Council Meeting

1. Call to Order
President Brandon Gaut called the council meeting to order at 9:00 AM Sunday, June 7, 2014. In attendance were President Brandon Gaut, Past-President Sudhir Kumar, President-Elect Joe Felsenstein, Councilors Laurent Duret, Sandra Baldauf, Yoko Satta, David Liberles, Marta Wayne, Harmit Malik, Treasurer Aoife McLysaght, and Genome Biology and Evolution (GBE) Editor-in-Chief Bill Martin. In addition, Christian Schlötterer (SMBE Vienna 2015) and Barbara Holland (SMBE 2016 Gold Coast Australia) as well as Jennifer Boyd and Matt Ward from Oxford University Press attended part of the meeting. Secretary James McInerney was unable to attend the Council meeting due to a family emergency. This report was prepared using preliminary notes prepared by Harmit Malik in his absence.

2. Approval of Minutes
The Council approved the minutes of the 2013 Council and Business meeting prepared by the Secretary, published in the January issue of Molecular Biology and Evolution (MBE).

3. Editor’s Reports
The Editors in Chief of MBE and GBE gave reports on the current state of their journals (see separate editors’ reports). They reported on a very healthy rate of submissions for both journals. OUP representatives also gave a presentation on their work on the journals, including vignettes where individual articles had been highlighted for widespread media attention.

4. Secretary’s Report
A review of the council actions over the preceding year was summarized, and detailed below. A strong case was made for formalized procedures for various functions performed by SMBE Council, with a record that can be maintained at the new website maintained by Allen Press. Council was strongly in agreement for this proposal and different Councilors were encouraged to submit their documents to the Secretary for reference by future SMBE Councils. SMBE President Brandon Gut also presented details about the SMBE partnership with Allen Press for management services, including website maintenance, membership access, and accounting.

5. Treasurer’s Report
SMBE Treasurer Aoife McLysaght presented the budget and outlook for SMBE activities for 2013–2014. The budget outlook is very healthy with significant revolving budget and savings. SMBE is in the process of switching banks and she reported on a couple of options for moving the budget to interest-bearing accounts. In view of a healthy budget outlook, Council voted to make sure SMBE earnings per annum were completely used for the benefit of the Society membership. More details can be found in the Treasurer’s report.

6. Election of SMBE Officers
The nominations committee charged with nominating candidates for the position of President-elect, Treasurer, and two Council positions was chaired by Robin Bush (UC Irvine, USA). In addition to Dr Bush, the nominating committee consisted of Takashi Gojobori (NIG Mishima, Japan), David Posada (University of Vigo, Spain), Matthew Hahn (Indiana University, USA), Tal Pupko (Tel Aviv University, Israel), and Emma Teeling (University College, Dublin, Ireland). James McInerney, SMBE Secretary (NUI, Ireland) was an ex officio member of this committee as per society bylaws.

The nominees for the SMBE Ballot were as follows:

President-elect: George (Jianzhi) Zhang (University of Michigan, USA) and Manolo Gouy (University of Lyon, France).
Treasurer: Dan Graur (University of Houston, USA) and Juliette de Meaux (University of Muenster, Germany).
Councilors: Tal Dagan (University of Kiel, Germany), Emma Teeling (University College, Dublin, Ireland), Belinda Chang (University of Toronto, Canada), and Kateryna Makova (Penn State University, USA).

SMBE members were issued with online ballot details on 1 June. The results of the ballot are that President-elect is George (Jianzhi) Zhang, Treasurer-elect is Juliette de Meaux, and the elected councilors are Emma Teeling and Kateryna Makova.
7. Other Activities

i) Nominations for Future Satellite Meetings

Satellite meeting proposals were solicited in an open call to SMBE membership in mid-April 2014, and the resulting five proposals were evaluated by a committee consisting of SMBE Councilor Harmit Malik, Soojin Yi (Georgia Technical University, USA), Tal Dagan (University of Kiel, Germany), and Hopi Hoekstra (Harvard University, USA). Due to a left-over budget allocation to satellite meetings from the previous fiscal year, council approved funding for four of the proposals and encouraged the fifth to reapply for the 2015 competition. Council discussed whether the maximum budget for satellite meetings contributed by SMBE should be lowered from $40,000 to $30,000, which would allow for funding of more meritorious proposals in a given year. Instead, it was agreed upon to make clear that the future call for proposals would be substantial in size. Councilors are asked to put a budget of at least $35,000 per term, to encourage a continued membership. Councilor Sandra Baldauf will be taking over these duties as Laurent is ending his Council appointment this year.

