



# SEB

Society for Experimental Biology

# Bulletin

March 2011



# SEB@Glasgow

## From the President's desk



It hardly seems any time since I was composing my first President's letter for the SEB Bulletin. Two years seem to have flown past, an ugly cliché but sadly something that I think all experimental biologists, and most academics, are finding. I am involved in so many exciting projects, each one in itself enjoyable and

important. However, with the number of research, teaching, writing, reviewing and management activities we all have, finding the time to follow up anything is a real challenge. Perhaps more worryingly, I do wonder if there is enough time to reflect on the bigger picture and to have the opportunity to let my innate curiosity (perhaps a defining characteristic of experimental biologists) determine the next actions. With the ubiquity of internet and telephones, even waiting time is no longer an opportunity for reflection, perhaps with just a notebook (paper that is, not something with a keyboard!). At the coalface of teaching, I am very worried about the lack of curiosity in students - "Where can I find out more? Why does that happen? How?" has been replaced by the mantras "Is it in the exam? Which page of the textbook do I need to read? When are we getting the example questions?". Actually, I am wrong in writing 'lack of curiosity in students' and really mean 'suppression of curiosity' through years of testing at school and no push to go beyond what will be in the exam. The enormous availability of textbooks, high quality and focused on the curriculum and not going one step further, is certainly a problem, and a true key-skill is extracting understandable and valuable information from advanced research papers. Anyway, my University's marking criteria are absolutely clear; well-constructed arguments without significant errors will not get you the top degree classification; for that, you need to show evidence of originality of thought, analytical skill and use of outside reading from the research literature. These are certainly values at the forefront of teaching experimental biology.

This year, we will be back in Glasgow for our Annual Meeting. The conference centre there offers us excellent lecture rooms, all in the same area of the building, with lots of space to have the posters and exhibition. The sun and warmth of our last two meetings in Glasgow have given many people a new view of Glasgow, which I hope will be repeated this July. I know it is difficult to get away from the meeting with our dense programme of parallel sessions, but the centre of Glasgow is only 15 minutes walk away and it is well worth seeing the monumental architecture, or for a different view on life go to the necropolis in the cemetery. The walk and the opportunities to talk to new and old colleagues all provide the opportunities for reflection and talking about the bigger picture that I was advocating in my first paragraph. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Glasgow!

**Pat Heslop-Harrison**  
President.



## Call for applications for an Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Experimental Botany

The Society for Experimental Biology is seeking to appoint an Editor in Chief to take effect from January 2012. The *Journal of Experimental Botany* is an established and innovative international journal publishing high quality primary research papers and reviews since 1950 and now includes extra publications such as The Flowering Newsletter. It is wholly owned by the Society for Experimental Biology and published by Oxford University Press. The journal has a novel open access policy and currently an impact factor of 4.27. Under the two previous editors-in-chief the journal has seen a steady growth in submissions and an increase in the impact factor. Please see <http://jxb.oxfordjournals.org/>

The Society is seeking an Editor-in-Chief, a scientist of international standing with a good track record of publishing in high quality international journals, a person with excellent leadership skills and the ambition and vision to drive this innovative journal forward. Funding is available for journal development.

The term is for 5 years and is an honorary post that carries an honorarium (expenses associated with the role will be covered). The position is supported by a managing editor and editorial office currently with three staff. The post may be held by a scientist resident within or outside the UK.

Further information can be obtained in the first instance from Professor M. M. Burrell [m.burrell@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.burrell@sheffield.ac.uk).

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