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J.E. McPherson – A Career of Exemplary Service and Contributions to the Entomological Society of America

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Scientific societies are a vital component of the infrastructure that fosters progress in science. They play a vital role in the exchange of information through the publication of scientific journals and by organizing scientific meetings and symposia at which results and ideas are shared and discussed, professional contacts are made, and networks established and maintained. Scientific societies provide a plethora of professional development opportunities for both young and established scientists. They are volunteer organizations comprised of and led by practicing scientists, teachers, and practitioners who provide the vision, leadership, governance, scientific and ethical standards, scientific programming, and educational training opportunities that lie at the core of their mission. Exceptional service to scientific societies is often a hallmark of outstanding scientists and educators. It is therefore no surprise that outstanding service to the Entomological Society of America (ESA) spanning over 30 years is a hallmark of J. E. (Jay) McPherson’s career (Fig. 1).

Recognizing the particularly important role played by the ESA Branches in the professional development of students and young scientists, Jay was active in his service to the North Central Branch, having served as vice chair of the Systematics, Morphology and Evolution Section at the Annual Meetings in 1983; as chair in 1974, 1984, and 1991; and as co-moderator for the Systematics, Morphology and Evolution Section in 1994. In addition, Jay served on the branch’s Membership Committee (1980-83), Resolution Committee (1996-97) and C.V. Riley Award Selection Committee (1997-2000).

Jay’s service at the ESA national level has included multiple years as a judge in the student competition for the President’s Prize, and as a member of numerous committees including the Committee on Common Names of Insects, Finance Committee, Fellow Review and Recommendation Committee, and a presidential special committee to revise qualifications for selection of ESA Fellows. He also served as a judge for the Linnaean Games at both the branch and national meetings over many years. However, Jay’s most significant contributions were made as a member of the editorial board and editor of American Entomologist, ESA Governing Board representative, and as ESA President during 2002.

One of Jay’s most lasting contributions to the ESA was his service on the editorial board of the Bulletin of the Entomological Society of America during its transition to American Entomologist. The Bulletin, which had been published since 1955, was very narrow in scope, focusing on ESA business and affairs, with only limited scientific and general interest content. In the late 1980s the ESA Governing Board authorized the creation of a new publication with an entirely new focus and format, emphasizing high quality entomological articles of broad interest. The goal was to showcase entomology and the role of insects in shaping the human condition in the context of science, society, culture, and the environment in a way that would attract both readers and authors. This new publication, American Entomologist, first published in 1990, was intended to replace the Bulletin as a member benefit and become the signature publication of the ESA. As a member (1986-1993) and chair (1986 and 1991) of the editorial board, Jay played an important role in developing, designing, and implementing American Entomologist, while working closely

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Figure 1. J. E. McPherson at the Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting, Reno, NV, November 2011. Past President, Honorary Member, Fellow, Linnaean Games Head Judge, Entomological Foundation Donor, Trouble Maker.
with Paul Opler--American Entomologist's first editor. In 1991 Jay received the ESA National Service Award in recognition of his efforts in making American Entomologist a successful publication. Jay continued to serve on the American Entomologist editorial board until 1993 when he stepped up to become its editor; a position he held until 2001 when he took office as ESA President-Elect. As editor, he expanded the scope, quality, and diversity of articles, features, and columns appearing in American Entomologist, boosting its reputation for interesting and high-quality articles.

As a member of the ESA Governing Board representing the former Section A (Systematics, Morphology, and Evolution) from 1994-1996 and as President-Elect (2001), President (2002) and Past-President (2003), Jay helped the Society navigate a period of great change in the processes and business models for scientific publication, one of the core functions of the ESA, and a period of financial difficulty that threatened the survival of ESA as an organization. Jay assumed office as President-Elect while the Society’s financial crisis was unfolding. He worked closely with Past-President Sharron Quisenberry, President Larry Larson, and the entire Governing Board to devise strategies to address the crisis by restructuring the Society’s business operations. As President, Jay implemented many of these strategies, including arranging for sale of the ESA-owned national headquarters building, dramatically reducing the number of paid staff, and outsourcing many of the business operations of the Society. These changes and a restructuring of the ESA publications enterprise were central to restoring the ESA to financial solvency and re-establishing a solid financial foundation.

Jay’s record of exemplary service to the ESA was recognized in 2004 when he was elected an Honorary Member by the Society’s membership. This recognition is reserved for “those who have served the ESA for at least 20 years through significant involvement in the affairs of the Society that has reached an extraordinary level.” In 1993, Jay was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching by the ESA North Central Branch, and in 1996-97 he was named Outstanding Teacher in the College of Science by Southern Illinois University. In 2007 Jay was named a Fellow of the Entomological Society of America in recognition of his outstanding contributions to entomology research and teaching. Throughout his career, excellence in research and teaching, and exemplary service have been the hallmark of Jay McPherson.