

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: The 21st International Conference on Arabidopsis Research (ICAR)

Travel Dates: June 4th to June 11th 2010

Location: Pacifico Yokohama, Yokohama, Japan

Group Member(s): Poay Lim

Aims: To attend conference meeting and present my PhD findings as a poster

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

I am very grateful to the James Rennie Bequest for providing me with a travel award to help facilitate my travel to the 21st International Conference on Arabidopsis Research (ICAR) in Yokohama, Japan that was held from June 6th to June 10th.

ICAR is the largest international conference focusing on research into the model organism *Arabidopsis thaliana*, with over 1300 scientists attending this year. This year's conference also served as a memorial to the Arabidopsis 2010 genome project, TAIR. In attending the conference I was able to learn more about the disappointing news of cancellation for the funding of TAIR, and the issues with finding new funding sources that threaten the existence of this invaluable research resource. Although this is a negative and troubling situation, one small positive is that I have gained a greater understanding and perspective upon the funding issues facing all scientific research in the present economic and political climate.

On a more positive note, there were many highlights gained from discovery more information on recent Arabidopsis translational research using cereal crops, particularly rice. Dr Motoyuki Ashikari, from the Nagoya University, gave a particularly informative and interesting talk on "Rice Breeding by QTL Pyramiding".

At the meeting, I was able to gain first hand contact with prestigious scientists and researchers in the field of Natural Variation such as Maarten Koornneef and Detlef Weigel, as well as my attending of informative lectures by luminaries in the field.

I presented a poster title "Natural Variation in Seasonal Adaptation" in the Natural Variation section, which captured the interest of some attendees. Presenting my poster at the conference allowed me to gain experience of critical cross-examination whilst also being able to discuss my research findings with many delegates, of diverse interests and experience.

This exposure to a diverse range of cutting-edge science and some of the sharpest minds in the field will give me invaluable knowledge and direction for completing my

studies and forging my career. I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the global scope of Arabidopsis research and discover more about the research being performed outside the more local European and North American regions.

On a more personal note, I enjoyed having the opportunity to learn more about the local Japanese culture and even pick up some of the language. Although this may not be immediately scientifically beneficial, it has certainly been personally beneficial and opened me up to the possibilities of postdoctoral work outside of the EU or US.

Attending ICAR in Yokohama has certainly broadened my horizons and given me valuable contacts and opportunities to share research ideas.