

MMEG2019 was the 26th meeting of the MMEG series, the first that was hosted at the Open University, and thanks to ISME for their sponsorship, it was a highly successful meeting. The MMEG provides a forum for early career researchers to present their microbiology and microbial ecology-based research to an audience of their peers and senior members of the microbiology community.

Conference attendance was high compared to previous years, with 104 registered delegates. A total of 42 presentations were delivered in two formats. Oral presentations were provided by 29 attendees and poster presentations were delivered by 13. Five sessions occurred over the two days, which were chaired by ten early career researchers, allowing for additional professional development. We were also able to build a programme that had good gender balance with regards to the oral and poster presentations, as well as the session chairs.

After registration, lunch, the welcoming address and housekeeping there was a talk given by the UK ambassador for ISME Dr. James McDonald, who provided details on the upcoming ISME18 meeting in South Africa and advertised the benefits of ISME membership. Following this, the first day was comprised of two sessions. The first was on the “plant-associated microbiome”, with talks on isoprene and ammonia cycling, the impact of fertilisers on plant associated bacteria and monitoring the spread of diseases affecting oak trees. The second session was on the “marine microbiome” and had talks covering the impact of high salt concentrations on the survival and preservation of microbes and DNA, the impact of microplastics in the marine and the synthesis of unusual lipids by *Ruegeria pomeroyi*. This was followed by the poster session and conference dinner.

The second day included talks by two invited speakers, Dr. Sophie Nixon from the University of Manchester presenting work on the microbial communities resident and active within deep Greenland groundwaters and Dr. John Moreau from the University of Glasgow, who presented research on mercury cycling in the environment. They also described their career paths, to provide inspiration and guidance to the early career researchers in attendance.

The second day also involved three further sessions on the topics of “trace gases”, “microbial metabolisms” and “nitrogen cycling”. The third session detailed the characterisation of the metabolism of a range of compounds, including hydrocarbons, acetaldehydes, dimethylsulfoniopropionate (DMSP), and pesticides. The “nitrogen cycling” session was then comprised of a series of talks investigating ammonia oxidising archaea and the role of microbes in the global cycling of nitrogen oxides. The final session on “trace gases” covered a broad range of topics including research on the cycling of carbon monoxide, nitric oxide, DMSP, isoprene, and methane. The standard and scientific content of the talks and posters was incredibly high, with the early career researchers providing a strong programme over the course of the two-day meeting, with active participation by the audience during the question sessions.

Thanks to the generous support of ISME we were able to supply travel grants to eight presenting delegates. Further to this, we were able to provide transportation to and from the conference dinner on the first night, ensuring the greater safety of all attending delegates. ISME was specifically thanked during the opening talk, before the session on the “plant-associated microbiome”, before the poster sessions and by every presenting delegate who had received funding from the society. Further to this, the ISME logo was included in all websites and printed materials for the conference.

We are currently in the process of collecting feedback through an online survey, including questions on the perception of ISME, to ensure that we identify ways to improve the conference series for future hosts as well for future conferences hosted at the Open University. We will also pass this feedback on to the society in order to help maximise return on future sponsorships.



ISME award recipients Beth Williams (left) and Maria Maglulio (right) with the judging panel (left to right) Andrew Crombie, Laura Lehtovirta-Morley and James McDonald.