

Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE) Council and Business Meetings, 2004 State College, Pennsylvania, USA

Council Meeting

1. *Call to order.*—President John Avise called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, 17 June 2004. In attendance were President John Avise, Treasurer Marta L. Wayne, Editorial Advisory Board member Stanley A. Sawyer, Editor William Martin, Past-President Naoyuki Takahata, Secretary Sudhir Kumar, and Councillors G. Brian Golding, Laura A. Katz, and Jody Hey. President-Elect Jeffrey R. Powell arrived later due to flight delays. The meeting began with Introductions.
2. *Approval of minutes.*—Council approved the minutes of the 2003 Council and Business meetings, published in the December 2003 issue of the journal *Molecular Biology and Evolution* (MBE).
3. *Editor's report.*—Most of the meeting addressed a discussion concerning the Journal's future and dealings with the Oxford University Press (OUP) (see report).
4. *Treasurer's report.*—Treasurer Marta L. Wayne summarized the financial state of the Society (see report). The fiscal year has now changed to January–December (coincident with calendar year).
5. *Secretary's report.*—Secretary Sudhir Kumar reviewed Council actions over the preceding year, they are summarized here:

Society Elections: For the 2004 SMBE elections, President-Elect John Avise had appointed a nominations committee, including Past-President Naoyuki Takahata (chair), Gisella Caccone, Treasurer Marta L. Wayne, and Secretary-Elect Sudhir Kumar (*ex officio*). OUP produced the election packet and sent it by first-class mail to all SMBE members. These election materials included the ballot (to be returned to the Secretary by 15 April 2004) and information about nominees Drs. Montserrat Aguade and Bruce Weir for the President-Elect and Drs. Michael Lynch and Koichiro Tamura for Councillor. In the final tally, Drs. Aguade and Lynch were elected President-Elect and Councillor, respectively.

In the future, SMBE elections are expected to be conducted on-line at the OUP member-subscription site. Cathy Kennedy of OUP indicated January 2005 as a date for the availability of election website for testing by the SMBE Council.

SMBE membership: Council stressed the need for the availability of on-line facilities to join SMBE. Cathy Kennedy indicated that this facility will be available in 2005 and that the Council will be able to “test drive” it in November 2004. Cathy Kennedy was also requested to provide the Council with a membership list (individual as well as institutional) every year and on-demand (as need arises).

The subject of SMBE mailing list rentals was raised during the year. In the past, the Society rented the mail

addresses of its members to organizations, including book vendors, for the distribution of information considered useful to the membership. Although Allen Press previously handled rentals approved by the Editor, the policy of OUP is to decline such requests, because this policy is intended to protect the OUP from charges of violation of the Data Protection Act (UK) governing dissemination of information about subscribers. Council noted that the Society, apart from the OUP, reserves the option of disseminating such information, which has in the past been made available in hard-copy form to all SMBE members. Even so, Council decided to decline rental requests, pending further review of Society policies on privacy protection of its members.

Council approved distribution of a revised letter originally drafted by Cathy Kennedy outlining the benefits of subscription and membership renewal. The letter, signed by the three SMBE Presidents, was sent by regular mail to former MBE subscribers and to attendees of the 2003 SMBE meeting.

Cathy Kennedy then informed Council of a request from the International Society for Computational Biology (ISCB) to make available to their members discount subscriptions to MBE. The ISCB sponsors the journal *Bioinformatics*, to which it already offers a discounted rate to SMBE members. Council approved a \$100 rate for the print and online Journal for ISCB members, discounted from the usual \$120 rate.

Overall, a 4% increase in personal subscription rate was approved by the Council and a suggestion was made to increase the SMBE institutional subscription by 7% the following year. Council also voted to allow Postdoctoral fellows to join SMBE at the student rates.

Furthermore, discussions were held to change the tax-status of SMBE in order to allow SMBE subscriptions to be tax-deductible.

Council also discussed the report presented by Jody Hey (chair) of the committee intended to explore the reasons for declining memberships and potential membership incentives to promote SMBE membership. Significant differences in opinion among the committee members arose, and the discussions are on-going.

