

MASC meeting 2014

Location: Gage Residence, Ruth Blair Room C, UBC, Vancouver, Canada

Wednesday, 30th July 2014, 2:10 pm – 3:40 pm

Minutes written by: Luise Brand, Ruth Bastow and Nicholas Provart

Attendees (28): Sarah Assmann, Ruth Bastow, Dominique Bergmann, Jim Beynon, Siobhan Brady, Luise Brand, Marcos Castellanos-Uribe, Karen Cone, Charis Cook, Joanna Friesner, Erich Grotewold, Klaus Harter, Inhwan Hwang, Dan Kliebenstein, Masatomo Kobayashi, Minami Matsui, Blake Meyers, Jason Miller, Catherine Perrot-Rechenmann, Nicholas Provart, Motoaki Seki, Chris Town, Doris Wagner, Viktor Zarsky, Ross Sozzni, Matt Vaughn, Wolf Frommer, Keiko Torii

Summary of new action items for 2014/2015

- A) A 2 days Arabidopsis Information Portal developers' workshop is planned for November 5th and 6th, 2014 at University of Austin - TACC, Texas, USA (AIP: Matt Vaughn, Chris Town)
- B) IAIC and AIP will update the community via their web sites on future events
- C) ORFeomics SC should assess the needs/usefulness to complete ORF library (by a company or other options) together with the Systems Biology SC and, if there is the need within the Arabidopsis community, find researchers to write an international collaborative grant to the NSF, BBSRC, DFG, Japanese funding agencies, etc. to get funding to complete ORFs e.g. based on RNA-seq data. The ORFeomics SC will work together on this with the Systems Biology SC, ABRC and BRC (Motoaki Seki, Joe Ecker, Siobhan Brady, Josh Heazelwood, Erich Grotewold and Masatomo Kobayashi will follow up)
- D) Ongoing discussions between Phenomics and Natural Variation SCs to phenotype the 1001 Arabidopsis accessions began in 2014 → Fabio Fiorani will follow up
- E) No possibility for funding of MASC coordinator in sight. NSF suggested to assess options for joint funding of MASC coordinator by NSF, BBSRC and DFG → The "Future of MASC" working group will follow up
- F) A MASC Community Workshop should be proposed again for the next ICAR, organized by MASC chair (Nicholas Provart). The MASC coordinator could give again the a 5 min talk, while the rest of the session would be research focused talks, including a talk from the MASC chair
Alternative: 5 min MASC overview before one of the plenary sessions (Luise and Nick will follow up)
- G) All MASC members should be contacted again for contact information of funding agencies, so that Luise can send the 2014 MASC Report to them (Luise follow up and distribute the report where appropriate)

- H) Continue with transfer of information from the MASC pages at TAIR to new host, additionally include on homepage information of funding agency contacts relevant for the SCs and Countries. (see also GARNet for examples of this) (Luise will follow up)
- I) Set up working group on the "Future of MASC", and generate a white paper
- J) Send a survey link to the Arabidopsis community on The Arabidopsis Book from Keiko Torii (ed.), and continue discussions with MASC and the AIP on hosting this book, as ASPB is no longer interested in supporting it. (Luise will follow up)
- K) Conduct a community-wide survey on whether the annual MASC Reports are useful and on their format and content. Is there anything else MASC can provide to the community? (Luise will follow up)
- L) Check with Subcommittee chairs if a newsletter is feasible (Luise will follow up).
- M) New Epigenomics SC is formed. Send information about MASC Subcommittees to the Epigenomics SC chair or chair plus co-chair or two co-chairs (will have to be elected or nominated by EPIC – the Epigenomes of Plants International Consortium) regarding possible contributions to the annual MASC Report 2014/2015 (Luise will contact Doris/EPIC)
- N) Joanna Friesner will conduct post ICAR survey

1) Update on action items in 2013/2014:

