

# **IS-MPMI News**

## **International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions October 1993 Volume1/Number1**

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### **A Brief Introduction to the International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions**

The International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions developed as a result of the success of the biennial symposium series. These began in Bielefeld in 1982 when Alf Puhler organised a meeting to bring together scientists interested in applying molecular genetics to problems of interactions of microbes with plants. Our area of science grew rapidly, shown by the increase in numbers of participants at successive symposia, and informal discussions were held about the founding of a society to promote the advancement of the science.

An Interim Board was established following a ballot of the participants at the 1988 Acapulco symposium. The Board took on the task of establishing the Society. Much of the work of negotiating and drafting the Bylaws was undertaken by Desh Pal Verma, the founding President of the Society.

The Board approved the Bylaws at its meeting in Interlaken in 1990, and the Society was formally inaugurated on 7th September 1990. The administration of the Society is carried out by the Business Executive, Steven C. Nelson, who is also Executive Vice-President of the American Phytopathological Society (APS).

As is usually the case when a new Society is established, most of the work in drafting Bylaws and establishing operating procedures fell upon the shoulders of a few individuals. The Board recognises that it may not have got everything right, and it urges any members who perceive defects in the structure of the Society to express their views by writing to the President. The Bylaws provide for a procedure for changing the rules. Copies of the Bylaws have been distributed at Symposia. Additional copies can be obtained on request.

The main activity of the Society has been the holding of a biennial symposium. The next symposium is to be held in June 1994 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Further details are given elsewhere in this newsletter. The Board is anxious to develop further activities and services to members, and would welcome suggestions for new ventures. Up to now we have been constrained by lack of funds. However, an agreement has been reached with APS which will give the Society a modest supplement to subscription income in the form of royalty payments based on subscriptions to the journal *Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions*. This arrangement recognises the crucial role that Society members have played in establishing the journal, as editors, referees and contributors. The journal is developing in a most encouraging manner, and a report in this newsletter from the Editor in Chief, Fred Ausubel, describes recent progress.

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## **Report from the IS-MPMI Board Meeting, July, 1992**

The IS-MPMI Board met on 13th July 1992 in the Department of Microbiology, University of Washington, Seattle, during the Sixth International Symposium on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions. Members present were Dr DPS Verma (President), Dr EW Nester (Treasurer), Dr MJ Daniels (Secretary and President-Elect), Dr L Thomashow, Dr B Rolfe, Dr J Denarić, Dr H Hennecke and Dr FM Ausubel (Editor-in-Chief, Molecular Plant Microbe Interactions). Apologies for absence were received from Drs S Leong and T Bisseling.

### **Composition of the Board**

The President welcomed the new members of the Board, Drs Thomashow and Rolfe (Dr Leong was absent). 114 members of the Society had returned Ballot papers to elect the new Board Members.

Dr M Daniels took over as President of the Society during the meeting. The Board elected Dr Rolfe Secretary, and Dr Verma Treasurer for the 1992-94 period. Dr Nester was subsequently nominated President-elect, to become President in 1994.

### **Finances**

Dr Nester reported that membership of the Society now stood at 402 plus 63 student members. Two companies had become sustaining members and negotiations with two more were at an advanced stage.

Full details of the Society's finances are given elsewhere. It was noted that the American Phytopathological Society charges a fee of \$6-50 per member per annum to handle the administration of the Society, but no overhead charges are levied.

The budget for the Seattle meeting totalled about \$200,000 and had been drawn up in the expectation that about 600 persons would attend. In fact about 700 were present. Local expenses of ca 50 invited speakers had been covered, and any excess funds would be applied to offsetting travel costs. Income included \$2000 surplus from the 1990 Interlaken meeting, grants totalling \$23,000 from NSF, USDA and DOE, plus a total of \$7000 from several companies.

The Board formally thanked these organisations for their support and congratulated Dr Nester on the excellence of the Seattle meeting, for which he and his colleagues must take full credit. It was agreed that the policy for Society meetings would be that, as in the past, they should be financially self-supporting. In the event that surpluses accrued, \$5000 should be retained as a reserve for subsequent meetings.

