

The American Society of Human Genetics

Business Meeting Minutes • San Diego, California • October 18, 2002

ASHG president, P. Michael Conneally, opened the meeting by thanking the ASHG administrative staff for its professionalism and outstanding support throughout the year. He then asked for a moment of silence in memory of two deceased members, Ed Hodes and Michael John Singer.

Conneally welcomed new board members Diana Bianchi, Bronya Keats, and Cynthia Morton, and congratulated the new president-elect, Robert Nussbaum*. He presented gifts and thanked the members who were leaving the board: Directors Jane Gitscher, Lou Kunkel and Jim Lupski, and Past President Ron Worton.

SECRETARY'S REPORT - Ann Walker

Ann Walker asked for a motion to approve 2001 business meeting minutes from San Diego, posted on the ASHG Web site in September 2002. The motion was seconded. There were no objections.

For the 2002 election, Walker thanked members of the Nominating Committee: Max Muenke, chair; Debra Driscoll; Thomas Hart; Mary Claire King; Bruce Korf; David Ledbetter; and Ann Matthews. In 2002, there were 4,772 ballots mailed to members in good standing. 1,326 members voted resulting in a 27.8 percent return rate, which was slightly lower than last year. Walker mentioned the future possibility of voting on the Web, which could lead to increased member participation in the election process.

As of October 2002, there were 7,283 paid ASHG members, including 1,200 student members and overseas trainees. "Overseas trainee" is a new category this year. There are 78 new members who formerly would have joined as "overseas affiliates." Walker reported that ASHG is making efforts to attract international students.

This year 1,078 memberships lapsed, an increase of almost 57 percent from last year, although membership compared to last year increased by five percent. The increase may be due to the ease of renewing membership on the Web. Walker said that members can also change their contact information for the online directory via the ASHG Web site. At the Board meeting this year, a committee was appointed to study what demographic information would be needed to improve methods of tracking members at ASHG annual meetings. Walker asked members to contact her by e-mail with suggestions on collecting useful data. An audience member pointed out that she was able to access and change other people's data on the ACMG Web site and wanted ASHG to make certain that its system is secure.

Walker presented data on annual meeting preregistration figures as of September 17, 2002. At that time, there were 4,014 preregistrants. Of all preregistrants, 70 percent were either regular or trainee members. Seventy-four percent were from the US; five percent were from Canada. Fifty-one other nations are represented at the meeting. Approximately 66 percent of preregistrants reported that their primary activity was either basic or clinical research; approximately 20 percent said they were involved in patient care activities. This year for the first time attendees could register on the Web up to a few days before the meeting, so it is difficult to compare registration figures with previous years.

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TREASURER'S REPORT - Jan Friedman

Friedman summarized actual expenses and revenue for 2001. Revenue from the general activity fund decreased substantially, reflecting an \$86,000 loss in ASHG's stock portfolio. Membership figures were nearly the same or increased slightly. There was a \$10 increase in membership dues last year. The Journal institutional subscription rate was increased by \$100 between 2001 and 2002, with a similar increase between 2002 and 2003. In terms of projected revenue, the annual meeting remains the same. General activity expenses increased substantially between 2001 and 2002 due to establishing the office of the executive vice president, as well as making major changes and improvements to the ASHG Web site. Membership expenses remained unchanged.

Journal expenses increased in 2002 and will increase again in 2003 because of costs at the University of Chicago, which have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

Meeting expenses are approximately the same as last year because of favorable rental agreements with the Baltimore Convention Center this year and an even more favorable agreement with the Los Angeles Convention Center next year.

Friedman concluded that the Society continues to be in a healthy financial state.

EDITOR'S REPORT - Stephen Warren

Warren reported that circulation of the Journal is doing well with approximately 5,684 member and 1,500 institutional subscriptions. He thanked retiring editorial board members Chris Amos, Allen Bale, Bernice Morrow and Steven Narod. New editorial board members are Joan Bailey-Wilson, Hal Dietz, Eleanor Feingold and Bruce Korf.

There were 35 eligible papers submitted for the Cotterman Award. Awardees are Anachera Finale and Harold Boring. This award was established to provide an incentive to ASHG members who are students and fellows. In addition to 35 eligible manuscripts, many more were submitted by nonmember authors. Membership applications will be sent to them next year. Warren asked members with students and fellows in their programs to encourage them to apply for ASHG membership and compete for the award.

Manuscript submissions this year are projected to be 1,120, a slight dip after 1999. There is a 25 percent acceptance rate, compared with a previous 30 percent acceptance rate. The journal citation rank has remained relatively stable; AJHG is now ranked seventh. Nature Review Genetics, primarily a review-based publication, has inched ahead. Publications of this type generally are cited more often than literature publications. However, AJHG ranks third in publishing primary research. In journals primarily featuring articles on human genetics, AJHG is ranked second following Nature Genetics, and it is anticipated that this ranking will continue.

The Journal office staff continues to work on reducing time for manuscript processing, which currently takes approximately 53 days from submission to acceptance (a small decrease from last year). Time from submission to rejection (including rejections with and without review) is approximately two weeks.

