



ASM History: Presidents/Vice-Presidents

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Clinton Hart Merriam (1855–1942), a classically trained medical doctor of the latter 1800s, quit his medical practice in 1885 to follow his lifelong passion of natural history. In 1885, he became the first chief of the Division of Economic Ornithology, which in 1886 was renamed the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy of the United States Department of Agriculture. The Division later became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1940. Because of his leadership there, driving passion for research, and no doubt charismatic personality, in 1919 Merriam was elected as the first president of the newly formed American Society of Mammalogists (ASM; Fig. 1). Our fledging Society thrived under his leadership, but full credit must also be given to the unselfish, dedicated work in fostering the new Society from the legions of other members. The first listing of members, published in the *Journal of Mammalogy* in 1920, included 358 individuals from 15 countries. The photograph taken of attendees at the organizational meeting of the Society in 1919 shows 14 women and 43 men (Timm and McLaren 2019). Running the ASM has been a team effort from the beginning, with legions of members serving on committees, working closely with elected officers and other colleagues behind the scenes, and volunteers quietly running much Society business. Anna M. Jackson, wife of Hartley H. T. Jackson, the first Recording Secretary of the ASM and key figure in getting the Society started, is perhaps the earliest example of the importance of the contributions of so many members. In recognition of her time and support, Jackson provided funds for the Anna M. Jackson honorarium to memorialize his wife and to encourage students to attend annual meetings and participate in the Society (*Journal of Mammalogy* 50:908, 1969). In fact, these involvements provide the background and training instrumental in the development of effective leadership within the ASM throughout our history.

The President represents the Society and is responsible for the successful operation of all aspects of Society business. Here we: (1) trace the history of the positions of President and Vice-President in the ASM; (2) bring together information on the

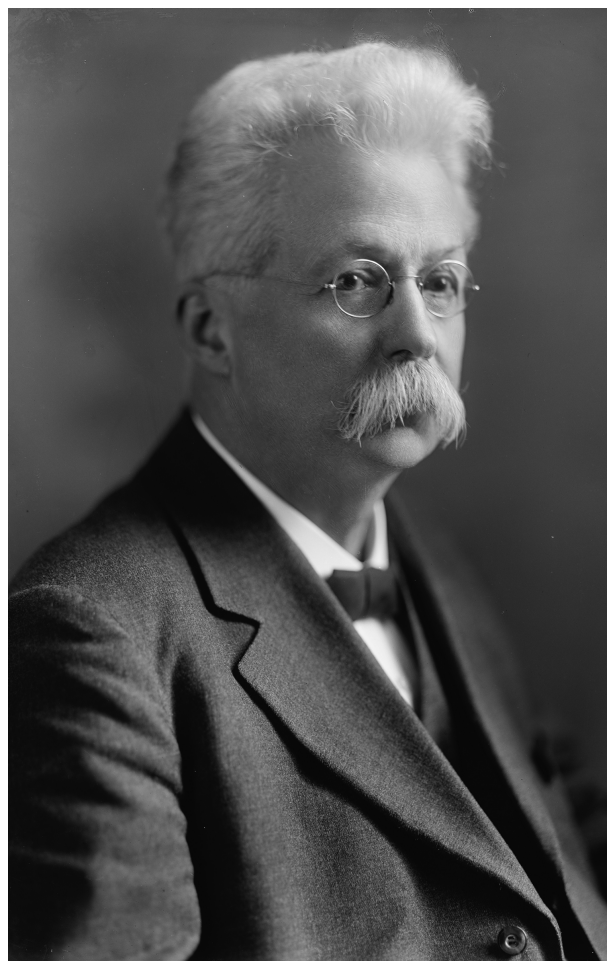


Fig. 1.—C. Hart Merriam, first President of the ASM, serving from 1919 to 1921. Photographed in Washington, District of Columbia, in 1919 at age 64. Merriam, considered “father of American mammalogy,” was noted for perfecting methods, use of large series of specimens, and emphasis on precision of geographic data. He is the namesake of the Society’s highest recognition for research on mammals (Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, District of Columbia; Harris & Ewing Collection, LC-DIG-hec-15601).

members who served as President; and (3) compare some characteristics of the cohort of ASM Presidents with the cohort of the ASM North American Honorary Members (Genoways et al. 2023). The ASM has published several excellent discussions of the presidents of the organization and it is not our intention to review or duplicate these publications (Hoffmeister 1969; Layne and Hoffmann 1994; Merrick and Wilson 2019; Timm and McLaren 2019). ASM Vice-Presidents, on the other hand, have received minimal attention in the past, so we present an initial summary of those members who did not later serve as President.

