

DNA Databases Monitored

In February 1987, a workshop on the "Future of Molecular Biology Databases" was held in Heidelberg, West Germany. As an outcome of that meeting, an International Advisory Committee for DNA Sequence Databases has been established to provide advice to the funding agencies of the three DNA sequence databases: the European Molecular Biology Laboratory Data Library, GenBank, and the DNA Databank of Japan. This advisory committee, which held its first meeting in Bethesda, Maryland, in February 1988, is made up of three members each from the United States and Europe and two from Japan. The members are broadly representative of the molecular biology, data management, and data analysis communities.

The charge to the committee was to provide the three databases with guidance regarding their collaborative efforts to manage the current influx of information and the expected great increase that will result from programs to systematically map and sequence the genomes of many organisms, including man. The committee members commended the databanks on their international collaboration, which has been successful in several areas. However, the advisers specifically focused on the differences that exist among the databases, differences which lead to the inability to automatically translate data from one to another because of differences in data items.

The committee made three recommendations that reflect its concerns.

- Within 6 to 9 months, the databases should agree upon and implement a minimal set of common data items and biological annotations in order to facilitate the exchange of data among the three sites.

- Any backlog of unentered sequences from the earlier literature must be removed as rapidly as possible.

- The databases should begin to formulate plans to include references to other genetic databases.

The undersigned representatives of the funding agencies that support these databases have assured the members of the International Advisory Committee, and wish to assure the scientific community as well, that these recommendations will be carried out promptly.

It is expected that the International Advisory Committee for DNA Sequence Data-

bases will meet annually and will monitor progress in efficient handling of DNA sequence information and in providing the database tools needed by the molecular biology community as efforts in genomic analysis increase.

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Baltimore's "Fiery Blast"

The news article about David Baltimore's "fiery blast" at the opening of the recent AAAS meeting (26 Feb., p. 972) stimulates me to make a few comments. I am entirely sympathetic with most of his concerns. However, I take issue with his insistence that the concept of evolution is "the basic fundament of all biological science." It is inappropriate to suggest that everyone who disagrees with his position embodies "ignorance, superstition, and fear at their most nefarious." Baltimore has the privilege of holding his own philosophical position, but there are published scientists of quality who do not find it necessary to begin with evolution as the fundament.

A different fundament is affirmed in the Bible, where mankind is instructed to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over . . . every living thing" (Genesis 1:28). Scholars have labeled that instruction the "cultural mandate." Science, technology, the arts—all of culture—can find their fundament in the Creator's

command to develop the world he has given to us. This stance encourages continuing and fearless research in any and all areas of human endeavor.

In reference to animal rightists—they do indeed present a genuine hazard to meaningful research. Nevertheless, their philosophy could be said to derive from the evolutionist's position that there is no qualitative difference between man and other animal species. The Judeo-Christian position places man on a higher level than other species, which allows for appropriate and humane experimentation on animals. The cultural mandate directs mankind to responsibly pursue knowledge, utilizing the most effective means of scientific research.

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"Lost" Sex Survey

I must comment on William Booth's article "The long, lost survey on sex" (News & Comment, 4 Mar., p. 1084). He gives only a partial story about the tragedy of an unpublished book that society has needed for 20 years and has paid for with over \$350,000 in taxpayer's money.

The tragedy was no mere squabble over title-page author order, but was a struggle to control editing issues, for example, representation of how and why certain steps of analysis were taken, what the book's title would be, and which chapters would be included.

We did not restrict others' access to the data; as with Charles Turner, of the National Academy of Sciences, I have always been prepared to facilitate others' access to our data. Immediately after acquiring the data we sent a complete magnetic tape set to Ira Reiss of the University of Minnesota, who has since published results (1).

I did not leave the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research (ISR) when termination of National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) funds in April 1973 ended my salary. I continued project work for 6 years every day and weekends in the ISR office, with only minimal time off to prepare lectures for part-time teaching to support my family, until they closed the office in late 1979.

The facts belie the description in Booth's article of 2 years of unproductivity (from the completion of the survey in 1971 to the end of funding in April 1973).

In the fall of 1970, in midsurvey, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) discovered and reported to me that interviews were averaging almost 2