

Post IYCr in Latin America: scientific, academic and outreach activities

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The International Year of Crystallography 2014 (IYCr2014) was very special for the Latin American community for many reasons. One of the most important ones was the recognition of the Latin American Crystallographic Association (LACA), founded in October 2013, as a regional association of the IUCr during the 22nd IUCr Congress and General Assembly held in Montreal, Canada, in August 2014. In addition, the IYCr2014 promoted the organization of many scientific, academic and outreach events that encouraged the growth of Crystallography in the region and strengthened the LACA.

One of the most relevant regional events of the IYCr2014 was the Latin American Summit Meeting on "Biological Crystallography and Complementary Methods" held in Campinas, Brazil, in September 2014. It had a great success, receiving about 100 participants, most of them from Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Paraguay and Venezuela). This meeting intended to provide a forum for stimulating the application of Crystallography to complex biological phenomena and mainly consisted of a series of scientific presentations by invited Latin American scientists. The opening lecture was given by Nobel Laureate Ada Yonath. This event had a great impact on the Protein Crystallography community. At present, Protein Crystallography groups in our region maintain an intense scientific cooperation and organize advanced courses every year.

The IUCr-UNESCO OpenLab was a major initiative of IYCr2014, aimed at allowing access to crystallographic knowledge all over the world. In Latin America, four OpenLabs were carried out during 2014 in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay. The OpenLabs continued after 2014 in the context of the "Legacy of the IYCr2014" initiative and therefore three further OpenLabs were organized in Mexico (2015), Uruguay (2016) and Bolivia (2016). These advanced courses are very important to the region for many reasons: they promote cooperation among Latin American countries, strengthened national associations (especially those founded more recently) and promoted Crystallography in countries where further development is still needed. Besides, the IYCr2014 promoted the organization of several national meetings, workshops and courses in the region.

The IYCr2014 was also an excellent opportunity to increase the work related to education and outreach throughout our region. Several activities were carried out: exhibitions, fairs of science, art or photo contests, outreach talks, etc. In addition, very successful national crystal growing contests were organized in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, which also included workshops on Crystallography and Crystal Growth for teachers. These activities are still running with great success. In summary, the IYCr had a very positive impact for Latin America. The LACA is consolidating and generating new activities. Its first two meetings have already been organized (in São Paulo, Brazil, in September 2015 and in Merida, Mexico, in October 2016) and the third one will be held in Valparaiso, Chile, in October 2018. In addition, new courses and OpenLabs are being planned in order to promote the training of human resources in Crystallography.

The LACA thanks all the Latin American colleagues who participated so enthusiastically in the above mentioned activities, carried out in the frame of the IYCr2014.



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