Society website: Sudhir Kumar presented a lay-out of the Society website, which was approved by the Council with minor modifications. It was decided that the SMBE website be hosted on the OUP server (discussions with Cathy Kennedy pending) and that Dr. Stanley Sawyer be the primary contact for SMBE website matters. This website will be connected with the OUP membership-subscription site. Also discussed was the possibility of providing a searchable database of SMBE members on the Society website (not favored) and the ownership of www.smbe.org (presently assigned to Duke University).

A representative of Blackwell Publishing proposed incorporation of reciprocal links between the SMBE website and the Journal of Anatomy; the proposed link would be on the Society's rather than on the Journal's

website. Past-Secretary Marcy Uyenoyama proposed that the offer be declined and the Council concurred, but they left open the possibility of future cross-linking.

Annual meeting: Ms. Susan Wright, Business Manager, presented an excellent report on the 2005 SMBE annual meeting to be held in Auckland, New Zealand (1–5 July 2005). This meeting will be entitled “Remembering Allan Wilson: Molecular Clocks, Phylogenetics, and Ancient DNA,” and will be co-hosted with the Genetics Society of Australasia. Facilities as well as organizational plans were presented (David Lambert and David Penny were in attendance). John Avise proposed that Arizona State University host the 2006 SMBE meetings, and Sudhir Kumar presented the bid to the Council. Council approved the bid. The site of the 2007 SMBE meeting is expected to be Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia (organized by Ford Doolittle).

Council discussed the matter of \$15,000 support from SMBE to the annual meeting organizers. It was agreed that the organizers were not obligated to return any part of this support; however, they will be encouraged to return monies if the meeting is profitable. Still, the Council recommended that the organizers obtain insurance against cost-overruns, as SMBE’s contribution will not exceed \$15,000.

Committees: President John Avise appointed Naoyuki Takahata (chair), Laura A. Katz, and Howard Ochman to the Fitch Prize Selection committee for the 2004 Annual SMBE Meeting. He also appointed Laura A. Katz and Jody Hey to the Audit Committee. Past-President Naoyuki Takahata appointed Sudhir Kumar, Marta Wayne, Naoyuki Takahata, and Gisella Caccone to the Nominations Committee. He also appointed Sudhir Kumar, Blair Hedges, Masatoshi Nei, Jody Hey, Marta Wayne, and Gisella Caccone to the Membership Committee. Naoyuki Takahata convened e-mail discussions with Margaret Kidwell and Marcy Uyenoyama on a review of the SMBE bylaws. This committee was to consider models of governance and propose any necessary revisions to the bylaws. This issue remains open. In 2003, Naoyuki Takahata appointed a committee to explore incentives to promote SMBE membership, which included Jody Hey

(chair), S. Blair Hedges, Sudhir Kumar, Masatoshi Nei, and Marta Wayne. Council discussed declines in MBE subscriptions and SMBE memberships.

President John Avise appointed a new committee called “SMBE Awards and Incentives Committee” consisting of Marta L. Wayne, Jody Hey, and Laura Katz to explore new incentives and awards for SMBE members throughout the year and during the SMBE annual meetings.

Journal: Dr. William Martin assumed the Editorship of the Journal from Simon Easteal. A number of new associated editors were approved by the Council (see Editor’s report). Council also approved the appointment of David Penny to the Editorial Advisory Board. The Editor announced a new category of papers (Letter). Potential MBE offshoots and a companion journal establishment was discussed and not favored. Council voted to provide ~\$3800 to publish a double issue of MBE in order to clear up the backlog and to expedite the publication of future manuscripts. Furthermore, an external audit of OUP financial reports (conducted by David Ashley) for MBE publications was discussed and is underway. There were also substantial discussions and clarification of Consortia arrangements with OUP as well as the meaning of “Open-Access” publications.

Business Meeting

1. *Call to order.*—President John Avise called to order the annual SMBE Business meeting at 6:10 PM, 17 June. A number of SMBE officers were in attendance. The President summarized the discussion at the Council meeting, focusing on the findings of the Membership committee, and the on-going issue of membership decline (there are currently 500-550 SMBE members).

2. *New business.*—Discussion addressed the Society meeting and the MBE Journal.

Addendum.—The Society congratulates Barbara Engelhardt, University of California, Berkeley, who was the winner of the 2004 Walter M. Fitch Student Prize for her presentation, “Protein Function Prediction Using a Bayesian Model of Molecular Function Evolution.”