ASM News

MicrobeWorld Podcast Hits 1 Million Downloads

Episodes of ASM’s MicrobeWorld Radio podcast have been listened to more than 1 million times, according to statistics from Feedburner.com, the world’s largest RSS feed management provider. The podcast originated on 1 August 2005.

A recent ramp up in listenerhip and interest is primarily due to the updated version of the MicrobeWorld website. A pop-up flash player on the homepage makes listening to MicrobeWorld Radio’s podcast easier than ever before and doesn’t require people to download extra software for accessing podcast content. In fact, the average podcast episode is listened to 4,000 times.

All of MicrobeWorld Radio’s aired episodes have now been archived into a database that is searchable by keyword. The episodes are also being tied to the National Science Education Standards so that educators and homeschoolers can browse through and use them to help initiate classroom discussions or build into curricula.

Discovery Education Licenses Intimate Strangers: Unseen Life on Earth

The education division of the Discovery Channel has licensed ASM’s Intimate Strangers: Unseen Life on Earth, the 4-hour PBS television documentary that explores the microbial world and how life has evolved over Earth’s 3.8-billion-year history. The agreement allows Discovery Education to electronically distribute the series through their United Streaming, Cosmeo, Discovery Health Connection, and Digital Curriculum products. Also, new curriculum developed by ASM’s Education Committee in association with the Intimate Stranger: Unseen Life on Earth video podcast is available on the MicrobeWorld website.

Microbes Go Mobile

MicrobeWorld Radio’s podcasts are now available to mobile phone users on any service plan carrier. Dubbed “phonecasts,” users can subscribe for free by calling 408–731-6840. After the initial welcome message, the latest MicrobeWorld Radio episode will play. The user is now signed up to be notified with a text message that will alert them to the MicrobeWorld topic of the day. Press 7 to request notification with a telephone call.

Phonecast subscribers can also comment on MicrobeWorld Radio episodes by pressing 2 to send a message to MicrobeWorld. Other options include pressing 0 for instructions or # to unsubscribe.

MicrobeWorld phonecasts are made possible by SayNow, a Palo Alto, Ca., company founded in November 2005 by people who are passionate about voice and mobile technology.

Submit to MicrobeWorld

ASM encourages its members to submit material for MicrobeWorld, especially feature articles, lesson plans, or lab experiments. Development of MicrobeWorld will always be ongoing to accommodate user requests, suggestions and emerging technology. For more information, technical assistance, or to learn how to become involved, please email ccondayan@asmusa.org.

Chris Condayan
Chris Condayan is a Manager in the ASM Communications Department.

NABT Attendees “Discover Microbes” in Albuquerque

The ASM K-12 Committee on Education sponsored five workshops and an invited speaker at the National Association for Biology Teachers...
(NABT) meeting held in Albuquerque, N.M., 11–14 October 2006. The Committee presented a five-part series of “Discovering Microbes” workshops demonstrating how to incorporate into curricula the video podcast series Intimate Strangers, currently hosted on Microbe-World.org. Using the podcasts and hands-on experiments, ASM facilitators created a packaged lesson plan for attendees to take back to their classrooms. Overall, the ASM-sponsored sessions were attended by nearly 400 NABT attendees.

The first four sessions were modeled after the four parts of the Intimate Strangers series structure, beginning with “The Tree of Life Revisited” and ending with “Creators of the Future.” Chris Condayan, ASM’s Public Outreach Manager, first acquainted attendees with MicrobeWorld.org and demonstrated how they could easily download audio and video podcasts from the site. “Since debuting in August 2005, we have seen over 1 million downloads of the MicrobeWorld Radio podcasts,” Condayan said. “We are also seeing similar enthusiasm for the Intimate Strangers video podcasts, which have over 300,000 downloads to date. Some of the unsolicited feedback we have received is inspiring as well” with one enthusiastic, self-identified science teacher in the iTunes Music Store saying, “These videos are outstanding at explaining life that exists at the microscopic level. The content is simple enough for nonscientists to understand, yet covers the important concepts currently being discussed in microbiology . . . I look forward to each episode.”

After participants learned about podcasts, committee members led them through hands-on experiments easily replicated in the classroom. Whether using “kitchen microbiology” to learn about halophiles or seeing how investigating epidemics can enhance the curriculum, attendees were always actively engaged. Attendees also shared tips from their own experiences with one another.

The related podcasts, lesson plans, and student and teacher handouts from the NABT sessions are posted on the MicrobeWorld.org website and referred to in convention highlights on the NABT website. Attendees have been asked to submit an ASM Microbial Discovery evaluation form if they use one of the lesson plans in their classroom. The hope is to build a database of field-tested, peer-reviewed “Microbial Discovery” activities to promote microbial teaching and student learning as early as possible into the curriculum.

ASM’s also sponsored invited speaker Mecky Pohlschroeder from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Pohlschroeder explained how all living organisms can be classified into three different domains, Bacteria, Archaea, and Eucarya. She also promoted the use of halophiles in the classroom. “To halophilic archaea, organisms that thrive in environments containing 15–35% salt, low salt environments, such as the human body, are ‘extreme’ and uninhabitable,” she explained. “This not only classifies them as biosafety level 1 microorganisms (i.e. they are not known to cause diseases in healthy adult humans) but also guarantees that under the high-salinity conditions required for their growth, contaminants, including potential pathogens, cannot be cultured. Thus, haloarchaea, which grow at room temperature and can be stored in salt crystals, are ideal for teaching basic microbiology to students at high school and early college levels,” she said.

