

1943

1969

2009

# 40 Years USGEB

**of Roots**

—  
**&**

**Shoots**



**Ewald R. Weibel**  
University of Bern  
USGEB President 1969-1972

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# 40 Years USGEB

**of Roots**

—  
**&**

**Shoots**



Why was USGEB founded in 1969?

What was the background?

Where did this lead?

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# 40 Years USGEB

**of Roots**

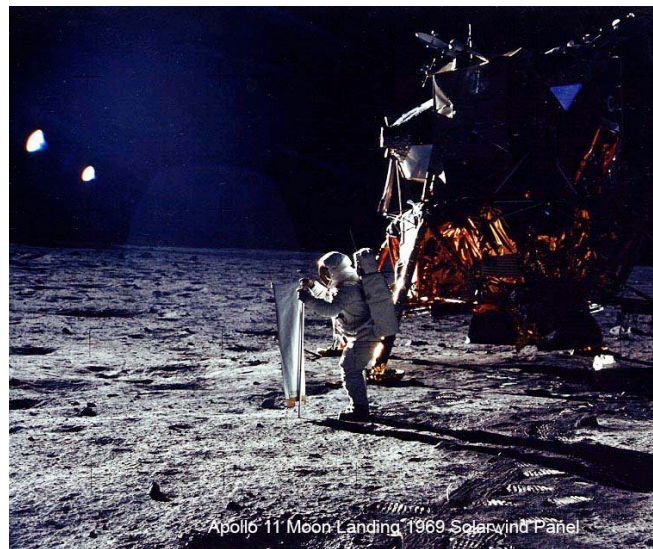
**&**

**Shoots**

USGEB was founded in a fascinating time of change — excitement — unrest — contrast



*The Swinging Sixties*



*... Moon landing ....*



*"1968"*

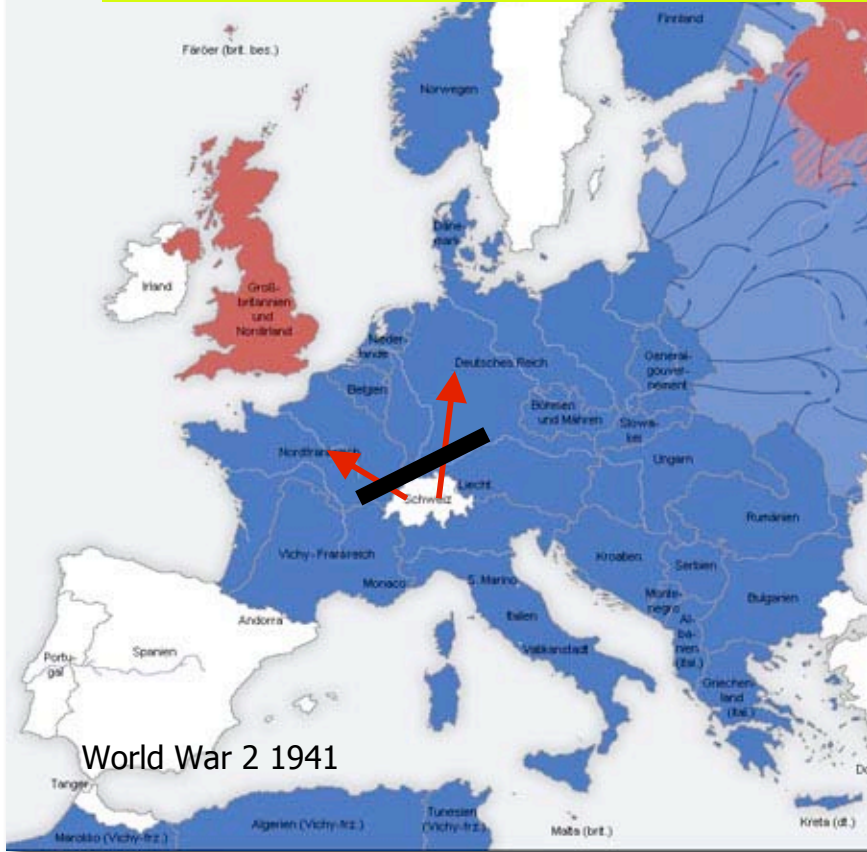


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## Foundation of USGEB: the background — “the roots”



