

Current State of the Florida Entomological Society — 2014 FES Presidential Address —

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Current State of the Florida Entomological Society

– 2014 FES Presidential Address –

Nan-Yao Su

As of Jun 2014, the introduction page of the web site for the Florida Entomological Society (FES) contained the statement that "... the Florida Entomological Society with approximately 700 memberships is the largest state entomological society in the USA ...". This figure was fairly accurate in the 1980s as indicated in the 1984 FES Presidential address by C. McCoy, "... presently, the Florida Entomological Society membership stands at approximately 750." Since then, however, there has been a steady decline, and FES membership dropped from 750 in 1984 to 314 in 2013 (Fig. 1). At 314 memberships, is FES still the largest state entomological society in the US? A survey showed that there are at least 16 state or regional entomological societies in the US (Table 1), but the number of current memberships was confirmed (through a follow-up communication with society officers) from only 7 societies (excluding FES) and ranged from 28 (Tennessee Entomological Society) to 270 (Entomological Society of Washington). The lack of responses from the remaining 8 societies may indicate inactivity of some. The survey results showed that even with the reduced membership of 314 in 2013, FES remains the largest state entomological society among the 8 societies for which membership numbers could be confirmed (Table 1).

The approximately 60% reduction in FES membership in the past 30 yr is dramatic, but this may reflect the national trend. Entomological Society of America (ESA) membership, for example, peaked at > 9,000 in 1986 but held steady at 8,000 to 8,500 until 1999, and the number dropped to about 6,000 in 2000 (Fig. 1). There is a statistically significant correlation ($P < 0.0001$) between ESA and FES mem-

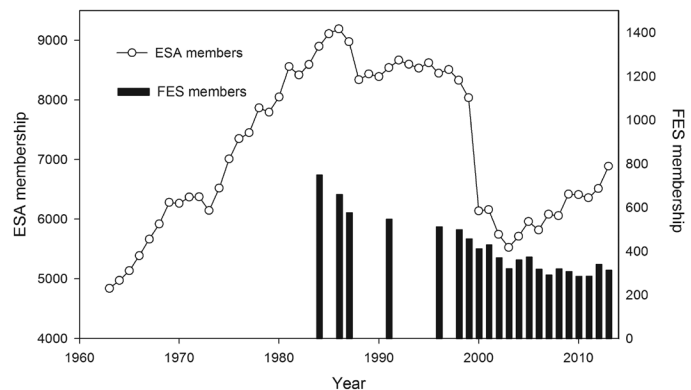


Fig. 1. Membership of the Entomological Society of America (ESA, 1963–2013) and the Florida Entomological Society (FES, 1984–2013). Missing data are omitted.

bership from 1984 to 2013 (Fig. 2), and the decline over 30 yr may be due in large part to the diminishing number of jobs in entomology. In 1986, for example, there were 90 faculty members in the Entomology and Nematology Department of the University of Florida (UF), but the number declined to 55 by 2013. A closer look at the regression (Fig. 2) indicated 2 data clusters: a significant correlation for the period

Table 1. State or regional entomological societies in the United States, their founding years, membership, publications, and meeting frequency^a.