The offices of President and two Vice-Presidents were created in Article III of the original ASM Bylaws, adopted on 3 April 1919.

Article III. Officers

Sec. 1. The officers of the Society shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer. These, together with the Editor and ten persons elected from the Society at large, shall constitute the Council [= Board] of Managers of the Society.

Sec. 2. The officers of the Society shall be elected annually and shall be eligible for reelection; and such officers shall perform their duties until their successors shall qualify. (*Journal of Mammalogy* 1:49–51)

The Bylaws, as amended at the Fifth Annual Meeting, 15 May 1923 (*Journal of Mammalogy* 5:78–80, 1924), included the “Ex-Presidents” [= Past Presidents] as life members of the Board of Directors. This arrangement has served the ASM well through the years, giving the Board a long organizational memory.

No further definition of these offices or the duties of these officers appeared in the ASM Bylaws until those that were adopted in June 1984 (*Journal of Mammalogy* 65:733–736). The offices of President and two Vice-Presidents were again established in Article III, Section 1. Section 2 of this article put into place what had become tradition: “The President shall be elected for a two-year term and may not be re-elected.” For the first time, the duties of the President were spelled out in some detail in Section 9 of this article.

Sec. 9. The President is empowered to speak for the Society, and shall preside over the Board of Directors and at the general business sessions of the Society. It shall be the President’s responsibility to appoint members of the standing committees, and the President, either independently or following action of the membership, may organize, charge and discharge ad hoc committees as needed in the conduct of affairs of the Society. (*Journal of Mammalogy* 65:734)

The duties of the First and Second Vice-Presidents were given in Sections 10 and 11, respectively, to replace the President when absent and to replace the President and First Vice-President when absent. However, the vice-presidents performed other



Fig. 2.—J. Mary Taylor was the first woman to serve as President of the ASM, with a term from 1982 to 1984. The primary focus of her research was reproduction in marsupials and rodents of the Australian region. She served as the Director of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for nearly 10 years. Reflecting her influence, in 2020 the Society established the J. Mary Taylor Award to recognize the impact of an individual or a team through contributions that promote and improve the accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity of our discipline or of our Society (Photograph courtesy of the archives of the American Society of Mammalogists).

duties as requested by the president, such as chairing ad hoc or Standing Committees.

Finally, in the Bylaws adopted in June 1999 (*Journal of Mammalogy* 80:1398–1402), the President’s position remained unchanged but the First and Second Vice-President positions were eliminated and replaced by a President-Elect and a Vice-President. The member elected President-Elect serves for a 2-year term and then becomes President for a 2-year term. The members of the ASM had become convinced the president’s position was highly complex, with the person needing 2 years of experience before taking charge of the organization. The President’s role as the face of the organization was expanding, representing the ASM in many different formal and social situations. There was a need for the current President to serve as a mentor for the President-Elect. Operating budgets were exceeding \$100,000 and the up-front financial commitment for the annual meeting could be as much as \$70,000. This was a position that required calm, firm, experienced leadership. The Vice-President was to be elected to a 1-year term, but could be re-elected. The term for this office was changed from 1 year to 2 in a group of Bylaws amendments passed at the second

Members Meeting in 2013, but not published in the *Journal* until 2018 (*Journal of Mammalogy* 99:1553, 2018; [McLaren and Timm 2019](#)).

By the 2025 annual meeting of the ASM, 53 people will have served as President of the organization (Appendix I)—48 were men and five were women. The first woman to serve as President was J. Mary Taylor, elected in 1982 ([Fig. 2](#)), followed by Alicia V. Linzey, elected in 1996. The remaining three women were elected after 2000 during which time nine men were elected President. Although women being elected to the highest offices of the ASM has increased in the 21st century, it has not reached parity. The early Presidents were all born in the last half of the 19th century, with E. Raymond Hall being the first person born in the 20th century to be elected President. We are still awaiting the first President born in the 21st century. All Presidents were from North America until Enrique P. Lessa from Uruguay in South America became President in 2021. This will almost certainly not be the last President from outside of North America, as the ASM has broadened its international outreach.