MASC Subcommittees

- IAIC planned a 1-2 day workshop directly prior to the 25th ICAR2014, Vancouver
Topic: AIP (Arabidopsis Information Portal) structure and modules – presentation of AIP modules, requirements for implementation of AIP modules, support for applications regarding funding of AIP module development
→ a 2.5 hr AIP developer and user workshop was held at 25th ICAR, 28th July 2014
A) **A 2 day AIP developers' workshop is planned for November 5th-6th 2014 at University of Austin, TACC, Texas, USA (AIP: Matt Vaughn, Chris Town)**
- IAIC organized AIP session at 25th ICAR2014, Vancouver
→ 1.5h community workshop on IAIC was held by Blake Meyers at 25th ICAR, 31st July 2014
B) **IAIC and AIP will update the community via their web sites on future events**
- Proposal for funding to complement ORF clone set by synthetic synthesis to be written by the 25th ICAR 2014, Vancouver

→ No further discussions and progress over the last year. Funding by NSF is possible but won't cover all costs; in Japan there is no funding for Arabidopsis research at the moment

C) ORFeomics SC should assess the needs/usefulness to complete ORF library (by a company or other options) together with the Systems Biology SC and, if there is the need within the Arabidopsis community, find researchers to write an international collaborative grant to the NSF, BBSRC, DFG, Japanese funding agencies, etc. to get funding to complete ORFs e.g. based on RNA-seq data. The ORFeomics SC will work together on this with the Systems Biology SC, ABRC and BRC (Motoaki Seki, Joe Ecker, Siobhan Brady, Josh Heazelwood, Erich Grotewold and Masatomo Kobayashi will follow up)

- Natural Variation and Phenomics Subcommittee should work together to organize the phenotyping of the 1001 genome lines (Fabio Fiorani, Robert Furbank will work on this together with Brian Dilkes and Chris Pires)
 - There was a workshop on Phenomics – from Phenotypes to Genes addressing the current bottlenecks in phenotyping of Arabidopsis

D) Ongoing discussions between Phenomics and Natural Variation SCs to phenotype the 1001 Arabidopsis accessions began in 2014 → Fabio Fiorani will follow up

MASC coordinator

- Find new country to get involved in funding of the MASC coordinator by the 25th ICAR 2014, Vancouver, or the latest by the 26th ICAR 2015, Paris in order to ensure continuous funding

→ Not possible to get funding from Asia

E) No possibility for funding of MASC coordinator in sight. NSF suggested to apply for joint funding by NSF, BBSRC and DFG (no details known) → The "Future of MASC" working group will follow up

- It was proposed that a MASC workshop could be held as the first session of 25th ICAR2014, Vancouver to represent the road map (Barry Pogson and Nicholas Provart to organize, Luise to follow up)
 - Not part of the opening session. Instead, there was a MASC workshop on abiotic stress, with a 5 minutes introductory talk by Luise. Although there were not many participants, researchers from Poland and Saudi Arabia expressed interest in becoming MASC members

**F) A MASC community workshop should be proposed again for next ICAR, organized by MASC chair (Nicholas Provart). The MASC coordinator could again give a 5 min talk, while the rest of the session would be research focused talks, including a talk from the MASC chair
Alternative: 5 min MASC intro before one of the plenary sessions (Luise and Nick will follow up)**

- Broadcast MASC Reports online and via e-mail (Luise Brand will follow up and update the Committee at next MASC meeting)

G) **All MASC members should be contacted again for contact information of funding agencies, so that Luise can send the 2014 MASC Report to them (Luise follow up and distribute the report where appropriate)**

Note: funding agencies were only included in country reports forms not in Subcommittee or Resources/Projects forms – space for these will be added to the forms for next year.

- Set up new MASC pages that can be transferred to AIP next year (Luise Brand will set up new pages by the 25th ICAR2014, Vancouver, in contact with IAIC/AIP)

→ New MASC pages are set up end of 2013 at www.arabidopsisresearch.org. These are so far quite simple. Transfer of the old MASC pages is in progress.

Discussions on what else MASC could deliver to the community via its homepage like funding options, research and education news, additionally hosting of ICAR pages including abstract submission system should be envisaged. Especially, news on international funding options for specific subcommittees would be beneficial, as sometimes specific funding calls might be overlooked.