The Committee is already working with NABT leaders to plan next year’s sessions. NABT 2007 will be in Atlanta, Ga., 28–December 1 November 2007. “Next year, with the meeting so close to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we look forward to providing access to experts in the field while continuing our best efforts to increase student learning as related to microbial discovery,” said committee chair Mark Gallo of Niagara University in New York.

Kelly A. Gull
Kelly A. Gull is Manager, Faculty Programs, in the ASM Education Department.
ASM Report

Council Policy Committee Minutes

The Council Policy Committee met in formal session at the St. Regis Hotel in Washington, D.C., on 8 April 2006. The meeting was called to order by President Stanley Maloy at 1:05 PM.

Voting members of CPC in attendance were: Stanley Maloy (President), Diane Griffin (President-Elect), James Tiedje (Past President), Judy Daly (Secretary), Ronald Luftig (Treasurer), R. John Collier (chair, Board of Governors of the American Academy of Microbiology), Clifford Houston (chair, Education Board), Lucia Rothman-Denes (chair, Meetings Board), Ruth Berkelman (chair, Public and Scientific Affairs Board), Samuel Kaplan (chair, Publications Board), Edna Kaneshiro, Joan Slonczewski and James Staley (members at large [Divisions]), and Yvonne Lue, Irving Nachamkin, and Joan Rose (Members at Large [Branches]).

Ex officio members and ASM staff in attendance were: Jay Grimes (chair, Communications Committee), Michael Goldberg (executive director), Ed Rekas (deputy executive director), Jerry Palmer, (director, Financial Operations), Ronald Butler (director, Information Systems), Amy Chang (director, Education), Nancy Elder (director, Meetings and Industry Relations), Jeff Holtmeier (director, ASM Press), Barbara Hyde (director, Communications), Carol Colgan (director, American Academy of Microbiology), Linda Illig (director, Journals), Lorna Kent (director, Membership Services), Lily Schuermann (director, International Affairs), Kim Shankle (director, Administration and Human Resources), Janet Shoemaker (director, Public and Scientific Affairs), and Charlotte Daniels (manager, Leadership Services).

I-A. Roll Call. The roll was called. It was noted that Toby K. Eisenstein (chair, Membership Board) and Keith Klugman (chair, International Committee) were absent.

I-B. Approval of CPC Agenda. A motion to amend the agenda was unanimously approved. An item on the “Future of ASMR” was added as new Action Item III-A and Information Item IV-G. “Membership Retention: Monthly Webcast” was withdrawn. A final motion to approve the amended agenda was unanimously passed.

II-A. Official Appointments. Secretary Judy Daly presented a list of appointment candidates for the CPC’s approval. A motion was unanimously approved to accept the following appointments:

American Academy of Microbiology:
Chair, American Board of Medical Laboratory Immunology (ABMLI): Barbara Detrick, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, Md.; Chair, American Board of Medical Microbiology (ABMM): Mark T. LaRocco, St. Luke’s Episcopal Health System, Houston, Tex.; Dean, American College of Microbiology: J. Michael Miller, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Atlanta, Ga. (reappointment); Chair, ASM Graduate Microbiology Teaching Award Selection Committee: Abraham L. Sonenshein, Tufts University Health Sciences Campus, Boston, Mass.; Chair, Merck Irving S. Sigal Memorial Awards Selection Committee: W. Michael Scheld, University of Virginia Health System, Charlottesville; and Chair, Abbott-ASM Lifetime Achievement Award Selection Committee: Linda L. Randall, University of Missouri, Columbia.

International Committee. Chair, International Microbiology Education Committee: Linda Kenney, University of Illinois, Chicago, Ill.:

Meetings Board. Vice Chair, Professional Development Committee: Melodie Beard, Laboratory Corporation of America, Burlington, N.C. (At the end of the term, the role of Vice Chair automatically assumes the role of Chair. Therefore the role of Vice Chair requires appointment.)

Public and Scientific Affairs Board. Chair, Committee on Agricultural and Food Microbiology: Michael Doyle, University of Georgia, Griffin (reappointment); Chair, Committee on Environmental Microbiology: Gary King, University of Maine, Walpole (appointment); Chair, Committee on Laboratory Practices: Joseph Campos, Children’s National Medical Center, Washington, D.C. (reappointment); and Chair, Committee on Microbiological Issues Impacting Minorities: Marian Johnson-Thompson, National Institutes of Health, Research Triangle Park, N.C. (reappointment).

Publications Board. Editor in Chief of Journal of Bacteriology: Philip Matsumura, University of Illinois, Chicago (reappointment); Editor in Chief of Applied and Environmental Microbiology: L. Nicholas Ornston, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. (reappointment); and Editor in Chief of Eukaryotic Cell: C. C. Wang, University of California, San Francisco (reappointment).

II-B. Education Board Review Committee. President-Elect Diane Griffin as chair of the Review Committee presented a final report and recommendation for appointment of the Education Board chair. Other members of the Review Committee were Joan Slonczewski, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio; James Tiedje, Michigan State University, East Lansing; and Amy Vollmer, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa. Griffin complimented the Education Board and Clifford Houston for providing excellent leadership during his nine-year term as Education Board chair. She then presented Neil Baker as the Committee’s nomination for appointment as chair of the Education Board. A motion to accept the Review Committee’s recommendation to appoint Neil Baker as chair of the Education Board was unanimously passed.

