

Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE) Council and Business Meetings, 2005 Auckland, New Zealand

Council Meeting

1. *Call to order.*—President Jeffrey R. Powell called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM, June 19, 2005. In attendance were President Jeffrey Powell, President-Elect Montserrat Aguade, Past-President John Avise, Treasurer Marta L. Wayne, Editor William Martin, Secretary Sudhir Kumar, and Councillors Michael Lynch, Laura A. Katz, and Jody Hey. The meeting began with Introductions.
2. *Approval of minutes.*—Council unanimously approved the minutes of the 2004 Council and Business meetings, published in the December 2004 issue of the journal *Molecular Biology and Evolution* (MBE).
3. *Editor's report.*—The Editor gave a report on the increasing impact factor of the journal published by the Society. It was indicated that the newest version of the Scholar 1 online system for manuscript processing is now stable (see report).
4. *Treasurer's report.*—Treasurer Marta L. Wayne summarized the financial state and showed that the Society was in excellent financial health. It was reported that an external audit of the Oxford University Press (OUP) financial records pertaining to the journal publication costs did not find anything amiss, but there was an adjustment towards an increase in SMBE income. There was a motion to hire an accountant to help the Treasurer with taxes, accounting, investigating, and the reporting of costs. This hire was seen to attract treasurers in the future and to provide much needed continuity in financial record-keeping. Approval was unanimous.
5. *Secretary's report.*—Secretary Sudhir Kumar reviewed Council actions over the preceding year, summarized here:

Society Elections: For the 2005 SMBE elections, the nominations committee consisted of John Avise (Past-President, Chair), Sudhir Kumar, Dennis Hedgecock, and Chris Simon. The elections were conducted online for the first time at the OUP member-subscription site, where short biographies of each candidate were made available. In the final tally of the 2005 SMBE elections, Dr. Deborah Charlesworth was elected President of the Society for the year 2007 (she will begin serving on the Council as President-Elect in 2006) and Dr. Charles "Chip" Aquadro was elected Councillor for years 2006–2008. There was also a motion to make a one-time exception to extend the term of the current Treasurer (Marta L. Wayne) for 3 years. The exception was made because the Treasurer's office was overlooked from inclusion in the elections for the officers and because the current Treasurer has served the Society exceptionally well. The motion was approved unanimously. The Council also engaged in a discussion of creating an overlap period for all offices (especially for Secretary and Treasurer) to ensure stability within the Council. Furthermore, it was discussed that the deadline for voting for the Society elections should be the end of the second day

of the annual meetings in order to involve as many members as possible. Michael Lynch and Sudhir Kumar were asked to consider this matter further and to present their findings to the Council.

SMBE membership and awards: The Council discussed expanding the benefits of the SMBE membership. A motion was made to the effect that Annual Meeting registration fees for full and student members should be discounted by at least 85% of the respective online membership fees. This motion was approved unanimously. In order to interest young scientists in joining the Society, there were deliberations to institute award programs aimed at younger researchers. Given the exceptional financial situation of the Society, a motion was made and approved to make available travel, registration, and accommodation expenses to support up to 10 undergraduate students from underrepresented groups and minorities (including women). The Council also approved a motion to allocate funds towards supporting up to 10 graduate students to travel to the Society meetings at the Arizona State University (ASU). A motion was made to provide travel support to all the selected participants for the Fitch Prize (up to \$1,000 for U.S. and up to \$1,600 for international participants). The OUP will also provide a 1-year subscription to the print journal to all the graduate student travel award winners and the selected participants for the Walter Fitch Prize. These motions were unanimously approved for 2006. Furthermore, a motion to raise the award for the Fitch Prize to \$1,000 was approved by the Council. In addition, SMBE has now begun awarding added Best Poster prizes for Post-doctoral fellows and for Graduate Students.

Council members also emphasized the need to establish awards to recognize scientists for their service-oriented and fundamental contributions to the field of molecular evolution. A motion was made and approved unanimously to establish two Council Awards for the year 2006: one for service and another for contributions to the field of molecular evolution. The Council will renew these awards year-to-year, as the outstanding individuals are identified and discussed, and the Society will provide full travel, lodging, and registration expenses to attend the annual meeting of the Society for winners of these awards. The Council unanimously voted to present a Service Award to Brian Golding at the 2006 Society meetings for moderating and maintaining the EvolDir Web resource, which has served the evolutionary biology community over the years. For the year 2006, Tomoko Ohta was the unanimous choice for the Council Award for Outstanding Contributions to the field of molecular evolution.