Between 1919 and 1984, Presidents were elected on a yearly basis, but very quickly electing Presidents for a second 1-year term became tradition. However, there were exceptions to this tradition, with three Presidents serving for a single year and three serving for 3 years. William D. Matthew probably did not serve a second year because in 1927 he moved from the American Museum of Natural History to become director of the Museum of Paleontology at the University of California, Berkeley. Joseph Grinnell undoubtedly served only a single year (1937–1938) because he was beginning to have the health problem that took his life at age 62 in 1939 ([Hall 1939](#)). Edward A. Goldman served only 1 year because he passed away while President. We have found no information as to the reason Edward W. Nelson served as President for 3 years (1921–1924). The reason William B. Davis (1955–1958) served an extra year “was the result of a desire of the membership to maintain administrative continuity during a period of reorganization of the society’s finances” ([Layne and Hoffmann 1994:24](#); [Schmidly and Dixon 1998](#)). Examining the ASM records reveals that during Davis’ tenure publishing for the *Journal of Mammalogy* was moved from Waverly, Inc., in Baltimore, Maryland, to Allen Press in Lawrence, Kansas ([Genoways et al. 2020](#)), and the positions of Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer were combined, with the office moved to Stillwater, Oklahoma, with Bryan P. Glass serving in the position (*Journal of Mammalogy* 38:551, 1957; [McLaren and Timm 2019](#)). Most recently, Douglas A. Kelt served from 2018 to 2021 because of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual meetings were canceled, moved, and held virtually, but Doug’s steady leadership carried the ASM through this period with only minimal financial harm. In fact, because of the success of the virtual meetings triggered by the pandemic and the need to socially distance, it seems likely that for the foreseeable future, there will be a significant virtual component to our annual meetings.

The mean age of Presidents of the ASM when taking office was 53 years 9 months; the median age was 53 years 3 months;

and the mode for this group of ages was 48 years 3 months, with three Presidents beginning office at this age. The youngest person to become President was Richard G. Van Gelder elected in 1968 at the age of 39 years 6 months. The next youngest person elected President was E. Raymond Hall at 41 years 11 months in 1944 and next would be Don E. Wilson taking office at age 42 years 2 months in 1986. Edward A. Goldman was the oldest President of the ASM at 72 years 9 months when elected in 1946. Next in age sequence would be Vernon O. Bailey who was 68 years 10 months in 1933 and then Edward W. Nelson who was 66 years old when taking office in 1921. All three of these gentlemen (Goldman, Bailey, and Nelson) had worked for the U.S. Biological Survey/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The 53 Presidents of the ASM worked for 32 home institutions/organizations. Seven of the presidents worked for the U.S. Biological Survey/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with six serving prior to 1950. Four Presidents were employed by each the American Museum of Natural History and the University of California, Berkeley, and three worked at the University of Kansas and University of New Mexico. Two past presidents worked for the following five employers: Carnegie Museum of Natural History; Field Museum of Natural History; Texas Tech University; University of California, Davis; and University of Michigan.

ASM presidents received their terminal training at 24 institutions, whereas only one did not pursue a college degree. The University of California, Berkeley, and University of Kansas, with 12 and seven, respectively, had by far the most graduates become President. In a rather remarkable run, in the 22-year period from 1944 to 1966 eight graduates of the University of California, Berkeley, held the office of President for a total of 17 years. Two institutions (Columbia University and George Washington University) had three graduates each become ASM President, with all holding office by 1940. Seven institutions have had two graduates become President as follows: Cornell University; New Mexico State University; University of Arizona; University of Illinois; University of Michigan; University of Minnesota; and University of New Mexico. By our count, at least 30 ASM Presidents can trace their academic ancestry to the program started by Joseph Grinnell at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, Berkeley. In our analyses of ASM honorary members, we termed this the “Joseph Grinnell Effect” because of the dominance of Grinnell and his students in the history of North American mammalogy ([Genoways et al. 2023](#)).