II-C. Meetings Board Review Committee. Review Committee Chair Diane Griffin presented the Committee’s final report.

Minutes Available Online

Beginning in February 2007, the minutes of ASM governance meetings will no longer be printed in Microbe. Minutes will be available online. Notices will be printed in Microbe to alert members to their availability.
Other members of the Review Committee included: Peter Maloney, Johns Hopkins Medical School, Baltimore, Md.; David Hooper, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass.; and Irving Nachamkin, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Griffin briefly described the evaluation process and the enthusiasm of the comments she received concerning Lucia Rothman-Denes and her leadership of the Meetings Board. She reported that the Committee was unanimous in their decision to nominate Lucia Rothman-Denes for reappointment as chair of the Meetings Board. A motion to accept the Review Committee’s recommendation to reappointment Lucia Rothman-Denes as the Meetings Board chair was passed with one abstention.

II-D. Membership Board Review Committee. Review Committee Chair Diane Griffin presented the Committee’s final report. Other members of the Review Committee included: Yvonne Lue, Quest Diagnostics Inc., Teterboro, N.J.; Edna Kaneshiro, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio; and Clifford Houston, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. Griffin described the comments she received which expressed great support for Toby Eisenstein and her leadership of the Membership Board. She reported that the Committee was unanimous in their decision to nominate Toby Eisenstein for reappointment as chair of the Membership Board. A motion to accept the Review Committee’s recommendation to reappoint Toby Eisenstein as the Membership Board chair was unanimously passed.

II-E. Communication Committee Review Committee. Review Committee Chair Diane Griffin presented the Committee’s final report recommendation for appointment. Other members of the Review Committee included: R. John Collier, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Mass.; Kenneth Berns, University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville; and Mike Osterholm, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Griffin presented Stanley Maloy as the Committee’s nomination for appointment as chair of the Communications Committee. It was noted that this was an unusual circumstance since Maloy would be serving as Past President for one year which would overlap his service as Communications Committee chair and that several issues had already been addressed through consultation with ASM legal counsel. The first issue concerned the possible prohibition of a volunteer holding two major appointive positions. The only reference to this situation is found in Constitution Article 5; Section 1- “Elective Officers,” which applies to the four elected officers who are not permitted to hold other “major appointive” positions. The Past President is not an elective officer of the Society so the restriction does not apply. The second issue concerned a possible conflict of interest by voting in favor of funding and other financial matters as they pertain to the Communications Committee. In response to this issue, legal counsel advised and Maloy agreed to recuse himself from his duties on the Finance Committee as Past President for the entire 1-year term in that position. A motion to accept the Review Committee’s recommendation to appoint Stanley Maloy as chair of the Communications Committee was passed with one abstention.

III-A. Future of ASMR—Shareholder Meeting. Samuel Kaplan, as the ASM Liaison and a director of ASM Resources, Inc., conducted the 2006 stockholders meeting which he called to order at 1:33 PM. Kaplan as the appointed Inspector of Election supervised the election of members to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has been reduced from 9 members to 5 members as follows: Larry McCarthy (chair), Carol Nacy (Treasurer and Secretary), David Persing, Fred Pfander, and Sam Kaplan (ASM Liaison). The newly elected directors will serve a three-year term. Kaplan also presented a report on the current operations of ASMR which included the following: (1) all staff positions have been phased out; (2) all leases and services have been terminated; and (3) the ASMR office has been relocated to the ASM headquarters building.

III-B. 2005 Audited Financial Statements. ASM Treasurer Ronald Luftig offered comments on the method and approach utilized to produce these statements. He announced that the 2005 financial statements had been audited by a new audit firm, Clifton Gunderson, LLP. A motion to accept the 2005 audited financial statements and recommend final approval from Council was unanimously passed.

III-C. Task Force on Divisions. Stan Maloy presented several recommendations from the Task Force on Divisions for approval.

1. Proposal to change division governance structure. This proposal was included for information only since CPC had already approved the proposal at the October 2005 meeting. It will be forwarded to Council in May for approval.

2. Proposal to allow secondary division membership to apply to voting status. This proposal would change the process for determining division viability to allow division primary and secondary membership numbers to count towards the total 300 members required (this does not include student members). The process to determine voting status in Council to allow primary and secondary membership numbers (not including student membership) to be applied against division voting status with a minimum of 300 primary plus secondary members being required.

Proposal approval would necessitate the following changes in the wording of the ASM Bylaws (proposed changes are in italics).

Bylaws Article VIII. Divisions

As prescribed in the Constitution (ART. VII, Sec. 2), members with common scientific interest may be authorized by the Council to meet as a group, to be known as a Division. A Division shall consist of at least 300 (delete 150) total members (total equals primary plus secondary members but not including student members).

Section 7. To establish a new Division, a group of at least 300 (delete 150) total members (total equals primary plus secondary members but not including student members) must petition the Council through the chair of the Meetings Board. The Council may then grant Division status. Upon obtaining Division status, those members petitioning to create a new Division will be transferred to equivalent primary or secondary membership in that new Division. Only Councilors of Divisions that maintain 300 (delete 150) total voting members will be entitled to vote in Council.

Volume 2, Number 1, 2007 / Microbe • 37
A motion to approve the proposed changes outlined above was passed unanimously. The proposal will be forwarded to Council in May for approval.

