



FOREWORD

Going Forward

I remember when I first learned about the existence of the International Oak Society. It was around 2006 and I was sitting in the office of Dr. Mark Coggeshall, bugging him about oaks, specifically about the propagation of oaks. At one point he asked me if I was a member of the IOS, to which I responded that I didn't even know of its existence. As he explained what the IOS was and who the members were that he interacted with, I remember thinking that this sounded like some sort of exclusive club and I wondered if I could be a part of something like that. A group of people as enamored with oaks as I was? I soon found out I was not alone; that, in fact, there was a multitude of folks just as oak crazy as I was. Some even more so.

The people that I met in the early stages of my IOS experience represented the organization very well. They were experienced, kind, and generous with their time and knowledge. In addition to Dr. Coggeshall, I remember very well conversations and time spent with Guy Sternberg, Allan Taylor, Allen Coombes, Béatrice Chassé, Bob McCartney, Michael Melendrez, Eike Jablonski, Charles Snyers, Dirk Benoit, and many others. Each of these people shared their expertise, particular interests, knowledge, and their plants with me. Thanks to this network, I was able to expand my knowledge and collection tenfold in a short period. Things I once thought of as unattainable, such as creating an oak collection, soon seemed common place.

My earliest goal of simply building a personal oak collection morphed into many other projects. In 2012, I began the process of building a public arboretum, now Stephens Lake Park Arboretum, here in Missouri. That process put me in contact with others who were also building public collections, and those partnerships helped all of us grow. Species conservation is the latest iteration of my oak work, focusing on *Quercus acerifolia*, *Q. austrina* and several others. I cannot say that any of these goals or processes are complete nor that they ever will be, but that is part of the fun. Each year as I learn more, it seems like there is even more to learn.

Who knows where things will go from here, but I am proud to be a part of this Society and I am proud of what the IOS has become. From the valuable oak research in a vast

array of different fields, to the oak conservation efforts that are supported through the Oak Conservation and Research grants, to the top-notch publications we produce, the IOS sits at the forefront of the oak world. From the novice, simply wanting to learn a little more about their backyard trees, to the seasoned professional, the IOS has room for everybody. My hope is that we can continue to blend everything that the IOS has become with what it started as: a group of oak enthusiasts excited to build collections of oaks from around the world for their enjoyment and for the enjoyment and education of others.

As you read about the 11th Triennial Conference in Oaxaca, Mexico, in these pages, you will clearly see the excellence within our Society. Members from around the globe traveled to the center of oak diversity to take in the sights and sounds of this wonderful part of the world. Tour attendees were treated to a diverse range of territories and species, and the Conference presentations likewise offered diverse topics from taxonomy to genetics, to the role oaks have played in human society, to artistic inspiration, conservation, phylogeny, evolution, and ecosystemic functions.

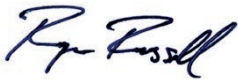
A great deal of work went into planning the Conference and Tours and I would like to thank the Conference Committee Chair Béatrice Chassé, our “man on the ground” and Conference Host, Antonio González Rodríguez, and Committee members Roderick Cameron, Dirk Giseburt, Amy Byrne, Dan Kostka, and Phil Douglas, all instrumental in making sure the Conference was a success.

I am honored to serve this term as the President of the International Oak Society. With help from the rest of the Board of Directors, as well as from the membership, I hope to build on our past excellence and continue to improve our publications, Tours, Conferences, and friendships. All the while keeping in mind the lessons learned at the beginning: sharing knowledge, time, and oaks.

As the age-old adage goes, “If you want to keep a plant, give it away.”

Sincerely,

Ryan Russell
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Russell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and the last name "Russell" clearly distinguishable.