Effect of World War 2  
on Swiss Culture & Science:

**Isolation** from traditional  
contacts with neighbors ...

*... a new chance:*

**Science in Switzerland must develop its own stature**



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Foundation of USGEB: the background — “the roots”

## ***Swiss science develops its own stature***

### **Foundation of Swiss Scientific Societies & Institutions**



*W.R.Hess*

Walter Rudolf Hess  
(Nobelpreis 1949)

Swiss Society for Physiology, Physiological Chemistry  
& Pharmacology (1943)

(1934 Free Association of Swiss physiologists)

Association libre des Anatomistes des  
Universités Suisses

(founded 1934)

New **Swiss Journals** (1943):

- *Helvetica Physiologica et Pharmacologica Acta*
- *Helvetica Chimica Acta*
- *Acta Anatomica*
- *Experientia*

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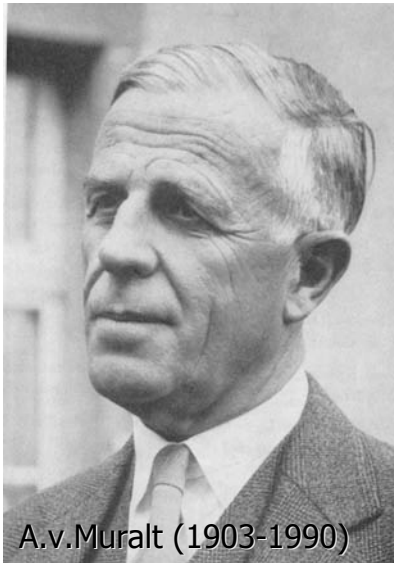
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Foundation of USGEB: the background — “the roots”

***Swiss science develops its own stature***

**Foundation of Swiss Scientific Societies & Institutions**



A.v.Muralt (1903-1990)

**Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences  
by Faculties of Medicine (1943)**

**Stiftung biol.-med. Stipendien (1942)**

*Alexander v. Muralt & Alfred Gigon  
as main promoters*



1943 **1952**

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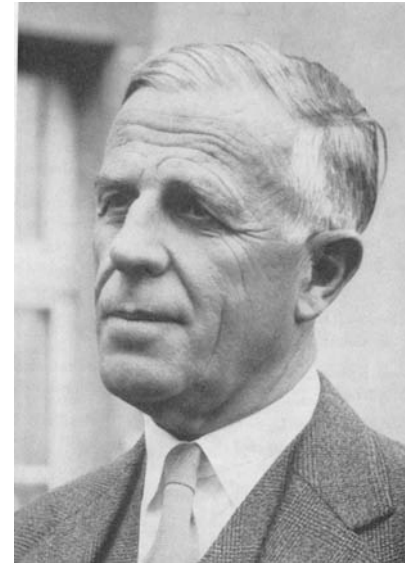
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Foundation of USGEB: the background — “the roots”

1952: The all-important step:  
**Schweiz. Nationalfonds SNF**

Alexander v. Muralt:  
Chief promoter  
*as President of SNG*  
*(Schweiz. Naturforschende Gesellschaft)*

First President of  
National Research Council  
(1952-1968)





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Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

USGEB was founded in a time of **excitement**



Big steps in science:

In **biology**: new techniques  
opened new fields:

*cell biology*  
*molecular biology*

1962: Werner Arber discovers  
DNA restriction enzymes  
(Nobelpreis 1978)

1962: Swiss Society for  
Cell & Molecular Biology founded



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Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

