

Conclusion

Towards the future: celebration of a Jubilee

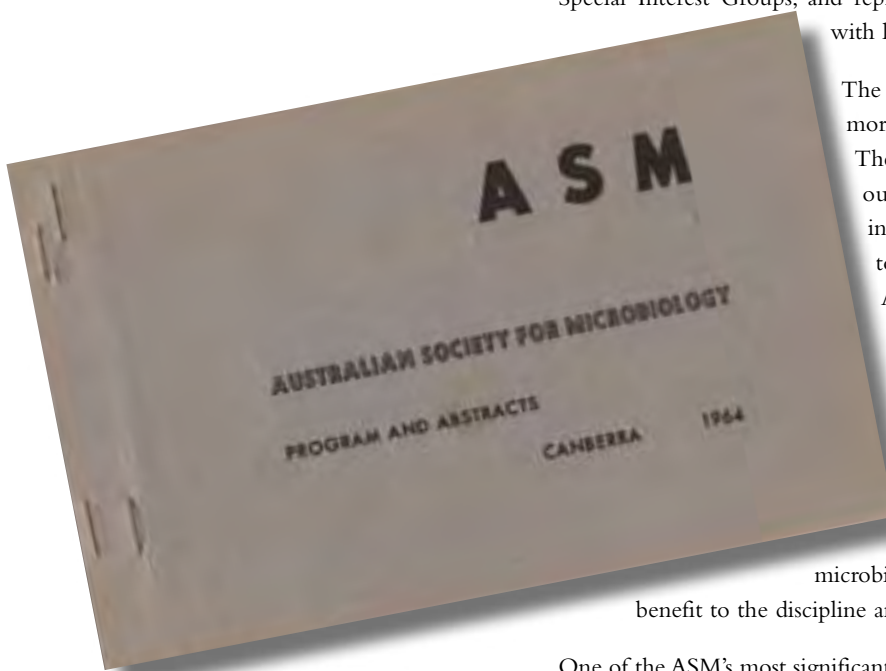
The founders of the Australian Society for Microbiology were pioneers. They were idealists with a vision. They took decisive action in response to an identified need – a need for a scientific community that united microbiologists across Australia. They were motivated also by a desire to further the science of microbiology, so they created a learned society for microbiology. The year 2009 marks 50 years since the establishment of this Society. While it has changed markedly since 1959, it remains a vibrant, dynamic Society that continues to be dedicated to microbiology and microbiologists in Australia.

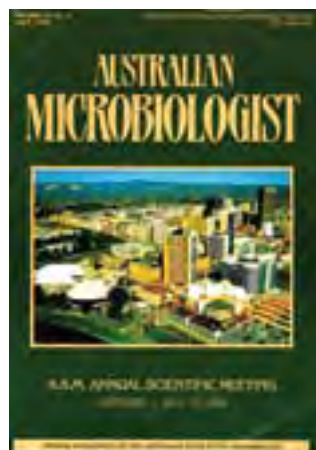
There can be no question that the creators of the ASM succeeded in their aims. In fact, they were exceeded. Not only was a learned society brought into existence, but the activities of the ASM on both the state and federal levels helped establish microbiology as a stand-alone discipline in Australia. It fostered and encouraged microbiologists and gave them a forum to share their research and build important professional networks.

Before long the Society, along with the discipline, began to diversify. Members desperately required professional representation and the ASM faced an important decision – to change with its members and adapt to their needs, or to maintain the status quo. In what became a characteristic move for the Society, it took up the challenge of change. As a direct result, the ASM has a list of important achievements to its well-established name. Many of them are tangible – the development of professional membership categories; the successful and highly anticipated Annual Scientific Meetings; a thriving journal published five times each year; a range of Special Interest Groups; and representation on numerous influential committees with legislative responsibilities.

The less tangible achievements of the Society, while more difficult to quantify, are of equal importance. The Australian Society for Microbiology has an outstanding reputation in the Australian and international scientific communities. It continues to attract high-profile international speakers to its Annual Scientific Meetings and its contributions to microbiology have been vast. The ASM has also contributed greatly to the understanding of microbiology and of the roles of microbiologists in the broader community. A by-product of this has been the development of an important interface between the ASM and government on matters of health, safety, and microbiological regulation, which is of immeasurable benefit to the discipline and to the general community.

One of the ASM's most significant roles is that it continues to provide a current and dynamic forum for the discussion of the science of microbiology and its application in various professional contexts. This is a role that has become increasingly challenging as the discipline continues to diversify and sub-specialise. But this role,





As the changing face of scientific programs over the decades show, the ASM has grown and professionalised in 50 years, developing into a Society of breadth, dynamism, strength, reputation and continuing relevance.

if the ASM is to continue to thrive as it has over the past 50 years, is critical. The introduction and support of Special Interest Groups and the adoption of a divisional structure have both contributed to the continuation of this crucial role. Similarly, the advocacy role provided by the ASM must also continue into the future for the benefit of both the Society and the wider community.

The relationship between the state branches and the national body is also integral to the longevity of the Society. Each continues to face the challenge of a changing scientific world and an ever-evolving discipline. But the vitality of the branches remains as critical to the health of the Society as it was in its earliest days, providing a lifeline to an ever-increasing membership. Interaction and communication

with the state branches is an important way of ensuring that the ASM as a national body remains in touch with its broad membership base and responds to their evolving needs.

The ASM has a rich and dynamic history. Fifty years on, the Society's founders would no doubt be amazed at the ASM today – amazed at the breadth, dynamism, strength, reputation and continuing relevance of the Society. As it reaches the end of its fifth decade, the need that led to the creation of the Australian Society for Microbiology continues to be met by the Society. The strong position of the ASM today is testimony both to the vision of its founders and to the dedication of all of those who have been involved in its history.



The release of a commemorative Australia Post envelope in celebration of the Society's Golden Jubilee – an indication of the strong position from which the ASM faces its second 50 years.