| Society | Est. | Membership | Publication (circulations) | Meeting |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Michigan Ent. Soc. | 1954 | 600 (?) | The Great Lakes Entomologist | Annual |
| Soc. SW Entomol. | 1976 | ? | Southwestern Entomologist | Annual (at SWB ESA) |
| S. Carolina Ent. Soc. | 1953 (?) | ? | J. Agric. & Urban Entomol. | Annual |
| Kansas Ent. Soc. | ? | ? | J. Kansas Entomol. Soc. | Annual |
| Wisconsin Ent. Soc. | 1969 | ? | None | Bi-annual |
| Hawaiian Ent. Soc. | 1905 | ? | Proc. Hawaiian Entomol. Soc. | Quarterly |
| American Ent. Soc. | 1859 | ? | Entomol. News Trans. of AES | Public/seasonal |
| New York Ent. Soc. | 1892 | ? | J. New York Ent. Soc. | ? |
| Ent. Soc. Washington | 1884 | 270 | Proc. Ent. Soc. Washington (426) | Monthly (Oct–Jun) |
| Ent. Soc. Penn. | 1842 | 139 | None | Annual |
| Pacific Coast Ento. Soc. | 1901 | 125 | Pan-Pacific Entomologist (300) | 6–8/year |
| Tennessee Ento. Soc. | 1973 | 28 | The Firefly (infrequent) | Annual |
| Maine Ento. Soc. | 1997 | 128 | Maine Entomologist (128) | Annual (+ 7 events) |
| N. Carolina Ento. Soc. | 1956 | 52 | None | ? |
| Georgia Ent. Soc. | 1937 | 235 | J. Entomol. Sci. (600) | Annual |
| Florida Ent. Soc. | 1916 | 314 | Florida Entomologist (353) | Annual |

^aData with ? are either unknown or unconfirmed.

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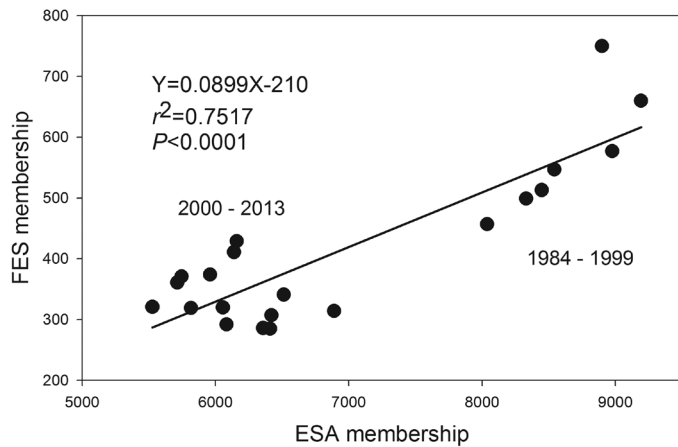


Fig. 2. A strong correlation between Entomological Society of America (ESA) and Florida Entomological Society (FES) membership 1984–2013 ($P < 0.0001$), with a significant correlation for the period 1984–1999 ($P = 0.0256$), and no correlation for the period 2000–2013 ($P = 0.3551$).

1984–1999 ($P = 0.0256$), and no correlation for the period 2000–2013 ($P = 0.3551$). In fact, ESA membership steadily increased from 5,500 in 2003 to 7,000 in 2013, but FES membership did not increase substantially (Fig. 1).

The stagnation of FES membership may be due in part to poor participation by students in FES. The number of students in the UF Entomology and Nematology Department increased from 57 in 2000 to 131 in 2013, but this sizable increase did not appear to change the FES student membership, which varied between 30 and 50 during the same period (Fig. 3). As the result, the participation rate of UF students in FES has steadily declined. Of the 57 UF entomology and nematology students in 2000, 39 (68%) joined the FES, but by 2013, less than 33% (43 of 131) of UF entomology and nematology students were FES student members. Increased participation by students may be one solution to

