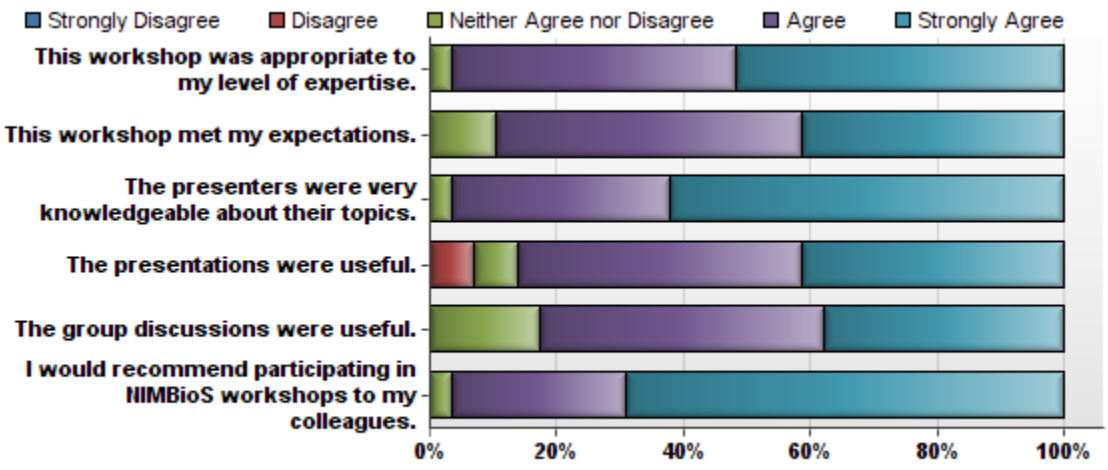
Evaluation Summary Report

Workshop: *Computational Advances in Microbiome Research*

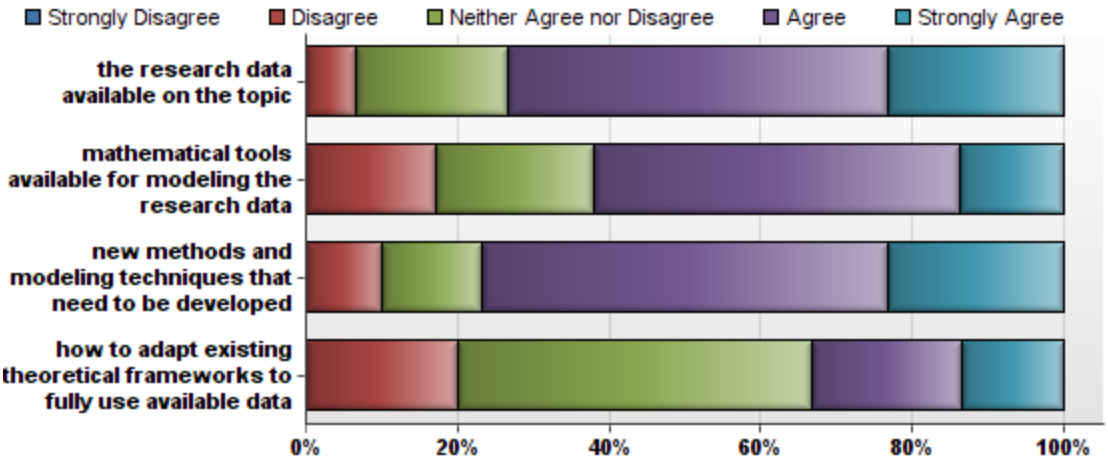
July 27-28, 2015

Pamela Bishop
Evaluation Manager
National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis

Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about this workshop:



As a result of participating in this workshop, I have a better understanding of:



What do you feel was the most useful aspect of the workshop?

Getting to meet researchers whose work I am familiar with face to face.

Discussion in small groups that might result in new collaborative interactions.

Group discussions allowed us to deal the matter of our deeper-interest in much detail.