USGEB was founded in a time of **change**

In academia:



Bundesrat  
Hans-Peter Tschudi

***"Hochschule Schweiz"***

1.1.1969: Eidg. Hochschulförderungsgesetz  
(financial support & coordination)

***New institutions:***

1964: ISREC Lausanne

1971: Biocenter Basel

*Explosion of number of students*

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Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

USGEB was founded in a time of **change**

In academia:

**Curriculum reform in medicine**

*"time for change had come"*



Prof. Ettore Rossi

*1967-1972 Rossi-Plan:*

- *6 years curriculum to MD*
- **2 years basic sciences:**

***integrated teaching by topics:***

*Anatomy, Physiology & Biochemistry  
of Respiration —*

*Colloquium on Pathology & Clinic*

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Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

USGEB was founded in a time of **change**

*Scientific communication becomes international*

1967: Swiss Society for Physiology, Physiological Chemistry & Pharmacology intends to split:

- Swiss Society for **Physiology**
- Swiss Society for **Biochemistry** (founded 1958)
- Swiss Society for **Pharmacology**

*Goal:* • *relation to International Scientific Unions*

*Result:* • *Swiss Societies small, few members*  
*"familiar" groups*

- *communication increasingly specialized, narrow*

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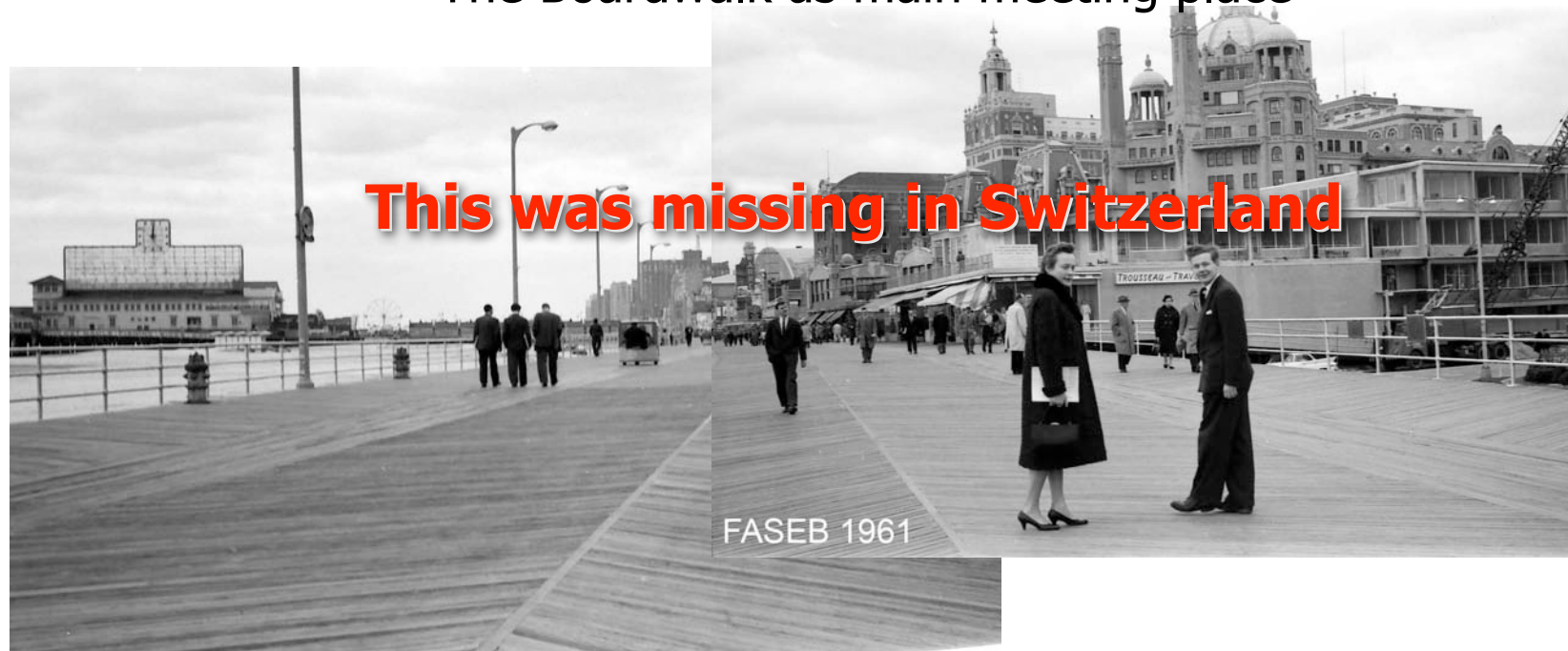
## Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