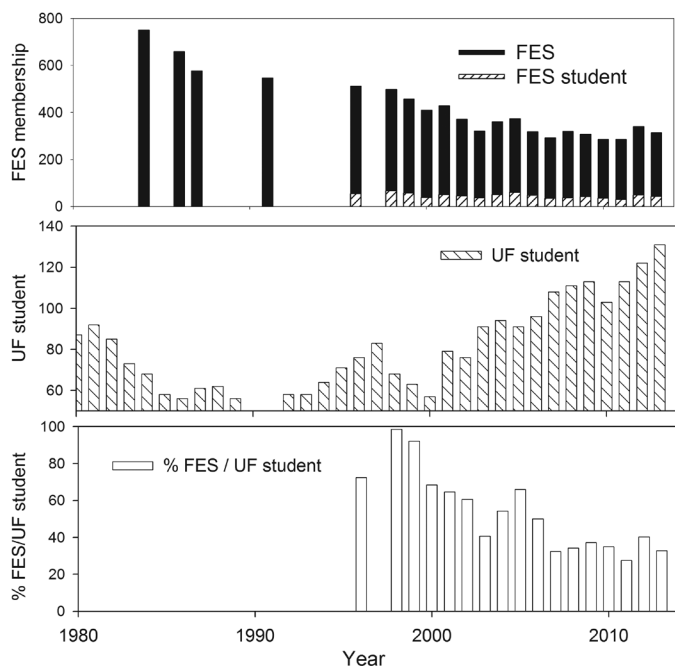


Fig. 3. Overall Florida Entomological Society (FES) membership (1984–2013), FES student membership (1996–2013), number of University of Florida (UF) entomology and nematology students (1980–2013), and proportion of UF students participating in FES.

prevent or reverse the general decline in FES membership. If the 2013 UF student participation rate were brought back to the 2000 level of 68%, for example, there would be 46 more FES student members, or an overall 15% increase in FES membership, which would equal to that of 2004–2005. To that end, I suggest that more financial resources be provided for student travel grants, scholarships, and student competition awards. Students should be made aware that the financial incentives of these awards are not the primary benefits. What they can show on their résumés or curriculum vitae as they compete for career opportunities will be of the most value!

Another indicator of the state of FES is our flagship publication, Florida Entomologist. Publication of scholarly journals is the major activity of any scientific society. With a circulation of 353, Florida Entomologist ranked 3rd behind the Journal of Entomological Science (600, by Georgia Entomological Society) and Proceedings of the Entomological Society of Washington (426) (Table 1). The circulation number alone, however, may not tell the full story of the progress of Florida Entomologist in the past decades. Under the leadership of Journal Editor W. Klassen, the journal pages increased from 682 in 2009 to > 1,600 in 2013, and the number of articles submitted doubled from 160 to about 320 (Fig. 4). In 1993, 165 authors contributed to the journal, but in 2013, the number increased to 947, an astonishing 575% growth. Contributing to the numerical increase is the substantial growth in the number of foreign authors. No Chinese or Indian authors contributed to Florida Entomologist in 1993, but the numbers increased to 129 and 34, respectively, in 2013. Equally impressively is the continuing strong tie of FES with South and Central American entomologists. For example, the numbers of contributing authors from Brazil, Mexico, and other Central and South American countries were 5, 9, and 11 in 1993, but within 20 years, these numbers increased to 202, 88, and 49, respectively (Fig. 5). The increase in the number of submissions and authors, however, also created challenges for FES. Despite the stand-

