

Workshop on Molecular Evolution

22 July - 10 August 2007

Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA

The Workshop on Molecular Evolution (<http://workshop.molecularevolution.org>) has been organized every year since 1988 in the prestigious Marine Biological Laboratory on Cape Cod (Massachusetts, south of Boston). The two-week course consists of lectures, demonstrations and computer laboratories, and every year 60 students are admitted to participate. After the main workshop, 15 students are allowed to stay for an extra week and attend the extended topics session, where they have the possibility to analyze their own datasets using the computer resources provided by the workshop and consult the experts in the field of molecular evolution.

This summer, I had a privilege to attend the workshop and also stay for the extended topics session. The participants of the workshop came from around the world with very different backgrounds, including Ph.D. students, post docs and PIs from populations genetics, systematics and molecular evolution. The program was intense, with lectures starting at 9 am and computer tutorials ending at 10 pm, however, the program was very well planned with skillful lecturers that were chosen not only by their merits in science, but also by their presentation skills. Therefore, it was straightforward to follow and understand all the lectures, even in subjects that I had no former knowledge about. The computer tutorials formed a very important part of the workshop and we were introduced to many different programs, including: BEAST, ClustalW and ClustalX, FASTA, GARLI, GCG, LAMARC, MAFFT, MrBayes, PAML, PAUP*, and PHYLIP. For the extended topics session, I had brought my own dataset to work with. It was extremely useful to stay the extra week after the main workshop, use the programs with my own data and discuss my own project with the experts on the field.

The course location was superb with the Atlantic Ocean and its beaches just around the corner. The accommodation was well organized in dorm rooms and the food was surprisingly good with salad and fresh fruits at every meal. In all, this workshop was of very high quality and I can recommend it to anyone interested in molecular evolution in general.

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