

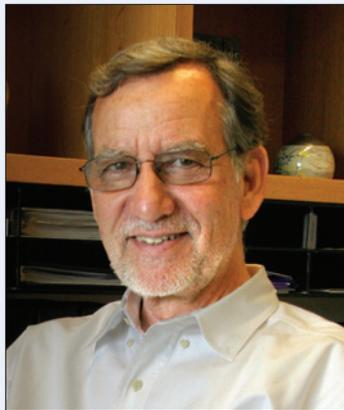


ASCB, The International Society for Biosciences?

ASCB President Tim Mitchison invited Jim Spudich, Chair, ASCB International Affairs Committee, to write this column.

When Mary Beckerle and Bruce Alberts, prior Co-Chairs and *ex officio* members of ASCB's International Affairs Committee (IAC), asked if I would consider taking on the role of Chair of IAC starting January 2010, I immediately and enthusiastically accepted. There is no more pivotal role for our Society than to broadly foster communications and collaborations with the world at large. The importance of the IAC's role is manifest by the number of prior ASCB presidents who continue to devote their time and energy to IAC affairs. The devotion of Cheryl Lehr (ASCB Executive Assistant/Office Manager) and Joan Goldberg (ASCB Executive Director) in facilitating initiatives that have come from the IAC is remarkable and ensures the success of our endeavors.

The major objectives of the IAC are "to serve ASCB's international members and enhance their engagement in the Society, to reach out to international colleagues to promote scientific exchange, and to contribute to building capacity in cell biology worldwide." To that I would explicitly add "to transcend the complex political issues facing the world today, and set an example of how to cooperate productively, sharing ideas, and creatively moving forward." As one of the strongest biological science societies in the world, ASCB has an obligation to help bring these objectives to fruition. Many ASCB members are already deeply involved in these endeavors, and I'm delighted to report that this year we have started several new initiatives to add to the extremely productive programs established in prior years. Our current initiatives, summarized below, are strong and growing due to hard work and devotion by all of the IAC members, as well as that of many other ASCB members who are Associates of the IAC.



Jim Spudich

Global Outreach Programs

IAC Roundtable at the ASCB Annual Meeting

The highly popular IAC Roundtable, headed by Judith Kimble with heavy involvement from

Deborah Lycan, is held at the ASCB Annual Meeting. The goals of the IAC Roundtable are to foster interactions between the U.S. and international attendees, to discuss science and policy issues of special significance for international attendees, and to provide suggestions to ASCB leadership regarding programs and benefits. Members of the IAC and ASCB Council facilitate discussions over lunch. Participants include

international and U.S. graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

International Research & Training Exchange Fair

A wonderful idea from Dick McIntosh being enthusiastically organized by Vivek Malhotra, the International Research & Training Exchange Fair is new in 2010. It will be held at the ASCB Annual Meeting on the first evening during the 50th Anniversary Reception. Its goal is to enable attendees to learn about research, training, and other opportunities in countries around the world. Information about scientific institutions from a wide variety of regions around the world will be displayed. Representatives will be in attendance at each table to answer questions.

iBioSeminars

A spectacular international initiative is the open-access iBioSeminars, spearheaded by Ron Vale. These lectures, largely funded by Howard Hughes Medical Institute, are viewed in more than 100 countries. Vale and Karen Dell have worked tirelessly to create an extensive and highly popular, freely available library of seminars. Outstanding scientists host lectures on ongoing research in leading laboratories.

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iBioSeminars start with an extended introduction, making them accessible to nonspecialists and students, and then progress to cover current research. Everyone from students to senior scientists can view these lectures. The lectures are intended to be more accessible than most typical seminars for advanced undergraduates/beginning graduate students and researchers outside of the specific field. iBioSeminars are being used by undergraduate and graduate teachers to augment their classroom material. An education component has now been added to the website (see www.ibioseminars.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107&Itemid=6).

iBioMagazine

A complementary initiative to iBioSeminars is being launched. Called iBioMagazine, this new project features short 10- to 15-minute videos focused on behind-the-scenes issues of science.

IAC Columns in the *ASCB Newsletter*

Since January 2007, IAC members and colleagues have written articles of interest to scientists around the world. Under the leadership of Mark Peifer and Mahasin Osman, articles include the most recent “Cell Biology under the Puerto Rican Sun,” “Bridging the Gap: Cell Biology in Sub-Saharan Africa,” “Cell Biology in Argentina,” an upcoming article on cell biology in Israel, and an article on India. Osman has recently recruited articles on Brazil and Ghana that will appear in future issues.

