Letters

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 Databases 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.

DIETER SOLL*
Department of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry, Yale University, 260 Whitney Avenue, Box 6666, New Haven, CT 06511
RUTH L. KIRSCHSTEIN
National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health, Westwood Building, Room 926, 5333 Westbard Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20892
LENNART PHILIPSON
European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Postfach 10.2209, Meyerhofstrasse 1, 6900 Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany
HISAO UCHIDA
DNA Databank of Japan Steering Committee and *Committee on Molecular Biology, Science Council of Japan, Teikyo University, Kaga 2-11-1, Itabashi-ku, Tokyo 173, Japan*

*Moderator, International Advisory Committee for DNA Sequence Databases.

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.

JONATHAN H. CILLEY, SR.
209 Abbeyview Avenue, Willow Grove, PA 19090

"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

hours in length instead of the 1½ hours provided by the contract. The NIMH invited me to submit a supplemental funds proposal, since I judged that about $45,000 of the resulting cost overrun had been incurred in good faith and was justified in the interests of the study and the investment already made. Officials at Indiana University in charge of the contract with NORC feared issues of liability and consequently did not approve my proposal. This caused a year's delay in data acquisition from NORC.

Our priorities of subsequent years were to have several major analyses progressing in the preparation of a 15-chapter monograph. Much effort was required to develop indices and scales so that a wide range of latent variable structures could be examined. This was imperative before analyses could begin, since the survey produced an unprecedented wealth of raw data (about 600 items per person).

We presented a broad overview of the data in June 1973 at the annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association (*2*). As the book progressed, preliminary findings were also presented on public attitudes toward and perceptions of homosexuals (*3*), on sex education experience in the United States (*4*), and on sexual suppression of women (*1–5*). The project graduate research assistant produced a doctoral dissertation (*6*).

Given this progress, Colin J. Williams stated in an early 1975 memo that so much work was done and in progress that I should not be replaced as project director and senior author; he volunteered to help, as third author. Williams did not simply write the book then. I explained our methods, interpreted results, outlined and sometimes dictated a chapter to him, or provided a draft so he could write while I continued other analyses. Later, he originated chapters himself. (As he says, in some ways we worked well together.)

There are many reasons why the "long, lost survey" is not yet published. I did not give up the fight early or easily, and with each new chance I continued to fight. Until Charles Turner of the National Academy of Sciences urged further effort to publish, I had found no further avenues to pursue; I greatly appreciate his assistance and the open-minded facilitation of ISR director June M. Reinisch in the resurrection of publication possibilities. I may not believe in miracles, but some of my friends think I do.

ALBERT D. KLASSEN
Department of Sociology, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND 58202

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2. E. E. Levitt and A. D. Klassen, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, New York, June 1973).
3. E. E. Levitt and A. D. Klassen, *J. Homosexual.* 1, 29 (1974), reprinted in *Gay Men: The Sociology of Male Homosexuality* [M. P. Levine, Ed. (Harper & Row, New York, 1979), pp. 21–35]; A. D. Klassen and E. E. Levitt, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Mexico City, Mexico, November 1974.
4. A. D. Klassen, paper presented at the Public Forum on Sex Education, Sex Information, and Education Council of Indiana, Indianapolis, October 1976.
5. A. D. Klassen, address delivered at the annual meeting of the Mental Health Association of Indiana, Indianapolis, April 1978. (Expanded version presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society, Des Moines, IA, April 1982.)
6. R. E. Dargitz, thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington (1976).

Erratum: In line 7 of the second paragraph of William W. Darrow's letter "Behavioral research and AIDS prevention" (25 Mar., p. 1477), reference 2 was misnumbered as (*1*).

Erratum: In the third paragraph of the Research News article "Probing the authenticity of antiquities with high-tech attacks on a microscale" by Deborah M. Barnes (18 Mar., p. 1374), Sir Humphrey Davy's name was misspelled.

Erratum: At the end of his Research News article "New superconductors answer some questions" (8 Apr., p. 146), Robert Pool's name was misspelled.