

The Microbial Taxonomist

A Newsletter Published by Bergey's Manual Trust

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Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome to the first newsletter of Bergey's Manual Trust. The Trust is initiating this as a means of enhancing communication among microbial taxonomists. We hope you enjoy receiving this newsletter and welcome any comments.

Relocation of Bergey's Manual Trust Editorial Office

The Bergey's Manual Trust (BMT) will begin the new year at a new location. Recently BMT appointed William Whitman as Director of the editorial office. Dr. Whitman is a Professor at the University of Georgia where the Trust's editorial office is now located.

George Garrity, Professor of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics at Michigan State University, completed a ten-year term as the Editor-in-Chief of BMT in June 2006. Dr. Garrity will continue pursuing his teaching and scholarly activities at MSU as well as his interests in semantic technology in publishing as a principal of Names for Life, LLC, a company that he co-founded in 2005. The Board wishes to thank Professor Garrity for the many years he has dedicated to serving the international community of bacterial taxonomists, as well as the Trust. The Board also thanks Connie Williams, who retired this year, after many years of dedicated service to the Trust and Michigan State

University for hosting the Trust and their generous financial support.

In addition to editing Volumes 1 and 2 of BMSB, much of the editing for Volume 3 was completed under Dr. Garrity's direction so Volume 3 should be published in 2007.

William Whitman, Director of Editorial Office

William "Barny" Whitman was recently appointed Director of the new editorial office of Bergey's Manual Trust. Barny was a recipient of the Bergey Award in 2000. He was elected to the Board of Trustees of BMT in 2005.

Barny's area of research expertise is methanogenic archaea. He is involved in their physiology, metabolism and taxonomy. The late David Boone, a former Trustee and Barny played critical roles in developing the current hierarchical taxonomy of the Archaea as illustrated by their contributions to Volume 3 of the 1st edition and Volume 1 of the 2nd edition of *Bergey's Manual of Systematic Bacteriology*.

Barny Whitman received his PhD in the Department of Microbiology at the University of Texas, Austin in 1978. He was a post doctorate at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana before coming to the University of Georgia in 1982. He was appointed to full professorship in 1993 and is now Head of the Department of Microbiology.

The Chair's Forum

In Consideration of a Professional Society for the Taxonomy of Prokaryotes

Jim Staley

Welcome to our new newsletter and our new website: www.bergeys.org. This past year has been a year of transition for the Trust. A new goal of the Trust is to consider changes we can make to better serve the scientific and social interests of microbial taxonomists. This newsletter is the first step we are taking in this regard as it will allow us to better communicate with you and other microbial taxonomists. Bergey's Manual Trust is also exploring the possibility of establishing an international society for the taxonomy of Bacteria and Archaea. The purpose of the society would be to promote the study of prokaryotic taxonomy and diversity.

The proposed society could sponsor sessions at meetings or perhaps have its own meeting. Meetings of the society could be held regularly, for example, in conjunction with the International Union of Microbiology Societies, or more frequently if desired. Perhaps a new journal could be established, not to compete with the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology, IJSEM, but to complement it as a means of providing another vehicle for publication by microbial taxonomists. Another possibility would be to form, as part of this new society, an honorary group, which would recognize those microbiologists who have made important contributions to the field. Many deserving microbial taxonomists have not been fully recognized for their work. Furthermore, receiving recognition from the society may be helpful in career development such as during consideration for promotion, advancement to tenure or in other respects.

If there is sufficient interest, we will make arrangements to discuss the organization of a new society at the forthcoming IUMS meeting in Istanbul in 2008. Bergey's in association with Springer plans to organize a reception for current authors of *Bergey's Manual of Systematic Bacteriology* and *The Prokaryotes*. At that meeting we could discuss this matter in greater detail with prospective members. Please let us know whether you believe this to be a worthwhile pursuit. If you agree it is worthwhile, what types of activities would you like to see promoted? Please send an e-mail to me indicating whether or not you would be interested in becoming a charter member of such an organization:
jtstaley@u.washington.edu

Update on BMT Publications

William Whitman, Director of Editorial Office

Building upon the solid foundation from MSU and the hard work of the editors, Fred Rainey, Karl Schliefer, Dorothy Jones, Paul DeVos and George Garrity, good progress is being made in the preparation of Volume 3 on the Firmicutes. Currently, all but 30 of the 272 planned chapters have been received, and most have been copyedited. We are aspiring toward publication in 2007.

Similarly, good progress has been made for the remaining volumes. Currently, Jim Staley and Noel Krieg, have received greater than 80 of the 252 chapters planned for Volume 4, to include *The Spirochaetae*, *Planctomycetes*, *Bacteroidetes*, and other taxa. We are eagerly awaiting the remaining chapters. We hope that the editorial office can transition smoothly into the preparation of Volume 4 upon the completion of Volume 3, maybe even this spring.

Michael Goodfellow and Peter Kämpfer are hard at work in preparation of Volume 5, which will include the the High Mol % Gram Positives. Currently, 210 chapters are planned. Most of the authors have been solicited, and some of the manuscripts have already been received. I am really looking forward to getting this done for a couple of reasons. First, this is a wonderful group of organisms that hasn't been thoroughly reviewed for 20 years, and there is a great need for the encyclopedic treatment of Bergeys. Second, many new Archaea have been discovered since

the beginning of the second edition, and it's almost time to start the third edition!

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Aidan Parte is Managing Editor of Bergey's Manual Trust

In February, 2007, Aidan Parte will assume the title of Managing Editor of Bergey's Manual Trust. Aidan has had considerable experience in scientific publications. Many of you may recall that he served as the Managing Editor of IJSEM for several years.

The Microbial Taxonomist is a copyrighted publication of Bergey's Manual Trust. Current members of the Board of Trustees of Bergey's Manual Trust are:

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Special Topics in Microbial Taxonomy

Royal Society Meeting on Microbial Species and Speciation

On March 13- 14, 2006, the Royal Society of Great Britain sponsored a meeting to consider the microbial species concept and the process of speciation. The meeting was organized by Brian Spratt, James Staley and Matthew Fisher.

Fourteen speakers were invited to present papers in the area of their specialty. The speakers consisted of taxonomists, population biologists and microbial ecologists. Over 200 were in attendance.

The general consensus of the meeting was that the taxonomy of bacteria and archaea is likely to be impacted by recent experimental approaches directed toward understanding microbial speciation. In particular, the use of genomics and multiple locus sequence analyses (MLSA) are revealing fascinating and significant information about the evolution of microbial species. Whereas 16S rRNA sequences have been extremely important for taxonomy at the level of the genus, this sequence is too highly conserved to reveal information on the process of speciation and the concept of a microbial species. Nonetheless, its utility at and above the level of the genus has been very important for current phylogenetic classification. A major unresolved issue is that of

horizontal gene transfer.

Thus, MLSA and genomics approaches are providing information that will likely lead to a better understanding not only about how microorganisms speciate but how they can be better classified taxonomically.

The contributions of the speakers were published in a special, November 2006 issue of *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* entitled "Species and Speciation of Microorganisms." For those who are subscribers the web address is:

www.pubs.royalsoc.ac.uk/microgenesis

Peter Kämpfer is New Trustee

Peter Kämpfer was elected as a new member of the Board of Trustees of Bergey's Manual Trust at the last Trust meeting in Ghent, Belgium. Peter is Professor in the Department of Applied Microbiologie at Giessen, Germany. He has been involved in microbial taxonomy for many years. Peter received the Bergey Award in 2002. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology*.

Peter's main area of expertise is in the taxonomy of gram-positive bacteria, but he is also involved in the study of other bacterial groups.

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