

Birthdays and Homecomings at ISMB-ECCB in Dublin

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While for much of its history since the great famine of the eighteenth century Ireland has been synonymous with mass emigration, the 23rd [ISMB \(Intelligent Systems for Molecular Biology\)](#) meeting sailing into the regenerated "[Silicon Docks](#)" of Dublin last week was a homecoming of sorts for the annual gathering of the global Bioinformatics community. Having Michael Levitt as the opening keynote, felt like a victory parade for the field's first nobel laureate (alongside his [co-recipients](#) Martin Karplus and Arieh Warshel), and vindication that computational biology and bioinformatics had come of age. Michael was embarrassed to admit that this was his first time at the meeting, but the community embraced their champion to their collective bosoms, and upon receiving his [fellowship](#) of the [ISCB \(International Society of Computational Biology\)](#) sounded a convert to the meeting and societies work.

Levitt in his [Nobel speech](#) stated that the 4th recipient of his prize should have been the computer industry, and he has to be one of the first truly digital Nobel laureates, carrying on his laptop the five million files and terabytes of data he has created over his career. A true computational biologist, in the press conference after his talk he recounted that he still codes as much now as he did before his award, coding in PERL, a little C++, and being a dab hand in sysadmin tasks and booting up virtual machines. This years conference the white heat of technological focus normally seen in the satellite SIGs such as [BOSC](#) (see [our write up](#) of the meeting) seemed to be integrated more in the mainstream, with the [ISCB Overton Prize](#) winner and keynote Curtis Huttenhower presenting all of the methods presented over his metagenomics heavy talk as dockerised pipelines [available for download](#). The keynote recognized the importance of biocuration, giving the fellows award to database ([Swiss-Prot](#), etc.) pioneer [Amos Bairoch](#). While Amos has attended a few meeting in the past, he acknowledged that it may not have been so biocuration friendly, but certainly was so now. While the [bio-ontologies SIG](#) (attended by our curator Chris) may have been the main draw for biocurators, there was plenty to keep them staying on for the whole meeting, including two talks from our editorial board member Carole Goble on systems biology infrastructure ([ISBE](#) & [FAIRdom](#)) and a few talks from the [eTRIKS consortium](#) covering standards and data integration in translational research (HT to our ISA collaborator Philippe Rocca-Serra).

Birthdays and Anniversaries

With this being the 14th time the meeting has been combined with the ECCB European Computational Biology meeting, the biannual European meetings often can be a little larger, and the conference has experimented this year with a few new innovations at the conference to stop people getting lost between talks. On top of a new app, a [new community journal](#) and conference materials portal with our friends at F1000Research, the tracks were streamlined somewhat to reduce the number of parallel sessions. Having organized workshops the last two years (see the write-ups [here](#) and [here](#)) we were slightly disappointed these were reduced and partly merged with [new AKES](#) (Applied Knowledge Exchange) pre-conference sessions, but the reorganization of the main tracks into curated themes (data, disease, proteins, genes and systems) seemed a welcome innovation. Being regular attendees of the meeting and satellite SIGs (you can see previous write-ups [here](#)), we have some history here, having [launched at the 2012 meeting](#) in Long Beach. Last year we participated in the [BMC Open Data drinks](#), awarding the BMC Open Data Award to some of the authors of our Assemblathon2 paper. Thanks to the

generous support of our partners at BMC, this year we hosted 3rd birthday celebrations at the Ferryman pub, and over Guinness we caught up with editorial board members, previous authors and old friends, as well as many new ones.

*Friends of old catching up at [@TheFerrymanPub](#) during [@GigaScience](#) birthday bash 🍷
[#ismbecb2015](#) [pic.twitter.com/8RizS0FqoS](#)*

— Monica Munoz-Torres ([@monimunozto](#)) *July 13, 2015*

We had a gr8 time @ the [@GigaScience](#) pub evening, thank U to [@SCEdmunds](#) and colleagues [@BioMedCentral](#) [#ISMBECCB2015](#) [pic.twitter.com/vO4RuUNsch](#)

— BF Francis Ouellette ([@bffo](#)) *July 13, 2015*

[@GigaScience](#) Thanks for the [#ISMB2015](#) drinks! [pic.twitter.com/Y4lpTvoCgA](#)

— Ted Gibbons ([@trgibbons](#)) *July 12, 2015*

We also gave out several boxes of our popular "Free Data" t-shirts as a birthday treat, fortunately not causing the [near riot](#) of last year. We are starting to see some of these turn up in amazing places (such as the [top of Mount Fuji](#)), and hope the new batch will share equally exiting pictures with us. It was with a heavy heart that we've had to leave the inviting pubs and exciting science of Dublin, but we look forward to coming again soon.

The post [Birthdays and Homecomings at ISMB-ECCB in Dublin](#) appeared first on [GigaBlog](#).