SSSA is working hard to mount a global imprint of our activities, with a current international membership of more than 1,200. At our Annual Meeting in Tampa, we had more than 550 registrations from overseas. Much of the success of our scientific publications and the Digital Library depends on international subscriptions. By way of the Board on International Scientific Organizations (BISO), and on behalf of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), our Society is represented by the U.S. National Committee of Soil Sciences (NCSS) in supporting participation in international activities. In this role, the NCSS represents the interests of soil science in the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) and provides leadership in the advancement of soil science internationally.

Through changing land use or as soils are degraded by erosion, desertification, salinization, and chemical pollution, they lose their primary functions of producing food, storing soil carbon, and providing ecosystem services. Implications of soil degradation affect people’s livelihood and human well-being worldwide. Broader attention of soil-based issues requires a global approach, and SSSA is actively taking a part in this. Our activities include participation in FAO’s 2012 Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and membership on the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, promoting sustainable management of land and soils, thereby contributing to efforts of eradicating hunger and food insecurity and stabilizing ecosystems. Among the main goals of the GSP is to develop public awareness and recognition of the importance of soils and to address critical soil issues that are relevant both regionally and globally.

Also, through facilitation by the GSP, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 as the International Year of Soils (IYS). Our Society has been invited for membership on the steering committee for IYS. Past President David Lindbo is heading a task force that is planning for SSSA’s participation in IYS. The main goal is the development of a set of materials and coordinated activities that will increase public awareness of the importance of soils and the visibility of soil scientists in their local communities. Material will be designed and developed for these specific purposes and shared with educators, funding agencies, professional societies, industry, and legislative offices. An important effort will be development of a planner that includes monthly themes that represent the broad functions of soils and society. Examples of such themes include Soils Support Urban Life, Soils are Living, Soils Support Agriculture, and Soils and Culture. We are seeking theme leads and in contributing to any of the monthly themes. Updated information is available on the IYS webpage at www.soils.org/IYS.

International Presence

This year, to emphasize the global interest of SSSA, the leadership is preparing to attend at least four international scientific meetings. Of course, we will attend the 20th World Congress of Soil Science in Jeju, Korea, under the theme of “Soils Embrace Life and Universe,” as the 90th anniversary of IUSS is commemorated. SSSA will have a booth with membership, educational, and publications materials and will widely distribute our “I Heart Soil” stickers, translated in nine other languages, including Korean. We successfully collaborated with the IUSS on this, sharing in the costs of development and printing. In late April, the SSSA leadership represented the Society at the European Geosciences Union (EGU), held in Vienna, Austria. The EGU has a very active Soil System Sciences Division that works closely with its Hydrologic Sciences Division to hold a first series of Conferences on The Earth’s Living Skin 2014: Soil, Life and Climate Changes. This session we will be co-organizing, “Understanding and Enhancing Soil Organic Matter Functioning for a Sustainable Future,” will focus on state-of-the-art techniques and approaches to elucidate soil organic matter composition and functioning, as well as relationships between soil organic matter dynamics and soil biodiversity.