H) Continue with transfer of information from the MASC pages at TAIR to new host, additionally include on homepage information of funding agency contacts relevant for the SCs and Countries. (see also GARNet for examples of this) (Luise will follow up)

ICAR

- Open call for site selection of the 27th ICAR 2016, Australasia (Barry Pogson will follow up, with support of Luise Brand: post on news group, e-mail)

→ call closed ICAR2016 will be in South Korea, Gyeongju (see ICAR section for more details)

2) The Future of MASC

- There's no real link between ICAR and MASC, and lack of awareness of MASC amongst the Arabidopsis research internationally. ICAR organizers at 24th ICAR in Sydney, 2013 kept \$AUD 12,000 for MASC
- Currently, there is duplication of efforts for the organization of the ICAR: a new website and a new abstract submission system has to be set up every year; organizers have to find solutions how to pay the deposit for conference venues etc. because no funds are transferred to the next ICAR organizers
- Proposal by Barry Pogson and Ruth Bastow: see discussion paper below.
- Summary of comments during MASC meeting:
 - SEB seems to be best suitable for MASC

- NAASC could apply for RCN grant to NSF to support ICAR meeting organization; in case of positive review results this would secure ICAR meeting support by NSF for 5 years (could cover salary for US resident, travel, workshops, websites). But no solution for MASC coordinator funding.
- It could be discussed with NSF, BBSRC and DFG if there is an option for funding of MASC coordinator by combined support, but it is important to think about purpose of this consolidation effort
- NAASC can and should exist on its own
- MASC has to give a value to the community otherwise no one will become a member, if the member will only profit from discount on registration fees or application for travel grant – important to think about disseminating international funding options, education, ...
- It is possible that not many will sign up for MASC society membership if there is no obvious benefit
- Arabidopsis researchers should not be defensive about their work like first two talks during ICAR 2014 were, but rather focus on the positive sites and future of Arabidopsis: cutting-edge research and technology development as well as translational biology
- When MASC was initiated the idea was that the leading scientist of their field would work together and build a committee. The funding landscape has changed, so this model might not be applicable anymore. MASC could look at other communities such as GARNet or the Banana Network for ways to provide added value to the community
- To further evaluate a sustainable future for MASC a working group should be formed with researchers from Europe, North America and Australasia:
Former and current MASC coordinators: Joanna Friesner, Luise Brand
Past ICAR organizer and supervisor of MASC coordinator: Ruth Bastow
Senior researchers: Barry Pogson, Nicholas Provar, Klaus Harter
Young researchers: Siobhan Brady, e.g. Keiko Sagimoto plus someone from Europe
- I) Set up working group on the “Future of MASC”, and generate a white paper**
- Arabidopsis book (Keiko Torii) - updated web page and twitter, free to read and publish, sponsored by ASPB, 100,000 visitors per year. Is Arabidopsis book useful for education and research?
Future of Arabidopsis Book? It would be nice to be hosted by MASC! AIP and Arabidopsis book could be linked. Would that mean MASC is again the community behind the scenes?
- J) Send a survey link to the Arabidopsis community on The Arabidopsis Book from Keiko Torii (ed.), and continue discussions with MASC and the AIP on hosting this book, as ASPB is no longer interested in supporting it. (Luise will follow up)**

3) MASC coordinator

- Forms for the MASC report are good and easy to use, fields to type in information should be larger

- Format of the MASC report – who is the audience/who reads it? Was used in the past for grant applications, so it is useful. It brings the community together and shows the international network that exists, especially to funding agencies but also Arabidopsis researchers. MASC report will be published and printed in 2015.

Format of the MASC report is up for discussion:

K) Conduct a community-wide survey on whether the annual MASC Reports are useful and on their format and content. Is there anything else MASC can provide to the community? (Luise will follow up)

- *Not discussed:* MASC report news – Projects and Resource Section was broadened to gain outreach to other Arabidopsis focused international projects (see MASC report for details)
- *Not discussed:* Abstract submission system for ICAR – TAIR system? – Depends on future of MASC
- *Not discussed:* MASC meeting minutes – who gets this information? – Depends on future of MASC, currently everyone who contributes to MASC report or is present at MASC meeting gets minutes. Minutes will not be available online
- *Not discussed:* How to efficiently discuss/inform between MASC meetings? - MASC newsgroup or mailing list, should be part of MASC future discussions
- What else can MASC do for the community? - e.g. 4 times a year a newsletter like ASPB including funding information

L) Check with Subcommittee chairs if a newsletter is feasible (Luise will follow up)

