

Dear virus lovers,

We hope that you are all doing well in these unpredictable times. With this newsletter we would like to draw your attention to several initiatives in the field of viruses of microbes.

- We look back on a very successful symposium from our Special Interest Group at the VAAM Annual Meeting in February. The symposium title was ‘Novel microbial viral defense systems beyond CRISPR’. Our key note speaker Karin Maxwell joined us online from Canada and spoke about how viruses block quorum sensing in order to inactivate anti-viral defence. Six early career scientists followed with short talks, during which we learned more about the various anti-viral defence systems used by microorganisms and got insights into topics ranging from ecology to molecular biology from several bacterial and archaeal viral systems. The PhD candidate Larissa Kever was elected by the audience for the award of ‘best short lecture’ in this session.
- The symposium was followed by an online meeting of this special group during which we gave an overview of last years activities and plans for the coming year. Now, two years after the initiation of our Special Group, it is already officially time for elections for new speakers. However, since all activities were until now online, the elections have been postponed to the meeting of the Special Group on the VAAM annual meeting in 2023. Until that time, we will continue as speakers of the group.
- Now that corona-measures are being lifted, dreams of face-to-face meetings with international colleagues might become reality. There are many exciting conferences about viruses of microbes coming up. We list several here:
 - Mai 23/24, 2022: **German Phage Symposium**, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
 - July 18-22nd, 2022: **Viruses of Microbes Conference VI**, Guimarães, Portugal (postponed from 2020)
 - September 5-7, 2022: DGHM symposium: **Bacteriophages today: from basic research to patient treatment**, Berlin
 - Ongoing iVoM series organized by ISVM (<https://ivom.phage.directory/>)
- At the Viruses of Microbes conference in Portugal, the Special Group will organize a lunch session for all members who will attend this conference. More information will follow soon.

We look forward to meeting you soon in person again. Until then, please send us an email with any suggestions about the Special Group or information that you would like to share with the community via these newsletters.

Best regards

Stefanie Barbirz and Tessa Quax