

Editor's preface

In April 2005, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences organized an international symposium focussed on genomics-based plant germplasm research, with help from IPGRI (www.ipgri.cgiar.org) and the Generation Challenge Programme (www.generationcp.org). The intention of the organizers was to capture this important moment when genomics, having already made such a significant impact on the plant genetics world, is poised to bring high throughput analysis of DNA sequence variation to plant germplasm research. The symposium chose as its major themes 'genomic diversity and core collections', 'plant germplasm as a resource for gene discovery', 'plant germplasm as a resource for varietal enhancement', and 'bioinformatics and plant germplasm'. Like much of what modern China is attempting, the ambition and vision were large, and the meeting attracted a sizeable international contingent from across the world, along with a healthy crowd of local academics, practitioners and students. The opportunity to distil and preserve a flavour of the meeting's content in the form of a special issue of *Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization* was too good to miss. Mirroring that of the meeting itself, my own ambition and vision were large enough to make me worry that I would be faced with the problem, particularly familiar to the germplasm bankers among you, of how to generate a workable 'core set' of contributions from an overall collection too large to deal with in its entirety. In the event, natural selection worked its magic and produced its own representative sample of exquisitely appropriate size.

With this second special issue, the journal is attempting to establish a pattern of focussed volumes set against a background of the uncontrolled and uncontrollable content that is the regular fare of an academic journal. We are now on the look-out for a theme for 2007, and I would like to take this opportunity to invite our readers (hopefully not too many of them) to suggest a theme for our third special issue next year. All you need to do is send in an email to the journal office—it's as easy as that. As an inducement—or perhaps a disincentive!—you may well get an email back inviting you to be a guest editor. In the meantime, we hope that the content of this issue will succeed in communicating to you some of the excitement and progress that was so very evident in Beijing last spring.

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