(3) Proposal to require annual review of divisions

Although there is a mechanism for creation of new Divisions, there is presently no effective mechanism for review or dissolution of a Division. Therefore, the Task Force on Divisions recommended that each Division undergo annual review and that if a Division does not achieve voting status for two consecutive years, it will be retired. Within this 2-year window the Divisional Group Representatives and Membership Board will try to help any Division in this category improve their status. If approved, the 2-year window would begin following the 2007 annual meeting.

A motion to strike the sentence “In addition, any Division in the nonvoting status would not qualify for sessions at the General Meeting” was passed with 13 in favor and 2 in opposition. A motion to change the wording “periodic review” to “annual review” was unanimously approved. A motion to accept the proposal with the approved changes was unanimously passed. The proposal will be forwarded to Council in May for approval.

(4) Changes in divisional group organization

A minor realignment of divisions within Divisional Groups should be considered to provide more effective interactions during planning of the General Meeting. The only divisional groups affected were Group I and Group II as outlined below.

Group I – Clinical Microbiology & Epidemiology
A – Antimicrobial (moved from Group II)

C – Clinical Microbiology
L – Healthcare
Y – Public Health
V – Clinical Immunology (moved from Group II)
Z – Animal Health (moved from Group II)

Group II – Microbial Pathogenesis & Host Response
B – Pathogenesis
D – General Medical Microbiology
E – Immunology
G – Mycoplasma
F – Mycology (moved from Group I)
U – Mycobacteriology (moved from Group I)

A motion to accept the changes in divisional group organization was unanimously passed.

(In order to accommodate a visitor scheduled to make a presentation during the CPC meeting, this agenda item will appear in the order it was discussed, not in the order it appeared on the actual agenda.)

IV-C. PEPFAR Update. ASM PEPFAR Committee Chair Steven Specter presented an update on the ASM-CDC Cooperative Agreement on PEPFAR initiatives. ASM finalized the signing of this agreement in November 2005 and has also become a member of the CDC Laboratory Coalition for CDC partners on PEPFAR initiatives. Specter mentioned that CDC has informed us about an initial project with the country of Namibia. Namibia has one of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the world. A technical assistance request has been issued by the Namibian Institute of Pathology. The project goals are to develop good standards for tuberculosis testing in the core labs and to work extensively on quality control and quality assurance. Also, workshops will be developed and presented to the regional labs to ensure that specimens are properly prepared and sent to the core labs. A budget timeline has been developed for the Namibian project which has been submitted to CDC covering the period from May to December 2006 and budget totals are still under negotiations. A new ASM staff person, Lynne Galley, has been hired as the Program Manager for ASM’s laboratory capacity building for PEPFAR initiatives. This position is fully funded under the cooperative agreement with CDC.

III-D. Task Force on Relationships with Other Not-For-Profit. Stan Maloy presented a proposal for approval to establish a task force to develop more effective and productive interactions with other not-for-profit associations in the microbiological sciences. A motion to approve the establishment of the task force was unanimously approved.

III-F. Approval of Revisions to AAM Bylaws. John Collier presented a proposal to change the criteria for election to Fellowship in the AAM as stated in the American Academy of Microbiology Bylaws. A motion to approve the changes in criteria for election to AAM fellowship was unanimously approved. The changes to the AAM Bylaws (Section 2. Membership) are as follows:

2. Membership

Members of the American Academy of Microbiology shall be called Fellows. The criteria for election to Fellowship in the American Academy of Microbiology are scientific excellence, originality, and leadership; high ethical standards; and scholarly and creative achievement. Membership in the Academy shall include individuals representing the varied facets of microbiology, including careers in basic, clinical, and applied research; teaching; public health; industry; and government service. Qualifications are:

(a) An earned doctoral degree (delete in microbiology or a related discipline).
(b) Senior professional standing in microbiology.
(c) Distinguished scholarly achievement in microbiology. Achievement may be evidenced by outstanding publication record; strong editorial board service; honorary, scientific, educational, clinical, and professional achievement awards; significant professional service record; inventions; patents; and board certification.
(Agenda items will appear in the order discussed, not in the order listed on the actual agenda.)

IV-H. MicrobeWorld Podcasts. Barbara Hyde, Director of Communications, demonstrated the use of a new broadcast medium, podcasting, which has greatly extended the reach of the MicrobeWorld radio program. She also mentioned that video podcasts have also been produced to highlight ASM’s public TV series “Intimate Strangers.” ASM is the first scientific society to launch audio and video podcasts. This prominence has launched numerous opportunities for publicity, including being featured in Science magazine.

Communications has collaborated with both the Education Board and International Affairs. These collaborative efforts include (a) distribution of information on podcasting to the Education Board’s numerous listservs which received positive feedback about podcast utilization in the classroom; (b) participation in an all-day session featuring the podcasts and videos at the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT); and (c) podcasts have been translated into Spanish, and there are plans to produce translations into other languages through cooperation with ASM’s ambassadors worldwide working through International Affairs.

IV-A. Report of the Nominating Committee for Officers 2007–2008. Past President James Tiedje reported that the Nominating Committee is still in the process of identifying nominations for the positions of President-Elect and Secretary. The names of the candidates will be ready for announcement at the upcoming Council meeting.

IV-B. Bacteriology Workshop. Stan Maloy requested that discussion of this item be postponed.

IV-D. Task Force to Develop a Response to Intelligent Design. James Tiedje reported that a statement is being developed and will be ready prior to the Council meeting. There is also a consortium of other scientific societies that have met on this issue. Barbara Hyde has been asked to attend the next consortium meeting as the ASM representative to further promote coordination between scientists and other scientific societies. It was noted that the subject of the Opening Session at the General Meeting is “. . . Evolution and the Crisis in American Science Education.”