1960s: Re-migration of young biologists from post-doc fellowships

The US experience:

**FASEB meetings in Atlantic City:**

The Boardwalk as main meeting place



Cross-talk between physiologists, cell biologists, biochemists etc.



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## Foundation of USGEB: the environmental conditions

Café de la Radio Genève

13 September 1967



Conception of  
**"Swiss FASEB"**

Create a platform to  
get societies together to  
foster interdisciplinary  
dialogue & collaboration



ERW



Jean Posternak  
Pres. SS Physiol-Pharm



Charles Rouillier  
Pres. SS CMB

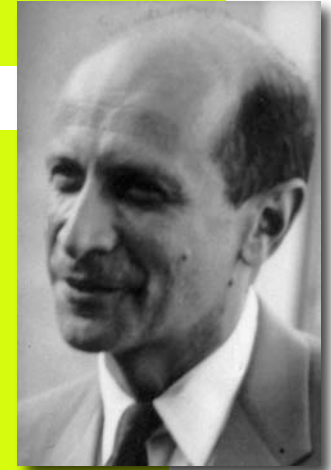


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## Foundation of USGEB



15 March 1969: Assembly of Delegates of

- Swiss Society for Physiology
- Swiss Society for Biochemistry
- Swiss Society for Pharmacology
- Swiss Society for Cell & Molecular Biology

in Bern decides to found

**Union of Swiss Societies for Experimental Biology**  
and to hold annual joint meetings.

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17 May 1969: official Foundation Meeting in Bern and  
**First USGEB Meeting (17-18 May 1969)**

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## Foundation of USGEB

17 May 1969: **Foundation Meeting of USGEB** in Bern

“Gemeinschaftshörsaal” (1967)

*of Institutes of Anatomy, Physiology & Biochemistry  
for integrated lectures*



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## Foundation of USGEB

17 May 1969: **Foundation Meeting of USGEB** in Bern

*in presence of Bundesrat Hans-Peter Tschudi*

Addresses by

Jean Posternak

outgoing President of Swiss Society for Physiology

Ewald Weibel

new President of USGEB

Paul Huber

President of SNG (SC|NAT)

Keynote Lecture by

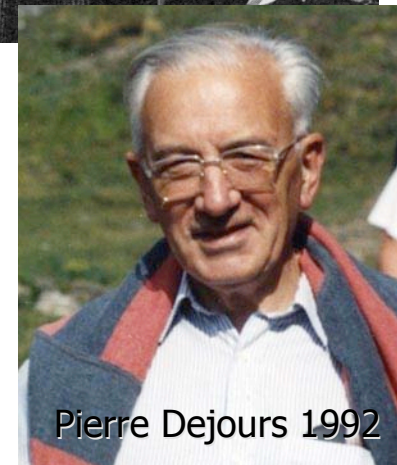
Pierre Dejours, Strasbourg CNRS

*"La régulation de la respiration en haute altitude"*

Followed by demonstrations & free communications



H.P. Tschudi Eric Jéquier  
1973



Pierre Dejours 1992

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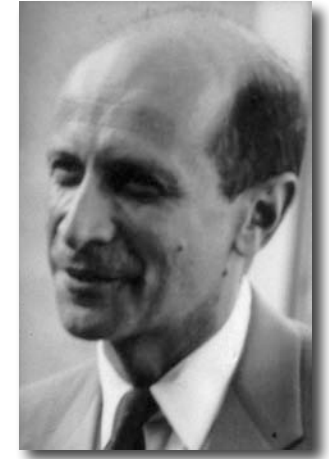
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## Foundation of USGEB

