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Citation: Scheffler, Robin Wolfe. "The Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology: A century of service and advocacyHowardGarrisonJudithBondRalphBradshawBethesda, MD: FASEB Press, 2019." The FASEB Journal 34, 9 (August 2020): 11326-11328.

As Published: http://dx.doi.org/10.1096/fj.202001722

Publisher: Wiley

Persistent URL: https://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/131142

Version: Author's final manuscript: final author's manuscript post peer review, without publisher's formatting or copy editing

The Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology: A Century of Service and Advocacy.

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FASEB Press: Bethesda, MD, 2019.

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Readers of the *FASEB Journal* are already familiar with the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology, but they may be less aware of its history. While not cloaked in mystery, the history of the Federation certainly runs the risk of obscurity: many of the records from its first decades of operation were lost after they were deposited at Johns Hopkins University in the 1940s. Conceived on the occasion of its hundredth anniversary in 2012, *The Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology: A Century of Service and Advocacy* promises to provide a more permanent chronicle.

Written by the Federation's former director of public affairs, Howard Garrison, and past Presidents Judith Bond and Ralph Bradshaw, this volume draws on archival material, publications, and recollections to describe the first hundred and five years of the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) through ten chapters, grouped in three phases. This core narrative is supplemented by biographies of its past presidents as well as appendices on its membership, past meeting participation, and recent important symposia and consensus conferences. Given that the FASEB is one of the most prominent biological sciences organizations in the United States, each of its phases also reveals something more about the evolution of the relationship of the community of experimental biologists to American society.

The first phase, from 1912—1945, corresponds to the founding and early operations of the FASEB. During this phase, the American scientific community was still of modest scale. The scope and ambition of the Federation was narrow compared to its later years. Recognizing that the memberships of its first three constituent Societies, the American Physiological Society, the American Biological Chemistry Society, and the

American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, already had a substantial degree of overlap in their interests, the Federation emerged to coordinate an annual meeting—replacing the more informal system of seeking to arrange events alongside the meeting schedule of the American Physiological Society. They were soon joined by the American Society of Experimental Pathology.

In its first three decades of operation the FASEB provided what sociologists of science call important "social infrastructure" for the experimental biology community. In addition to its primary commitment to organizing the annual meeting, starting in 1913, the FASEB Executive Committee, comprised of the leadership of its constituent societies, also began publishing the Federation Proceedings in 1914, and coordinated a jobs placement service starting in 1921 to match applicants from its membership with prospective employers. Just before the United States entered the Second World War, which halted nonessential scientific meetings, the American Institute of Nutrition and the American Association of Immunologists joined, setting the six societies that would constitute the Federation until the mid 1980s.

The second phase, from 1945—1989, witnessed the FASEB's growth into a voice for the biological sciences as it rode the rising tide of federal support for biomedical research and the rapid expansion of the biological sciences community. The Federation developed a greater and greater advocacy role in public and policy circles on behalf of experimental biologists. Participants in the annual meeting sextupled in a few short years. The Federation's informal operations structure was not able to keep pace with the responsibilities that came with running an increasingly complex meeting. A reorganization in 1951-1952 sought address these challenges and also provided the first articulation of the Federation's mission: organizing the annual meeting, publishing new information on biological research, and providing a unified voice for the membership of its constituent societies in public affairs.

As part of its new commitment to public affairs the FASEB created a Standing committee on Public Information. However, even this tentative commitment to public inspired disagreement, as demonstrated by dissent whether to launch a robust campaign against anti-vivisectionist legislation. The Federation's constituent societies were still unwilling to immerse themselves fully into public debates about the place of biology in society. The Federation's efforts to exert influence in public policy discussions in the 1950s thus remained piecemeal, including protesting the exclusion of the biological sciences from civil service pay increases, supporting water fluoridation, and cautiously advocating on behalf of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 1954 the Federation acquired a physical headquarters at the Hawley Estate in Bethesda, Maryland—approximately a mile north of the rapidly growing headquarters of the NIH—a portent of the important role that Washington would play in its activities to come.

At its 50 year anniversary, in 1962, the FASEB was in the process of expanding into an organization that was far more engaged in promoting the expertise of its constituent societies to the scientific, government, and business communities. In the 1964 the Federation established the Life Sciences Research Office, a service that

promised federal agencies and other organizations independent scientific evaluations of important questions in the life sciences. The first of these studies, for the Army, evaluated the military relevance of research in ascorbic acid. The office expanded in the next three decades, and its clients included not only NASA, the NIH, and the FDA but also private companies such as Phillip Morris, Proctor & Gamble, and the Kellogg Company. Interestingly, although these were decades when molecular biology drew more and more attention, the bulk of these studies focused on nutrition issues. Other efforts were less successful, such as the production of the *Handbooks of Biological Data* and other reference works for the biological sciences community—these reference works could not keep up with the pace of biological discovery!

