

The Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean (AMLC): New Thoughts, New Directions

Firstly, may I say that it is an honor and a privilege to be able to serve the Association of Marine Laboratories of the Caribbean (AMLC) as its Executive Director – to lead and help manage this excellent scientific organization. We are fortunate to have some of the finest marine laboratories in the world as members. The Association carries with it a rich history spanning over 50 yrs. Indeed, we started with a handful of marine labs from the Caribbean in the 1950s, with the intention of facilitating information exchange between institutions, to help them run more effectively and efficiently, and possibly embark on collaborative research programs. We have developed over the years and grown greatly, to the point where we now boast of some 30 marine institutions. These institutions are from 20 countries, encompassing the Antilles and the Americas and beyond - spanning from Bermuda to Venezuela. This is quite an accomplishment, and my compliments to all of those who contributed to this successful expansion in representation. We can be proud that we are a group of scientists and administrators who respect each other's science, each other's countries, and each other's cultures. We are multi-national, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual, and this is clearly evident at each of our meetings which offer translator services for each talk. In addition, all of our conferences use a single-session format, and this allows all of us – from all walks of science and all corners of the Greater Caribbean – to hear about each other's work. I am very proud of this approach to scientific information transfer.

Our meetings continue to foster graduate student research through awards for excellence in presentation. We are also a “user-friendly” environment for students. We recently adopted an exercise at our meetings to help expose students to the different career opportunities that may be available to them through a dedicated Graduate Student Night. On that evening, all attendees introduce themselves and their institutions. Senior researchers discuss the course of their personal career development. After this, the floor is opened for discussion and questions from the graduate students regarding coursework, career opportunities, career directions, etc. We will now be repeating this exercise at each conference.

Also, at this meeting, we sponsored an evening of discussion of potential new AMLC initiatives. In Dominica, we discussed the possibility of the Association becoming involved in other movements in the Caribbean addressing international oceanic governance. This concept is now being developed through the newly created Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC), in association with the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). It would seem fitting that we as an international scientific body investigate the links between our organization to serve as a source of unbiased and objective scientific information which may be used for regulating activities which affect the environment of our region - the Greater Caribbean. Discussions and debate continue as the concept develops.

We are proud to once again this year publish our Proceedings in *Revista de Biología Tropical*, a publication of the University of Costa Rica. J. Cortes, N. Quinn, and I co-edited this volume, and personally, I am most thankful for for Jorge's and Norm's assistance. The papers cover a variety

of marine science research projects pursued throughout the Caribbean. This year's Proceedings are special, however, in that they feature the reports of the various AMLC laboratories that participated in the Caribbean Coastal Marine Productivity Program (CARICOMP). This was a research program designed to monitor environmental variables throughout the Greater Caribbean. Two things made this program special. Firstly, all environmental variables were monitored in a standard fashion. Secondly, sampling was performed at the same time – over a period of 25 yrs. This has created an extraordinary environmental database for the Caribbean. You will find several of the reports from this research program in this issue.

There are many other papers of great interest here as well. We are fortunate to have so much talent represented from so many different member countries throughout the region. I'm sure you will enjoy reading this issue.

Next year, our conference is scheduled to be held at the University of Costa Rica in San Jose. We anticipate it to be an even greater success than this last one. And, of course, we invite all interested parties to attend and make a presentation (see www.amlc-carib.org).

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