The cohorts of 52 Presidents and 72 honorary members from North America overlap broadly, having 32 people in common. The 20 Presidents who have not become honorary members share a few characteristics, such as they represent 18 degree-granting institutions, with only the University of Minnesota with two graduates. They represent 16 home institutions, with two from the American Museum of Natural History, Field Museum of Natural History, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, and U.S. Biological Survey/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Probably the primary characteristic they share is that

the number in both cohorts will rise with time because many of the recent Presidents remain eligible for honorary membership.

The Vice-Presidents of the ASM have drawn only limited attention when considering the history of the organization. In part, this is because between 1919 and 1999 (when changed to President-Elect) only three Presidents had not previously served as a Vice-President. These three members were C. Hart Merriam, who obviously as the first president had no opportunity, Vernon O. Bailey, who held no other office in the ASM but previously had been a Director and was a well-known field researcher, and Sydney Anderson, who moved from Recording Secretary to President. Schmidly (2018:344) presents this interesting story concerning Bailey's election:

In May 1933, at the fifteenth annual meeting of the ASM in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Bailey was elected for a two-year term as president of the society....His election came after T. S. Palmer, his colleague at the Survey, had declined to serve. The minutes of the recording secretary of the ASM recorded the election episode as follows: 'On the first ballot for President Dr. T. S. Palmer received the greatest number of ballots, and on motion was formally and unanimously elected but Dr. Palmer promptly resigned, even after those present refused to accept his resignation. Persisting, however, a new ballot was taken, indecisively, and the third ballot showing a preponderance of ballots for Vernon Bailey, and as this was a formal ballot, Bailey was declared as elected, and he took the chair and thanked the members for their approval'.

Since 1999 and moving to a President-Elect and Vice-President arrangement, seven of the Presidents have served as the Vice-President—Patterson, Cameron, Timm, Mares, Lacey, Sikes, and Smith. The Vice-Presidents who went on to serve as President have been recorded in ASM history primarily through their service as President (Layne and Hoffmann 1994; Merrick and Wilson 2019; Timm and McLaren 2019).

However, there is a group of ASM members who have served as a Vice-President, but have not gone on to be President at this time (Appendix II). The reasons for this occurrence are probably as varied as the 21 people who fall into this cohort—for example, we heard Oliver Pearson decline the nomination to President because of some long-standing research plans in southern South America and Jerry Choate did not stand for the office, despite being nominated, because he wished to continue serving as chair of the Trustees feeling he could best contribute there. This was a group with diverse backgrounds. Of the 21 members of this group, 16 were men and five were women; 18 were from the United States, two from Canada, and one from Mexico. This cohort includes nine Honorary Members, and an additional three were Jackson Awardees. Nineteen home institutions were represented, with only U.S. Biological Survey/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service having three. The list of highest degree-granting institutions is also quite diverse, with 16 institutions represented and one Vice-President who only completed high school. Institutions

represented by more than one individual were University of Kansas (3), Harvard University (2), and Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley (2). This was not a group of "left-behinds," but rather a diverse and active group of ASM members whose contributions were enormous and should not be forgotten in the history of the Society.

The members who have held these leadership positions of President and Vice-President have dedicated considerable time and energy to the ASM, but all would agree that their leadership time was relatively short and temporary and that the real long-term leadership of the ASM has come from an informed and active membership. It is the members who submit and review manuscripts, and fill the work positions of editors, officers, and Board members. It is the members who attend the annual meeting, make presentations, and engage in scholarly discussions, and they mentor the next generation of mammalogists and participate in the "buddy system," helping authors who are not native English speakers. It is members who perform committee duties, such as writing resolutions, monitoring conservation issues surrounding mammalian populations, and surveying the status of systematic research collections. The financial stability of the ASM, the quality of the *Journal of Mammalogy* and other publications, and the broader intellectual influence of the Society are a result of the close working relationship of the American Society of Mammalogists' leadership and the membership. The Society has a unique role to play in promoting and guiding the science of mammalogy, but with such opportunity comes great responsibility as well, and a continuing need for leadership and membership to communicate, collaborate, and to integrate their diverse and varied strengths.

