

Introduction

The First France–Israel Binational Workshop on Biosensors and Biochips was held in Omer, Israel, October 27–28, 1998, under the auspices of the Institute for Applied Biosciences at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev. It had been originally planned to take place at the Ben Gurion University, but because of a nationwide student strike, it was moved to the nearby Omer Industrial Park. The aim of the meeting was to recognize the importance and interest in these fields in the respective countries, as well as to promote collaborations. To this end the participants (representing 26 research groups in both academia and industry) described their latest research and sustained lively and fruitful discussions that demonstrated the strong interest of all the participants, who numbered 103 registered attendees.

It was clear from the outset of the meeting that a world of activity exists and that a network of collaborations will ensue, such as exchanging data, writing joint research projects, fostering grant application proposals in the context of either binational grants or the European Community, and initiate further workshops, scientific visits, and exchanges.

The workshop greetings were given by Prof. Nahum Finger, Rector of the Ben Gurion University, by his Excellency Jean-Noël de Bouillane de Lacoste, Ambassador of France, and by Dr. Mahmoud Taya, Director for Biological Research at the Ministry of Science and the Arts. The scientific inauguration was given by Dr. Serge Cosnier and a special international plenary lecture was presented to us by Prof. David Walt from Tufts, Boston, MA, USA on “Pushing the limits of size, density and sensitivity with optical sensor arrays.”

The scientific program included a large panel of biosensor activities such as amperometric, optical, and acoustic biochemical sensors and, of course, biochip technologies. The broad topics covered experimental and theoretical aspects of the field, related problems, and an outlook that included shared experiences and a commercial vision in applications that are vast, such as environmental, clinical, and food industries. A total of 25 invited oral communications and 4 posters were presented by experts in the field. Because of the high number of speakers and short workshop duration of two days, presentations were generally limited to 20 minutes with a full schedule. The chairmen of the sessions managed to keep the speakers to their schedules, but despite this, quite a bit of discussions did occur.

The location of the workshop in the Negev desert provided the foreign participants with an opportunity to taste Bedouin food and coffee, under

the open skies, inside a typical Bedouin tent at the Joe Allon Bedouin Center. The French participants were taken on a partial tour of Israel, visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Dead Sea, the Trappist Monastery at Latrun, enjoying oriental food in Abu Gosh, and they were presented with the complex and deep-rooted intricacies of the Israeli society.

The workshop suffered few glitches, save the nationwide student strike blocking the entrance of the University, the original site of the workshop, and airport delays—temporarily keeping some of our speakers away.

The co-chairmen of the Workshop take pleasure in thanking the participants for coming in such large numbers, providing us with such stimulating presentations and an enjoyable atmosphere with much humor. It is hoped that new friendships and collaborations will result in a strengthening of relations between our worlds. They are also grateful to Prof. David Walt for inviting the participants to publish their latest results in this special issue of the journal *Applied Biochemistry and Biotechnology*.

We wish to thank the local organizing committee for their help in turning this event into a smooth one, particularly Becki Shimoni, Ministry of Science; Mahmoud Taya, Ministry of Science; Judith Rishpon, Tel-Aviv University; and Ovadia Lev of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Special thanks go to Arie Levy for his sustained and formidable last minute organizational skills, and secretarial help provided by Biopixel Ltd and Biosensing Technologies Ltd in the names of Nancy Schwarz and Manuela Biton, respectively.

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We are pleased to announce that the continuation of this workshop will be held on the 12th–15th December 2000, in Autrans (40 km from Grenoble), in France.

Robert Marks and Serge Cosnier
Co-Chairmen
Binational-Scientific Committee