ii) Satellite Meetings Held in 2014

SMBE funded two satellite meetings in 2014. The first was “Causes of Genome Evolution” organized by Hiroshi Akashi at the Toray Conference Center in Mishima, Japan in March 2014. The second was on “Reticulated Microbial Evolution” organized by Tal Dagan, James McInerney, and Bill Martin at University of Kiel, Germany in April 2014.

iii) Undergraduate Mentoring and Diversity Program

Councilor Laurent Duret organized the undergraduate mentoring and diversity program at the annual meeting. This program was able to make ten awards. Councilor Sandra Baldauf will be taking over these duties as Laurent is ending his Council appointment this year.

iv) Graduate/Postdoc Student Travel Awards and Fitch Prizes

Past-President Sudhir Kumar was involved in the selection of graduate students and postdocs who were to be given travel grants to attend SMBE. A total of 15 graduate student and 10 postdoc awards were made. In addition, Sudhir Kumar and Juan Carlos Martinez Cursado (University of Puerto Rico) chose eight senior graduate student finalists for the Walter Fitch Prize Symposium. An award committee chaired by Laura Landweber (Princeton University, USA) awarded the 2014 Fitch Prize to Alex Cagan from the Max Planck Institute (Leipzig, Germany).

v) Marta Wayne presented her summary of the recommendations made by the newly instituted SMBE Awards Committee that she chaired. The committee made the recommendation to institute four prizes. There will be a prize for senior postdocs/junior professors (between years 3 and 7 after their PhD) to recognize the accomplishments of SMBE members at an important early stage of their career. Unlike the Fitch symposium, the committee felt that this should be awarded on the basis of a written package of their research accomplishments. Council members requested the number of awards in this category be raised to two and future SMBE meetings give an opportunity for a short lecture by each of the winners, perhaps following the Nei lecture (SMBE President’s address), starting from the 2016 SMBE Meeting. Another award will be presented for the best papers published in MBE and GBE (one each) that had a graduate student as the first or corresponding author, to be selected by the EICs of the respective journals. The third award will be for SMBE community service. The fourth award proposed is to recognize the lifetime contribution of individuals to SMBE. All awardees will be given free registration and travel funds to allow them to receive the awards at the SMBE annual meetings. Marta Wayne will chair the Awards committee and formalize procedures for nominations and selection in the next few months so that the first awards may be made in the 2015 SMBE meeting.

During the discussion of the awards committee’s recommendations, several Council members raised concerns that insufficient childcare subsidies might prevent young parents from traveling to SMBE meetings to present their work. Considering the healthy fiscal state of SMBE and especially to ensure that this demographic is encouraged to continue to participate in SMBE meetings, Council voted to make as many as 50 childcare awards of up to $1,000 each available, to assist in things like travel to the conference site by the child or for travel of a caregiver so that the scientist may attend the SMBE meeting. These awards are in addition to the postdoc/grad student travel awards and individuals will be eligible to apply for both. The exact details of the award and logistics will be worked out in a committee to be chaired by a Council member. SMBE Treasurer Aoife McLysaght expressed a strong desire to lead this committee even after her service term on Council ends this year.

SMBE President Brandon Gaut announced these exciting awards in the Nei Lecture and answered questions about the awards at the SMBE Business meeting.

vi) SMBE president Brandon Gaut made a couple of additional remarks to Council. He expressed a desire to have an SMBE Council member be formally responsible for the public relations and social networking. At present, this function is performed by the SMBE Secretary, which adds to the already heavy duties of this individual. David Liberles volunteered to take over this function in close collaboration to present SMBE Secretary James McInerney and other Council members to coordinate and advertise efforts of findings reported in SMBE journals and in the field of molecular evolution. President Brandon Gaut reiterated the need to have written protocols of all tasks. Finally, to simplify procedures associated with increasing or maintaining SMBE membership, he suggested that SMBE membership be awarded in 3-year terms, for $30 per term, to encourage a continued membership. Council voted to approve this change.

vii) Christian Schlotterer (Vienna 2015) and Barbara Holland (Gold Coast 2016) also gave informative presentations about the facilities and options for attendees of the next annual SMBE meetings. A call for meeting proposals for 2017 was
also issued with President-Elect Joe Felsenstein chairing a committee to decide the venue for SMBE 2017.

**Business Meeting**

1. Call to Order
President Brandon Gaut called to order the annual SMBE Business meeting at 1:45 PM on 12 June.

2. Business
The president summarized the discussions at the council meetings, announced the location of the 2016 meeting, and congratulated Taras Oleksyk and the other organizers of the Puerto Rico meeting. Christian Schlötterer gave a short presentation on the logistics of the 2015 annual meeting in Vienna.