

The Need for Textbooks in Plant Pathology

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Instructors of graduate courses in plant pathology are at a distinct disadvantage compared to those in other disciplines when it comes to choosing textbooks. The choices are usually one or none. Generally, this leads to a logistical logjam when one tries to bring together reprints, book chapters, reference lists, lecture outlines, and other materials needed to provide students with a proper, modern approach to the various ramifications of plant pathology. As a consequence, copy machines never cool; in fact,

they greatly influence the choices of material made available to graduate students. In addition, libraries may or may not fulfill our needs, depending on how liberally they are budgeted for plant pathology literature. In any case, I would prefer to have the student provided with his own literature within limits of feasibility and have him use his library time more extensively for his research or special interests.

I made a brief survey of advanced textbooks in plant pathology. At present, only two areas, virology and epidemiology, seem to have adequate modern texts. In virology, strides are so rapid that frequent revisions are necessary, and this keeps the cost per book very high. In fact, the basic problem of providing books for our sciences is that expected sales are too low to warrant investment by a publisher; so the needs continue and a solution is wanting.

From my knowledge of graduate curricula, courses for which current texts are needed include genetics in plant pathology, virology, phytobacteriology, epidemiology, principles of

control, vector relations, methods in plant pathology, physiology of pathogenesis, biology of edaphic pathogens, biology of phytopathogens, and comprehensive principles of plant pathology. Some may wish to include everything in one grand package, principles of plant pathology, but such a course would require comprehensive development of the other topics listed. In addition, despite the current emphasis on concepts, I adhere to the approach that one must have a repertoire of diseases before one can fully appreciate concepts. Therefore, there is a need for "diseases of" books wherein principles, as well as symptoms, cycles, and controls, are presented. Jim Dickson's book "Diseases of Field Crops" was the best of these until it became obsolete. The new book by G. R. Dixon, "Vegetable Crop Diseases," typifies the style that is needed. I doubt if traditional publishers would be willing to become involved in such a variety of titles, and if they were willing, the books would be expensive. So what solutions could be sought?

The APS has demonstrated considerable craftsmanship and finesse in developing compendia, manuals, monographs, and classics. The possibility of printing textbooks for the courses cited earlier should be considered. Textbooks in the traditional sense have a number of drawbacks, namely, preparation time, printing costs, and early obsolescence. The Society has an abundance of potential authors who, working together, could compose the texts and thereby shorten preparation time. Such activity could be sponsored by APS subject matter committees. The price may be reduced by utilizing the loose-leaf concept. This has the advantage that an entire book need not be published at one time but could be produced in phases. In addition, when traditional books become obsolete, if only in sections, the entire books must be revised, printed, and bound. The loose-leaf approach would make plausible revision of obsolete sections or chapters; thereby, current material would be available for a minimum price.

Could it be done? Is the proposal reasonable? I don't know, but I think it deserves consideration by members, subject matter committees, the Council, and the technical staff of APS.

Are Monographs Worth the Effort?

About 1975, the APS Council converted the ad hoc Monographs and Reviews Committee (M & RC) to a standing committee of the Society. Through July 1982, no new monographs had been approved for publication and only one—on *Phytophthora cinnamomi*—that had been previously approved has been issued. Two monographs have been considered and approved for revision, and one new title approved by the committee has not been approved by the Council. Thus, since its establishment as a standing committee the M & RC has little to show for the time and effort given by committee members. A former M & RC chairman canvassed the APS membership concerning who would buy and who would use monographs. From approximately 3,000 APS members, 34 replied; that is an appalling show of interest. So I ask, is a monograph committee really worth the effort and are monographs worthy of future expenditures by the APS? Some members of the Council must think so because at least twice it has been suggested that the M & RC be dissolved or combined with the Plant Disease Compendium Committee.

For the present, the outlook for publication of new monographs seems dim. The financial obligations invoked on the APS by PLANT DISEASE have forced the Council to act cautiously about publishing items that would not quickly return publication costs to the APS. Monographs have not exactly been best-sellers. Compendia, on the other hand, have been the proverbial "ship that came in" for APS and have contributed

much to our solvency. As a result, monographs have become as unwanted stepchildren. I have jokingly referred to the M & RC as the "No Money for Monographs Committee" and to the Compendium Committee as the "Oh boy! Another Compendium Committee." Money and the need to have a stable income play a major role in Council's decisions on what is to be published.

The APS was not organized to be a money-making society. Its constitutional objective is "to promote the increase and diffusion of all aspects of knowledge relating to plant diseases and their control." Have we become somewhat obsessed with money-making projects rather than addressing our constitutional objective? If yes, there will be no more monographs; if no, the means to publish an occasional monograph can be found and those who have served the APS on the M & RC will know their efforts were well worth the while.

For the Council to approve publication, monographs would have to be broadly appealing and not too bulky and do well at the marketplace. Do you think these are attributes of monographs? By their nature, monographs will appeal to only a few members, but they can serve a major function in plant pathology. They can give revered experts in certain areas a chance to make a contribution to the archives. In a way, they can become modern phytopathological classics. Should we really turn our backs on a useful way to enrich our professional heritage?