The Role of ASHS in Implementing HortBase

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SUMMARY. ASHS is the largest worldwide professional scientific society for the horticultural science community. Research presented in the serial publications of the society is peer-reviewed under a well-organized and rigorous system that provides independent review of the research and ensures that the scientific information published is validated. The ASHS Executive Committee and Board of Directors are firmly committed to the HortBase concept of information dissemination and are supportive of the society's proposed role as the validator of HortBase information for use in extension and teaching. The presentation will discuss the role of the scientific society, specifically ASHS, in implementing HortBase.

ASHS was established in 1903 and now represents a worldwide constituency of $\approx 5,000$ scientists and practitioners in the field of Horticultural Science. The mission of ASHS is "to promote and encourage national and international interest in scientific research and education in horticulture in all its branches through the following:

- 1) Sponsorship of an annual meeting of the society to provide a forum for research, reporting, lectures, and public discussion on horticultural research;
- 2) Dissemination of horticultural knowledge through the publication of the *Journal of the American Society for Horticultural Science* (hereinafter referred to as the *Journal*) and other publications of the society;
- 3) Participation and offering of leadership in national and international horticultural matters; and
- 4) Development of mutual understanding among individuals and organizations concerned with the science of horticulture (ASHS Bylaws, as amended, July 1995.)

ASHS is a leader in the publication and dissemination of peer-reviewed scientific horticultural information. The *Journal* has been published continuously since 1903. In addition to the *Journal*, the society now publishes two other peer-reviewed scientific journals, *HortScience* and *HortTechnology*, and many proceedings and other publications of service to the horticultural science community.

Director of Publications Michael Neff states that ASHS is organized and uniquely suited to provide peer review and use the unique capabilities of HortBase. "The ASHS Publications Department's primary function is to organize and manage the society's peer-review system and distribute the horticultural information that meets the requirements for dissemination. As Web and other electronic information distribution systems come online, the functions of the department will not change, but the methods to achieving the final product will.

Former ASHS executive director.

Issues such as the security of electronic peer-review and controlled methods of information dissemination are at the forefront of discussions among scientific publishers. The role of established scientific society publication departments on how best to implement the changes brought about by Web in the distribution of this information is being discussed. Synergism is occurring as we change from the traditional printed media and peer review to the future of online, dispersed peer review and Web publication.

ASHS capabilities as publisher for HortBase

ASHS is organized and structured as a not-for-profit professional scientific, educational society and is recognized as tax-exempt by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. The services and programs of ASHS are managed by an experienced paid staff based at the ASHS headquarters building in Alexandria, Va. A Board of Directors, composed of society members, governs the overall direction of the society.

ASHS Headquarters operations are aided and facilitated by a state-of-the-art computer and information systems support structure that includes a dual platform (Macintosh and PC) Novell network and UNIX-based Internet servers connected to the Internet through a high-speed, broadband T-1 connection. The Internet service provider (ISP) for ASHS is UUNet, one of the largest ISPs in the world.

ASHS currently maintains its own Web site with a Home Page that highlights all ASHS programs and services and allows interactive registration for conferences. The ASHS headquarters building has appropriate space available to house the additional staff that will be required to manage the ASHS segment of the ASHS HortBase.

ASHS commitment to HortBase

The ASHS Board of Directors has committed the support of the society to the ASHS HortBase project. This includes the initial staff work and consultation needed to bring this project to functional reality in the start-up phase. However, the financial support for any ASHS HortBase dedicated staff and other direct services or costs must come from grants, user fees, or other sources.

This project was originally presented to the ASHS Board of Directors in 1995 by ASHS Extension Division Vice President James L. Green. Since that time, the board has been presented with periodic updates on the progress of the project.

ASHS has now registered the HortBase logo and name as official trademarks and has also registered a new Internet domain name, HORTBASE.ORG, for use in this project.

We firmly believe that ASHS is the organization best equipped to be the peer-review and validation mechanism for the horticultural component of ASHS HortBase and that ASHS should, in fact, be the organization charged with the responsibility for that independent scientific review of all horticultural data in the HortBase system.