

Appendix 5.

GARNet Town Hall Meeting (Summary notes)

27th Jan 2006, Linnaean Society London

General Questions/Comments on Interim Report – Presented and Chaired by Andrew Millar

How complete does the model have to be?

Will it feed in to an international effort, if so who is doing what where?

Answer:- Single Institutions in the EU such as Ghent and Golm and in the US several FIBR grants such as Elliot Meyerowitz, computable plant.

The community should decide upon a single goal e.g. whole plant by 2017 and use what ever technology is available to us, to meet the goal across the whole of the community rather than let the technology determine what we do.

The leaf as a model was considered to be good proposal by a proportion of the audience including David Fell ISB Panel Member, who suggested that a single goal specific to plant would make it stand out and compete well against projects from other communities.

However a number of the audience were equally apposed the idea of a leaf and suggested other area such as homeostasis or fields linked by a generic technology.

There was general consensus among the audience that training was an essential part of any proposal.

David Fell reminded the audience that BBSRC can not allocate funds for PhD training but the EPSRC are able to supply funding in this area.

Engineers and Mathematicians present suggested that a 4yr PhD would not be attractive to them as this is rather a long time compared to the average PhD.

MSc courses were accepted as a useful way to assess students abilities in this area; exposing students to both theoretical and life sciences and providing experience of the problems they will face in the future. This type of approach is often not possible in a 3yr PhD that is focused on practical outputs rather than theoretical training.

More access for all lab members to attend taught University undergraduate courses.

Possible involvement in Marie Curie or other European programmes

Training will be an essential part of any centre that is created by Phase two of the CISB funding and any future plans will need to take this into account.

As with all training each person learns in a different way so no one course will be useful for all. Instead we should support a range of training programmes from taught courses to practical workshop and hotel facilities in relevant centres/institutions

Maths study groups with Medics at Nottingham have been very productive with 11 out of the 13 projects gaining further funding. This may be a good way to pump prime a project.

Many of the current Arabidopsis systems biology projects are at a very early stage and need pump priming before they can go any further. All this often requires is money for a theoretician to sit down with the biologist and discuss the pros and cons of a project. Often people are interested but don't have the time to spare. This type of approach can be covered by the BBSRC discipline hopping scheme

Suggestion for a service centre where people could send there data for theoretical treatment akin to NASC arrays for your micro array data

GARNet provided easy access to genomics technology in the past suggestions for a similar level of generic support for systems biology so that it can be taken up by the community as whole.

Mechanisms to achieve this could included

A retreat

Summer School for students

Centre to which labs can send personnel for training

Research Areas - Presented and Chaired by Simon Turner

Is it really feasible to find one single goal that we can all sign up to and would benefit from? Unlikely instead a set of guidelines to choose a project would be useful.

David Fell stressed that what ever project or idea we put forward it must address an important scientific question, have some outline of what it will achieve and an understanding of the appropriate level of modelling.

It is possible for people to group together now and obtain systems level funding from current BBSRC responsive mode funding. So instead of personal goals we should be thinking of something that can offer outputs to both plants and other communities

The 30M in phase three is not going to fund a large project therefore we should not try to be inclusive as that is not feasible at this stage instead the project should have flexibility for further projects and spin outs for the future.

David Fell agreed that these proposals should be enabling and used as a foundation for other projects to build on in the future from responsive mode funding. Possible suggestions could include a coordinated approach to collect a data set e.g. micro array data under specific conditions that we could all use and benefit from.

Tools and Resources – Presented and Chaired by Keith Lindsey

Missing basic information and physiological data about plant functions is essential for a systems approach we should therefore work towards filling these gaps before we move onto obtaining new data.

Tools or technologies that are specific to plant biology should be provided by this type of community proposal. Examples might include looking at specific compartment or tissue or perhaps movement of transcription factors between cells.

David Fell suggested that we find tools distinct for system biology and should consider data access and curation e.g. a common data repository.

Localization of proteins/macromolecules activities in 3D