

Byron J. Smith, PhD

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Research Focus

I develop and use bioinformatic tools and statistical models to integrate diverse data towards understanding complex microbial communities.

Publications

- [in prep] **B.J. Smith**, X. Li, Z.J. Shi, A. Abate, K.S. Pollard. Scalable bacterial strain inference in metagenomic data using fuzzy genotypes. (for submission to *Frontiers in Bioinformatics*)
- [2021] **B.J. Smith**, R.A. Miller, T.M. Schmidt. *Muribaculaceae* genomes assembled from metagenomes suggest genetic drivers of differential response to acarbose treatment in mice. *bioRxiv* (revised and resubmitted to *mSphere*) doi:[10.1101/2020.07.01.183202](https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.07.01.183202)
- [2021] **B.J. Smith**, K.S. Pollard. Evaluation of Le et al.: Challenges and opportunities for using data to understand equitability in science. *Cell Systems* doi:[10.1016/j.cels.2021.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cels.2021.08.005)
- [2021] **B.J. Smith**, Y.M. Piceno, M. Zydek, B. Zhang, L. Aboud Syriani, J.P. Terdiman, Z. Kassam, A. Ma, S.V. Lynch, K.S. Pollard, N. El-Nachef. Clinical efficacy and increased donor strain engraftment after antibiotic pretreatment in a randomized trial of ulcerative colitis patients receiving fecal microbiota transplant. *medRxiv* (submitted to *Scientific Reports*) doi:[10.1101/2021.08.07.21261556](https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.08.07.21261556)
- [2020] N. El-Nachef, **B.J. Smith**, Y. Piceno, M. Zydek, L. Syriani, J.P. Terdiman, A. Ma, Z. Kassam, K. Pollard, S. Lynch. Antibiotic pretreatment prior to fecal microbiota transplantation increases rates of remission in patients with mild to moderate ulcerative colitis: Results from a pilot randomized clinical trial. *Gastroenterology* (Digestive Disease Week Abstract) doi:[10.1016/S0016-5085\(20\)30716-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-5085(20)30716-2)
- [2019] **B.J. Smith**, R.A. Miller, A.A. Ericsson, R. Strong, D.E. Harrison, T.M. Schmidt. Changes in the gut microbiome and fermentation products concurrent with enhanced longevity in acarbose-treated mice. *BMC Microbiology*. doi:[10.1186/s12866-019-1494-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12866-019-1494-7)
- [2015] S.F. Stoddard, **B.J. Smith**, R. Hein, B.R.K. Roller, T.M. Schmidt. rrnDB: Improved tools for interpreting rRNA gene abundance in Bacteria and Archaea and a new foundation for future development. *Nucleic Acids Research*. doi:[10.1093/nar/gku1201](https://doi.org/10.1093/nar/gku1201)

Posters and Presentations

- [2022 (upcoming)] “Scalable strain reconstruction and tracking in metagenomic data with fuzzy genotypes” ([abstract](#)) **Keystone Symposium: The Human Microbiome: Ecology and Evolution**, Banff, Alberta
- [2021] “Bacterial genotype deconvolution in shotgun metagenomic reads using fuzzy genotypes” ([poster](#)) **Probabilistic Modeling in Genomics**, Cold Spring Harbor Lab
- [2020] “Identifying and tracking bacterial strains in metagenomic libraries” ([talk](#)) **Tools & Tech RIPS**, The Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco, California
- [2020] “Strain-level bacterial reconstruction and inference in patients receiving fecal microbiota transplantation for ulcerative colitis” ([talk](#)) **Microbiome Ignite Series**, University of California, San Francisco
- [2019] “Improved methods for strain-specific genome reconstruction” ([lightning talk](#)) **Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Inter-lab Confab**, San Francisco, California
- [2019] “*Muribaculaceae* Genomes assembled from metagenomes suggest genetic drivers of differential response to acarbose treatment in mice” ([poster](#)), **American Society for Microbiology - Microbe**, San Francisco, California
- “Changes in the gut microbiota and fermentation products associated with enhanced longevity in acarbose-treated mice.” Presented at:
 - [2018] (invited talk) **Pollard Lab Meeting**, University of California, San Francisco, invited by Dr. Katherine S. Pollard
 - [2018] ([poster](#)) **Keystone Symposium on Manipulation of the Gut Microbiota for Metabolic Health**, Banff, Alberta
 - [2017] (invited talk) **Lynch Lab Meeting**, University of California, San Francisco, invited by Dr. Susan V. Lynch
 - [2017] (talk) **Microbiome Group Seminar Series**, University of Michigan
 - [2017] (poster) **American Society for Microbiology - Microbe**, New Orleans, Louisiana
- [2017] “Automating reproducible data analysis pipelines with Snakemake” ([invited talk](#)), **Department of Research Computing - Joint User Groups Meeting**, Boise State University
- [2016] “The longevity enhancing drug Acarbose modulates the gut microbiome and its fermentation products” (poster), **Michigan Meeting on the Microbiome**, University of Michigan
- [2014] “Slow but successful: spatial structure and the evolution of efficiency” (talk), **Pre-Candidacy Seminar**, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Michigan
- [2011] “GABA signaling and reception in the developing nervous system” (talk) **Spring Honors Colloquium**, The College of William & Mary
- [2010] “The role of calcium in neural phenotype differentiation in developing *Xenopus*” (poster), **Undergraduate Research Symposium**, The College of William & Mary