4) MASC Subcommittees

- Updates on Bioinformatics (Nicholas Provar, Chris Town, Matt Vaughn) – AIP funded by NSF, alpha version of araport.org online, information from TAIR and other resources was implemented, science apps have a lot of potential, IAIC workshops tomorrow will give people information how to contribute modules, AIP workshop 1st week of November 2014 (look for new ideas, data display options, fitting etc.), AIP can communicate remotely, a lot of tutorials and functionality exists
- Updates on ORFeomics (Motoaki Seki, Joe Ecker) –Japan has stored clones now at two sites, one as back up, new clones were added to the ORF set (see MASC report).
- Updates on Systems Biology were skipped for time reasons. Please see MASC report.
- New Subcommittee proposed: Epigenomics (represented by Doris Wagner, EPIC),

M) New Epigenomics SC is formed. Send information about MASC Subcommittees to the Epigenomics SC chair or chair plus co-chair or two co-chairs (will have to be elected or nominated by EPIC – the Epigenomes of Plants International Consortium) regarding possible contributions to the annual MASC Report 2014/2015 (Luise will contact Doris/EPIC)

5) ICAR

- 26th ICAR in Paris from 5th-9th July 2015, web site is online as of 24th ICAR, Vancouver, 2014: www.arabidopsisconference2015.org, it's recommended to book rooms and flights early as it will be in the city center of Paris at the Palais de Congrès, speakers are already invited
- 27th ICAR in Gyeongju, South Korea from June 29th – July 3rd 2016, historic city about two hours by direct train connection from Seoul, an Asian airport is 1 hour away, cheap housing available.
- Future of ICAR: as number is not dramatically lower than in Sydney, so no changes required. But suggestion would be to rename the ICAR to International Conference on Advanced Plant Research in case numbers drop e.g. in favor of general or research topic specific conferences (up for discussion!)

N) Joanna Friesner will conduct post ICAR survey

- It might be possible for NAASC to apply for a Research Coordination Networks (RCN) grant to the US National Science Foundation. This might help to provide funds to NAASC to send US Researchers and minorities to attend future ICARs for the next 5 years and would mean that no annual grants have to be written by NAASC for ICAR.
- NAASC was asked to have the ICAR not back to back with ASPB meeting
- In future MASC should keep in mind to look for reasonable places to host the ICAR and not in the main seasons in expensive cities, so that there is cheap accommodation available for the mainly young researchers
- Suggestions for 28th ICAR, 2017 in North America would be Madison (up to NAASC to decide)
- Suggestion for 29th ICAR, 2018 in Europe, could be Prague (contact Victor Zarsky)
- Suggestion for 30th ICAR, 2019 in China, could be Wuhan (contact Wei-cai Yang)

6) MASC appointments

- New MASC chair 2014/15 is Nicholas Provar, Canada
- New elected MASC co-chair is Loic Lepinec, France

7) Open Floor

- Community should be able to comment on genome annotation in TAIR – will be possible in AIP, Viktor Zarsky and Chris Town will continue to discussions this feature

Additional Information on 2) The Future of MASC on the following pages.

How to ensure a sustainable future for MASC

Discussion paper prepared by Barry Pogson and Ruth Bastow

In many countries funding has been diverted away from Arabidopsis research, with a greater move towards crop research and translational efforts. Given these pressures on the Arabidopsis community it is important now, more than ever, to work together to communicate how valuable the model plant Arabidopsis is to the future of plant science and biology. MASC and ICAR have central roles to play in helping us achieve this, but it will require a stable funding stream and a coherent organizational structure for the years ahead.

We propose to establish a small committee, representative of the three regions of the ICAR meeting, to develop:

- i) A financial model for the sustainable future of MASC;
- ii) A structure to minimise duplication of efforts in organising future ICARs

This committee will undertake a consultation with all stakeholders to gather views and relevant information, and develop a set of recommendations for the MASC committee to consider.

Background

For the last 12 years MASC has been supported by a series of grants from national funding agencies (see below), which have provided funds for the MASC Coordinator and the production and distribution of the MASC report.

