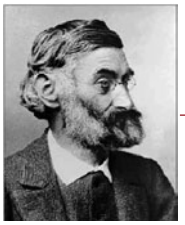
Volume 17 Number 5 October 2011

Microscopy AND Microanalysis

table of contents preview



Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

I am interested to hear your views on air-conditioning requirements for confocal microscope rooms. We have central air conditioning with temperature sensors in each microscope room, but this setup does not keep the temperature sufficiently stable. We are thinking of installing a dedicated unit similar to those used in computer rooms. This should maintain the temperature and control humidity, but prices for such units are very high.

Anya in Hawkesbury

Dear Anya,

Oy gevalt! What is this world coming to when we have to coddle these whiny namby-pambies who opine that "it's too cold" or "it's too hot" or "I have lost all feeling in my fingers and my core body temperature has dropped to dangerous levels—may I please come inside the lab?" Now we are extending these same courtesies to inanimate microscopes! When I used to build instruments we made them TOUGH! The prototype of the Zeiss Ultraphot was built to withstand just about anything. Carl Z and I once took it out back and emptied an entire clip from my trusty Walther p38 toward it. We laughed heartily when the shots would ricochet off in all directions; at one point coming straight back and knocking my spectacles clear off my head. Imagine the fun we would have had if we had also been drinking?

Dear Abbe,

I have a question about live imaging. We are planning on running an experiment where we want to follow a cell that will be moving quite a lot over an extended period of time. We need to keep this cell in the field of view throughout the whole experiment. The two possibilities that come to mind are either taking a relatively large tilescan at every timepoint and hope that the cell will not go past the area, or writing a lengthy and complex macro in a program in order to detect the cell's movement within the field and move the stage with it over time. Have you done a similar experiment?

No Time in New York

Dear Timeless,

For crying out loud, why all this "automated" nonsense? What is wrong with doing it the way we did in the old country, namely strapping an undergraduate to a chair and making THEM follow the blasted cell? If you keep feeding him or her Twinkies and Red Bull, they should have no problem doing this for at least two days. If one provides a waste receptacle capable of containing liquids, this can be extended indefinitely. It is a scientific rite-of-passage to be stuck watching over cells or reactions for interminably long periods. Most advisors don't really need the data—think of it as benign scientific hazing. Developing the skills required can be useful in future situations. I once spent an entire week staking out the apartment of Frau Ingrid Grosse Brüste and did not doze off once (although I did have to pretend to be a passed-out landstreicher when her husband came over to inspect the bushes where I was hiding).

Even if you've already consulted your Scientific Ouija board, you still need to get that second opinion! Write to Professor Abbe through his personal associate administrative assistant at jpshield@uga.edu.