Grants and Fellowships

- [2021-2022] Computational Innovation Post-doctoral Fellowship for my proposal, “Strain-resolved microbiome-wide association studies for the discovery of hidden, microbial drivers of disease”, funded for \$75,000
- [2016-2018] Integrated Training in Microbial Systems (ITiMS) Fellowship co-advised by Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt and Dr. Aaron A. King
- [2015-2016] Instrumental in preparing a UM Glenn Center for Aging Research grant which was funded for \$50,000. Principal Investigator: Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt
- [2013-2014] UM Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Departmental Block Grant
- [2011-2012] Excellence in BioMolecular Science Fellowship from the College of Natural Science, Michigan State University
- [2008-2010] Howard Hughes Medical Institute Student Research Awards
- [2008] Howard Hughes Medical Institute Freshman Research Grant

Education

- [2013-2018] **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI
 - Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
 - [Dissertation](#): “Integrated Analysis of the Gut Microbiota and Their Fermentation Products in Mice Treated with the Longevity Enhancing Drug Acarbose”
 - Embedded Masters in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, granted in 2016
 - GPA: 4.0
 - Research Advisor: Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt
- [2011-2013] **Michigan State University**, East Lansing, MI
 - Graduate student, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
 - GPA: 4.0
 - Affiliate, BEACON Center for The Study of Evolution in Action
 - Affiliate, Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center
 - Research Advisor: Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt
- [2007-2011] **The College of William & Mary**, Williamsburg, VA
 - B.S. Biology
 - Graduated *Summa Cum Laude*
 - GPA: 3.80 (overall) / 4.00 (major)
 - Minor: Mathematics
 - Research Advisor: Dr. Margaret S. Saha

Select Coursework and Workshops

- [2015] **Train the Trainers: Teaching Adults Researchers to Program**, Michigan State University
- [2014] **Guarda Workshop in Evolutionary Biology**, University of Basel and ETH Zürich, Switzerland
- [2012] **Software Carpentry Bootcamp**, Michigan State University
- [2012] **Enhancing Linkages Between Mathematics and Ecology**, Kellogg Biological Station, Hickory Corners, MI
- [2011] **Microbial Metagenomics Workshop**, Michigan State University

Honors and Awards

- [2011] Nominated for Michigan State University Distinguished Fellowship or University Enrichment Fellowship
- [2007, 2008, 2009, 2011] The College of William & Mary Dean's List for Academic Excellence
- [2008] Inducted into Alpha Lambda Delta and Phi Eta Sigma Academic Honor Societies

Research Training

- [2019-Present] Advised by **Dr. Katherine S. Pollard** at the University of California, San Francisco
- [2012-2018] Advised by **Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt** at Michigan State University and University of Michigan
- [2008-2011] Advised by **Dr. Margaret S. Saha** at The College of William & Mary
- [2006-2007] Advised by **Dr. Mary A. Voytek** at the United States Geological Survey