Warren said that his office continues on the fast track with manuscripts of unusual significance. The average time for these manuscripts from submission to first decision is 11

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days, from submission to acceptance is 22 days, and from submission to electronic publication is 42 days. Since beginning the fast track option, the editorial office has received an increase in the number of manuscripts requesting this service without justification. Authors of those manuscripts are now offered a slightly more rapid review process than normal. The most rapid track for manuscript processing is as follows: from submission to first decision, 4 days; from submission to acceptance, 7 days; from submission to electronic publication, 14 days. In 2003, the editorial office is planning to implement complete electronic manuscript submission and review. Warren said that those parameters are being looked at presently, and he hopes that the program will be phased in within the next couple of months.

Warren thanked Kate Beauregard, Kathy Alden, Carissa Gilman, Mary Ann Hall and the editorial board for their assistance, and thanked members for serving as reviewers.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Joann Boughman

Boughman began by reviewing some of ASHG's major policy issues. She informed members that ASHG's effectiveness will increase if it builds and sustains strong partnerships with other organizations such as FASEB, TGAC, and The National Health Council. This year, much of the activity on Capitol Hill has involved legislation related to September 11, 2001. There are two pieces of homeland security-related legislation on issues impacting immigration law and visa status that Boughman's office has been following and clarifying for Congress. These changes in legislation have had an adverse affect on a variety of universities and on the scientific community's international collaborations. Concern also exists with some aspects of the biomedical sciences being moved from the Department of Health and Human Services to the new Department of Homeland Security. One issue of major concern is the peer review process, which could be radically changed. Boughman emphasized that the integrity of the peer review system must be maintained. She also discussed HIPAA regulations and the importance of working in partnership with other organizations, specifically ACMG, to ensure that these regulations do not have an adverse impact on the human genetics community.

Regarding congressional focus on 2003 appropriations, Boughman told members that NIH is working under a continuing resolution that could last through March 2003. She pointed out the possibility that not only would NIH not achieve its doubling, but that FY04 funding may also be in jeopardy.

ASHG has been very active with fellow organizations on the stem cell and cloning issues. In addition, until two weeks ago, genetics and patient advocacy-related organizations were hopeful that genetic non-discrimination legislation would progress through Congress. However, ASHG is working with NHGRI to combine the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Watson and Crick publication in April and the concurrent announcement of the completion of the human genome with a strategy to emphasize the importance of protecting all Americans by passing genetic non-discrimination legislation.

Boughman explained that ASHG also is working on executive department policy issues including data sharing, informed consent, and human subjects. She said that the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing, created during the Clinton administration, is one of many committees disbanded by the Bush administration. To replace this committee the current administration has put forward a charge for a new Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Health and Society. ASHG has submitted the names of several nominees for

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committee membership to Secretary Thompson.

ASHG is working in collaboration with NHGRI on several initiatives including a shared fellowship that may begin as early as the first of January.

In addition, the Administrative Office is working closely with FASEB to produce a genetics poster for distribution to approximately 70,000 public health organizations; educational institutions including middle, high school, undergraduate and graduate programs; congressional offices; and policy makers in the DC area. Boughman noted that one of FASEB's "Breakthroughs in Science" articles about genetics will be mailed to approximately 10,000 individuals and organizations. ASHG is represented on all of FASEB's committees. Boughman stressed that when she visits offices on Capitol Hill accompanied by the FASEB director of public policy, who represents 60,000 scientists, many elected officials "sit up and take notice."

She then spoke of ASHG's Web site initiatives including a new homepage design and a focus on using the Web site to enhance communication among members. She invited members to send ideas to her by e-mail that would help create a more useful Web site.

Finally, Boughman explained an initiative embraced by the Board of Directors: ASHG is working with NHGRI to announce the Mentor Network on April 25—the fiftieth anniversary of the Watson and Crick publication and the date selected for announcing the final sequencing of the human genome. ASHG is currently creating a member network of volunteer mentors to work with middle/high school science and biology teachers throughout the US and Canada. These mentors will visit classrooms in their geographic area and serve in a variety of roles such as teaching, discussing careers in genetics, and sharing the important news about the final sequencing of the human genome and its impact on health care. The goal is to have at least 1,000 geneticists in schools on April 25. Boughman encouraged members to sign up for the Mentor Network.

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE - Mary Kay Pelias

Rotating off the committee this year are Jeff Botkin, Jane Congleton and Frank Desposito. The new committee members are Louis "Skip" Elsas and Eric Johnson. The third position is pending.

Pelias reported that at this year's meeting, the Social Issues Committee sponsored its first two education sessions in social issues: one on policy and one on human subjects, third parties, and informed consent. The primary topic of interest to committee members involved representations, reception and perceptions of genetics research—how the lay public and the professional non-genetics public perceive what geneticists do and who they are. A full-length manuscript will be written including topics such as geno-hype and what it means, the genetic mystique (misperceptions about genetics), direct marketing of genetic tests, and online genetic counseling. Members of the committee hope to have this project, led by Tim Caulfield and Wendy Uihman, completed by the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Watson and Crick publication on April 25. The Committee is also planning to write a short position paper on issues related to expanded newborn screening. Angela Scheuerle and Skip Elsas will chair this initiative. In the future, the Committee hopes to address issues including race, ethnicity, pharmacogenetics, and blanket consent.

