

## **DoLS Travel Award Report**

ISME | International Society for Microbial Ecology

21 – 26 August 2016, Montreal, Canada

Laura Johnson

I attended the International Society for Microbial Ecology (ISME) conference in Montreal from the 21<sup>st</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> August. This was my first international conference; it was a huge gathering with around 2000 people attending. There were many sessions on a broad range of topics, with multiple sessions running simultaneously each day. My PhD project looks at the ecology of the gut microbiota and the role of diet on community composition. There were two sessions that focused on the gut microbiome, which ran over two whole days. I saw many interesting and relevant talks, including a plenary talk on the gut microbiome given by a highly-regarded researcher in the field. There were also sessions on methods in microbial ecology, metagenomics and community ecology which I found very useful. I attended a round table discussion about synthetic microbial communities versus natural communities, which is a topic I come across quite often. It was extremely valuable to hear both sides of the argument from knowledgeable scientists.

I presented a poster at the conference, showing some of my recent work. My poster was on display for two days, and there were two late afternoon poster sessions where I was able to stand beside my poster and talk about it. The poster session proved to be a great way to discuss my work with other scientists, and I received useful comments and positive feedback. It was also refreshing to hear new perspectives on my work in an international setting, and see first-hand how it fits in to the broader field. There were around 800 posters in total at the event, so there was plenty of opportunity to walk around and learn about current research, in my field and others.

I would like to thank the Department of Life Sciences for granting me the opportunity to attend this conference, I returned feeling motivated to complete my PhD and move on to the next stage of my career.