Public Datasets

- [PRJNA737472](#): Longitudinal fecal metagenomes and 16S rRNA gene libraries from ulcerative colitis patients receiving fecal microbiota transplants with and without antibiotic pretreatment and with maintenance dosing via either capsules or enema.
 - Associated bile acid profiles are also available
- [PRJNA448009](#): Paired metagenomes and 16S rRNA gene libraries of fecal samples from acarbose treated and control mice, as well as carefully curated metagenome assembled genomes from nine members of the understudied bacterial family, the *Muribaculaceae*
 - Associated metabolite profiles and mouse longevity data are also available

Teaching

- [2015-present] Instructor, **Software Carpentry Bootcamps**,
 - Co-taught over a dozen workshops on computing skills for researchers: programming, the command-line version control, data management, etc.
 - Students are postdocs, graduate students, faculty, etc.
 - Workshops at Stanford University, Harvard Medical School, University of Pennsylvania, University of California, San Francisco, University of New Hampshire, University of Michigan, Wayne State University, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and Genentech
 - Contributor to development of shared teaching materials, notably lessons on the tools Git and Make.
- [2020] Guest Lecturer, **BMI 206: Statistical Methods of Bioinformatics**, University of California, San Francisco
 - Prepared and presented an interactive lesson titled [Brief Introduction to Bayesian Inference](#) to first year PhD students in the Biological and Medical Informatics Graduate Program
 - Course Instructor: Dr. Katherine S. Pollard
- [2015, 2018] Graduate Student Instructor, **Introductory Biology Lab: The Human Microbiome**, University of Michigan
 - Assisted during three semesters in designing and running laboratory activities and lectures for a novel, research based, introductory biology lab
 - Course Instructors: Dr. Thomas M. Schmidt, Dr. Kristi MacCready, and Dr. Arvind Venkateraman
- [2017] Teaching Assistant, **Data Intensive Biology Summer Research Institute** hosted by the University of California, Davis
 - Assisted with week-long workshops on “Environmental Metagenomics” and “Non-Model Organism RNA-Seq”
 - Organizer: Dr. C. Titus Brown
- [2016] Instructor, **Bodega Marine Laboratory Bioinformatics Workshop**, hosted by the University of California, Davis
 - Invited to teach a half-day lesson titled [GNU Make for Reproducible Analysis Pipelines](#)
 - Workshop Organizer: Dr. C. Titus Brown
- [2014] Teaching Assistant, **Software Carpentry Bootcamp**, University of Michigan
 - Assisted instructors teaching basic computing skills to early career scientists
- [2013] Graduate Student Instructor, **General Ecology**, University of Michigan
 - Course Instructor: Dr. Aaron A. King
- [2012] Teaching Assistant, **Microbial Genomics Lab**, Michigan State University
 - Course Instructor: Dr. Robert A. Britton

Service and Outreach

- [2019-present] **Gladstone Postdoc Advisory Committee** member
 - Advised Gladstone leadership and administration on postdoc issues, involved in planning and executing several activities and events
 - Lead postdoc advocacy efforts to increase representation, recruitment, and retention of postdocs from communities historically under-represented in the life sciences, which directly contributed to the creation and implementation of the Gladstone DEI Strategic Plan.
- [2018-2020] **Software Carpentry Curriculum Advisory Committee** member
- [2019] **UCSF Library Reproducibility for Biomedical Researchers** panelist
- [2016-2018] **University of Michigan Software Carpentry** group member
 - Actively involved in developing a community of Software and Data Carpentry instructors, learners, and advocates
- [2017] **Models: at the intersection of data and discovery.**
 - Collaborated in proposing a meeting for the directors and students of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund's Institutional Program Unifying Population and Laboratory Based Sciences
 - Held at the University of Michigan
 - \$150,000 budget
- [2016-2017] **Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Statistics Office Hours** organizer
 - Co-founded and organized monthly statistics help sessions for graduate students
- [2016] Graduate Student Representative to the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology **Executive Committee** during the fall term
- [2014-2015] Graduate Student Representative to the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology **Seminar Committee**
- [2015] National Ocean Sciences Bowl, "**Great Lakes Bowl**" volunteer
- [2013-2014] Michigan **Xplore Engineering** "Microbiology and Environmental Engineering" workshop team

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