

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:**

Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution 2014

Travel Dates:

08/06/14 – 12/06/14

Location:

Caribe Hilton, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Group member(s):

Sam Lewis

Aims:

Present and receive feedback on my PhD work

Attend conference talks and posters, and meet other researchers in the field

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Thanks to the generosity of the James Rennie Bequest I was able to attend the 2014 meeting of the Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE 2014). This is a major international conference which focuses on molecular evolution, evolutionary genetics and population genetics, and this year was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The meeting consisted of 4 parallel session which ran over 4 days, during which I saw many fascinating talks by eminent researchers. Particular highlights included Kevin Verstrepen who presented a high-resolution evolutionary history of maltase gene duplicates in yeast, and David Rand who described an experimental approach to quantifying mitonuclear epistasis in *Drosophila*. There were also five plenary talks, one of which was given by Professor Masatoshi Nei, and it was a great privilege to hear the views of someone who has been and continues to be so influential in the field.

During the meeting I presented my own work in the form of a poster, entitled “Recent *Drosophila* Argonaute2 duplicates display functional specialization and low genetic diversity”. This experience was particularly valuable, enabling me to discuss my work with other PhD students as well as more senior researchers. I received insightful feedback and suggestions about my results, particularly regarding their implications for the experimental work I have planned for the rest of my PhD, which will be of great benefit to the project overall. I also met Henrik Kaessmann (University of Lausanne) and Raquel Assis (Penn State University), whose work is relevant to my own and who gave me useful suggestions for future directions of research.

I am very grateful for the assistance provided by the James Rennie Bequest in attending SMBE 2014. It was a stimulating and rewarding experience, which exposed me to novel ideas both in and outside my field of interest, and allowed me to talk in detail about my work with a wide variety of researchers.