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APPENDIX I

Presidents of the American Society of Mammalogists, 1919 to 2025.

President	Years served	Approximate age when taking office	Home institution	Institution granting highest degree
*C. Hart Merriam	1919–1921	63 years 4 months	U.S. Biological Survey	Columbia University
*Edward W. Nelson	1921–1924	66 years 0 month	U.S. Biological Survey	Cook County Normal School, Chicago
Wilfred H. Osgood	1924–1926	48 years 6 months	Field Museum of Natural History	University of Chicago
William D. Matthew	1926–1927	55 years 2 months	American Museum of Natural History	Columbia University
Glover M. Allen	1927–1929	48 years 3 months	Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University	Harvard University
Witmer Stone	1929–1931	62 years 7 months	Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia	University of Pennsylvania
*Marcus W. Lyon, Jr.	1931–1933	56 years 3 months	South Bend Medical Clinic in Indiana	George Washington University
Vernon O. Bailey	1933–1935	68 years 10 months	U.S. Biological Survey	George Washington University (2 years)
*Harold E. Anthony	1935–1937	45 years 1 month	American Museum of Natural History	Columbia University
Joseph Grinnell	1937–1938	60 years 2 months	Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley	Stanford University
*Hartley H. T. Jackson	1938–1940	57 years 2 months	U.S. Biological Survey	George Washington University
*Walter P. Taylor	1940–1942	51 years 8 months	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [Cooperative Wildlife Program at Texas A&M University]	University of California, Berkeley
*A. Brazier Howell	1942–1944	55 years 8 months	Johns Hopkins Medical School	Yale University (1 year)
*E. Raymond Hall	1944–1946	41 years 11 months	University of Kansas	University of California, Berkeley
Edward A. Goldman	1946–1947	72 years 9 months	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	High school only (some courses at George Washington University)
*A. Remington Kellogg	1947–1949	54 years 11 months	U.S. National Museum	University of California, Berkeley
*Tracy I. Storer	1949–1951	59 years 10 months	University of California, Davis	University of California, Berkeley
*William J. Hamilton, Jr.	1951–1953	48 years 7 months	Cornell University	Cornell University
*William H. Burt	1953–1955	50 years 5 months	University of Michigan	University of California, Berkeley
*William B. Davis	1955–1958	53 years 3 months	Texas A&M University	University of California, Berkeley
*Robert T. Orr	1958–1960	49 years 10 months	California Academy of Sciences	University of California, Berkeley
*Stephen D. Durrant	1960–1962	57 years 8 months	University of Utah	University of Kansas
*Emmet T. Hooper	1962–1964	50 years 10 months	University of Michigan	University of California, Berkeley
*Donald F. Hoffmeister	1964–1966	48 years 3 months	University of Illinois	University of California, Berkeley
*Randolph L. Peterson	1966–1968	46 years 4 months	Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada	University of Toronto
Richard G. Van Gelder	1968–1970	39 years 6 months	American Museum of Natural History	University of Illinois
*James N. Layne	1970–1972	44 years 1 month	Archbold Biological Station	Cornell University
*J. Knox Jones, Jr.	1972–1974	43 years 3 months	Texas Tech University	University of Kansas
*Sydney Anderson	1974–1976	47 years 5 months	American Museum of Natural History	University of Kansas
*William Z. Lidicker, Jr.	1976–1978	43 years 10 months	Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley	University of Illinois
*Robert S. Hoffmann	1978–1980	49 years 4 months	University of Kansas	University of California, Berkeley
*James S. Findley	1980–1982	53 years 6 months	University of New Mexico	University of Kansas
*J. Mary Taylor	1982–1984	51 years 1 month	Oregon Regional Primate Research Center	University of California, Berkeley
*Hugh H. Genoways	1984–1986	43 years 6 months	Carnegie Museum of Natural History	University of Kansas
*Don E. Wilson	1986–1988	42 years 2 months	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	University of New Mexico
Elmer C. Birney	1988–1990	48 years 3 months	University of Minnesota	University of Kansas
*James H. Brown	1990–1992	47 years 9 months	University of New Mexico	University of Michigan
*James L. Patton	1992–1994	51 years 0 month	Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley	University of Arizona
*Robert J. Baker	1994–1996	52 years 3 months	Texas Tech University	University of Arizona
*Alicia V. Linzey	1996–1998	53 years 5 months	Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Virginia Tech University
O. James Reichman	1998–2000	51 years 5 months	University of California, Santa Barbara	Northern Arizona University

