Special Meeting Sections for the 7th ASM Conference on Biofilms

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In this issue we present sections dedicated to the 7th ASM Conference on Biofilms held in Chicago, IL, from 24 to 29 October 2015. These special sections contain a meeting overview and nine research articles as well as four minireviews. And do not forget to take a peek at the terrific cover image.

Research in the biofilm field has come a long way since I attended the 1st ASM Conference on Biofilms from 30 September to 4 October 1996 in Snowbird, UT, as a young postdoctoral fellow. At that meeting, the focus of the presentations included understanding the structures of these communities, the composition of the extracellular polysaccharide, and how substratum properties impact adhesion, as well as many imaging studies. The discussion topics included “Do Surface Chemistry and/or Topography Really Affect Bacterial Adhesion?” and “Is There a Common Organization to All Biofilms?” Some of those same themes carry over to the 2015 version of this meeting, but the articles in this issue also represent a broad swath of new themes relevant to these microbial communities. For example, topics including cyclic di-GMP signaling, quorum sensing, and the role of evolution in biofilms were not well-represented (or were completely absent) at the first biofilm conference. And it was difficult to find genetic or molecular studies at the first conference as well. Indeed, my poster at that meeting described a single unmapped, biofilm-defective mutant that impacted

swimming motility, and it was one of the few examples of genetic studies!

When I attended my first ASM Conference on Biofilms, I had the opportunity to get a feel for the questions being asked in the field. For an outsider coming into the world of biofilms, such exposure to the research in the field was critical. Listening to the breadth of topics under investigation helped me formulate questions I was excited about pursuing and, equally importantly, identify areas I did not want to pursue, because, for example, the sub-field was already well occupied with investigators. For young scientists who could not attend the 2015 conference, this issue will serve as an excellent entrée to the questions currently under active investigation in the biofilm field, perhaps letting one define and refine the questions to be investigated in the coming years. I hope you enjoy reading the articles in these special sections as much as I did.

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