International Federation for Cell Biology (IFCB) and Other International Organizations

Through its membership in the IFCB, ASCB helps support travel funds for young scientists, many of whom are ASCB members, to attend IFCB’s Congresses held around the world. Cynthia Jensen attends the IFCB Congresses on behalf of ASCB and promotes relationships with other cell biology associations, such as the Korean Society for Cell and Molecular Biology and the Asian Pacific Organization for Cell Biology.

ASCB Co-Sponsored International Meetings

In light of the international constituency of the ASCB, the IAC has pursued cosponsorship of meetings abroad. This initiative began with a joint meeting with the European Cytoskeleton Forum titled “Dynamic Interplay Between

Cytoskeletal and Membrane Systems” facilitated by David Drubin, Daniel Louvard, and Laura Machesky. The meeting, held in Dijon, France, attracted about 200 scientists from Europe, South America, North America, Australia, and Asia. A second international meeting was held in Japan in 2009, facilitated by Mark Peifer, Sachiko Tsukita, and Masatoshi Takeichi, and jointly sponsored by ASCB, RIKEN, and the Japanese Society for Cell Biology. IAC members David Roos and Cynthia Jensen are looking into a potential meeting in Brazil or Singapore for which ASCB can be a cosponsor with no monetary obligation.

Outreach to Specific Countries African Workshops

One of our most unusual programs is our African teaching and research training program, the brainchild of Dick McIntosh in 2008. It involves many ASCB members. ASCB has been fortunate to obtain a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to support this endeavor. Olympus and Zeiss have also contributed significantly by donating relevant microscopy equipment. A primary goal of this program is to teach young African researchers and teachers about modern cell biology, using Web-based resources and other material that can help to enrich whatever textbook material is available. A second goal is to present laboratory exercises (practicals) that provide hands-on experience with important and commonly used methods for cell biology and that use inexpensive materials to demonstrate important concepts. A focus of each course has been on the cell biology of diseases that are locally relevant, like malaria and sleeping sickness, so the students of the course will leave carrying valuable materials with which to excite and educate their own students. Courses have been given in Tanzania and Ghana, where members of ASCB and colleagues have partnered with African universities to provide two weeks of intensive instruction. Aspects of cell biology were taught to about 25 young African scientists in each course.

Books for Africa

This initiative originated in 2003 when Chris Watters taught cellular and molecular biology at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia as a Fulbright Fellow. While there, Watters became concerned about the severe shortage of textbooks at the university. He convinced

several publishers to donate texts in cell and molecular biology and biochemistry. As a result of Watters' hard work and dedication, ASCB launched the Books for Africa project under his direction in 2008. Books for Africa, in collaboration with numerous U.S. Embassies, now targets 35 universities in Egypt, Tunisia, the Sudan, Tanzania, Burundi, Swaziland, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and Algeria. To date 1,229 textbooks have been sent to African universities. Imagine how many lives have been touched by this effort, by a single ASCB member. Imagine what could transpire if half of ASCB's membership, or nearly 5,000 members, took on an effort of this nature!

Teaching and Research in India

This new initiative, headed by IAC member Satyajit Mayor with help from Shubha Tole and others, represents an exciting opportunity for ASCB members. Science education and research in India are experiencing an unprecedented stimulus. In addition to cutting-edge and exciting research at existing institutes,¹ new and exciting educational initiatives have been set into motion in the past four years. Five Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) and the related National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER) are distributed around the country (Figure 1). In addition, at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) in Bangalore, a new Stem Cell Biology Institute called inSTEM is being incubated, and the leaders of that endeavor are very interested in running programs focused on stem cell biology.

The development of these new initiatives in biological excellence is outpacing the number of highly qualified Indian teachers and researchers, and therefore represents an exciting opportunity for ASCB members. For more information, see p. 23.

Teaching in Turkey

IAC has begun exploring opportunities to secure funding to allow ASCB members to participate in co-teaching and contributing to scientific activities in Turkey. Jon Scholey heads this initiative and will teach at Bosphorus University

in Istanbul as a Fulbright Scholar this fall.