Jean Posternak on 17 May 1969:

*"Il s'agissait, tout en préservant l'autonomie des sociétés spécialisées et leur affiliations internationales, de renforcer leur collaboration. Il fallait aussi rendre possible l'élargissement du colloque interdisciplinaire."*



The **evolution of biology** towards increasing **specialization** must be **accepted** ... *but not put up with.*

Create a platform to **facilitate the interdisciplinary dialogue** between active **experimental biologists** of **all disciplines**

**That is the idea of USGEB**

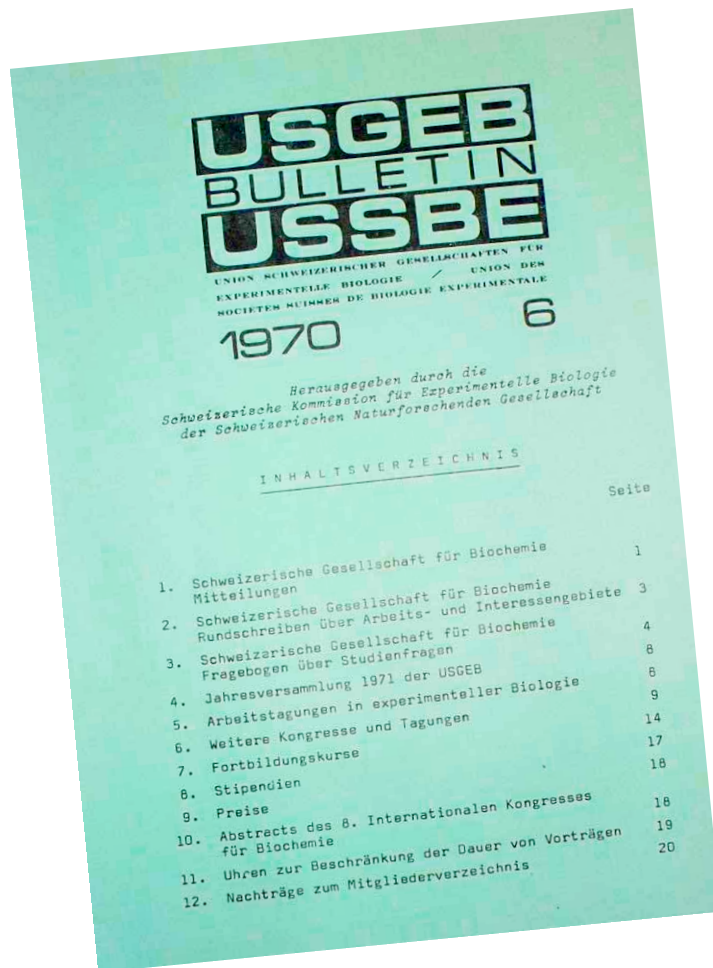
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## The Evolution of USGEB

### Union of Swiss Societies for Experimental Biology



#### Constituent Societies (1969):

- Swiss Society for Physiology
- Swiss Society for Biochemistry
- Swiss Society for Pharmacology
- Swiss Society for Cell & Molecular Biology

#### Joined later:

- Swiss Society for Nutrition
- Swiss Society for Anatomy, Histology & Embryology
- Swiss Society for Oncology
- Società Ticinese delle Scienze Biomediche

