

'Credit in Science: An Interdisciplinary Workshop'

Keynote speaker: Graham Dutfield

Title: Did Kary Mullis really invent PCR?

Date: Tuesday 29th May

Time: 3.00-5.00pm with a wine reception to follow

Venue: Egenis Seminar Room, Byrne House, University of Exeter

Program:

3.00-4.00pm: Graham Dutfield (U. Leeds), "Did Kary Mullis really invent PCR?"

4.00-4.20: Responses: Berris Charnley (Egenis/IPBio)
Naomi Hawkins (SCuLE)
Sabina Leonelli (Egenis)
Elena Simakova (Business School)

4.20-5.00: Round table discussion

5.00- close: Wine reception

Abstract:

In the popular imagination, the world of invention is populated by 'mad scientists' or at least those rather larger than life characters who stand out as being extraordinary. In the life sciences, recent examples include Kary Mullis and Craig Venter. This is despite the increasing acknowledgement that all invention is to some degree collective. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technology is a fascinating case where the invention is closely associated with a single person, Mullis, who self-consciously plays on his eccentric genius image. His inventorship was confirmed in three ways: a Nobel Prize, a patent, and a court decision. Evidently he deserved all the credit that he received. And yet, the court decision was highly controversial pitting Nobel laureates against other laureates. Arthur Kornberg, for example, was quite dismissive about Mullis's contribution. This presentation will pose the question of whether, even when attribution seems so clear cut, doubts may reasonably remain concerning the true inventor or discover. It will also consider more widely the question of what we mean by 'discovery' and 'invention' and to what degree attribution is inherently questionable.

Places are limited so please book in advance by contacting B.Charnley@exeter.ac.uk

Workshop jointly organised by ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society (Egenis), The IPBio Network, Science, culture and the law at Exeter (SCuLE) and the University of Exeter Business School.