

Scientific societies face 'modern challenges'

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An article published in the September issue of *BioScience* highlights the challenges facing biological societies and offers insights for scientific societies to respond and adapt to the changing dynamics of 21st century science.

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) surveyed 139 biology societies to better understand the composition of the [biological sciences](#) community and how this community has changed over time. Organizational leaders were asked about the size of their organization's membership over the last fifty years. The majority of the groups increased in size over time, but many societies experienced membership declines in the 2000s. Smaller scientific societies experienced more significant membership declines than larger organizations.

The survey findings appear in "Dynamism Is the New Stasis: Modern Challenges for the Biological Sciences" published in *BioScience*.

"There is compelling evidence that the landscape of how professionals and students interact with scholarly societies is changing dramatically," said Sheri Potter, the lead author of the article and Director of Membership and Public Programs for AIBS. "These organizations play multiple, critical roles in advancing science, but as largely unstaffed or minimally staffed, dues funded organizations, they depend on the ongoing voluntary commitment of individuals to achieve their mission. As individual needs and expectations change, societies must be prepared to change with them."

AIBS Executive Director, Dr. Richard O'Grady said, "Past surveys conducted by AIBS highlight concerns from organization leaders about membership, funding, and journal sales, and also demonstrate the desire of individual researchers to belong to a professional organization in order to gain access to scientific meetings and to be part of the professional community."

"AIBS has been actively studying the issues facing biology societies for the past few years so that we can understand needs and challenges," stated Susan Musante, an author of the article and AIBS' Director of Education. "We are excited to share our findings with the broader community and hope that it will generate dialogue both within and across organizations."

Provided by American Institute of Biological Sciences

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