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Actinomycetologists: a vibrant and strong scientific community. Papers from the 14th International Symposium on the Biology of Actinomycetes

Lubbert Dijkhuizen · Mike Goodfellow ·
Paul Hoskisson · Iain Sutcliffe

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The diversity and significance of actinomycetes has long been recognised and a series of International Symposia on the Biology of Actinomycetes (ISBA) have been held since 1968, when the 1st meeting was organised in Jena, Germany by Helmut Prauser. Continuing that 39-year tradition, the 14th ISBA was held from August 26th to 30th 2007 in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The Organising Committee was led by Mike Goodfellow (a veteran of the 1st meeting and all subsequent meetings) and Alan Ward of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The symposium, which was attended by over 400 participants from 43 countries, was opened with a keynote lecture by Zixin Deng who described his pioneering work on ‘A novel DNA modification with sulphur: an emerging new field’.

The programme was divided into eight themes, each of which covered important areas of contemporary actinomycete research, namely Evolution & Comparative Genomics; Combinatorial Biosynthesis; Systematics & Diversity; *Streptomyces* Physiology and Genetics; Pathogenic Actinomycetes; Ecology; Cell Envelope Biology; Marine Actinobacteria; and Metabolic Diversity of Actinomycetes in Biotechnology. Workshops were held on Control of Morphogenesis, Selective Isolation and Endophytic Actinomycetes. The scientific programme was closed by a keynote lecture by Jeff Errington on “The cell biology of wall synthesis in *Bacillus subtilis*”.

Three poster prizes for early career researchers were awarded during the Closing Ceremony: the Ecology prize went to Silvia Schrey (University of Tuebingen), the Systematics prize went to Sanjay Antony-Babu (University of Newcastle) and a poster prize sponsored by *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* to Sonchita Bagchi (Uppsala University). Also, during the closing ceremony, Julian Davies spoke warmly of the scientific achievements of David Labeda, presenting him with the Bergey Award for 2007 on behalf of the Bergey’s Manual Trust. He also paid tribute to the late Simon Baumberg (1940–2007), a much missed contributor to the field of *Streptomyces* genetics.

The conference programme provided an excellent framework for enjoyable and productive discussions on the progress being made towards greater understanding of the biology of actinomycetes. In this

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Special Issue of *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek*, we are pleased to bring together a selection of invited papers that reflect the breadth and depth of contributions made in the 14th ISBA programme. We hope that

these papers will provide a foretaste and advert for the forthcoming 15th ISBA, which is being organised by Zixin Deng and will be held in Shanghai, China in 2009.