

Media Kitchen

W. Ridley

The Media Kitchen was established in 1996 to provide a wide range of sterile microbiological, mycological, plant tissue culture, media preparations and disposable plasticware for the Institutes' laboratory staff.

The advantage of buying in bulk has meant huge savings, and prices have fallen as the volume of orders has increased. The Media Kitchen operates as a research facility under the central administrative overhead, to minimise bureaucracy. Centralising the media preparation has meant that individual departments no longer have to maintain a sterilisation and media preparation facility.

The Media Kitchen is staffed by two full-time and one part-time members of staff. The facility is supported by the efforts of one full-time and one part-time worker who were initially recruited from The Helm Project in Dundee.

Orders are delivered on a daily basis to 13 pick-up and drop-off locations around the Institute. At the same time, used media kitchen glassware is collected to be washed and recycled. Empty tip-boxes and Eppendorf pots are collected to be refilled. This work is carried out primarily by the support workers. They also, on a separate run, collect, autoclave and dispose of waste microbiological materials.

Agar plates and any other specific media can be ordered by e-mail, telephone or by visiting the Media Kitchen. All requests are usually met within 24 hours.

Figure one shows the output of the Media Kitchen, year by year since the first full year in 1997. From these figures it would appear that saturation point has been reached but with University staff just moving into the Institute and changing patterns in science this could change.

The Media Kitchen quickly outgrew its original premises and moved to much larger premises at the end of 2000. This much-improved working environment has given us greater diversity i.e. the pouring by hand of slopes and different sizes of plates. It also means that we can carry much larger stocks of the most popular media which relieves the pressure when we are short-staffed either through annual or sick leave.

The work that is carried out by the Media Kitchen staff not only frees the innovative scientists, visiting workers, PhD students and the support technicians from the repetitive and time-consuming tasks associated with media preparation, it also guarantees a standardised quality of media according to ISO 9000. This was attained in November 2002 and will prove invaluable as regards grants and contracts.

The facility and service the Media Kitchen offers is appreciated and often envied by visiting scientists and students. The provision of a standardised, quality-assured media and sterile disposable-ware facility, with its daily delivery service and daily removal of waste microbiological materials will continue to be invaluable both to researchers and to those monitoring costs and assessing value for money.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Boxes of tips (100/box)	13,933	14,300	19,738	19,653	20,609	24,000
Eppendorf tubes (c. 200/pot)	2,600	2,620	4,211	4,279	4,130	4,561
Agar plates	37,011	43,600	56,084	52,064	51,349	50,974
Other items *	24,654	45,080	47,928	51,850	43,389	43,180

* Item = anything bottled and capped.

Figure 1 Media kitchen output.