

# The State of the American Phytopathological Society

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There have been more changes in the American Phytopathological Society in the past 10–12 years than in all previous years of our Society's history combined. Our headquarters in St. Paul was completed in 1971. We own and maintain the property on a 50:50 basis with the American Association of Cereal Chemists, but APS is now responsible (and pays) for 60% of the salaries and other overhead costs of doing business at headquarters. The *Compendium of Corn Diseases* was published in 1973, and now we

list 11 compendia completed and 4 in progress. *Plant Disease Reporter* became *PLANT DISEASE* in 1980 and now circulates at nearly 5,500 copies, a number slightly greater than that of *Phytopathology*. APS entered the book business in 1967, by publishing *The Dynamic Role of Molecular Constituents in Plant Parasite Interaction*, but a major involvement with books began with the corn compendium, followed in 1974 by *Serological Tests for Identification of Plant Viruses* and in 1975 by *Biology and Control of Soil-Borne Plant Pathogens*. Today, we list 12 books (other than compendia) in print. The total budget of the Society has increased from about \$300,000 for FY74 to more than \$1.5 million projected for FY84. Why all these recent changes, and are we heading in the right direction?

Our professional Society since its origin has been a "do it ourselves" Society. As plant pathologists, we establish professional standards independently of the agencies and organizations that employ us, and we impose these standards on one another through our meetings and journals. The decision to publish the corn compendium was consistent with our purpose. It was the first APS publication to serve mainly an extension role, and it marked the first conscious effort by our Society at service beyond our own membership. Approximately 100,000 compendia have been sold. No one could have predicted that nonjournal publications would, by 1984, generate more income than any other source, including membership dues. The anticipated income from books in 1984 is about \$350,000, up 25% from 1983. By comparison, income from dues is estimated at \$257,000 (up 7% from 1983), from *Phytopathology* at \$261,000 (up 6.5%), and from *PLANT DISEASE* at \$162,000 (up 11.7%). The income from nonjournal publications is helping the Society remain financially solvent without having to raise membership dues.

The decision to take over *PDR* as a second journal was also consistent with our purpose. When the USDA-ARS could no longer justify *PDR* as a budget item serving mainly plant pathology, we voted overwhelmingly to "do it ourselves." The first 3 years were survived financially through grants from the USDA-ARS, but *PLANT DISEASE* is now in the black without subsidy. However, producing journals ourselves is literally that, right down to paying for lights and heat, the staff, editing, producing the proofs, and composing the pages. These in-house costs are covered by subscriptions and membership dues, and page charges assessed of authors cover only the cost of printing the pages after editing, typesetting, and layout.

Having served on Council for 7 of the past 8 years, I know that no major decision has come without concern for an undoing of

the financial integrity of APS established by the earlier Councils. Besides new publications, Council also committed funds for modernization of our publications capability at headquarters, including funds for computer equipment to produce *Phytopathology* and *PLANT DISEASE* and to increase the amount and efficiency of membership services. Balanced against these new projects was the need, as a good business practice, to budget 5–10% as a reserve for emergencies or new projects. The income of our Society during the past several years has not allowed for both new projects or equipment and 5–10% of the budget as an operating reserve. Remarkably, in the fiscal year just ended, \$85,000 (6%) of our \$1,394,850 budget was identified and achieved as an operating reserve. In fact, the Society ended FY83 with a surplus of \$7,596 beyond the reserve. This sound financial condition of the Society is a credit to excellent business decisions made by previous Councils and to the sound professional advice of our Executive Vice-President, Raymond J. Tarleton.

APS is now launched into the nonjournal publications business. Speaking as a book buyer, I want books at a price I can afford. Speaking as an author, I want my books to be available at a price others can afford. Many book publishers have abandoned the individual book buyer and plan only for sales to libraries. By doing it ourselves, we can publish books on plant pathology at a price much lower than would be charged by some well-known publishers. On the other hand, we pay the price when our turn comes to serve as an unpaid editor, reviewer, or board member; in this regard, there will continue to be a limit to the amount we can do for ourselves with volunteers.

The Society must continue its balancing act between taking on new commitments and maintaining financial integrity. There is also the need for balance between projects that are worthy but cannot pay their way and must be subsidized and projects that generate enough income to make up the difference. Most requests of the Society are for projects or areas of activity that must be subsidized. And there is the new problem of charges by banks to clear checks from members in other countries when the check is in U.S. dollars but is drawn on a foreign bank. While APS is a nonprofit organization, we must generate income in order to spend it, and generating income is much more difficult than dispensing it. Moreover, the amount of income generated by a project such as a new book or journal is a pretty good indicator of the amount of good accomplished. What better service than to produce a commodity having a high demand?

Our membership has increased by about 30% in the past 10 years, to about 4,250. Meeting attendance has increased, in contrast to some societies who report that meeting attendance is down. The number of papers and posters presented at our annual meetings reached an all-time high of 653 in 1982 (Salt Lake City), compared with 420 in 1976 (Kansas City) and 429 in 1977 (Michigan State). APS registrants for the Diamond Jubilee meeting in Ames submitted 625 abstracts, of which 473 were posters. These and other statistics leave no doubt that we are in a growth phase.

Council is considering construction of a warehouse for the storage of our inventory, either on existing property or on land available next to our headquarters building. An ad hoc committee is assessing the need for a publication equivalent to *Fungicide and Nematicide Tests*, but which would accept reports of data on biological, cultural, and genetic control. It is also only a matter of time before we enter the age of electronic communications and perhaps begin to phase out our existing journals, at least in their present form. The opportunities ahead are exciting, and I believe our Society is ready to deal wisely and progressively with each one.