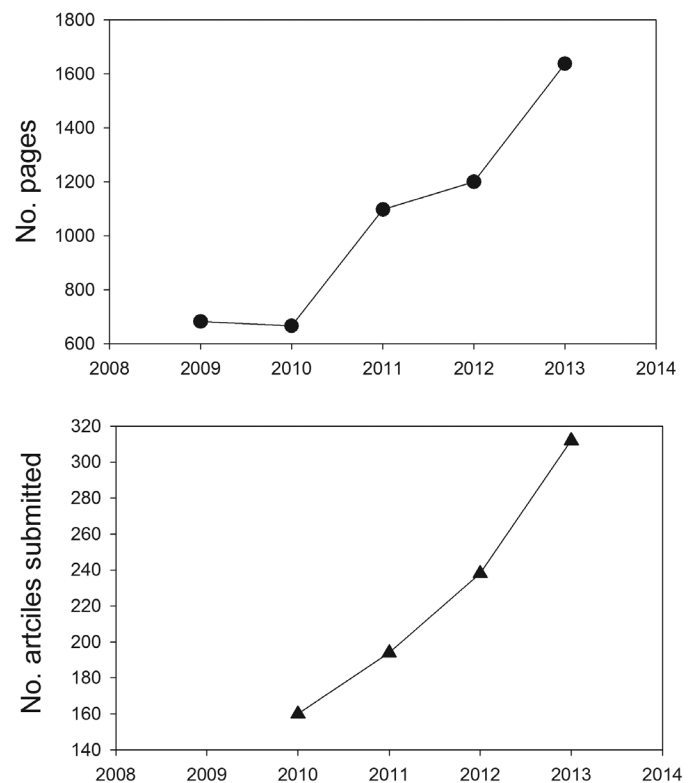


Fig. 4. Numbers of annual publication pages (2009–2013) and article submissions (2010–2013) for Florida Entomologist.

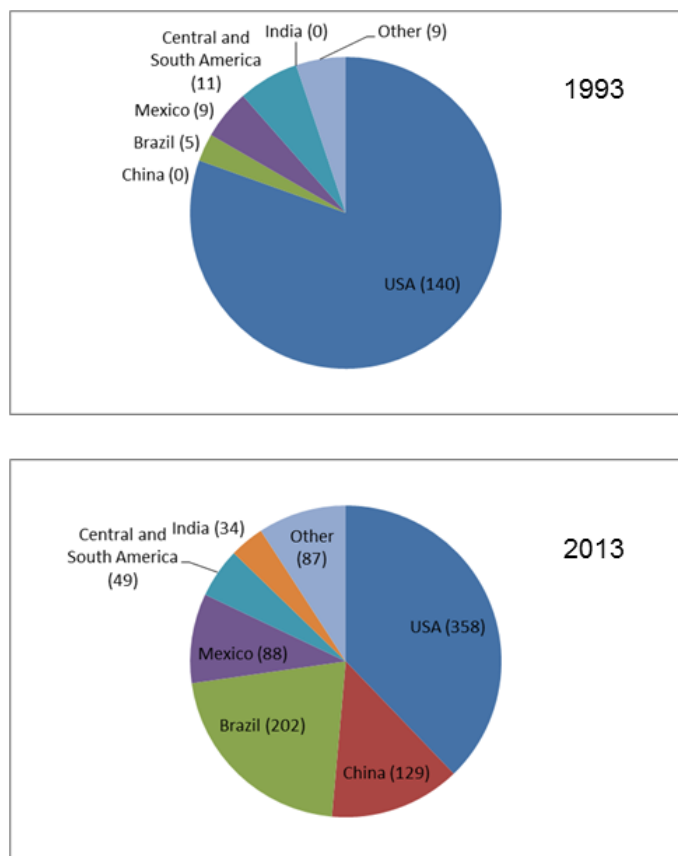


Fig. 5. Country origins of Florida Entomologist authors in 1993 and 2013

ing policy that "... at least one author must be a member of FES ...," a brief survey (H. Frank, personal communication) indicated that only 54% of the manuscripts submitted in 2013 had an author who was a member of FES. Thus of the 238 articles published in Florida Entomologist in 2013, 109 lacked an FES member among the authors, and of the 947 names listed as the authors of Florida Entomologist in 2013, the majority were not FES members. This seemingly problematic issue, however, may present an opportunity for FES to reverse its declining membership. For example, if we had enforced our policy, we would have gained 109 members—and increase of 35%. Moreover, because the annual membership fee is relatively inexpensive compared with the cost of publishing a manuscript, it is reasonable to assume that many of the non-FES members who have published in Florida Entomologist can readily be persuaded to join FES. If about one-third of the 947 above-mentioned authors were to join FES, we could easily double the current membership of 314. We need to encourage our Membership Committee to take up this challenge. Moreover, all FES members need to actively promote membership in our Society, bearing in mind that active participation in FES will help advance entomology globally in all of its disciplines.

Acknowledgments

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