

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/

Conference Title: American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB)

Travel Dates: 10th-22nd December 2012

Location: San Francisco, CA, USA

Group member(s): Laura Wood (s0924185)

Aims:

- Present a poster and receive feedback from leaders in the field
 - Attend symposiums, keynote sessions and poster presentations
 - Gain more of an understanding of the Career opportunities available to graduates
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OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) conference is an annual event and is one of the largest meetings of its kind. Researchers from across the world attend to specifically discuss and highlight all the scientific fields encompassed under the umbrella term of 'Cell Biology'. The event circulates throughout a number of cities across the USA and in 2012 I was lucky enough to attend, along with over 7000 other registered participants, the San Francisco-based conference.

I found the ASCB very unique in its set up and unlike any other conference I have been to in the past. To accommodate the large number of attendees, the conference was set up in the Moscone centre; a large main area was the site of all poster presentations and many stalls/exhibitors, while smaller rooms were used for roundtables, minisymposiums, panel discussions and workshops.

My PhD is focused on trying to understand the architecture of kinetochores, a large protein complex found on either side of chromosomes, and crucial for the normal segregation of sister chromatids to the two daughter cells during cell division. It was great to find that so many sessions/talks were directly linked to my field of research and that chromosome biology in particular was highly represented. Throughout the 5 days one of my main priorities was to attend minisymposiums, with each session consisting of several short talks within a certain biological category. Examples included 'Cell Division', 'Cancer Cell Biology' and 'Microtubule Organisation and Dynamics'. These sessions were sometimes concurrent but the diversity of the talks and the fast-paced nature of the conference meant that it was acceptable to constantly switch between individual sessions.

Poster sessions ran in the afternoon on each day of the conference. The poster I presented was found within the Kinetochore sub-group and it was an important

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opportunity to meet with collaborators and other leading researchers in the field. There was a lot of interest in my poster and the feedback I received was extremely useful and I came away feeling very positive and focused on future aspects of the project.

Many talks were not specifically focused on research and tackled subjects such as Career Development, Science Policy, Minority Affairs and Data Representation; these sessions employed a more interactive approach. One of the more interesting careers sessions was a discussion where panellists representing careers in biotechnology, academic administration, science writing and policy offered career advice on each of their given professions via a relaxed question and answer session.

This conference is a very interactive and dynamic event, it not only allows you to gain new insights into specific aspects of your own research, but creates an atmosphere that allows you to look into new fields. This is perfect for anyone in their final year looking to go on to a post-doc position, or even considering a change in career. I am very grateful to the James Rennie Bequest foundation for accepting my application and, in doing so, allowing me to attend such an exciting conference.