

After a good beginning in 1938–1940, NABT ran into a roadblock – the war. As Jeffers and Lightner state: “Every facet of American life was affected by the global conflict into which the United States officially entered on December 8, 1941” (Jeffers & Lightner, 2001, p. 29). The NABT was no exception.

○ The Impact of World War II

There was no gathering of biology teachers because the national meeting of AAAS was canceled at the request of the Office of Defense Transportation. “Due to problems with labor, paper supply, and other wartime conditions, publication of *ABT* was falling behind schedule” (Jeffers & Lightner, 2001, p. 30). The organization was trying to stay together despite a decline in advertising in *ABT* and a decrease in membership. The officers were asked to hold office for two years, the bylaws were rewritten, and additional effort was made to seek new members (Jeffers & Lightner, 2001).

○ *ABT* during the War Years

Many *ABT* articles and advertisements reflected the wartime situation. The Bausch & Lomb advertisement in the March 1942 issue explained that their grinding for optics was to be used to make optical instruments for ships – not microscopes. “The glasses with which the officers scan the horizon are Bausch & Lomb products.... [O]ptical science – with Bausch & Lomb instruments – is at work helping to strengthen America’s front lines of defense.... The lessons that they are learning in the white heat of the national emergency will be available later to further the peacetime interests of science and industry” (Bausch & Lomb, 1942). The April 1942 issue (vol. 4, no. 7) was called the “National Defense Issue,” with articles entitled “Yellow fever, plague, typhus-smoldering threats,” “What biology teachers can do to support national defense,” “The victory garden and biology,” “Ecology in a world at war,” and “Chemical warfare.”

○ The Nature of Biology Education in the 1940s

The most helpful place to look for the topics deemed important in biology education is the January 1946 issue of *ABT*, in which Dorothy R. Lunsford and Lee R. Yothers reviewed the articles appearing in the first seven volumes of *ABT*. Table 1 shows the number of articles published for each of the identified topics. Articles about “teaching methods,” “curriculum problems,” and “visual aids” appeared most frequently. Many of the current *ABT* articles address these same

Table 1. Numbers of articles published by category in the first seven volumes of *ABT*.

| Category | Number of Articles |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Teaching methods | 66 |
| Curriculum problems | 46 |
| Visual aids | 43 |
| Teaching aids | 36 |
| Field biology | 31 |
| Philosophy of biology | 23 |
| Biology in wartime | 19 |
| Health | 15 |
| Applied biology | 12 |
| Biology clubs | 10 |
| Conservation education | 10 |
| Physiology | 10 |
| Teacher training | 8 |
| Vocational biology | 8 |
| Evolution and heredity | 7 |
| Total number of articles | 344 |

topics. During this time, high school teachers were the major contributors to the journal. Of the 344 articles, 156 were written by high school teachers and 130 were written by college/university educators. The other authors included professionals in research labs, museums, and government agencies, physicians, and even students (Lunsford et al., 1946). Do we see the same diversity of authors within current *ABT* issues? As you look at this current issue, take note of the authors’ professional descriptions. Have there been changes in article focus as well as the type of authors?

○ Teaching of Biological Science: A Survey

In 1937, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching provided a \$10,000 grant for a study of the status of biology in secondary schools. The analysis of the questionnaire circulated by the Committee on the Teaching of Biological Science (CTBS) was presented in *ABT* volume 4, in the November and December 1941

issues. The last segments of this analysis were written by Oscar Riddle for the January, February, and March 1942 issues of *ABT*. The title “Amount and nature of biology teaching in secondary schools” reflected the focus that biology in the curriculum was growing and, depending on the location (rural or urban), the topics and depth of the curriculum differed. From our current point in time, one topic, in this analysis, is especially interesting – evolution.

○ Evolution in the Biology Curriculum

Riddle addressed the teaching of evolution and found that the school administration was more often credited with opposing the teaching of evolution than the school board. Yet the reason most often given was “opposed by the majority of the community,” followed next by “personal belief.” Riddle points out that many teachers thought that a state law prevented their teaching of evolution, rather than their city (Riddle, 1942b). This study (CTBS) also revealed that the most frequently taught topics in a general biology course at the high school level were health–disease–hygiene, physiology, heredity, genetics, conservation, and structure. The least favorite topics were photosynthesis, biological principles, scientific method, behavior, eugenics, adaptation, and evolution (Riddle, 1942a).

○ NABT Moves Forward

NABT weathered the war with the help of the Chicago Biology Roundtable. This relationship led many to think of NABT as a “Midwest” rather than a national organization. By 1944, NABT was back on more solid financial ground. Helen Trowbridge was elected the first woman president of NABT, and AAAS had been given permission to again hold its national meeting. In April 1945, NABT formally affiliated with AAAS and continued to hold the National Convention as part of the AAAS National Meetings (Jeffers & Lightner, 2001, pp. 30–33).

There was a major change in *ABT* in 1948. The January issue would be the first issue of a new volume instead of the October issue. Since 1948, the January issue of *ABT* has been the first issue of each new volume.

○ Some Thoughts from a Past President & *ABT* Editor

The 1940s had begun with a struggle. As the decade ended, NABT began to move forward again. Reflecting on the early years of NABT,

George Jeffers, NABT President 1940, wrote: “Now we enter upon our third year and it is altogether fitting that we pause again to inquire our direction. We must continue to build up membership, not as an end in itself, but because we need sufficient numbers to ensure a thirty-two page journal every issue.... I sincerely hope that each reader will consider himself or herself a committee of one to secure new members during the present year” (Jeffers, 1940).

As the decade was closing, *ABT* Editor John Breukelman encouraged the members to think about *ABT*: “[S]uch a magazine as ours depends to a large extent on the cooperation of the advertisers, so every biology teacher interested in the betterment of the journal can contribute to it by patronizing the firms who advertise in it and by mentioning the journal when answering advertising” (Breukelman, 1949).

Both of these comments apply today, just as they did in the 1940s. If the early members of NABT did not heed their words, we would not be celebrating this 75th year. We, the current members, need to accept the challenge presented to us by the past NABT members to move NABT forward to provide support for excellence in biology education in the future.

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