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INFORMATION AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Bronya Keats

Members of the 2002 Committee are L. Baumbach, C. Christianson, B. Korf, L. Oman-Ganes, V. Riccardi, F. Kaplan, A. Panya and S. Terry. Christianson and Korf will be rotating off the Committee. New members for 2003 will be P. Gregory, D. Gale and N. Lamb. The new chair will be announced soon. Keats said that the updated medical school curriculum guidelines have been posted on the ASHG and APHMG Web sites as a joint effort of the two organizations. She reported on the success of the high school student/teacher workshop held on Tuesday, the day before the meeting. In spite of the cancellation of field trips throughout most of Maryland, 58 students and 12 teachers attended. They participated in hands-on and interactive sessions on hereditary cancer, human variation, genomics, evolution, disease and newborn screening.

ASHG will be represented at the NABT and NSTA meetings. Lynn Jorde will be a featured speaker at the NABT annual meeting. Loraine Oman-Ganes has organized a half-day workshop for the NSTA meeting in Philadelphia in March 2003.

Keats encouraged members to submit education proposals for the education sessions at the 2003 meeting in Los Angeles.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE - Diana Bianchi

Bianchi reported that attendance for the Baltimore meeting has reached 4,968. This compares favorably with 4,869 attendees at the 2002 Philadelphia meeting and 4,314 attendees at the 2001 San Diego meeting, despite the events of September 11. Members leaving the Program Committee are R. Gibbs, M. Muenke, V. Sheffield, D. Bianchi and H. Orr. They will be replaced by E. Green, M. MacDonald, R. Spielman, Stratakis and A. Wynshaw Boris.

Bianchi said that 2,472 abstracts were submitted, of which 2,447 were published and will be presented at the Baltimore meeting. She reported that while there was a problem with the audio-visual portion of the meeting, comments were predominately positive regarding scientific content. Program changes, including distributing invited sessions over several days, have been very favorably received. Program Committees will continue to determine themes or focuses for annual meetings. The ASHG Board, in its session in conjunction with the 2002 meeting, voted to make education sessions formally part of the scientific program. Consequently, committee meetings cannot be scheduled during these sessions.

Charis Eng, chair of the 2003 Program Committee, discussed plans for the Los Angeles meeting. Saturday evening entertainment will be at Universal Studios. The meeting schedule, including two free evenings, will not change. On Thursday evening, November 6, there will be "A Night at the Movies" for meeting attendees as planned by a subcommittee. Eng reminded members that the deadline to receive invited proposals is November 3.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HUMAN GENETICS SOCIETIES - Judith Hall

Judith Hall reported that the International Federation was formed six years ago to increase communication among international human genetic societies, to respond to documents under review, and to support international human genetics congresses held every five years. In the last year, two organizations, the Latin American Network of Human Genetic Societies and the East Asia Union of Human Genetics Societies, joined The American Society

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of Human Genetics, The European Society of Human Genetics, and The Human Genetics Society of Australasia as full members. There are also 46 human genetics organizations from as many countries that are corresponding or affiliate members.

The presidency rotates every three years. Uta Francke will retire as president at the end of 2002 and Eric Hahn from Australia will become president. Judith Allanson will replace Judith Hall as the permanent ASHG representative. Names of all member organizations and their officers along with policy statements can be accessed through the ASHG Web site. Hall reminded members in process of developing policy statements and in need of helpful models to check policy statements of European societies and their subgroup, EuROGap.

So far, IFHGS has not been asked to comment on any specific documents. However, the United Nations (UN) planned on developing an international convention for human cloning. To assist UN members in understanding the complexities of this situation, Francke wrote a letter to all IFHGS societies requesting that they contact their UN ambassadors. While most would agree with a ban on human reproductive cloning, there are many other types of cloning that are very important for research and for therapies. Societies were asked to help clarify these issues.

Another purpose of the IFHGS is to support international congresses, including an excellent one in Vienna in 2001. The next one will be in Brisbane, Australia, August 6–10, 2006. ASHG will be responsible for the 2011 International Congress, October 9–15, in Montreal, Canada.

Formation of a New Society

Harold Klinger announced the formation of the International Cytogenetics and Genome Society. He reported that the main objective of the Society is to provide a medium for the exchange of information by cytogeneticists world wide in all areas, i.e, plant, invertebrate and vertebrate. Klinger hopes that this society will give greater visibility to cytogeneticists and that it will represent them in an unprecedented way. The Society will foster international communication and will provide stipends to postdoctoral fellows in developing nations. Currently, there are 2,200 members and 90 founding members. Klinger encouraged students to join.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann P. Walker, *Secretary*
Elaine Strass, *Executive Director*

**Serving in a personal capacity and not as a representative of NIH.*