



# System Dynamics NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Graham W. Winch**

Greetings from the Society office! After the great success of the 2005 Boston conference, and for some a well earned short break, things are now getting back to the usual routines. For the officers of the Society, and especially for the staff at the central office, this tends to revolve around preparations for next year's conference and the cycle of membership renewal, alongside routine sales of the Beer Game and other products, and general services to members.

This year is not proving quite as eventful as last. The new relationship with John Wiley & Sons seems to be working very well, and the membership system being managed in-house is also proving effective. We had very few people experiencing any kind of problem with the new system (what problems there were seemed to relate to funds transfer mechanisms) and memberships were mainly renewed earlier than before, and at comparable retention rates. I would like to remind members, however, that the earlier they renew their membership (details below and enclosed), the better the cash flow situation for the Society. Early renewal also ensures continuity in provision of the *System Dynamics Review* and other services for each member.

As I was able to observe during my presidential address at the conference, the Society is now operating at record levels in just about all aspects of its activities – we have now passed the 1,000 individual member mark, the Beer Game and other products have had a remarkably good year for sales, the conference broke all records for numbers of attendees, papers submitted, and papers presented, and we have welcomed more sponsors for both the Society and the conference.

One major change that this success has stimulated is that the Society office has now moved into new office space (but in the same building at the University at Albany), which is about twice the size of the previous space. This move is very welcome, as the old office had become very cramped, having to serve as the executive office, a packing and distribution centre, and space for meetings and visitors. Within a short period of time final refurbishment of the building will enable some further

modifications to be made to improve the office efficiency even further. I am very pleased that our excellent relationship with the University has enabled us to move forward in this way.

Returning to the conference, I have heard nothing but praise for the organization of the conference and the programme, the hotel, and the quality of presentations and workshops. The Seaport Hotel was certainly a very different venue to Keble College, Oxford, where the 2004 conference was held, but its operations were very slick and the flexibility that this offered made up for the undoubtedly unique experience of living in an Oxford college which most people thoroughly enjoyed last year.

The conference seemed to be virtually all good news. We were delighted to be able to award Bob Eberlein a special Society award for his outstanding contribution to the Society. He has served in a number of officer roles, including being my predecessor as President. In all of these he did a great job, but the award was also largely an acknowledgement for his immense efforts in developing and installing many of the Society's computer-based systems for administration and conference management.



*Bob Eberlein receiving the Exceptional Service Award from Graham Winch and John Sterman.*

We were also able to recognize another very worthy winner of the Jay Wright Forrester Prize for best system dynamics publication. The award went to Kim Warren, and following the citation and presentation, Kim, as is

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tradition, delivered a plenary presentation on his ideas. Kim gave an amusing and stimulating exposition, and completed my misfortune in that I had to be the following



*Kim Warren, recipient of the Jay W. Forrester Award with wife Christina Spencer.*

speaker, after having to succeed Bob as President – my two nominees for any ‘world’s worst act to have to follow’ award.

As ever, there was a long but valuable Policy Council meeting with a large agenda. It was decided that the 2007 conference should again be in the Boston/Cambridge area. As this is to be a special occasion marking the first 50 years of system dynamics, holding the conference in close proximity to its birthplace seemed to everyone to be the right decision. Strong expressions of interest were also reported from groups interested in hosting the 2008 and 2009 conferences. The Council also decided that the time is right for recasting and reorganizing the portfolios for our various Vice Presidents. It was decided that we should split the membership and chapter responsibilities as these have now both become very demanding roles, and also introduce a new VP to oversee our web presence. This leads to a net increase in two VPs, and we will be moving towards this structure as the next cycle of nominations and elections works through. The Council also decided to introduce new Associate Vice President roles. These will be open to current PC members, plus those with previous PC experience, and the role will offer the dual benefit of providing experience in Society governance for people interested in possibly taking on an officer role in the future, and providing some back-up and assistance for the current officers.

We have now finalized the details for the complimentary membership scheme, made possible by the generosity of the *Review*'s publishers and some internal funds. A separate announcement by the Vice President at Large Bob Cavana, who chairs the appropriate sub-committee, is included in this newsletter.

Finally, some administrative matters. Enclosed in this mailing, you will find the Society's membership renewal

form. Renewing is easier this year! You can renew your membership by returning this form by mail with a US\$ cheque drawn on a US bank, which is the easiest method to process. For many, of course, this is not practical, and we can accept credit card payments either through mailing or faxing this form, or by registering online and entering your credit card information there. If you would like to renew online, please go to the Society website and click on the grey button 'How to Join or Renew'. Please do not hesitate to contact the central office team if you have any problems transmitting funds or require any further clarification of the payment options.

From 2006, members will be offered a choice as to how they would prefer to receive the journal – either in both print and electronic form *OR* in electronic form only. Those who elect to take the electronic-only option will receive an email announcement when each issue of the journal is available online. The membership fee will be the same for both options. We know that many people like a paper version, but we also know a number of subscribers now rely exclusively on the additional facilities offered by electronic access, and they might therefore prefer not to bother with the paper version. This could save space on shelves and be a small contribution to managing the environment. There is only a very small economy gain to the Society when members choose electronic-only, but this can contribute towards the Society's undertaking to broaden representation in its membership through the complimentary membership scheme.

As always, please feel free to contact the Society office with any questions, comments or recommendations. We are trying to make it as easy and rewarding as possible to become and remain a member of the System Dynamics Society and we are always looking for opportunities to improve the membership experience. *Graham Winch*

### **Announcing the Wiley Sponsored Membership Scheme**

At the Boston conference we were very pleased to announce a new scheme to be sponsored jointly by John Wiley & Sons, our publisher, and the Society to encourage development of the system dynamics community in 'lower income' and developing countries and regions, to enable chapters to be formed or maintained, to promote the development of local system dynamics activity/meetings, etc., or to support recent system dynamics graduates who move to a new post where there is no current system dynamics activity. Briefly, the scheme allows up to twenty people to be given complimentary memberships to the Society to promote diversity of membership by geography. A sub-committee consisting of Bob Cavana (chair), David Lane, Scott Rockart and Graham Winch has been formed to oversee the new scheme. Further details will be available on the Society website. *Bob Cavana*