Discussion on the current limits and how we can (try to) solve them

The personal interactions with the other workshop participants. It is difficult to have these type of conversations about new developments in the field and future collaborations over email.

Meeting researchers in other fields that have similar computational challenges to mine

Meeting colleagues with whom I could explore collaborations.

Meeting new people, in particular bioinformaticians

Informal discussions/networking at lunch or after hours. As a postdoc it was great to meet members of the community and discuss research ideas, job search strategies, etc.

The workshop brought together people from related fields, and the cross fertilization was helpful.

Getting to talk with some of the important folks in my field was very useful.

Free exchange of ideas

Bringing together researchers from the two big microbial community research areas (human microbiome and environmental metagenomics), and sharing of ideas and a discussion of the challenges.

Discussions.

Interactions with NSF program officers and getting an understanding of where that funding agency wants to see the field move forward.

Interaction with program officers.

Since I work in multiple fields, I don't always get the chance to meet a huge number of people from any particular discipline. This was an excellent opportunity to remedy this. If working groups coalesce from the discussions that took place at the workshop, this will perhaps be the most promising development for the field.

The discussions. I thought the talks were way too long and slightly off topic a bit, but the discussions and interactions were very useful

Group discussion involving everyone - the group wasn't that big. The breakout sessions were the least useful - many of the topics overlapped. My group was small and lacked some of the expertise available in the other groups.

Meeting leaders in the field. Learning about knowledge gaps in that need to be filled.

I tweeted it, not something I usually do, and that enriched what was already a productive workshop experience for me.

Breakout sessions and time talking to colleagues

Getting the field's leaders in a single room to discuss current knowledge and technology gaps.

The discussion sessions were most useful. It would've been helpful to have more discussion time.

Informal discussions with the participants.

What would you change about the workshop?

Happy hour

Make it a little longer.

Talks!! It has to be more from guys developing methods to analyze metagenomic data. So that we can focus of pros-cons of widely used protocols and may allow to have few on less popular but versatile methods.

It would have been nice to get out of the NIMBioS building for dinner. Also, I was hoping to hear more from co-organizer Curtis Huttenhower who has developed many great tools for the field.

It appeared to be organized at the last minute, and the schedule shifted. I expected more of an emphasis on a group product to focus the discussions and help participants 'buy in' to the workshop outcome.

The presentations took up much of the time, leaving not enough time for breakout group discussions. Also the presentations were too focused on published work from the speakers, without helping to address the likely future needs and directions in their fields.

Pretty well done

More time. Some participants came with scientific questions they wanted to answer, but weren't aware of the "landscape" of bioinformatics tools available them. Perhaps add a structured session where participants can brainstorm solutions to specific scientific questions. This could also be addressed through participation of more experimentalists.

Perhaps the discussion groups could have been more directed, in order to be more productive. And, seriously, there needs to be alcohol in the evenings. This is ridiculous. We are grownups.

To improve on the follow up aspects of the workshop (like organizing special interest groups in particular computational challenge areas).

Make the goals explicit and ensure the speakers tailor their presentations to the workshop goals rather than just simply presenting their own research results.

More targeted outcomes--clearly stated and the beginning.

Nothing comes to mind.

More discussion sessions, and perhaps forcing certain matters to the fore in order to avoid reiterating previous discussions that have happened in previous meetings.

Shorten the talks and put them all on the first day. Expand the topics of discussion and possible get more out of the time spent.

I would have less overlap in topics of the breakout groups, and maybe randomly assign people to the groups, and rotate people through each group so every group had an opportunity to discuss the topics and the previous suggestions made. Maybe 2 or 3 breakout groups would be sufficient.

Get out of the building for some meal. Not a big deal though.

Fewer talks and more breakout sessions with some mixing of the breakout groups.