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## The Evolution of USGEB

### Committee & Presidents

<i>Period</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Place of committee</i>
2007-	Hans-Uwe Simon	University of Berne
2005-2007	Bernhard Erni	University of Berne
2002-2005	Sandro Rusconi	University of Fribourg
1999-2002	Denis Monard	Friedrich Miescher Institute Basel
1996-1999	Claude Bron	University of Lausanne
1993-1996	Kaspar Winterhalter	ETH Zuerich
1990-1993	Bernard Mach	University of Geneva
1987-1990	Herbert Fleisch	University of Berne
1984-1987	Heinz Tobler	University of Fribourg
1981-1984	Paul Walter	University of Basel
1978-1981	Eric Jéquier	University of Lausanne
1975-1978	Max Birnstiel	University of Zurich
1972-1975	Bernard Jeanrenaud	University of Geneva
1969-1972	Ewald Weibel	University of Berne



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# The Evolution of USGEB

"Corporate Identity"



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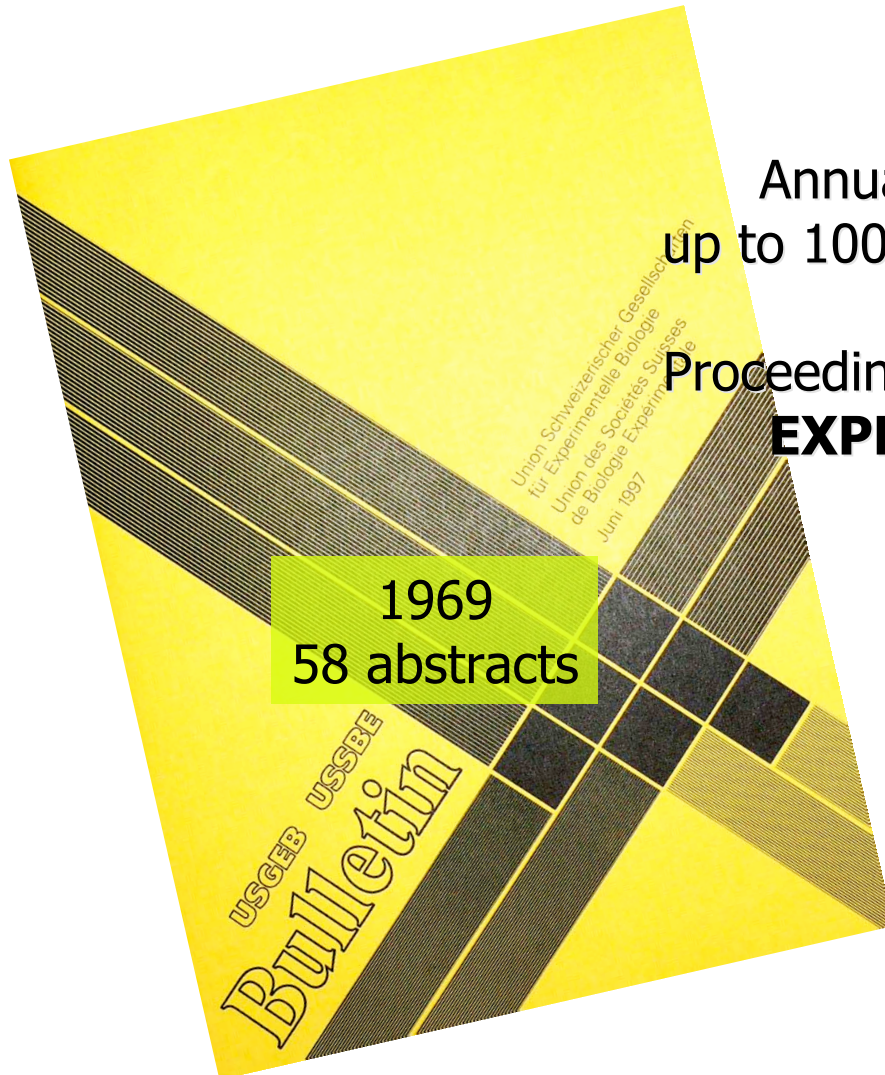
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## The Evolution of USGEB

