

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### **How much does the context influence the measurement of behavior?**

Date: Friday, August 29

Time: 14:00-15:00

Location: Auditorium

We will have an interesting, stimulating and topical debate loosely based on a theme which recurs in many of the symposia and presentations at *Measuring Behavior* this year – how necessary is a natural context to study behavior? A panel of eminent behavioral scientists will discuss the issues, and the audience will be interactively involved in the debate.

Propositions discussed will include at least some of the following:

- Traditional tests of learning and memory such as the water maze are so artificial that they can only measure unnatural behaviors and are best done away with.
- The home lab is nice for observations but the lack of replication and controlled conditions mean that the results from such labs cannot be regarded as real science.
- Measurements of behavior of social animals such as mice (and people) should only be carried out in social conditions. Otherwise it is bad for animal welfare and gives dubious results.
- The design and interpretation of behavioral experiments must include the evolutionary and ecological context. Swimming is not natural for mice and operating computers is not natural for people.
- What is the best direction for the future? New technology to enable us to measure people and animals in their natural context, or better thought-out laboratory paradigms so that everything is measured in a proper controlled scientific context?

This promises to be a fascinating discussion, with food for thought for us all!