technology Australia). Hon Sec Christine Beveridge and Gonzales Estavillo represented the ASPS this year. As president, I started serving on the Academy of Science's National Committee for Plant and Animal Sciences , chaired by Prof Roger Leigh. Our task is to respond to government policy documents (currently the National Food Plan). We are also working on a decadal plan for Agricultural research and education in Australia. I hear about all sorts of exciting things happening in the world of plant science through this committee and have been passing them on to you through emails, Twitter and FaceBook with the aim of raising awareness within the Society about special achievements and honours among our members.

Phytogen continues to be an important avenue of communication within the Society. We are very grateful to Tina Offler for continuing to edit our newsletter and thank her for all her efforts and innovations over the past year. Social media is becoming more and more important for communicating with wider audiences. FaceBook and Twitter are surprisingly easy to use and I am happy to continue maintaining them, if the new Council want me to. If you go to the page and click "Like" you will receive the items posted on our page in your FB newsfeed. It also helps us monitor how many supported we have.

This brings me to the Website. Tony Ashton, past treasurer, did a huge amount a few yeas ago streamlining our website and doing a lot of grunt work to get it in order and since then Helen Irving has been keeping it in order. The problem for me has been that it is not easy to update and the interface with the databases is rather cumbersome. This is one reason why I started sending around my "President updates" every few months. The ASPS Council decided last year to revamp the website, paying particular attention to the backend. Feedback from Discipline reps and Councillors was fed into the planning process. Features include an easy on-line system for advertising, an up to date membership directory, a News section (with Twitter feed) and Discipline sections where reps can post information and engage with their sections of the society. We will also have a Blog-style add-on for Phytogen. There are "Share" options on each page so you can tweet about what you read. A big thank you to Webmaster Michael Major and ASPS executive assistant Robert Shepherd for their efforts on this nearly completed task. It is very exciting to be able to launch the new website tonight.

Conferences: Last year's ComBio2011 was in Cairns. It was a smaller meeting, being so far away, but there was a great program and many thanks to chair Jim Burnell and ASPS representatives Graham Bonnett and Susanne Schmidt for making it such a success. The

ASPS dinner was particularly entertaining. ComBio2012 has representation from seven different societies. The Plant streams are really excellent. I would like to pass on my thanks to Steve Tyerman and Rachel Burton for representing the ASPS, with support from Geoff Fincher on the organising committee and Stuart Pitson, the conference chair. Thank you to Kathy Soole for co-ordinating the team of postgrads organising this year's ASPS dinner.

Prize winners and special lectures. Congratulations to this year's prizewinners. The winner of the Goldacre award is Dr Joshua Mylne (UQ), the ASPS Teaching Award is Dr Alex Johnson (Uni Melb) and the FPB Best Paper goes to Dr Arati Agarwal (DPI, Victoria). This year's RN Robertson lecture is to be delivered by Prof John Patrick (U Newcastle). Winners of the student prizes for both posters and orals will be announced tomorrow.

Education. Plants in Action 2 has been slow to get finished, but the core chapters are now close to completion. Dr Rana Munns has been the driving force behind this important project, with a lot of support from Susanne Schmidt. Thank you to both of them for their hard work and also to all those who have completed their chapters, and to the chapter reviewers.

Functional Plant Biology. We continue our special relationship with FPB. Rana Munns continues as Editor-in-Chief at least until March 2013. We thank FPB/CSIRO Publishing for continuing to sponsor the Goldacre Award and Best Paper Award. We also thank Managing Editor Dr Chris Anderson for his support for the society this past year, including sponsorship of the Fascination of Plants Day prizes. Visit the FPB PrometheusWiki FaceBook page for updates of this important initiative. Click "Like" to receive updates on your 'timeline'.

Council, Executive and Administration

ASPS is a lean operation with no secretariat. I would like to thank Robert Shepherd (post grad member) for his help as executive assistant over the past year and during the conference. The ASPS executive consists of the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the past President/ President-elect (depending on the point in the cycle). We meet by phone every couple of months, and otherwise by email, and visit each other when we are in the same town. I want to thank the current executive for their efforts this year. Thank you to Christine Beveridge for taking over as Secretary from John Evans, and to Helen Irving for her work as treasurer, and to past President Rana Munns who has continued on as brain-trust extraordinaire. I would also like to thank all the current, outgoing and incoming councillors for supporting ASPS for their readiness to serve. Thank you also to our Public Officer, John Evans (the role relates to our registration as a legal entity in the ACT) and Barry Pogson who is our representative on both the Global Plant Council and Science Technology Australia.

Finally I would like to thank you all for letting me serve the plant science community for the last two years through my role of President of the ASPS. I am pleased with some of things we have achieved. One thing I never got to was to establish a simple mentoring program for our younger members, but it's not possible to do everything. I am very pleased to nominate Tim Colmer as President. He has been serving on the executive for the past year as President-elect and I can assure you that the Society is in good hands.

Best wishes and happy researching, communicating and teaching about plants! They really are fascinating.



Assoc/Prof Ros Gleadow, ComBio2012, Adelaide, September 2012