In the late 1960s, the threat that that inflation, Vietnam War spending, and a slowing economy posed to the NIH's budget—especially its training programs—prompted the Federation to take a more active role in the annual federal budget process through its revamped Office of Public Affairs. However, the operation the Office continued to reflect tension regarding the degree to which the Federation should enter the political arena as lobbyists or focus on education in the public sphere. In the 1970s, as controversies emerged over recombinant DNA research, the process of peer review, and later the indirect costs that universities charged on federal grants, the need for the FASEB to restructure its advocacy on behalf of research in the biomedical and biological sciences became clear.

The third phase, from 1989 to the present, marked a dramatic reinvention of the FASEB and its growth into a Washington-focused interest organization. Discontent with the FASEB's operations had grown in the 1970s and 1980s. The Federation remained accountable to the leadership of each of its constituent societies, which it found hindered its ability to act decisively when policy challenges arose. Many of the administrative services that the Federation offered its constituent societies no longer seemed effective or necessary. A reorganization in 1989 marked a shift away from focusing on coordinating an annual meeting in favor of emphasizing its Washington-based activities. The FASEB adopted a more decentralized mode of governance and welcomed many more member societies—thirty by 2016. These changes allowed the Federation to focus on its new goal of serving as a voice of "working scientists" in Washington.

The Federation became a vital participant shaping conversation around biomedical research in Washington. Its actions and activities trace the evolving strategies that science organizations have used to exert influence in the Capitol in the past generation. Initially, the Federation sought to speak with the weight of scientific expertise. It developed a new forum, the consensus conferences, as a means of transmitting the views of its membership on important issues to Congress. These conferences advocated for increases in the budget of different wings of the federal research enterprise—research and training, individual NIH institutes, and in 1994 an appeal for a 10% increase in the annual NIH budget overall.

When the Republican party claimed a majority in the house in 1994, the political terrain of federal funding for biomedicine shifted. The FASEB needed to articulate new justifications for why federally-funded research mattered. Appeals to the medical benefits of research were reduced, while emphasis on the economic benefits rose. Personal relationships helped as well—while its Public Service Award had first saluted leadership in the NIH, by the late 1990s and early 2000s the Federation highlighted Congressional representatives who had helped it advance its goals, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. This maneuvering helped maintain budget increases for the NIH and biomedical research despite growing attacks on other areas of government spending. Indeed, from 1990 to 1999 the budget of the NIH doubled.

The aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks demanded new responses from the Federation. It redoubled its advocacy for federal funding as budgets tightened. The Federation sought to minimize what it saw as cumbersome federal oversight of biological research in the wake of new bioterrorism regulations proposed in the wake of the October 2001 anthrax attacks. While it sought to shield its members from government interference during the War on Terrorism, the Federation also backed the 2006 Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, which expanded the criminal penalties for actions by animal rights activists, including those who opposed the use of animals in biomedical research. This support was the continuation of a century of the Federation's advocacy for animal research. However, the sweeping enforcement of the Act since its passage has raised substantial civil liberties concerns even as consensus in favor of using certain animals in research, such as chimpanzees, has diminished. This provides an instance where the Federation's focus on the needs of biologists, narrowly understood, may have caused it to embrace polices that do not align with the values its members embrace as citizens.

Anniversaries provide an opportunity for reflection as well as commemoration. Since its 100th anniversary the FASEB has remain engaged in Washington, but its efforts to present the biomedical research enterprise as a nonpartisan public good have become more and more difficult to sustain. Indeed, these are trying times for the biological sciences. Even before the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis, the biological sciences community faced major questions regarding how it would justify continued federal support, combat partisan distortions of science, and remediate the existence of systemic racism and sexism even within its own ranks.

History can provide a guide in these troubled times. This is where the volume might have done more to help its readers consider the next 100 years of the Federation's path. Although the Federation aims to be a voice for working biological scientists, the concerns of these scientists are hard to hear within the lapidary confines of executive committee meetings and awards ceremonies. Having a broader sense of the meaning of the Federation in the lives of scientists it speaks for would be helpful in understanding the course of its development and where it might grow further. For example, the volume devotes far more space to the financial and organizational aspects of the Federation's headquarters arrangements than to those involved in its decades-long Minority Access to Research Careers program, one of its efforts to combat the legacy of discrimination in biology. Just as

this volume shows that the FASEB has reinvented itself before, one hopes that it will have the vision to adapt and respond to the most pressing challenges of the future.