The need for further approaches to recruit companies as sustaining members was discussed. Dr Rolfe agreed to coordinate the production of an information pack containing details of the Society's aims, together with a few selected reprints donated by members outlining key aspects of the science of covered by members. Sustaining members would have the Company name printed with the Society information in issues of MPMI.

### **Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions, the Journal**

Dr Ausubel, who had recently taken over as Editor-in-Chief of MPMI, reported on the current status of the Journal.

The financial position of the journal was improving steadily, but there was a need for further subscriptions, particularly from libraries. Page charges were being considered to increase income. The format of the journal was to be changed.

Dr Ausubel showed the Board examples of possible new styles, and there was general agreement that a style and layout resembling that of the EMBO Journal looked most pleasing.

A Publications Executive Committee, consisting of 3 members of IS-MPMI and 3 members of APS, oversees the running of the journal. A proposal had been received from APS which would give IS-MPMI royalties based on the number of individual and library subscriptions. With current numbers of subscriptions, the proposed payment to ISMPMI for 1992 would be about \$8200.

The Board accepted the principle that IS-MPMI should receive royalties, but the President was instructed to negotiate modified terms with APS.

### **Newsletter and Other Services to Members**

A newsletter would be started as soon as possible, edited by Dr A Downie. It was suggested that a review of the Seattle meeting should be included, together with an up-to-date directory of members. Dr Verma agreed to coordinate the setting up of an E-mail network so that matters of interest to members could be rapidly disseminated.

### **New Board Members**

The membership would be invited to submit names for inclusion on a list of candidates for election to the Board.

### **Next IS-MPMI Meeting**

Dr Daniels reported that a booking had been made with the University of Edinburgh for early July 1994. Since the booking had been made it had been announced that International Society for Plant Molecular Biology would be holding a meeting in Amsterdam in June 1994. Dr Daniels agreed to see whether the Edinburgh meeting could be brought forward a few days so that it would be easier for non-Europeans to attend both meetings. (This has subsequently been done: the IS-MPMI meeting will take place from June 26th to July 1st 1994.)

### **General Meeting**

A general meeting of the Society was held on 14th July 1992. Dr Verma reported on the matters discussed at the Board Meeting. He formally handed over to the new President, Dr Daniels, who outlined the history of the Society and pointed out that the work of setting up such an organisation inevitably fell to a small number of individuals. One result of this was that it was difficult to get things right immediately. Members were invited to suggest ways in which the constitution and operation of IS-MPMI could be improved, and to nominate a strong slate of candidates for election to the Board.

Dr Daniels asked the Society to join him in formally thanking Dr Verma for his untiring efforts in establishing the Society. The meeting then expressed its appreciation of the skill and hard work of Dr Nester and his colleagues in organising such a successful symposium.

### **IS-MPMI Finances**

The Society completed the 1992 fiscal year (January 1992 through December 1992) with a \$4,563 surplus from operations. Through the first six months of fiscal year 1993 cumulative net income and expenses for the Society have been minor over the past several years, however it is expected that this will change as the Society introduces new services. IS-MPMI recently completed a royalty agreement on the MPMI Journal which will help provide operating funds for these services.

*Steven C. Nelson, IS-MPMI Business Executive*

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## ***Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* - Report from the Editor-in-Chief**

*Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* (MPMI), published bi-monthly, is now in its sixth year of publication with a total circulation of 1594 (425 library and 1169 personal subscriptions). MPMI publishes high-quality papers that relate to the molecular biology of plant-microbe interactions. MPMI is not limited, however, to publishing papers involving recombinant DNA techniques. Rather, biochemical, cell biological, and genetic studies are considered for publication if they are an intrinsic part of or a prerequisite for an in-depth molecular characterization.

It is important to clarify the relationship between MPMI (the journal), the American Phytopathological Society (APS), and IS-MPMI (the international society). MPMI is published by APS, which owns the copyright. An Executive Committee on Publications has been established to oversee the publication of MPMI. This committee has six appointed members, three each from APS and IS-MPMI. In addition, a royalty agreement is being negotiated under which IS-MPMI will receive a modest share of the proceeds from the sale of MPMI subscriptions.

