Sexual Plant Reproduction Congresses: 2008

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Last year, there were two major and highly successful conferences that related to sexual plant reproduction and its eponymous journal *Sexual Plant Reproduction*: the “XXth International Congress on Sexual Plant Reproduction,” 4–8 August 2008, in Brasilia, Brazil, and “Frontiers in Sexual Plant Reproduction III,” 17–19 October 2008. Many participants in this area of research attended one of these meetings, and several attended both. With this issue, this journal launches a celebration of both of these meetings with a collection of special contributions that include new and novel research, as well as perspectives and reviews on topics emerging from these meetings. These contributions drew considerable interest and are therefore expected to span another one or two issues. Our hope is that *Sexual Plant Reproduction* will become increasingly attractive as a venue not only for original research, but also for papers of general interest to researchers in this area who contribute to understanding the challenges involved in the mechanisms and genetic consequences governing plant reproduction and the completion of the life cycle of plants in general.

The first international congress on sexual plant reproduction was convened in 1963 in Nijmegen by Prof. Ferdinand Linskens, who is incidentally also the founding editor of *Sexual Plant Reproduction*. Participants included representatives from 15 countries (Willemse 2008). This longtime international effort initially had irregular meetings and was largely a European-based series until the International Association for Sexual Plant Reproduction Research was founded in St. Petersburg in 1990. The

current congress is the twentieth in the ICSPP series and was the first to be held in South America (Araujo 2008).

“Frontiers in Sexual Plant Reproduction (FSPR)” originated as a symposium held in 2000 to honor the retirement of Joseph Mascarenhas, whose many scholarly contributions helped to lead the way to our current era of molecular studies. Also a past editor of this journal, he served as a grant program director for USDA and NSF, encouraging and supporting the development of this area of research on many fronts. FSPR was such a success that it has also emerged as a continuing series. The principal organizer of the series, Dr. Dmitry Belostotsky, was involved in organizing all of these to date, even though this area was not central to his research (Palanivelu and Belostotsky 2008).

Tragically, Dr. Belostotsky passed away unexpectedly this year at the peak of his career (Chen et al. 2009). With regret for his passing and to honor his role in supporting this area, we dedicate this special issue to Dr. Dmitry Belostotsky.

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