



## **The Biomedical and Life Sciences Division: The Last Twenty-five Years**

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**T**he past twenty-five years have been a time of great change both in the information environment and within DBIO. Revolutions in information retrieval and access, scholarly communication, and technology partnered with the challenging funding environments of the 1980s, 1990s, and now, as well as spiraling STEM journal costs, have made this an exciting, challenging, and stressful time to be an information professional in the biomedical and life sciences. DBIO, through its commitment to continuing education, quality programming, and professional communication, has endeavored to help its members not just survive but thrive in this environment. The last twenty-five years have seen a name change, a new caucus and section, new committees, four strategic plans, *Biofeedback* transform from a print newsletter to an e-newsletter, and the development of the division's listserv, Web site, forum, and blog.

In 1985, the Biological Sciences Division (BSD) of the Special Library Association, as DBIO was then called, celebrated its fiftieth year. Looking forward to the next fifty years, the Long Range Planning Committee of Karen Patrias, Steven Carter-Lovejoy, Nancy S. Selzer and chair John A. Timour developed BSD's first strategic plan. Approved by the membership, this plan recommended the formation of a programming and education committee, a continued commitment to student outreach, and the expansion of division publications and communication between members while maintaining a sound financial balance. In the next five years the growth and strength of the program development and fundraising committees would prove a true asset to BSD. Also in 1985, *Biofeedback* began accepting advertising, increased its rate of publication, and expanded its content. In 1987, *Biofeedback* announced that it would begin publishing members' email addresses for the first time.

At the beginning of the 1990s, BSD developed a new 10-year strategic plan underlining again the importance of programming and membership while instituting a member needs assessment every five years. The by-laws were revised to remove gendered language. In 1992, led by Ann Juneau, the Natural History Caucus held its first meeting. In 1994 interest for what would become BSDNET-L began.

Also beginning in 1994, an organization member petitioned to create a new medical/hospital division within the SLA. At that time, 44 percent of the nearly 700 division members were medical librarians, and the creation of the new division would have potentially stripped BSD's membership. What followed was a two-year battle. Eventually, through the advocacy of Chair Patricia Yocum as well as subsequent chair Lucy Rowland and other division officers, the Division Cabinet narrowly voted against the creation of the new division while granting BSD's request to form a new Medical Section within BSD. The new section, under Organizing Chair Nancy Bryant, had over 100 members by the summer of 1997.

After this crisis, the Biological Sciences Division decided it was time to make its role within SLA clearer. A name change to the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division, revisions to the bylaws and a new scope note were passed by the division membership in 1997 at the annual conference in Seattle. The new, more specific scope stated:

*The scope of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division encompasses all aspects of the life sciences, both pure and applied, including: biology and biochemistry, zoology and botany, microbiology, genetics, biotechnology, evolution, ecology, veterinary and human medicine, health sciences, and other aspects of the life sciences not specifically noted, or encompassed by another SLA Division. The Division promotes the exchange of information and ideas about trends and advances in information storage, retrieval and analysis, collection management, and dissemination in these fields to support research, education, and commercial endeavors.*

Also during the 1996-97 leadership year, the Vendor Relations and Student Relations/Career Guidance committees were created.

A move to an electronic newsletter format for *Biofeedback* was debated in 1999, and, by the 2002 meeting, the journal was completely online, with only one member requesting a print version. In 2000, the membership approved another ten-year long range plan. Building on the goals and objectives of the two previous plans, the 2000 plan increased the proposed frequency of membership surveys to once a year while emphasizing the importance of keeping up to date with the latest trends in information processing, delivery and technology. In 2003, BSDNET-L changed to BIOSLA-L. Divisional membership grew, too, with 197 new members joining in 2003-04.

In July 2007 the DBIO blog began with a posting on the possible blood-pressure lowering effects of dark chocolate. In 2008, the DBIO Web site was redesigned and its content enriched. 2008 also saw the formation of a new committee, the DBIO Ethics Ambassadors Committee.

The last few years also saw a new strategic plan. The current 2009-2011 strategic plan, the product of multiple division-wide surveys as well as brainstorming sessions beginning in 2005, emphasizes a dynamic response to the strictures of the current funding environment through continuing education brought to the members by virtual learning opportunities and regional programs, an increased commitment to advocacy, networking to facilitate job searches, and sharing valuable practices and resources through the blog, Web site, and calendar. DBIO is in good shape to prepare for the next seventy-five years.

#### *Acknowledgements*

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**For a history of the first 50 years of DBIO, see the previous *Biofeedback* article.**

## **75 Years of Chairs for DBIO**

- 1934-35 Frank Place, New York Academy of Medicine
- 1935-36 James F. Ballard, Boston Medical Library
- 1936-37 Helen Bayne, New York University Medical School and Bellevue Hospital
- 1937-38 Anna C. Holt, Harvard Medical School
- 1938-39 Irene Strieby, Eli Lilly Research Laboratories
- 1939-41 Estelle Brodman, College of Physicians and Surgeons
- 1941-42 Grace Van Nostrand Raschke, Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.
- 1942-43 Marion Kappes, Children's Memorial Hospital
- 1943-44 V. N. Rimsky-Korsakoff, General Foods Corp.
- 1944-45 Elizabeth Weissinger, Miles Laboratories
- 1945-46 Florence Roberts, William R. Warner Co.
- 1946-47 Alice M. Purington, Veterinary College, Cornell University
- 1947-48 Jennie R. Greenbaum, Michael-Reese Hospital