

Genomics update

Afterword: Genomics Update update

There is a rather subtle connection between the authors of this and next months' Genomics Updates – both are graduate students supported by the NSF IGERT programme in *Genomics of Closely Related Organisms* at the University of Arizona – and the manner in which they came to write their respective articles is rather circuitous. In their spring semester course, students typically design and perform an original research project, and learn to prepare, submit and publish a manuscript describing their research. I say 'typically' because this past semester was anything but typical. Coincident with the time that the class settled upon a feasible project, our sequencing centre ran into a bad batch of reagents, delaying the recovery of usable data and any downstream activities.

Because one goal of this class is to publish a manuscript – an objective that has been achieved in almost all previous years – Phil Hugenholtz came to my rescue by offering to consider their original essays for the monthly 'Genomics Update' feature of *Environmental Microbiology*. His only instruction to the class was that essays need to be 'short, current and snappy . . . something that can be read over the morning coffee'.

To initiate the process, each of the twelve students was given the weekend to '(i) read a couple of Genomics

Updates, (ii) scan/scour/read the literature and (iii) come up with two current topics (and associated references) for potential essays', and when the class next convened, their two-line topic descriptions, which ranged from rhinoviruses to global warming, were distributed and discussed. Based on their overall appeal to the class (*not* the author), topics were assigned, and each student proceeded to work through numerous iterations of manuscript revision.

The majority of students did not make it past three drafts, but two produced essays that were on the level of anything that I have read (or produced) for this feature. All told, the entire process took us about 3 weeks; and I have not yet read the final versions that are appearing in print, as the authors need to be wholly responsible for the contents of their publications. I do not know what students gained from this experience but hopefully, the ultimate purpose, to inform you about a salient topic in environmental microbiology, was realized. And perhaps, you might now be ready for that second cup of coffee.

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