- 2002: Full time Coordinator funded for 2 years by NSF
- 2004: Full time Coordinator funded for 1 year by DFG
- 2005: Full time Coordinator funded for 2 years by NSF
- 2007: Full time Coordinator funded for 2 years by NSF
- 2009: Part time Coordinator funded for 3 years by BBSRC
- 2012: Part time Coordinator funded for 3 years by DFG

Current Situation

ICAR Meeting

It was agreed at the MASC meeting in 2007 that the annual ICAR meeting would rotate between three geographical areas (Americas, Europe and Asia). The location for each meeting is determined and agreed via MASC but the organization of each meeting is completely autonomous and reliant upon the activities of the host country. An exception to this is when the meeting is held in North America, in which case it is organized by NAASC. There is no financial link between each meeting, i.e. the profits from one meeting do not get transferred to the next one. There is also limited organizational crossover between

meetings; current and previous coordinators always pass on their knowledge and assist local organizers where possible, but there is no formal shared organizational structure, website, registration system, or a database of previous attendees.

MASC Coordinator

The Coordinator is a key figure in MASC: they are the only person paid to drive MASC forwards and act as the glue to help keep everything together.

The roles of the Coordinator include:

- Serving as Executive Secretary of MASC;
- Providing assistance to local representatives in organizing the annual ICAR conference;
- Writing and editing the annual MASC progress report, with input from MASC members;
- Serving as liaison between members of MASC, the international research community, funding agencies, databases and stock centers.

Challenges

A) Funding

MASC has so far been supported by grant money, but obtaining further grant funding after 2015 is unlikely given changes in funding priorities or national funding bodies.

B) Lack of Awareness of MASC

While theoretically MASC is the international body representing the Arabidopsis research community, few people have heard of it, unless they have been directly involved with the committee. There is a general lack of awareness of MASC's existence and role within the community, and it has no unique website. Most groups or societies representing a body of scientists have an annual meeting that is the 'face of the society', but in the case of MASC and ICAR it is almost the opposite: ICAR has a great brand while very little is known about MASC. For many, the only relationship between MASC and ICAR is that MASC has meetings in a quiet room during ICAR.

C) Duplication of Effort

ICAR meetings are run on a three-year cycle and are completely independent from each other. In the case of the European and Asian meetings this means a lot of duplication of effort in terms of setting up committees, websites, bank accounts, and arranging the necessary insurance. This independent model also means that interaction with MASC is not always guaranteed and has probably added to the perceived separation of MASC and ICAR.

Proposal for future financial and organizational sustainability

To date, three models have been proposed for the future of MASC and ICAR.

Please note: these models are not the only solutions – we are sure there are others, hence the need to undertake stakeholder consultations to garner views, additional ideas and information. These will be followed by a systematic analysis.

- i) MASC subscription levy to be included in the ICAR registration fee
MASC could consider adding a subscription fee on top of the registration fee for the ICAR meeting. This would help provide some funds towards supporting MASC and the MASC Coordinator. As an example, a sum of \$12,500 USD has been set aside from the 2013 meeting in Australia; equivalent to around \$20 per attendee.

- ii) The establishment of MASC as a society
If MASC requests a subscription fee it needs to consider how and who will manage these funds. One possible option is to establish MASC as a society in its own right, which would allow MASC to maintain its independent status and have control of its own destiny. MASC could fully implement its recently established website (www.arabidopsisresearch.org) to support ICAR and other Arabidopsis activities. Such a structure would facilitate continuous organization of the annual ICAR meeting, provide some funds for the MASC Coordinator position, and promote continuity of an elected executive committee.

As a society, MASC could also consider charging a membership fee instead of the subscription fee. The amount of paper and legal work needed to form an international society is not trivial and would take time, effort, and money as well as someone willing to take on this responsibility. One person employed at least part time would be needed to deal with the day-to-day running of the society, plus maintenance of the website, preparation of the MASC report and meeting organization. One example of a society we may wish to consider when discussing the future of MASC is the International Society of Photosynthesis research (www.photosynthesisresearch.org).

- iii) The affiliation of MASC with another society/network
If MASC were to be affiliated to an existing society, this would eliminate some organizational challenges such as the need to set up a new bank account, undertaking paper and legal work to officially form an international society, and it could also help to provide support with meeting organization. For example existing members of staff within the society might be able to take on some of the MASC Coordinator's responsibilities.

The downside of this approach is the possibility that MASC might lose its independence. As MASC represents researchers across the globe it should also be considered whether it should or could be affiliated with a national society or network such as NAASC or GARNet, or whether it should instead be linked to an international society or network such as SEB or GPC.