A motion was also approved unanimously to develop the protocols for various Society functions, with the first protocol to be sent to the Council by the end of the year. There were also discussions about amending the by-laws in order to modify the Treasurer's term in order to better fit with OUP's fiscal year running on a calendar year basis. It was thought that an online ballot for this might be appropriate.

Society Web site: A motion was made to appoint Secretary Sudhir Kumar to be the webmaster for the duration of his tenure, as it was judged equivalent to maintaining Society records (it was noted that if a webmaster is selected outside the Council, then that person should appear in the journal as “Webmaster”). This motion was approved. At the webmaster’s request, the Council approved that the domain name www.smbe.org be transferred back to the Society and hosted at a Web-hosting company, with the annual domain name registration and Web-hosting expenses funded by the Society. The Council also suggested providing some financial assistance to the webmaster for the purpose of maintaining and updating the SMBE Web site. However, the current webmaster, Sudhir Kumar, indicated that it was not necessary, as his Center for Evolutionary Functional Genomics at ASU is donating these services to the Society for the duration of his term as the Secretary.

Annual meetings: Sudhir Kumar and Graziela Valente presented a report on the 2006 SMBE annual meeting to be held at the Arizona State University, Tempe, Ariz. (May 24–28, 2006). This meeting will be entitled “Genomes, Evolution, and Bioinformatics.” Facilities as well as organizational plans were presented, along with the organizers’ success in generating substantial sponsorships for invited symposia presentations. The Council approved the site of the 2007 SMBE meeting to be Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia (organized by Ford Doolittle). Sites of the 2008 meetings due to be held outside North America were discussed. The Council voted in favor of the venue in Barcelona, Spain. Montserrat Aguade was excused from the Council voting and discussions due to a conflict of interest. The Council also passed by a majority vote a motion that travel reimbursement for Council members attending the SMBE meetings in New Zealand be capped at \$1,500 per person. A motion was also made and passed to mandate that the organizers include a link to the SMBE subscription page on the Web pages for conference registration. This motion was approved. In addition, the Council indicated that there should be a liaison between the Council and the annual society meeting organizers.

Society Journal: The Council approved a motion to increase the journal subscription rate by 3%. In addition, the request for perpetual access of the Society Journal content at OUP, the new conflict of interest policy, and an increase in the number of pages in the journal to 2,500 pages was approved unanimously. The Council was also pleased with OUP’s performance in publishing the journal, and a motion to renew the publication contract with OUP was approved unanimously. However, the length of the contract (3 vs. 5

years) and the final terms are still being negotiated by Marta L. Wayne and William Martin on behalf of the Council.

The Council discussed the need for publication of the high-impact evolutionary software in the “Letters to the Editor” section of the journal, with the Editor appointing Sudhir Kumar as an Associate Editor to solicit and review such papers under strict guidelines to be developed. The Editor, William Martin, informed that he would like to have another editor take over in his fifth year of appointment so that he could be in a supporting role to the new Editor as an editor-in-change. A motion was made to overlap editors by 1 year, with the current Editor becoming the Consulting Editor to the new Editor. This was approved unanimously. The Council has initiated the search for a new Editor to take over the journal’s editorial responsibilities after the summer in 2007.

Business Meeting

1. *Call to order.*—President Jeff Powell called to order the annual SMBE Business meeting at 4:20 PM, Tuesday, June 21, 2006. Fifteen SMBE officers were in attendance. The President summarized the discussion at the Council meeting and discussions about ongoing attempts to enhance membership (there are currently 500–550 SMBE members).

2. *New business.*—The state of the Society and of the MBE journal was addressed in the discussion. Both are in excellent condition; the journal’s citation impact has increased to 6.30. Announcements were about the increase in the number of prizes, initiatives to bring more young and diverse students to the next Society meetings (see Council Minutes), and plans to recognize Tomoko Ohta for her fundamental contributions and Brian Golding for his service to the Evolutionary Biology Community. Election results and the extension of Marta L. Wayne’s term as Treasurer were announced.

Addendum: The Council thanks the judges for the Fitch Prize selection (Doug Crawford, John Avise, Laura Katz), Best Graduate Student Poster selection (John M. Archibald, Adriana Briscoe, Brian Verrelli, Matt Hahn, Rob Knight, David McClellan, Cam Muir), and Best Postgraduate Student Poster selection (Cam Muir, Mark L. Siegal, Christina Burch). The Council also congratulates Leslie Collins for winning the Fitch Prize, Kate Johnston and Scott Roy for winning (tie) the Best Poster Prize for Postdocs, and Katja Nowick for winning the Best Poster Prize for Graduate Students.