IV-E. “Grant-in-Aid” Katrina Relief Fund. In addition to a donation of $35,000 to the American Red Cross in support of Hurricane Katrina operations, there was additional concern expressed by ASM members in the New Orleans area that graduate students and postdoctoral fellows had suffered both in the their ability to continue their research and in their private lives. In December 2005, the ASM Officers responded to these concerns by allocating an additional $40,000 to establish the “Grant-in-Aid” Katrina Relief Fund to give direct financial assistance to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the affected areas of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. A review committee was established which included: Stanley Maloy, Diane Griffin, Amy Cheng Vollmer, and Shelley Payne. After review of all grant applications received, the review committee completely disbursed the Fund with checks being sent to all applicants on 28 February 2006.

IV-F. Nursing Curriculum and Microbiology. During the June 2005 Council Meeting, members of the Council expressed concern about microbiology training in the nursing curriculum. The Council asked the Education Board and Public and Scientific Affairs Board to prepare a report. In response, the topic for the winter issue of the Education Board’s quarterly publication Focus on Microbiology Education (published February 2006) features the results of a six-month study about the presence of microbiology in nursing programs, accreditation, and licensure conducted by a team of ASM undergraduate educators. Currently, there are multiple ways to becoming a registered nurse. The most common route is the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN). For these students, there is a shortened time in formal microbiology coursework. As a result, students from community colleges are concerned that their training in general microbiology is inadequate.

IV-I. ASM Website. Executive Director Michael Goldberg presented an overview of the ASM website in response to questions regarding how information on the Society’s website is organized, submitted, and presented. He outlined the primary goals of the ASM website as follows: (1) to facilitate access to a wide-range of information; (2) to provide 24-hour/7-day a week accessibility; (3) to organize a wide range of program, product, and service information from the user’s perspective, not the Society’s perspective; (4) to communicate via outreach and to receive user feedback concerning the user’s needs and interests; and (5) to reduce staff time and direct costs spent on the presentation of information. Goldberg continued his presentation by demonstrating the various information/program area groupings and their functionality from the user’s perspective. However, he stressed that it is difficult to identify the best single way to organize large amounts of information in order to aid the user in finding the information because each user’s approach is idiosyncratic. Currently, the best solution is to present several pathways to users to glean the same information. This approach to organization should prove applicable to a broader audience of users. He pointed out that while there is a mechanism to gather feedback from users, gathering more exciting information on user’s needs and expectations is needed. He also mentioned that future plans for the website include an improved search feature or search engine.

IV-J. Annual Reports. Stanley Maloy requested that since the Annual Reports for each Officer, Board Chair, and Committee Chair were contained in the meeting packet, only a very brief outline of program highlights should be presented. In compliance to this request, each program area offered a very brief report of activities during the past year.

V. Adjournment. There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 5:17 PM.

Education Board

International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) Conference

ASM members and Education Department representatives attended the 2006 International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) Con-
ference, “Making a Greater Difference: Connecting to Transformational Agendas,” in Washington, D.C., on 9–12 November. More than 800 international faculty members and institutional administrators attended the conference. The ISSOTL organization serves faculty members, staff, and students who are committed to teaching and learning as serious intellectual work. The goal of the Society is to foster inquiry and disseminate findings about what improves and articulates post-secondary learning and teaching.

ASM supports research in education through several programs. In 2005, ASM introduced the ASM Scholars-in-Residence (ASMSiR) program, a year-long residency in which faculty researches student learning in microbiology and biology programs. Two 2005–2006 ASM Scholars attended the conference. They were Laura B. Regassa of Georgia Southern University, and Loretta B. Taras of Kingsborough Community College of The City University of New York.

Regassa presented the session, “Implementation of Inquiry-based Molecular Biology Curriculum and Assessment of Learning.” After the session, Regassa said, “This was my first time attending an ISSOTL conference, and I was amazed by the high level of participation. The conference had good mix of faculty and administrators that helped foster robust discussion on both the mechanics and role of SOTL research. I left the meeting with some great ideas that I can apply to my own work, new contacts for future projects, and a better sense of how SOTL can influence the culture on a campus-wide basis.”

For more information about the ASM Scholars-in-Residence Program, contact Kelly Gull at kgull@asmusa.org. The deadline for 2007–2008 Scholar applications is 1 February 2007.

International Affairs

Latin American Congress of Microbiology

The XVIII Latin American Congress of Microbiology (ALAM), organized by the Chilean Society for Microbiology and the Chilean Society for Food Microbiology and Hygiene, was held 23–26 October 2006 at the lake resort Pucon in Southern Chile. ASM Country Liaison to Chile Mercedes Zaldívar was an integral part in the coordination of the meeting and solicited ASM support through speakers and ASM materials for promotion. Zaldívar was also awarded the first allocation of the newly established Ambassadors Project Fund which enabled 25 additional students to present their work by covering their registration to the event.

The Congress is carried out biannually, each time in a different Latin American country. It is hosted by the respective country’s local microbiological society, which is responsible for the scientific program as well as the overall organization and funding.