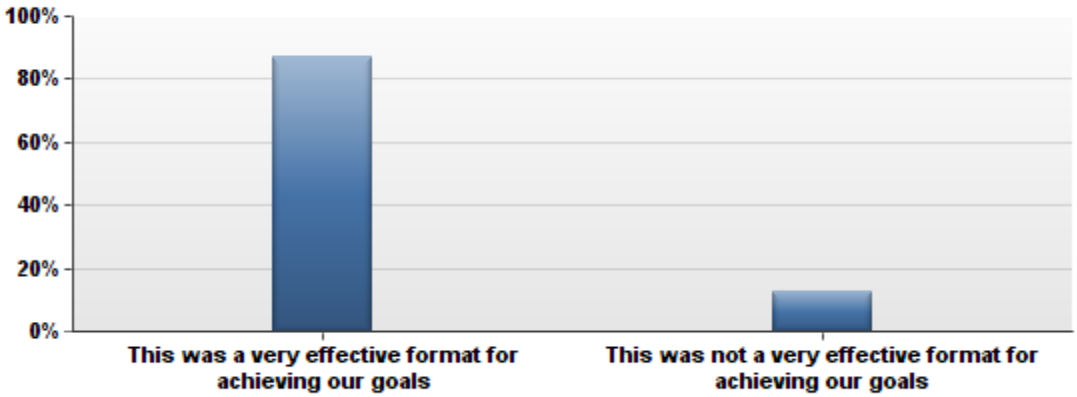
I would have liked to hear a talk from the main organizer about the general purpose of the meeting as a kickoff (rather than diving into scientific content directly).

Include structured focus groups

More discussion time, with greater opportunities to `mix up' the groups.

Make the breakout sessions more focused.

How do you feel about the format of the workshop?

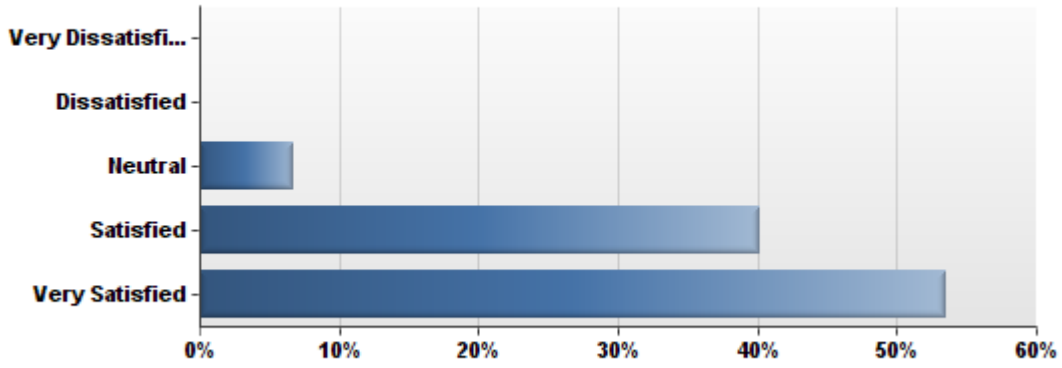


The workshop format would have been more effective if:

Goals and outcomes were better formalized and speakers targeted their presentations specifically to the workshop goals.

The organizers had made clear what the goals of the workshop were. I was hoping for tangible and achievable goals

How satisfied were you with the opportunities provided during workshop presentations and discussions to ask questions and/or make comments?

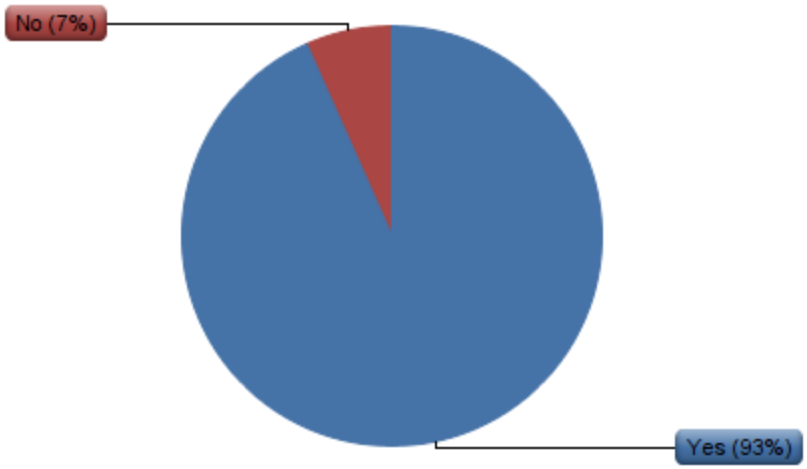


Please indicate any suggestions you have for facilitating communication among participants during the workshop:

