

Asperfest 10 Minutes

The 10th International Aspergillus Meeting (Asperfest 10) was held March 11-12, 2013, at Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California. There were 116 registered participants representing institutions in 15 countries.

The scientific program included a Poster session (concurrent with the Welcome Reception sponsored by Novozymes), scientific sessions and Genomics projects updates.

In the community directions discussion led by AGRPC Chair Michelle Momany the following items were raised and/or discussed:

1. AspGD renewal proposal has been submitted along with 165 support letters. Michelle Momany passed on Gavin Sherlock's comment that he has never seen such a high level of support for this type of resource, that the typical proposal might have 20 letters. If the level of user community support is important to NIH, these letters should be a compelling argument for continued funding.

2. The announcement by Ronald deVries that Aspergillus will retain the name "Aspergillus" was greeted with great enthusiasm. He noted that the community response to a questionnaire on this topic at the Asperfest 9 played a role in this decision.

3. Miguel Penalva presented "Asperwhat?" – thoughts on raising the profile of Aspergillus and ensuring that Aspergillus is recognized as a good model so that our work can be funded and published in high impact venues. He stressed the need to utilize the strengths of the system and to be sure that the standard of research quality is high. This led to spirited discussion with comments from many. Three themes emerged: (a) that we need to approach our work (and reviews of Aspergillus papers) with rigor, including scholarship and "due diligence" on previous literature, methods and strain verification, (b) that though much of the relevant information on methods/protocols has been published, it would be useful to assemble it in a central easy to use place with the gold standards for quality clearly outlined, and (c) the need for us to be competitive in the future as a model organism community.

Steve Osmani commented that most of the protocols and standards are published. Nancy Keller highlighted that often the information can be hard to find, and that consolidation would help.

Martha Arnaud floated the concept of a WIKI to help find published protocols and standards.

Kevin McCluskey highlighted the FGSC as a repository for protocols with a lot of information available.

Nancy Keller, as editor of FGB, commented that FGB would be a good venue for a publication on this topic. In discussions following the meeting, Miguel Penalva agreed to take the lead on assembling an FGB paper focusing on commonly used markers. The general idea is a central, information-dense table with ~5 pages of text. Nancy Keller was enthusiastic about this idea.

Prizes: Michelle Momany (University of Georgia) presented a shortened version of the Pontecorvo Lecture ("Pontecorvo Lite: A decade of Asperfest"). The Novozymes student poster prizes (\$200 each) were awarded to: Damien Downes (Todd lab, Kansas State University), Sara Blosser (Cramer lab, Montana State University), Farhana Runa (Payne lab, North Carolina State University), and Alexandra Soukup (Keller lab, University of Wisconsin-Madison). Jennifer Wortman chaired the student poster prizes.

T-shirts: Asperfest t-shirts sales, recovered costs and made a small profit for the AGRPC account. We thank Cameron Hunter (Kansas State University) for arranging t-shirt printing and shipping, and Diane Inglis (AspGD) for transporting them to Asilomar.

Elections: Terms ended for Gustavo Goldman, Vera Meyer, and Jennifer Wortman. We thank AGRPC members leaving the committee for their service. Newly elected members to serve for 3 year terms are: Paul Dyer, Mikael Andersen, Antonis Rokas and Rob Cramer. The AGRPC elected Michelle Momany to continue as Chair.

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