MPMI now operates in the black, a very respectable accomplishment for a relatively new and specialized Society-based journal. The number of submissions to MPMI has grown each year since its inception, reaching 126 for calendar year 1992. One of the most attractive features of MPMI is the relatively fast review and publication schedule. Currently, the average time lapse between submission and acceptance of a final revised manuscript, or between acceptance and publication, were 2.9 and 2.5 months, respectively. These are excellent statistics, especially considering the bi-monthly publication schedule.

A number of significant changes occurred in 1992. First, in addition to the appointment of Fred Ausubel as

Editor-in-Chief, three new Senior Editors were appointed. Stanton Gelvin succeeded Stephen Farrand as Editor for prokaryotic pathology, Adam Kondorosi succeeded Desh Pal Verma as Editor for prokaryotic symbiosis, and Richard Michelmore succeeded Forrest Chumley as Editor for fungus-plant interactions. Second, MPMI is now being printed in a perfect binding format rather than being stapled, permitting the title of the journal, etc., to be printed on the spine. Third, an illustration is now being printed on the cover of *each* issue. Finally, new reviewer forms were designed which make it easier for reference to give feedback to the editors.

Beginning with the January/February issue of 1993, MPMI has undergone several major changes in format. Most apparent are the reduction in size of the lettering of "Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions" on the cover, to make more room for photographs; a reduction in the size of the typeface within the journal; a reduction of the column width from 9 cm to the industry standard of 8.3 cm; and placement of the "Materials and Methods" at the end of each article.

In addition to the changes which affect the appearance of the journal, MPMI now offers a new section called "For the Record" which will consist primarily of molecular data useful for typing pathogens or for constructing physical and genetic maps of pathogens or host plants. A DNA sequence of a gene of unknown function or the DNA sequence of gene that was previously sequenced in another species would also be suitable for this new section of MPMI. "For the Record" papers will generally be 1-3 printed pages. Another new feature of MPMI is a non-refereed section called "Commentary". The first contribution to the "Commentary" section appears in January/February issue; a proposal for the nomenclature of *Pseudomonas avirulence* genes by Alan Vivian and John Mansfield.

Two major challenges face MPMI in the future. The first is to increase the number of submissions so that MPMI can move to a monthly publication schedule. This will require an approximate doubling of the current rate of submission. The second challenge is to increase the number of institutional library subscriptions. These are tough financial times for libraries, as for all of us, and libraries are looking for excuses to reduce the number of journals to which they subscribe. Clearly, if MPMI is not readily available in libraries, it is less attractive for authors to submit their work. You can play an important role in the future of MPMI, not only by submitting your papers, but also by encouraging your library to subscribe.

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## Electronic Network

The Society has established a computer network to facilitate communications among researchers in molecular plant-microbe interactions. Dr. N. Kent Peters of Ohio State University has kindly offered to maintain the network.

*How the network will work:*

- To post a message to all subscribers, send an email message to: [ismpmi@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:ismpmi@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu). The message will be forwarded to all other subscribers of the network.
- To have your name included in the network, send your request to: [ismpmi-request@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:ismpmi-request@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu).

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## Update on the Seventh International Symposium, Scheduled for 1994

The Seventh International Symposium on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland in June 1994. Arrival and registration will take place on Sunday, June 26th and the Scientific Sessions will be held from Monday, June 27th, to Friday, July 1st.

The International Programme Advisory Group is beginning its work and the first circulars will be mailed to members and others shortly. Any member who has ideas about the structure of the meeting, or who wishes to volunteer to help with the organisation, is cordially invited to write to me.

The Symposium takes place immediately after the Fourth International Congress on Plant Molecular Biology, which is being held in Amsterdam. It will therefore be possible for extra European members to attend both meetings without incurring the cost of two round trips.

Edinburgh is one of Europe's most attractive cities, often referred to as "the Athens of the North". The Symposium venue and the accommodation will be within walking distance of the city centre. We look forward to an exciting meeting.

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## **Plan to Attend the Eighth International Symposium on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions**

The Eighth Symposium is likely to take place in 1996. Since the best venues tend to be booked well in advance, it is not too early to be thinking about 1996.

Anybody who has ideas for a suitable venue and would be prepared to take the first steps in organising the meeting is invited to write to the President.

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