ASM’s participation in this event was significant. In addition to facilitating the participation of 25 students through the Ambassador Project Fund, ASM members contributed to the high level of expertise that made the conference such as success. Karl-Heinz Schleifer, President of the International Union of Microbiological Societies and an ASM International Committee member, kicked off the event with an opening lecture to the 600 attendees on “In Situ Identification of Bacteria Prior to the Cultivation.” Later that day, ASM Past-President Stanley Maloy drew a large audience at his plenary conference on “The Evolution of Host Specificity.” International Membership Committee Chair Edmundo Calva, Stanley Maloy, and ASM members Guido Mora and Claudia Savedra, both of the Universidad Andres Bello in Santiago, also contributed to the event with a highly touted symposium on “The Ecology of Microbial Pathogens.” In addition, Linda Kenney, Chair of the International Education Committee contributed with her knowledge in a lecture entitled the “Enigmatic SsrA/B Two Component Regulatory System on Salmonella Pathogenicity Island-2.” Finally, ASM International Affairs Manager Todd Peterson gave a presentation on ASM’s mission and products and services pertinent to the Latin American audience. He also hosted a booth to respond to inquires and distribute information on the benefits of ASM membership.

This scientific meeting provided a venue wherein Latin-American microbiologists had the opportunity to connect with colleagues from the around the world. Students and prominent scientists had the occasion to learn about and discuss new and exciting scientific discoveries, research techniques, and technological innovation. In addition, public health issues affecting the region, such as infectious diseases, were analyzed and research partnerships were coordinated. Maloy observed that “As science has become more and more of an international endeavor, the need for microbiologists to share new experimental discoveries and ideas has become increasingly important. The shared insights of the international community of microbiologists is essential for solving practical problems such as the need to recognize and respond to diseases that can be rapidly transported around the globe and the global needs for bioremediation. Furthermore, there is an evident need to address basic scientific problems such as detection of microbial populations in the environment and understanding microbial molecular and cellular biology. The international community of scientists who participated in the Latin American Congress of Microbiology provided diverse and creative perspectives on these and many other scientific issues — perspectives that are likely to profoundly influence the way we all think about microbes and their effect on our environment.”

Zaldívar was delighted with the outcome of the event and cited ASM’s participation as a key component. “The assistance of ASM-sponsored lecturers and students was undoubtedly an important factor in the success of the meeting, and we are very grateful for it.”

Southeast Asian Scientists

In accordance with ASM’s commitment to developing collaborative relationships with international microbiological societies, ASM hosted a meeting with prominent Southeast Asian scientists at the ASM headquarters on 5 October 2006. The meeting was organized as part of the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitors Leadership Program and initiated by the Mississippi Consortium for International Development. The occasion offered an ideal opportunity to disseminate knowledge about ASM and facilitate inter-
action with microbiological societies in an area of great importance to ASM.

ASM President Diane Griffin welcomed the participants with an informative presentation on “The Emergence of Arthropod-borne Viruses.” The lecture was highly appropriate to the participants and generated active discussion on the regional importance of this issue to Southeast Asia. Said Griffin, “Southeast Asian countries have been on the front line in dealing with a number of recent infectious diseases, and ASM is eager to foster closer collaborative relationships with these countries and their microbiology laboratories.”

ASM Director of International Affairs Lily Schuermann provided an overview of ASM and emphasized the Society’s mission to promote the microbiological sciences worldwide. She also explained that, “As stated in the International Committee’s Strategic Plan, ASM understands the importance of, and is committed to, developing collaborative relationships with microbiology societies worldwide.”

While most of the 15 participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines are members of local microbiology societies within their own countries, only one had previously been an ASM member. Indrawati Sendo, Senior Research Scientist at the Research Institute for Veterinary Science in Indonesia, commented that while “most microbiologists in Indonesia know of the American Society for Microbiology, few truly understand the advantages of joining the organization.” To address the issue, International Affairs Manager Todd Peterson introduced the benefits of ASM membership and explained the application procedures for international fellowships, professorships, and the Ambassadors program. ASM Education Board Director Amy Chang demonstrated the many resources of Microbe Library and offered temporary passwords so that the resource could be properly explained to their colleagues in Southeast Asia. International Affairs Manager Lynnee Galley presented a progress report of ASM laboratory capacity building activities, and Manager of Communications Chris Condayan demonstrated how ASM is utilizing the latest advances in information technology by introducing MicrobeWorld and ASM’s daily, 90-second radio series downloadable to any computer or MP3 player.

A reception followed the meeting at which key contacts were identified from each of the four countries to work with ASM staff in forging stronger ties between ASM and the Southeast Asian microbiological community.

2000 UNESCO-ASM Travel Award

In 2000, Rina B. Opulencia was an assistant professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños teaching in the Microbiology Division, having completed her postbaccalaureate research diploma and her M.S. in Microbiology at The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Opulencia’s 2000 UNESCO-ASM Travel Grant enabled her to return to Australia for an additional three-month course of study and research in plant pathology at The University of Queensland’s Department of Microbiology and Parasitology, under the supervision of Mark Fegan.

Opulencia’s work included a study on the sequence of a repetitive DNA element found in Ralstonia solanacearum isolated from banana infected with Bugtok disease. R. solanacearum is the causal agent of bacterial wilt, a worldwide and devastating plant disease, found in important crops such as banana, tomato, potato, eggplant, ginger, and peanut. Based on this sequence, a PCR-based diagnostic test was developed to detect specific sequence of R. solanacearum. The results of this work further confirm the phylogeny of strains of R. solanacearum causing Bugtok and Moko diseases of banana in the Philippines.

