

# UC Merced

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President's note to IBS members

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### Author

Heaney, Lawrence

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## President's note to IBS members

The International Biogeography Society operates on a two-year cycle, for both our primary conferences and for the terms of office for our officers. Thus, my term as IBS President will end simultaneously with the end of the upcoming IBS conference at Florida International University in Miami. As is always the case, the two years have gone by remarkably quickly, and IBS has grown in many ways.

As a young organization – the Miami IBS Conference will be only our sixth – we struggle to maintain a positive financial balance while expanding services and activities for our members. The news about our finances is generally good; after a decade of very nearly reaching the end of our bank accounts on a frequent basis, through pinching pennies, some generous support from members, and growing membership, we have created a reserve fund that gives us a small cushion against unforeseen changes in exchange rates, political events that affect our income, etc., allowing us to be just a bit more adventuresome in our activities. We have also been able to deal more quickly and smoothly with membership issues, through the efforts of Karen Faller, our part-time IBS jack-of-all-trades who not only has helped to serve and expand our membership, but also has helped to organize meetings.

This expansion has included the first official “off-year” conference, the Early Investigators Conference held at Oxford University in October 2011. With attendance by over 70 people, we clearly achieved our goal of giving encouragement to our young colleagues to pursue some of the most exciting aspects of biogeography. The conference in Miami is shaping up exceptionally well, with over 420 people currently registered. With great support from many individuals and organizations, many of the students who attend will be given some financial aid, allowing many to attend who could not afford it otherwise. Our society magazine, *Frontiers of Biogeography*, has expanded and continued to grow in quality of content, with rising numbers of downloads and citations. Other evidence of a progressively rising IBS profile in the scientific world includes an invitation to me, as IBS

President, to be interviewed about the current importance of biogeography and the IBS in the magazine *International Innovation*, and the stated intent for several editors from prominent academic publishers, including *Science*, to attend our conference in Miami.

These improvements and successes give us some welcome breathing space to consider how we might further increase the impact of the IBS. One perennial topic is again much on the minds of the IBS officers: how to increase the “International” aspect of the IBS. Although we seem to be near the limit of the amount of work that our small group of Board members can manage, and our finances remain quite modest, we are giving serious thought to how best to expand the geographic reach of the society – perhaps through the existing (though small and irregular) network of country coordinators, or perhaps through IBS-sponsored off-year meetings in locations that are too distant for most of our members to reach. How might we finance such meetings, and who will do the extensive necessary organizational work? For any such “off-year” meetings, and for our regular biennial conferences, what meeting format, number of participants, and location is optimal? To what extent should we concentrate efforts on expanding our reach through our journal, *Frontiers of Biogeography*? Can we realistically hope to develop a permanent endowment fund that will supplement our regular income and give us flexibility to support more students and international colleagues to attend our conferences?

All of these issues, and many others, will be much on the minds of the IBS Board members at the meeting in Miami. We all urge you to approach us to offer your opinions and criticisms, as well as your help and solutions. The incoming President, Rosemary Gillespie, and I look forward to continuing our involvement with IBS, in what is clearly one of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of our lives. I thank you for the opportunity that you have given me.

Larry Heaney  
IBS President