President	Years served	Approximate age when taking office	Home institution	Institution granting highest degree
*Thomas H. Kunz	2000–2002	62 years 0 month	Boston University	University of Kansas
Bruce D. Patterson	2002–2004	49 years 10 months	Field Museum of Natural History	New Mexico State University
Guy N. Cameron	2004–2006	62 years 1 month	University of Cincinnati	University of California, Davis
Robert M. Timm	2006–2008	56 years 10 months	University of Kansas	University of Minnesota
Suzanne B. McLaren	2008–2010	56 years 9 months	Carnegie Museum of Natural History	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
Michael A. Mares	2010–2012	65 years 3 months	University of Oklahoma	University of Texas, Austin
Edward J. Heske	2012–2014	59 years 1 month	Illinois Natural History Survey	University of California, Berkeley
Eileen A. Lacey	2014–2016	53 years 4 months	Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley	University of Michigan
Robert S. Sikes	2016–2018	54 years 6 months	University of Arkansas at Little Rock	University of Minnesota
Douglas A. Kelt	2018–2021	59 years 2 months	University of California, Davis	University of New Mexico
Enrique P. Lessa	2021–2023	65 years 3 months	Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay	New Mexico State University
Felisa A. Smith	2023–2025	64 years 11 months	University of New Mexico	University of California, Irvine

*Honorary Member.

APPENDIX II

Mammalogists who served in one of the Vice-President positions of the American Society of Mammalogists, but did not subsequently serve as President. Living members of this group remain eligible to be elected to the presidency. All home institutions are in the United States, unless otherwise indicated.

Name	Home institution	Institution granting highest degree	Vice-President	Years served
*Gerrit S. Miller, Jr.	U.S. National Museum	Columbia University	1st	1921–1924
*Theodore S. Palmer	U.S. Biological Survey	Georgetown University	1st 2nd	1927–1929 1929–1931, 1931–1935
*Edward A. Preble	U.S. Biological Survey/Nature Magazine	High school only	2nd	1935–1937, 1937–1938, 1944–1946
*Rudolph M. Anderson	National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Canada	University of Iowa	1st	1946–1947
*Lee R. Dice	University of Michigan	University of California, Berkeley	1st	1947–1949, 1949–1951
George H. H. Tate	American Museum of Natural History	University of Montreal, Canada	2nd	1953–1954
Ian McT. Cowan	University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada	University of California, Berkeley	1st	1960–1961
Richard H. Manville	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	University of Michigan	1st	1964–1965
*Bernardo Villa-R.	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, D.F., México	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México	2nd	1966–1967
*Oliver P. Pearson	Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley	Harvard University	2nd	1969–1970, 1970–1972, 1972–1973
Terry A. Vaughan	Northern Arizona University	University of Kansas	2nd	1976–1978, 1980–1982, 1982–1983
*Katherine Ralls	National Zoological Park	Harvard University	2nd	1990–1993
Sarah B. George	University of Utah	University of New Mexico	2nd	1994–1995
*Jerry R. Choate	Fort Hays State University	University of Kansas	1st	1998–1999
*Gordon L. Kirkland, Jr.	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	Michigan State University	2nd	1998–1999
Lawrence R. Heaney	Field Museum of Natural History	University of Kansas	VP	2000–2001, 2004–2005
*Glennis A. Kaufman	Kansas State University	Kansas State University	VP	2006–2007
Nancy G. Solomon	Miami University of Ohio	University of Illinois	VP	2007–2008
*David M. Leslie, Jr.	U.S. Geological Survey/Oklahoma State University	Oregon State University	VP	2012–2013
Thomas E. Tomasi	Missouri State University	University of Utah	VP	2014–2016
Janet L. Rachlow	University of Idaho	University of Nevada, Reno	VP	2021–2023

*ASM Honorary Member.

*H. H. T. Jackson Awardee.