Opulencia acknowledges the pivotal role of the Travel Grant in her career endeavors. She believes “the Travel Grant is a perfect opportunity for scientists to collaborate to conduct exciting science.” After completion of her research, Opulencia returned to her teaching post at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, where she served as a mentor for one graduate student and 25 undergraduates. In September 2004, she was selected for a Fulbright-Philippine Agriculture Scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. in the United States. Opulencia, Fegan, and colleagues plan to publish a paper soon detailing the results of their work.

Publications


Recent Presentations


Information about all ASM International Awards, as well as application forms, can be found at http://www.asm.org/international/index.asp?bid=2743.

Ambassadors Meeting during ICAAC

The first ASM International Ambassadors Meeting was held on 29 September 2006 during the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC) in San Francisco, Calif. The meeting was attended by ASM Ambassadors Atef El-Gendy of the North Africa & Middle East Region, Olusimbo Aboaba of the West Africa Region, Juan Carlos Tinoco of Mexico, and Kazuhiro Tateda of Japan. Also in attendance were ASM Past-President Stan Maloy, International Membership Committee Chair Edmundo Calva, International Education Committee Chair Linda Kenney, as well as ASM International Affairs Director Lily Schuermann and her staff. The meeting provided an excellent venue for the Ambassadors and staff to discuss new ideas, challenges, and ways to improve communication between Ambassadors. El-Gendy and Aboaba provided insight into the challenges associated in promoting ASM in a developing region, while Tateda and Tinoco offered the perspective from Ambassadors in a developed region.

Edmundo Calva led the participants through a brainstorming session to explore ways to expand existing programs of the International Committee in each region. He reiterated ASM’s intent to utilize the Ambassador Program as the principle means of expanding existing programs, as well as developing new programs to address the needs specific to their respective regions. The newly implemented Ambassador Project
Fund, which provides additional financial support to Ambassadors on a competitive basis, was discussed in detail and a variety of potential proposals were outlined. It was determined that an effective use of the Fund for developing countries is the creation of ASM Resource Centers at strategically located regional sites where students and professors could learn more about ASM, register to become members, and utilize the online materials to further their research.

El-Gendy, who already oversees a Resource Center out of the United States Naval Medical Research Unit’s Library in Cairo, Egypt, offered valuable advice towards Ambassador Aboaba’s plan to establish a Resource Center in Lagos, Nigeria.

Ambassador Tateda advocated that the most effective way to raise awareness of ASM in Japan, where ASM currently has 1,408 members, is more active promotion of ASM at regional microbiology meetings. To a large extent, he believes this could be accomplished simply by identifying the ASM participants that already attend such meetings but are not explicitly identified as ASM members. In addition, he will identify the most significant microbiological conference in Japan for 2007 and invite ASM speakers to give presentations, hold symposia, and host an ASM booth. Tateda was also assigned the task of developing a team of Japanese translators to make ASM resources available to the entire Japanese microbiological community.

Juan Carlos Tinoco described how he will utilize his new position as President of the Mexican Association for Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology (AMIMC). The AMIMC’s Annual Meeting will be held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, on 7–10 March 2007. Tinoco formally invited International Affairs Manager Todd Peterson to attend the meeting, where he will host an ASM booth and present an overview of ASM to the anticipated 800 attendees. Tinoco also discussed ways to improve upon existing ASM resources pertinent to Mexico, such as the Spanish Translators Network and the Spanish-Language Discussion Group.

Said Calva, “The Ambassadors meeting led to the realization of common and contrasting issues related to the promotion of microbiology in different parts of the world. The meeting also illustrated that communication between Ambassadors must be fostered throughout the year.” An online forum has been initiated to facilitate similar discussions on a more consistent basis.

### Membership

#### Deceased Member

On 23 September 2006, Albert Balows, after a brief illness, passed away. He was the loving husband of Ann, devoted father of Eve and Scott, and a true giant in clinical microbiology.

Balows was born in 1921 and spent his childhood in Colorado Springs, Colo. Upon receipt of his baccalaureate degree with distinction in biology from Colorado College in 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. It was the middle of World War II. He served as a laboratorian in the medical corps of Patton’s 3rd Army in the European theater in both France and Germany.

With the end of the war, Al, having seen firsthand the miracle that was penicillin, decided to pursue graduate studies in fermentation and general microbiology at Syracuse University. He wanted to be part of this new “war on infectious diseases.” He received his master’s degree from Syracuse in 1948. He then pursued doctoral studies in medical microbiology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, receiving his Ph.D. in 1952.

Following receipt of his Ph.D., Al joined the staff of the Lexington Clinic and later, St. Joseph’s Hospital, with responsibility for both the clinical microbiology and transfusion medicine services. In 1960, with the opening of the University of Kentucky Medical Center, Al was granted a faculty appointment in that institution as an Associate Professor of Medicine. His responsibilities were to direct a diagnostic microbiology laboratory in a fledgling academic medical center, teach medical students in infectious diseases and laboratory medicine, and establish a research program.

Al gained distinction in all three of these areas. He was among the very first Ph.D. clinical microbiology laboratory directors in the United States, and his accomplishments as a researcher were truly seminal. These included elucidating the role of Group B streptococci as a significant cause of neonatal and peripartal infections, defining the epidemiology of infections caused by Histoplasma capsulatum and Blastomyces dermatitidis, and clearly delineating the phenotypic diversity of strains of Escherichia coli recovered from patients with infections and then demonstrating the role of E. coli exotoxins in the pathogenesis of disease due to these organisms. His research efforts regarding potential agents of bioterrorism were 30 years ahead of their time.