I understand the importance of capturing everyone's questions and comments, but having to pass around a microphone distracted from the natural flow of the conversation.

Neutral to satisfied. I wonder if clearly stated objectives for discussion groups might have focused people's minds.

Do you feel participating in the workshop helped you better understand the research going on in disciplines other than your own on the workshop's topic?



Comments about understanding research in other discipline areas:

It shed light on what the "computational" researchers were struggling with

How to deal with the big amount of data coming from metagenomic studies

It was very helpful to hear from some of the leaders in the field about their latest developments in data analysis. Often these methods take a while to get through peer review and it is fantastic to have a heads up on what new developments are available.

Seeing recent updates from the collection and experimental side of microbiomics gave me a better appreciation of the current and emerging challenges in the discipline.

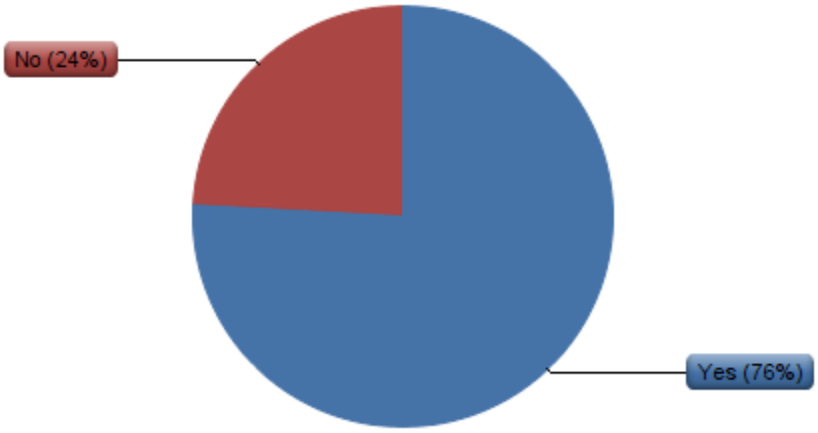
I believe that I have a better understanding of many other facets of microbial community research than I had before

Very useful to bring together many areas of biology that are working on essentially the same technical issues. Some fields of biology are ahead of others in various technical areas.

Metagenomics assembly for novel microbe discovery

It was a great opportunity to interface with metagenomic researchers in other fields.

Do you feel the workshop made adequate progress toward finding a common language across disciplines for research on the workshop's topic?



Comments about finding a common language:

Equilibrate presence of biology and bioinformatics-oriented scientists

This workshop increased my awareness of similar questions/research challenges in fields other than my own. I came to the workshop in order to learn more about these parallel efforts and to meet people who are leading them, and the meeting was very successful in doing that.

Focus was more on making the language/tools of the bioinformatics community accessible to other disciplines.

When the experimentalists were wishing for more bioinformatics cookbooks, it was amusing when Mihai Pop said something like - you wouldn't just write a recipe and let me go do PCR on my own. And all the experimentalists said - yes we would, and we do that stuff all the time!

I don't think uncommon language was an issue for this group.

