Inventions and contributions board inducts first Ames scientist

Jonathan Trent is the first Ames scientist to be invited to serve on the prestigious Inventions and Contributions Board (ICB). Trent will participate as the board expert in astrobiology and bio-nanotechnology.

Jonathan Trent

His enthusiasm for his research and his ease in communicating the complexity of topics such as bio-nanotechnology makes him a valuable asset to the ICB and NASA.

Trent joined Ames in 1998 to conduct research in astrobiology. In his paper 'Extremophiles in Astrobiology: Per Ardua ad Asta,' Trent states "One of the prominent goals of astrobiology is to discover life or signs of life on planets beyond Earth. To approach this goal, it will be useful to know the physical and chemical limits for life on Earth…"

He began his academic career at UC Santa Cruz where he is now adjunct professor. He explored the effects of pressure and temperature on microbes in the ocean. This work started a lifelong interest in the extreme limits of life on Earth. His research has taken him from acidic hot springs in Yellowstone National Park to a volcano in Kamchatka, Siberia.

After receiving a Ph.D. in biological oceanography at Scripps Institution of Oceanography studying marine microbiology, Trent spent six years in Europe at the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry in Germany, the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and the University of Paris at Orsay in France studying biochemistry and molecular biology. He returned to the U.S. to work at the Boyer Center for Molecular Medicine at Yale Medical School for two years before establishing a biotechnology group at Argonne National Laboratory. There, he developed industrial and biotechnological processes such as organisms used for waste clean up.

The nomination and appointment came as a surprise to Trent and he acknowledges the privilege of "…being able to work with the crème de la crème." "I don't know the other members of the board, but I will enjoy learning about the larger realm of NASA research and diversity of people. It's a place I want to be," Trent stated.

"I am proud of the many ways in which Ames researchers contribute to the broader community," said NASA Ames Center Director G. Scott Hubbard congratulating Trent on being the first scientist from Ames on the ICB. "Becoming a NASA ICB board member is a much-appreciated labor of love. Trent is a perfect example of always choosing to go the extra mile and embodying the Ames goals of visibility, excellence and impact."

Trent is very pleased to be representing Ames and the biological research community. "I'm looking forward to reviewing patentable materials. I may be able to bring a perspective not achieved before," stated Trent.

Trent received the news from Walter Hussey, ICB staff director at NASA Headquarters. Theron Bradley, former NASA chief engineer and chair of the ICB, nominated Trent and NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe conferred the appointment. Trent will serve a minimum three-year term.

The ICB was established in 1958 to reward outstanding scientific or technical contributions significant to aeronautics and space activities. The composition of the board reflects NASA's finest technical talent whose expertise covers more than 40 fields of science and technology. Members of the ICB must be experts in their field and working in an area of future research. The intention is to cover a broad scope of scientific and technical contributions and provide incentive for researchers. When expertise is needed in a particular discipline, a search is made to fill the gap. Currently, only 17 people possess this distinction.

The unpaid additional duty membership of the ICB was originally comprised of scientists from Headquarters, Langley and Goddard. According to Walter Hussey, ICB staff director "…we are now open to the entire agency due to the implementation of video-conferencing. This has permitted accessibility to all centers and greatly reduced travel expenses." Betsy Robinson of the Technology Partnerships Division is the Ames awards liaison officer. "Ames has a good history of award recipients, including such things as 'Software of the Year' for 2002 that earned designers $51,000," stated Robinson.

Over the past 46 years, the ICB has issued over 86,000 Space Act awards to NASA and its contractor employees, as well as to other government, university and industry personnel. The awards are designed as incentives for scientists and engineers to promote contributions to space, inspire innovation and for peer and public recognition. Anyone can receive an award, but to be eligible you must publish a NASA Tech Brief article, apply for a patent or obtain release authority approval for software. These 'initial' or 'pre-decided' awards are approved at the center level. The ICB individually reviews and 'values' other awards using a process similar to a patent search. The awards are not competitive and are granted throughout the year. In 2003, 1,007 awards were granted from $350 to $37,000. These monetary awards are given as personal checks and do not have to be used for further research. The Ames Technology Partnerships Division (Code EP) administers the Space Act award program. If you have questions, contact the Ames Space Act Award liaison officer, Betsy Robinson at Elizabeth.T.Robinson@nasa.gov. For more information, visit the Internet at http://icb.nasa.gov/

BY OLA MARRA COOK

Fluorescent light tube recycling

Did you know that fluorescent light tubes can be recycled? The NASA Ames Environmental Services Office manages the collection and recycling of fluorescent lights onsite through its hazardous waste program.

When you are ready to have your fluorescent light tubes recycled, simply fax a completed 'chemical material/waste pick-up and container form' to the Ames hazardous waste collection team at ext. 4-2612. This form can be found on the Ames Intranet at http://q.arc.nasa.gov/qe/forms/index.php.

To assist handlers, store intact lights in their original containers. If you have a broken light, sweep up the remnants and place them in a sturdy container for pick-up.