"The ASCB has never been timid about living on the edge in an effort to try something new," explains Tom Pollard, Professor in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy at Johns Hopkins Medical School. No one better personifies this can-do, visionary spirit that he credits to the Society than does Pollard. "I like to see things work," he says. Pollard has consistently made things work since becoming a member of the ASCB in 1968. He credits his involvement and effectiveness simply to "being in the right place at the right time."

His efforts began when, as a fourth-year medical student at Harvard in 1969, Pollard gave a talk at the ASCB Annual Meeting in Boston on the participation of actin and myosin filaments in the motility of cytoplasmic extracts. His was the only presentation on cytoplasmic contractile proteins that year, so the talk appeared in the microtubule session. "The ASCB has been fortunate to capture new fields that grew stronger as time went on," Pollard points out. Being in such a field gave him immediate visibility within the Society, which led to his eventual election to the ASCB Council in 1976. In 1982, Pollard was Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee and in 1985 became Program Chair. Because of his proximity to Washington DC, Pollard then began testifying on behalf of the ASCB before the Senate and House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittees on Health and Human Services. It was here that he realized how effective a group can be versus an individual. Once Pollard became ASCB President in 1987, he raised the Society's expectations and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the monumental congressional education and publishing efforts the ASCB has undertaken in recent years: with Bill Brinkley, he began laying the foundation for the eventual hiring of ASCB Congressional Education liaison Peter Kyros; with Frank Ruddle, his efforts led to the Society finally owning and publishing its own journal, Molecular Biology of the Cell.

As past-President, Pollard was key to what eventually became the total overhaul of FASEB. Pollard, along with Bob Trelstad and then Executive Officer, Dorothea Wilson, drafted the terms by which the ASCB would join FASEB, terms that included dramatically lowering the dues, releasing member societies from the FASEB Annual Meeting, and making each department within FASEB self-sustaining so that societies would pay for only those services they needed and chose to purchase. The terms, which FASEB agreed to, were designed to make FASEB more service-oriented and responsive to its members. This opened the doors for full membership in FASEB for the ASCB, the Biophysical Society, and the American Association of Anatomists.

In addition to his activities within the ASCB, Pollard has been deeply committed to other science activities, including serving as Associate Editor of JCB from 1984 to 1991. "This probably took more time than any other activity," he explains, "involving the tracking and dispositions of more than 300 manuscripts per year." He felt that this investment of time was worthwhile because he perceived a real need to improve service to people who publish in cell biology and to improve the quality of manuscripts in his area of science. "I
left my position at JCB," he explains, "with the satisfaction of knowing that my field is being covered well by the Journal."

Currently, having just finished the reorganization of Johns Hopkins Medical School's first year curriculum and serving as Chair of the ASCB Nominating Committee, Pollard continues his service as President of the Biophysical Society, as Associate Editor of MBC, and as Director of the Physiology Course during the summers at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole.

Pollard is frequently asked how he finds the time for so many activities. He credits three secrets: that he belongs to a "very small club of scientists who have no computer in their office": that he does not do everything himself, but tries "to mobilize people who are interested"; and that he doesn't "do paperwork in the office." Bringing the paperwork home is not a problem, he claims, because his whole family keeps busy with their own projects after the family dinner. "We all like to see things work!" His wife, Patty, is State President of the Maryland Chapter of the League of Women Voters and the co-founder of the Maryland Educational Coalition. His daughter and son are both involved in their own school and extra-curricular activities. "We all feel that it's important to contribute to our communities," he explains, "whether that be school, neighborhood, city, or the state."

His involvement with the ASCB is far from over. "The ASCB is more responsive to its members than any other organization I've been involved in," Pollard points out, "with everyone willing to make it work." His experience has shown him that in most organizations many good ideas die because they are assigned to committees rather than individuals who are willing to run the programs. Yet the members of the ASCB have consistently been willing to find ways to implement good ideas. The latest endeavor that the Society is undertaking is the grassroots congressional education effort in which he is involved both through the ASCB and through the Biophysical Society. "It'll take three to four years to get our act together," explains Pollard, "but scientists should be at least as clever as the NRA in pressing our views. I hope that we can take the leadership in helping scientists work with their elected representatives."

"The ASCB has always been effective in promoting both good science and public affairs," Pollard claims, "and it will continue to do so because it is agile enough to stay out in the front on broader issues."