American Society for Microbiology Microbe 2018 conference held in Atlanta

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The Microbe conference, biggest annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology, was held from June 7th to June 11th at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. During 5 days, scientists from all around the world gathered and presented the latest advances in microbiology sciences.

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM)

Founded in 1889 in New Haven, CT, originally named “Society of American Bacteriologists”, it is only in 1960 that the actual title of American Society for Microbiology was adopted. The American Society for Microbiology is the world’s largest life science organization, composed of over 50,000 scientists and health professionals all around the globe [1]. In 1989, the ASM celebrated its century-old and will turn 130 years old in 2019.

The ASM’s mission is to promote and advance microbial sciences across the world. In order to pursue this goal, the Society is divided in several thematic departments [2]:
- ASM PRESS: publication of internationally renowned authors with expertise in a broad range of microbiology disciplines;
- ASM JOURNALS: publication of the last scientific knowledge and dissemination of the results of fundamental and applied research through various thematic journals.
- ASM PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COMMITTEE: providing professional development opportunities and content to members to increase their skill, enhance their job performance and contribute to the profession by developing evidence-based and consensus-based professional guidelines.
- ASM EDUCATION: supporting students and professors at all levels in the microbiological sciences through fellowships, online publications, conferences, workshops etc. for learning and teaching purposes.
- ASM INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS: supporting international development and overseeing microbiology expertise around the globe. ASM supports developing countries in the creation of scientific infrastructures such as laboratories and research centers.

The ASM organizes several meetings a year, for instance, 8 thematic conferences are being held each year across the United States [3], the Microbe conference being the largest one, which took place in Atlanta this year.

The Microbe 2018 conference

The conference was opened by Anne Schuchat, keynote speaker, and Principal Deputy Director at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), who served as Acting Director of CDC in 2017 before Brenda
Fitzgerald appointment and in 2018 before Robert R. Redfield, current CDC’s Director, appointment. [4]. In her speech, Anne Schuchat highlighted the need of global solutions to address public health issues [5], especially outbreaks such as the 2014 Ebola crisis, which has recently made a comeback in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) [6] [7].

The Microbe conference being the broadest ASM event every year, the different workshops, talks and poster presentations were associated with 8 different themes:
- Antimicrobial Agents and Resistance (AAR)
- Applied and Environmental Sciences (AES)
- Clinical and Public Health Microbiology (CPHM)
- Host-Microbe Biology (HMB)
- Molecular Biology and Physiology (MBP)
- Microbial Ecology and Evolution (MEE)
- Profession of Microbiology (POM)

The different themes were gathered under pavilions within the Georgia World Congress Center, each one composed of posters, well represented by universities from the South-East, especially Atlanta based (Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, and Emory University); presentations and stands dedicated to private companies, such as the French company Biomérieux.

Pascale Cossart, French microbiologist, professor of exceptional class at the Institut Pasteur and Secrétaire Perpétuelle of the French Academy of Science since 2016, made a noticed presence among the conference attendees. Professor Cossart attended the conference to present her book “The New Microbiology: From Microbiomes to CRISPR” freshly translated in English. The Consul General of France in Atlanta, Mr. Louis de Corail and the Office for Science and Technology representatives in Atlanta had the honor to welcome Pascale Cossart at the Consul’s residency for a reception with the local science community. [8]

The Microbe conference next edition will be held in San Francisco from the 20th to the 24th of June 2019, and will be back in Atlanta in 2024, from the 13th to the 17th of June [9]. The next upcoming ASM conference, intitulée “ASM Conference for Undergraduate Educators (ASMCUE)” will take place in Austin from the 26th to the 29th of July.
[6] https://twitter.com/ASMicrobiology/status/1005561135691689985