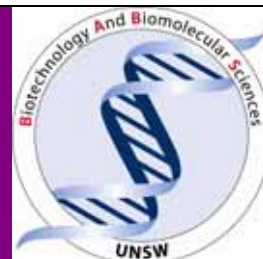


BABS Quarterly

November 2008



Message from HoS

Colleagues,

Over the past six months, as a School we have moved forward in key directions, continue to move forward in others, but have not progressed in one important area.

The RAT review has been completed and I am confident that the School has a more homogeneous direction. We now have the challenge of successfully implementing the necessary changes.

Ongoing, is the renovation and continued repair of our 'old tug', oft called the Biological Sciences Building. Renovation of the Rountree Room is almost complete. While we still have issues with temperature regulation, it is now a flagship of the School, celebrating achievement by showcasing students' theses. Room 244 has been renovated and the cockroach-infested galley is now a clean stationery and map room. In December, I plan to formally name the seminar room in honour of one of our colleagues! Future plans include the continued upgrading of the Samuels tearoom and the decrepit mail room. Most optimistically, we are confident that the renovations to the 'west-wing' of the first and second floors will be approved with renovations commencing in S2 2009. This work is, of course, a response to the RAT reviewers' comments!

In the last six months, the School seminar series has been resurrected. The quality of the invited speakers and the coordinated publicity ensured the seminars were well attended. The same cannot be said for the student seminars. It is not clear why few people attended the student presentations, but the issue needs to be revisited. Certainly, I do not wish to take a roll call, but I believe it is the responsibility of each academic to ensure that postdocs/students in their laboratories attend these seminars.

My greatest disappointment is the failure to deliver a new School website. Progress on this all-important public face of our School is occurring at a glacial pace. If we wish to attract new students, staff and colleagues, this must change. A major problem facing the necessary climactic change is the multitude of competing forces that pull on Tim Salmon. In future, all bookings for Tim's time will be made through Sue Jackson.

Good health,

Bill

Academic news and upcoming events

Grants

Congratulations go to Mark Tanaka, who was awarded a 5-year QEII fellowship in the ARC grants. Other successful grant applicants were Postdoc Fellow Mark Brown, who also gained a QEII fellowship, Rob Yang, Brett Neilan, Staffan Kjelleberg, Scott Rice, Andrew Brown, John Foster, Mike Manefield and Bill Ballard. Marc Wilkins also received significant state support for the development of his Systems Biology initiative.

A reminder that from 2009, Federation Fellowships will be replaced by Australian Laureate Fellowships, each worth around \$3 million over 5 years. The new scheme is designed to allow the Laureate Fellow to work with and mentor up to four postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers.

Teaching

CATEI reports are now in from Semester 2 2008, with evaluations continuing to show a high level of student satisfaction. Congratulations to all concerned.

A small working group has been established to revise the Majors within the School. This will feed into a revision of third year teaching in 2009.

Secret men's business

On 15 October in compliance with an embargo, Rob Brooks and Bill Ballard surreptitiously made their way to Canberra's Parliament House for the ARC Grant announcements. They had been invited to mount a small display about the project in the foyer and answer questions during the morning tea break. They're not 100% sure why they were selected, but have an inkling it may have had something to do with the project's catchy name, 'Sex and Ageing'.




Evolution – The Experience Melbourne 8-13 February 2009

Local Blue Cattle Dog Taz will be a star attraction at this conference in early 2009, which will explore the breadth and depth of Charles Darwin's ongoing impact in basic biology, agriculture, medicine, psychology, sociology, politics, history and religion. (Taz will be chaperoned by Bill Ballard.)



Staff Achievements

- 👉 **Rob Yang** and **Andrew Brown** have been promoted to Associate Professor, effective 2009
- 👉 **Diane McDougald** was promoted to Senior Research Fellow on 1 July 2008
- 👉 **Francesco Pomati** was awarded a prestigious Marie Curie Fellowship from the European Commission
- 👉 **Alan Wilton** received an award for Excellence in Contribution to Canine Science Research by the Master Dog Breeders & Associates

http://www.mdba.net.au/winners_2007.php
- 👉 Honours students **Suresh Nair** and **Lay Hoon Catherine Seah** were awarded University Medals. Suresh won the medal for Genetics and Catherine the medal for Microbiology

In the News

The discovery by VC postdoctoral fellow **Shauna Murray** of a new genus that has a DNA code 100 times bigger than humans, received coverage in the SMH. <http://www.smh.com.au/news/specials/science/how-the-vietnamese-discover-d-cabramatta/2008/09/28/1222540247025.html>

Wallace Bridge has received an ALTC Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning. The UNSW Diploma in Innovation Management that he developed has been heralded internationally, and received coverage in the SMH, the AFR and featured on the front page of the October ALTC newsletter.



PhD student **Matt Clemson** was interviewed on ABC radio in October about breakthrough tissue-typing technology for organ transplants, co-invented by **Wallace Bridge**. The new process supersedes traditional DNA sequencing to match donor and recipient, is quicker and cheaper, and reduces the need for anti-rejection drugs. <http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/links/>

A White Christmas for some



Rick Cavicchioli and Federico Lauro are currently in Antarctica to collect samples as part of the ongoing research into cold-adapted microbes and ecosystems. The lakes of Antarctica are home to unique microbial communities that are adapted to harsh conditions. These lakes represent ecosystems that were once connected to the ocean, but were cut off thousands of years ago, providing the opportunity to study the evolution of marine microbial communities after they become isolated. Use of techniques such as metagenomics and metaproteomics can uncover the microbial diversity present in these communities and gain insights into the metabolic networks that tie each community together. Central to the research goals is a comprehensive understanding of the enzymes and processes associated with the survival and growth of life forms at extremely cold temperatures.

Social Events



Christmas Harbour Cruise Wednesday 10 December 4-8 pm

Don't forget to RSVP to Sue Jackson if you would like to come on board for the School's Christmas event. We will be partying on a Vagabond cruiser leaving from Circular Quay. Tickets are only \$20 per head, the School subsidising the cost.

Melbourne Cup

The "race that stops a nation" had its usual fans in the Samuels tearoom on the first Tuesday in November. Many hopeful sweep tickets were thrown away dismally after the race was won by a rank outsider. Nevertheless, it was a fine introduction to this uniquely Aussie tradition for the many of our overseas colleagues and students who experienced it for the first time.



(Photos by Olaf Bressel)

Comings and Goings

Arrivals

- ☞ Nadia Urosevic, Lecturer, commenced in November 2008
- ☞ Noel Whitaker returns from sabbatical January 2009
- ☞ Michal Janitz, Snr Lecturer, commences February 2009
- ☞ Vladimir Sytnyk, Snr Lecturer, commences July 2009

Departures

- ☞ Mike Edwards retires in February 2009 and will be appointed as a Visiting Fellow
- ☞ Andrew Collins will be on sabbatical January–July 2009

Pitter patter of little scientists

Our best wishes go to Belinda Ferrari, Suhelen Egan, Preetha Sujit and Michelle Gehringer on the imminent arrival of their new babies.

