History of Crop Science

Donald G. Hanway

The Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) initiated publication of *Crop Science* in 1961 to function as its professional journal. Editor C.O. Qualset observed in his report to the CSSA Executive Committee in 1983, "It is my experience that *Crop Science* enjoys a strong international reputation for excellence in publication of applied science." This journal has become recognized worldwide as one of the primary publications of research related to the broad areas of crop science.

When CSSA was organized in 1955 as an affiliate of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA), it was following the pattern set in 1956 when the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) was established as the first ASA affiliate. SSSA was established to provide a professional journal for all soil scientists since some of their interests went beyond the commonly recognized limits of agronomy. In the editorial in the first issue of *Crop Science*, Editor I.J. Johnson and Managing Editor H.L. Hamilton explain that natural growth in many scientific disciplines had made it difficult for publishers and scientists to channel manuscripts arising from research into journals that would effectively serve specific needs. By 1956 the *Agronomy Journal* covered diverse subject matter areas. As it attempted to serve all members of ASA, it perhaps did not serve any to full capacity, and *Crop Science* was needed.

On recognition of the 25th anniversary of CSSA Dr. Glenn W. Burton wrote on CSSA, "Past History and Future Opportunities" (*Crop Science* 21:1-3, 1981). He attributes the following statement to Dr. A.A. Hanson, the second editor of *Crop Science*: "It was the decision to establish a separate journal that set the stage for the growth and current status of the Crop Science Society." Dr. Burton further states, "I believe the principal role of CSSA will always be to publish the research and the findings of its members. . . . Research is not complete until its findings are published. . . . With effective publication, the scientist fulfills his obligation to himself, his employer, his colleagues, his profession, and everyone who may benefit from his findings."

Table 1 shows the steady growth in distribution of *Crop Science* from 2088 copies in 1961 to 7259 in 1983. Membership in CSSA increased from 1658 to 5540 during this period. There were 430 nonmember subscribers, mostly libraries, in 1961. This number increased to about 1750 and has been a relatively stable figure since 1976. In 1983 CSSA had members in each state of the United States, all provinces of Canada, and 94 other nations. Since the journal goes to all CSSA members, distribution is now worldwide.

Table 2 lists the six divisions of CSSA which represent the areas of interest of its members. Thus, these become the areas of science represented by articles published in *Crop Science*. Crop breeding, genetics, and cytology (C-1) has recently represented about 60% of articles published. Crop physiology and metabolism (C-2) ranks second. Crop ecology, production, and management (C-3) is well represented in number of articles. Division C-6, Crop quality and utilization, was added in 1967 as a necessary component of crop science interest. It along with Seed production and technology (C-4) and Turfgrass (C-5) represents divisions with fewer numbers but still significant areas of research.

An important product of the research of breeders and geneticists is improved or special genetic materials. To serve this need for recognition of specific advancements from research efforts, CSSA provides a registration service for (i) crop cultivars, (ii) crop germplasms, and (iii) parental lines. From an average of 47 registrations for 1962 through 1965, the first 5 years of this service, the number of registrations grew to 221 in 1983, a fourfold increase closely related to increased research output in crop improvement. Table 3 lists the crops included in the registration program. Research articles of *Crop Science* relate primarily to these crops.

*Crop Science* serves the primary role of publishing research manuscripts of its members and of crop cultivar registration. The first volume in 1961 carried 125 articles, 35 notes, and no registrations. Volume 23 in 1983 contained 249 articles, 28 notes, and 221 registrations. To carry this great increase, journal size has steadily increased from 478 pages in Volume 1 in 1961 to 1242 pages in 1983. Related to its primary role, the journal also publishes editorials, letters to the editor, invited articles, suggestions for conferences, and other material beneficial to its members.

---

1 CSSA historian and professor of agronomy Emeritus, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln. Received 15 Oct. 1984.