

# Division of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology (DSEB): 2002 Spring Newsletter

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## Message from the Officers

*Miriam Zelditch, Chair; Donald Swiderski, Program Officer; Ingrid Kaatz, Secretary*

We had a very successful meeting, and our annual workshop, "Phylogenetics for Dummies" was well-attended. We are grateful to Diana Lipscomb for presenting a clear and thought-provoking discussion of the complex subject of biogeographic analysis. For next year's meeting in Toronto, we have a very interesting symposium on fish evolution organized by Francesco Santini of the University of Toronto. This symposium brings together often disjoint perspectives on pattern and process at levels ranging from hox genes to regional biogeography. The accompanying "Phylogenetics for Dummies" workshop will examine the problems of defining and recognizing characters, including molecular, morphological and behavioral traits. We also have a proposal for a symposium at the New Orleans meeting in 2004 on the special problems and uses of sequence data, spanning examples such as nucleotide sequences, developmental sequences, and stratigraphic sequences. If you have an idea for 2005, now is a good time to float it past the division program officer.

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## DSEB Business Meeting Discussions

We began the meeting with reports from the officers. The program officer brought up the new availability of power point slide presentations. We discussed how the cost was so very high and the problems with loading and preparing the files for readiness for the talks. Providing the file of slides to the session chair via email in advance of the meeting would be most helpful. Many of course noted that power point presentations are preferred because we can modify them on our computers in our hotel rooms the day before the talk thus sending them in advance of the meetings cancels this advantage to the speaker. We would need files to be minimally provided to student volunteers at the meeting 30 minutes in advance of the actual talk. The second subject of business from the program officer was a discussion of symposium numbers. We discussed whether there were too many symposia which now overlap with the division topic areas and thus draw attendance away from the regular division presenters. We were concerned that graduate students who present in the divisions lose out the most. We support the offering of symposium topics which conflict directly with each other to be presented at least in different years.

We received a visit from our society president Marvalee Wake and she provided us with good news on finances and also encouraged us to seek out promising new students as recruits to the society. We also

discussed with her the role of the division structure in the society. The divisions function as social cohesive entities for gathering people of common interests. They are also necessary for the proposal of symposia and activities.

The secretary reported on the meetings held on the previous day for society secretaries. Announcements were made for alerting all divisions to the up-coming newsletter where any elections candidates need to be announced. Our division has currently filled all division positions and will not be announcing any elections. Ingrid Kaatz has formally accepted the secretary role for this division from Valerie Capola at this meeting. The most important point raised at the secretary meeting was the mislabeling of our division. We would prefer being the DSEB emphasizing that we employ and teach the society about the tools of comparative biology (hence the "S" for systematics) rather than simply the division for evolutionary biology. We would like to continue to offer workshops on systematic methodology as a society function. Members were also alerted to the new option of on-line voting for officers.

The division chair next presented information from the society chairpersons meeting. Members were alerted to the fact that we can now enhance and add to our website for our division. We decided that we as a division will add in the future our workshop handbook notes on "Phylogenetics for Dummies" for easy reference to all members and for future officers of the division. The question was raised on the repeat of the town meeting events and if they should be on evolution. We discussed that as a division we would like to bring back educational topics on systematics especially for undergraduates. A topic title was proposed called "Tree Thinking". As a division we also discussed that we would like to encourage attendance at the divisional meeting by making it a social event with snacks and drinks. Sitting in a room in rows is much less conducive to meeting individuals in the division. We discussed this last year and interest is building in actualizing this proposed plan.