

Plants in Action ~ 2nd edition

a project of the Australian Society of Plant Scientists



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Report on Plants in Action – September 2007 – Brian Atwell

Plants in Action 2nd Ed. was initiated in 2004/5 with a new editorial team of Brian Atwell (Chief Editor, Macquarie Univ.), Paula Jameson (Univ. Canterbury), Susanne Schmidt (Univ. Queensland) and Mark Tester (Univ. Adelaide). Planning has progressed slowly in the past year, principally through individual meetings between the editors. This has yielded:

- A clear and detailed vision for the subject matter of the twenty chapters.
- Detailed plans as to who will write precisely what, including the totally re-written molecular and cell biology chapters (7-11). This includes considerable thought about the re-pitching of the material to design a new look for Plants in Action.
- This overall plan comprises ‘new writers’ and ‘existing writers’. There are also ‘previous writers’ whose expertise will not be required again, often because of reasons of retirement etc. there will be still others where existing writers will collaborate with new participants.
- ‘Editorial Advisors’ have also been nominated to advise on content and balance in late stages of manuscript preparation.
- A letterhead has been designed for the project, on which this report is printed.
- Letters have been prepared to go to all contributors.
- A draft contract from CSIRO Publishing has been sent to the editorial committee.
- Funds have been called in from some sponsors but not all. More sponsorship would be very, very valuable but it appears virtually impossible to raise support for non-fiction books.

Additional points:

- About 25% of chapters have been totally re-defined. It is considered that Chapters 7-11 will undergo most change (Cell and Molecular Biology) but there will also be quite radical changes to photosynthesis, respiration, growth, transport, drought, salinity and climate change. It is also intended to add a section in Part 1, the book’s introduction, to

introduce students better to the link between fundamental science and technology, and to understand levels of organization (gene to planet). We propose a new chapter, in lieu

of the current Chapter 20, talking about plant adaptation, climate change and evolution. Commentary on this big picture imagery from our membership is particularly sought. These changes will require considerable expense in production and drafting.

- Paula and Brian have met to overhaul Chapters 7-11 and in doing so included many new writers, particularly from the New Zealand biotechnology fraternity.
- All chapters have been assigned to at least two of the four Editors to manage re-writing.
- The first edition has been 'dismembered' from the original files. It is now in Word to allow us to send out first edition text as electronic files for re-writing the second edition.
- Preparation of *pro forma* letters has been achieved by collaboration between Brian Atwell and Dr Harshi Gamage at UQ. This has proved a huge and complex task.
- The new contract with Macmillan can be signed very soon we hope.
- Re-purchase of stock from Macmillan is in abeyance until we are further into pre-production and therefore able to know what first edition stock remains. Royalties continue to roll slowly in.
- I am not sure what we have spent of the original ASPS advance – I think about \$15,000 of the \$20,000. Peter Ryan might wish to comment.
- Again, the project is running over time and publication looks to be likely in late 2009. I am sorry about this but there are many factors. Those that were most unexpected were: (1) the appalling lack of interest from potential sponsors in an academic text, no matter how it was presented (an interesting anecdote can be quoted here about the AWB and a plant called *Triticum aestivum*, with which they claim to have no connection whatever – as is their want); (2) the tedium of the contract process; (3) organising writers and re-writers in a sensitive manner and so as to avoid any disputes over copyright.. Events beyond our control are responsible for this. We see no impediment to completion of the project once letters to writers are dispatched in the next few weeks.



Brian Atwell