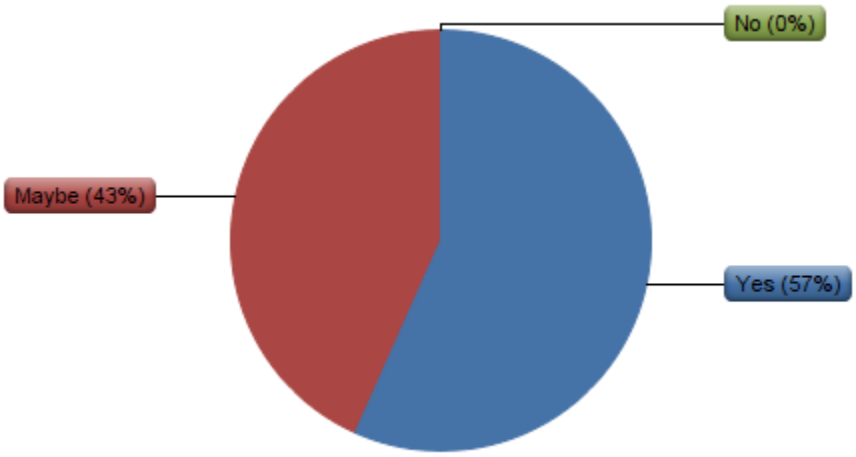
Although there were some excellent discussions and Q&A's, I felt that there could have been more follow-on sessions to build on the excellent first discussion groups. My feeling is the loop wasn't quite closed, and theoretical gaps remain.

I still think that there is a language barrier between the biologists and the modelers.

Yes it was useful to have the different disciplines, including biologists without much computational experience, trying to talk to each other in a room. It quickly became apparent what kind of concepts were universal and how a conversation to form a broader research team would have to go.

Helped define metagenomics for novel microbe discovery versus metagenomics for finding quantifiable changes between communities.

Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the workshop will influence your future research?



Comments about influence on future research:

One collaboration will likely arise from the workshop

Such interactions help us to understand the thought process of researchers beyond the stuff they published.

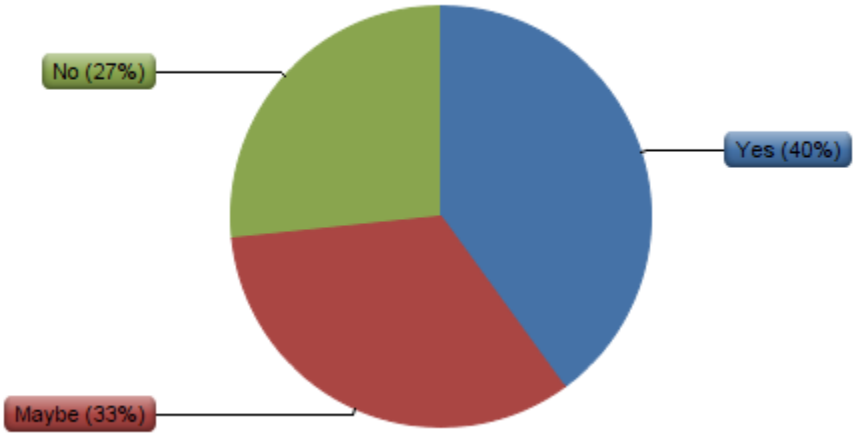
New ideas, new approaches, being aware that we all need to communicate more to take full advantage of the knowledge produce by metagenomics

Have a better idea of open areas to focus on as I pursue an independent research career.

Most definitely. I learned about new analytical and visualization tools and directions, in addition to the experimental and scientific advances I mentioned earlier. Meeting some of the people behind recent, popular methods was definitely a valuable experience.

I made some contacts that could serve as future collaborators

Did you develop plans for collaborative research with other workshop participants with whom you had not previously collaborated?



Comments about plans for collaborative research:

Yes I was able to set-up 2 new collaborative environments for my current projects.

Still trying to catch up after the workshop! But there were certainly a couple of connections that could prove valuable, mostly in the direction of experimental sampling protocols rather than mathematical approaches.

I made the contacts, but no firm plans for the future

Shared some protocols, made new contacts

Please use this space for any additional comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate! Although the format might be tweaked a bit, overall the meeting was a very positive experience and I was delighted to be a part of the discussions.

Great meeting!