

Micoteca da Universidade do Minho: 9 years operation

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The Micoteca da Universidade do Minho culture collection (MUM) was established in 1996, at the Biological Engineering Department of Minho University, in Portugal, aiming to maintain and supply fungal strains for research in biotechnology and teaching, and to become a centre of knowledge, information and training in mycology.

The original collection, containing 38 strains with specific degradatory capabilities, mainly cellulolytic, was typically a private research collection, and accompanied the researchers throughout various laboratories.

Pressing solicitations from the local agro-food industry, from which several cooperative research projects had been developed, and the fact that University of Minho was developing an institutional policy for the establishment of horizontal services to support research, made possible, among other factors, the creation of a culture collection capable of addressing the issues of availability of strains and related information, of research and selection of appropriate technologies, and of training and building of expertise.

MUM now harbours 138 species and 59 genera, totalling 396 strains. Among its holdings the collection includes fungi producing extracellular enzymes, mycotoxins, fungi from tap and bottled water, and airborne fungi, isolated during research activities on biodegradation and biodeterioration, mycotoxins in food products and studies of air quality in industrial environments. *Penicillium* and *Aspergillus* are the main genera represented in the culture collection in terms of species diversity and number of preserved strains.

Standard procedures have been set up for strain reception within established admission criteria and for strain preservation, storage and supply.

A computerised data base was built in-house, having in mind the storage and retrieval of strain data and also the stock management of preserved strains. External access to information on available strains is possible through the electronic catalogue at <http://www.micoteca.deb.uminho.pt>.

MUM was built on well established criteria taking into account relevant international quality standards. Membership in international organizations such as ECCO and WFCC was accomplished and MUM is also registered in the WDCM, BioCise, and BioCase information services. In the last three years MUM has been involved in the OECD initiatives related to guidance for the operation of Biological Resource Centres (BRC's).

It is foreseen that in the near future new facilities will be available at the Health of Sciences research building with better working and storage areas, in the vicinity of PCL3 laboratories. MUM is therefore in position to plan ahead in relation to the widening of the scope of its holdings, and to propose the strengthening of ties with other specialised sectors in life sciences within the University in order to achieve a certified BRC for the University of Minho (BRC-UMinho).