After nine years at Kentucky, in 1969, Al moved to Atlanta as the Director of the Bacteriology Division of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In 1976, he was appointed Assistant Director of Laboratory Science at the CDC, a position he occupied until his retirement in 1988.

In addition to his day-to-day work at the CDC, Al turned his attention to what some considered larger issues in clinical microbiology. He mentored countless individuals in the discipline, many of whom have become true leaders in our field. He became involved in what for Al would be a lifelong labor of love, managing the written words that surround the discipline of clinical microbiology. Simply stated, nobody in clinical microbiology has ever been involved in more numerous and important publication endeavors than Al Balows. An incomplete list includes serving as the Editor of Current Microbiology (1982–2005), Applied Microbiology (1965–1974), the Annals of Microbiology (1979) and the Thomus Medical Microbiology series (1964–1990). He was, during this time, a member of the editorial board of six other journals. Al authored or edited more than 75 books related to microbiology and infectious diseases. Importantly, these included editing the Prokaryotes in 1981 and 1999, and the 9th edition of Topley and Wilson’s Microbiology and Microbial Infections in 1998. Al started the Clinical Microbiology Newsletter in 1972, and with John Sherris, the Cumitech series in 1970. In 1974, Al, was the driving force behind publication of the first edition of the Manual of Clinical Microbiology,
now in its 9th edition. Perhaps of greatest consequence, Al led an effort that resulted in publication of the first issue of the Journal of Clinical Microbiology (JCM) in 1975. JCM was at its inception and remains today, the foremost scientific journal in its field, worldwide.

It is, I think, instructive to remember the landscape that existed at that time these endeavors were undertaken. Clinical microbiology was in its infancy as a specialty in laboratory medicine in the early 1970s. As evidence of this, “diagnostic microbiology” was relegated to subsection status, within the ASM journal Applied Microbiology. Al was not satisfied with that, believing a separate journal was needed. It took him seven long years of tireless lobbying but ultimately, he prevailed upon the powers that be within the ASM publications infrastructure, and in 1975, the Journal of Clinical Microbiology was born. He was its Editor-in-Chief for 10 years.

Throughout his career, Al Balows was a constant and vocal advocate for the discipline of clinical microbiology. Together with the likes of John Washington, Alan Truant, Eileen Randall, John Sherris, Alexander Sonnenwirth, Henry Isenberg, Richard Tilton, Sally Jo Rubin, William Hausler, John Matsen, Silas Farmer, Sidney Finegold, and many others, Al worked tirelessly to elevate the discipline, both in practice and in perception.

As a clear indication of his role as a leader in the field, Al received numerous distinctions during his career. These included the Becton-Dickinson Award in Clinical Microbiology in 1981; the Silver Medallion for Outstanding Contributions to Clinical Microbiology from the Italian Society of Microbiology in 1983; The P.R. Edwards Award for Outstanding Service Furthering High Professional Ideals and Standards in Microbiology in 1987; The Louis T. Benzet Distinguished Alumni Award from Colorado College in 1988; The Abbott Laboratories Award for Development of Rapid Laboratory Diagnostic Techniques in 1990; the Distinguished Professional Recognition Award from the American Board of Medical Microbiology in 1997; and the BioMerieux Sonnenwirth Award for Exemplary Leadership in Clinical Microbiology in 1999.

In 1981, Al reached the pinnacle of his career when he was elected to the position of President of ASM. He was the first and remains one of only two clinical microbiologists to have ever gained this distinction.

Al Balows’ contributions to the discipline of clinical microbiology were enormous. Those who practice in this field, as well as those who benefit from the good work of clinical microbiology laboratories everywhere, both health care providers and patients alike, are extraordinarily indebted to the nearly endless professional endeavors of Al Balows.

Those of use who were privileged to know Al and his lovely wife, Ann, at a personal level, feel an even greater sense of loss at this passing. This is my favorite Al Balows’ story. It makes an important point. He was as much a human being as he was a distinguished leader in clinical microbiology.

Al and Ann, my wife Jean and I, plus perhaps 20–30 others were on a bus in Ireland. We had been touring the Ring of Kerry for the better part of a very long day and had ended up at the Blarney Castle. We patiently stood in line for nearly 45 minutes for our turn to kiss the Blarney Stone. To kiss the Blarney Stone, one bended knee and with someone holding tight to your ankles, an individual is lowered gently down into this little pit to kiss a rock some 2 feet below the castle floor. The woman in line in front of Al had taken full advantage of her chance to gain the “gift of eloquence.” She’d been down in that pit for several minutes doing whatever she knew to do to that rock. She was portly woman; she had a hard time getting into position in the first place; and even harder time extracting herself when she had completed her mission. Now it was Al’s turn. I will never forget his words, “Ann, you go ahead. I believe this is one adventure I will skip!”

Simply put, Al Balows was at once a gentle man and gentleman. I know of no single individual who has made more significant and lasting contributions to the discipline of clinical microbiology than has Albert Balows. He will be missed today, tomorrow, and for as long as patients with infections are dependent on the clinical laboratory for the diagnosis and management of their diseases.

To Ann and Eve and Scott, today clinical microbiologists everywhere mourn the passing of your husband and your father. Thank you for sharing him with us.

Gary V. Doern
University of Iowa College of Medicine, Iowa City