Teaching in South America

John Mercer and Meg Titus, leaders of a new initiative in South America, have been teaching courses and workshops in Brazil and Uruguay with a number of their colleagues. They have organized Pan-American Studies Institutes sponsored by National Science Foundation grants; other courses have been funded by South

American agencies and the European Molecular Biology Organization. The next course will be offered in August 2010 in Rio de Janeiro.

Partnerships

Seeding Labs

Recognizing that there are wonderful initiatives that have been established outside of the ASCB IAC, we seek to form partnerships to enhance our efforts and those of others. A case in point is Seeding Labs, a

nonprofit organization that enables researchers in the developing world to pursue high-impact science. Nina Dudnik, Seeding Labs founder and executive director, began this initiative as a student at Harvard Medical School in 2003. Her goal: to reclaim surplus equipment from the university and other public and private research institutions. In seven years Seeding Labs has provided over \$700,000 in scientific equipment to scientists in 16 countries. In the coming years, Seeding Labs aims to focus its work geographically to widen the range of services it provides. The IAC is committed to helping these activities.

Sister Societies

We have also initiated contacts with our sister societies in the biosciences to form partnerships that will help coordinate and enhance the efforts of all.

Conclusion and Perspectives

A little over a year ago, President Obama announced in Cairo, Egypt, that science envoys would be part of a new U.S. effort to build stronger relationships with Islamic communities around the world. The first three envoys, including our own Bruce Alberts, along with several officials of the U.S. government and



Figure 1. Locations of Indian Institutes

ambassadors from Muslim-majority countries, participated in the event to discuss how scientific partnerships can foster cooperation in areas of mutual interest. In this same vein, I am pleased that we have begun the initiative in Turkey. I am very much looking forward to helping this initiative blossom and participating in teaching there. I will also continue a decade-long interaction with the NCBS in Bangalore, where I hold an adjunct faculty position and teach and carry out research. Under the direction of Mayor, our India initiative promises to be truly spectacular.

Still, we are far from our ultimate goal. The American Society for Cell Biology is neither wholly “American” nor exclusively classical “cell biology.” Currently, 25% of the members of the Society represent more than 75 other countries; and modern cell biology is a powerful mixture of disciplines, including classical cell and developmental biology, neuroscience, biochemistry, biophysics, biomedicine, and bioengineering, to name a few. We can feel we have accomplished our goal when ASCB is

seen as *The International Society for Biosciences*, and viewed by scientists the world over as their Society. New, innovative, international initiatives will then surface from different parts of the world, which will complement and enhance those already in existence. Among the many things we need to do is to forge a much larger effort regarding global health. Energy utilization and sources must also be high on our radar screen. As we move further in these directions, we will be one step closer in helping to bring about better international communications and understandings. ■

Reference

¹Vale RD, Dell K. (2009). The biological sciences in India: aiming high for the future. *J Cell Biol* 184, 342–353.

More about all of these initiatives can be found on the IAC website (<http://tinyurl.com/ASCB-IAC>).

Comments are welcome and should be sent to Cheryl Lehr (clehr@ascb.org) or to Jim Spudich (jspudich@stanford.edu).

Calling All ASCB YouTubers!

Let others know why you joined the ASCB and why you remain a member. Why do you attend the ASCB Annual Meeting? Share your favorite ASCB Annual Meeting memory with the world!

We Want to Hear From You!

In recognition of our 50th Anniversary, the ASCB invites you to create a YouTube™-style video no more than 50 seconds in length for all to see. To say thank you, we'll give you a free ASCB t-shirt that can be picked up at the ASCB Annual Meeting in Philadelphia—you'll be there, right?

The process is simple.

- 1. Pick one of the following statements:**

I joined the ASCB because...

After __ years, I am still an ASCB member because...

I look forward to the ASCB Annual Meeting because...

My favorite ASCB Annual Meeting memory is...

I love cell biology because...

- 2. Create a 50-second video** in which you complete one of the statements above. Be creative.

Use props. Do whatever it takes to get the message across (in less than 50 seconds, of course).

- 3. Upload your video to www.ascb.org/youtube.** Be sure to include the title of your video, your name, and your contact information when submitting.

All approved videos will be posted to the ASCB's YouTube™ channel and the ASCB website, and may be used in other ASCB promotional materials. If you have questions or comments about this call for videos, contact the ASCB at 301-347-9300 or ascbinfo@ascb.org.

We look forward to receiving your submissions. Thank you for supporting your community! ■