Possible MASC Affiliates:

A) North American Arabidopsis Steering Committee (NAASC)

NAASC is an elected body comprising primarily US-based Researchers. It provides North American representation to MASC and serves as the main organizing and fundraising body for the International Conference on Arabidopsis Research (ICAR) when it is held in North America.

NAASC's community service efforts include:

- (1) fundraising to support ICAR, including participation by young and under-represented scientists;
- (2) serving on relevant advisory committees and boards;
- (3) acting as leaders and participants for community-related initiatives; and
- (4) acting as liaison between researchers, funders, and other relevant groups such as ABRC.

NAASC has a wealth and knowledge of expertise in the management and running of ICAR and MASC, and further discussion is needed to understand whether an affiliation between MASC and NAASC is possible beyond the current organization of the North American meeting. A possible downside to such an affiliation is whether or not being associated with a North American-centred network would lead MASC to be viewed as having a regional/national bias.

B) GARNet

GARNet is a BBSRC-sponsored network aiming to help the UK Arabidopsis and wider plant research community remain competitive and productive at the national and international level. Representing UK Arabidopsis researchers through a committee of elected members, GARNet helps researchers make the best use of available funding, tools and resources. It also acts as an information hub for the community via its newsletter, mailing list and the rich content on its website, and provides a point of contact for researchers and funding agencies. Working with other groups, GARNet helps to promote interactions between fundamental and applied plant sciences, and to increase opportunities for UK Arabidopsis scientists at the international level.

GARNet has previously hosted the MASC Coordinator and organized the annual ICAR meeting. Further discussion would be needed to understand if a relationship between MASC and GARNet was feasible, and how this would be structured. As with NAASC, it may be a disadvantage for MASC, as an international organization, to partner with a UK-centric network. It would also be difficult for GARNet to provide MASC with additional personnel support without additional funding.

C) Society for Experimental Biology (SEB)

Founded in 1923, SEB is a well-established international society with its headquarters in London, UK, but a global membership. Given that the SEB has a team of staff and regularly runs and organizes meetings and conferences, it could be possible for existing personnel to support MASC activities. The exact relationship with SEB would need to be discussed and defined but initial conversations with Paul Hutchinson (SEB Chief Executive Officer) have been very positive. SEB is very open to working with MASC to work out whether it is possible to find a mutually beneficial solution for both SEB and MASC.

D) The Global Plant Council (GPC)

GPC is coalition of plant and crop science societies across the globe. It was formally established as a non-for profit organization in Switzerland in 2011. Ruth Bastow is the current Executive Director. The Global Plant Council could provide a 'home' for the MASC's finances, which would be generated from the annual meeting and/or a subscription fee. GPC would allow MASC to exist as it is now and would not interfere with its general running or organization. As a relatively new organization with only one part-time staff member however, GPC may not, in the short term, be able to provide additional support for MASC.

Costs associated with MASC

MASC Coordinator salary 50% (UK insurance, pension)	~£20,000–25,000 GBP
MASC report and poster print, homepage hosting	£3,000 GBP
Total	£23,000–28,000 GBP
MASC Coordinator salary 50%	\$38,000–43,000 USD
MASC report and poster print, homepage hosting	\$5,000 USD
Total	\$43,000-48,000 USD

NB: Costs for travel to annual meeting are not included here.

How could this cost be met if there is no grant to support MASC?

- a) Individual membership fee to become a 'MASC member'

\$100 USD/£60 GBP full membership

\$50 USD/£30 GBP early career membership

£35 USD/£15 GBP student membership

This option would require 500 full members to achieve funding for a 50% MASC Coordinator position: ~\$50,000 USD or ~£27,000 GBP.

- b) MASC subscription fee included in annual ICAR registration, e.g. \$30 USD or £15 GBP per registration.

Over the last 10 years there has been an average of 900 attendees per meeting, which would equate to \$27,000 USD or £13,500 GBP.

Over the last two years there has been an average of 650 attendees per meeting, which would equate to \$19,500 USD or £9,750 GBP.

- c) Profit from the annual meeting to support additional costs of MASC and the MASC Coordinator. Profits are highly dependent on number of attendees and sponsorship of meeting.

2012 Vienna: ~\$40,000 USD profit, 870 attendees

2013 Sydney: ~\$10,000 USD profit, 650 attendees

2014 Vancouver: ??????