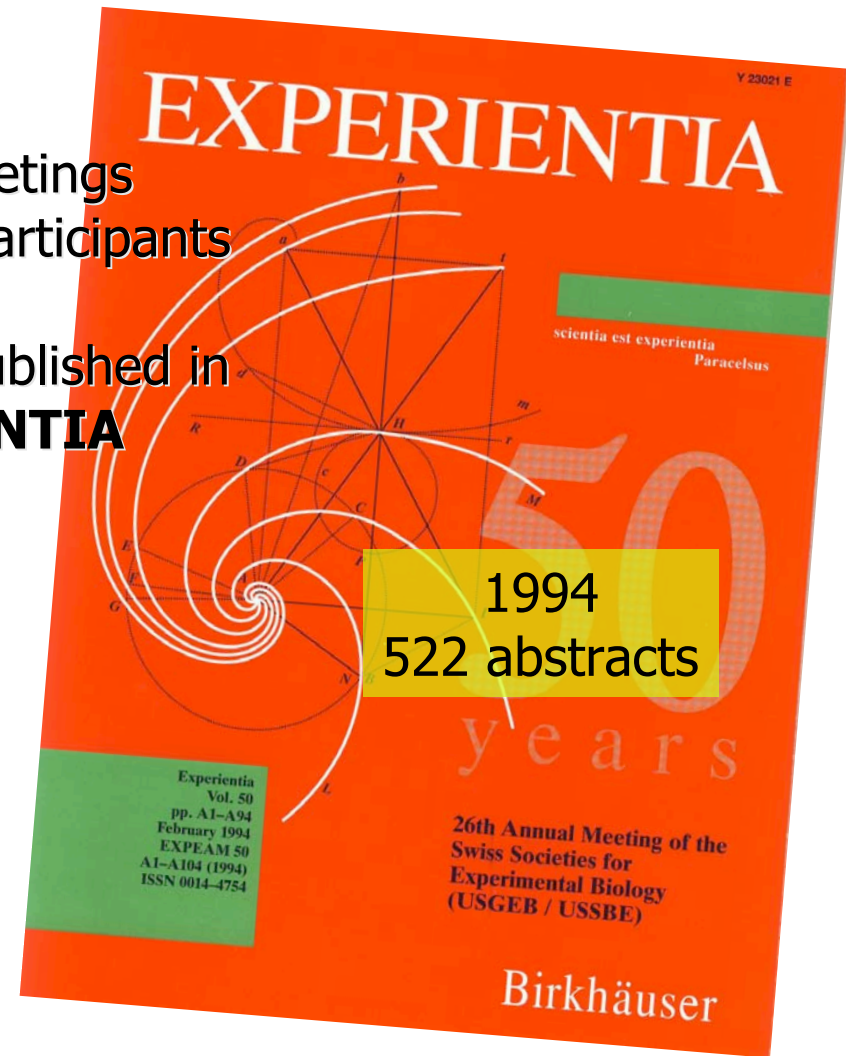
### The Science

Annual Meetings  
up to 1000+ participants

Proceedings published in  
**EXPERIENTIA**



1969  
58 abstracts



1994  
522 abstracts



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## The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

Where is USGEB in 2009?

Welcome to the USGEB Homepage!

**“Membranes in Motion”**

*Members in motion?*

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## The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

### The Mission 2009:



- The Union of Swiss Societies for Experimental Biology (USGEB) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting molecular biology within the Swiss Academic Community, and to addressing the social, ethical and economic issues raised by the rapid progress of the molecular life sciences.

### *Is this enough?*

*Where is „biology“, the life sciences as a whole??*

*Where is physiology, where is cell biology?*

*Where is the interdisciplinary dialogue?*

*Where is the „big picture“ that makes life??*

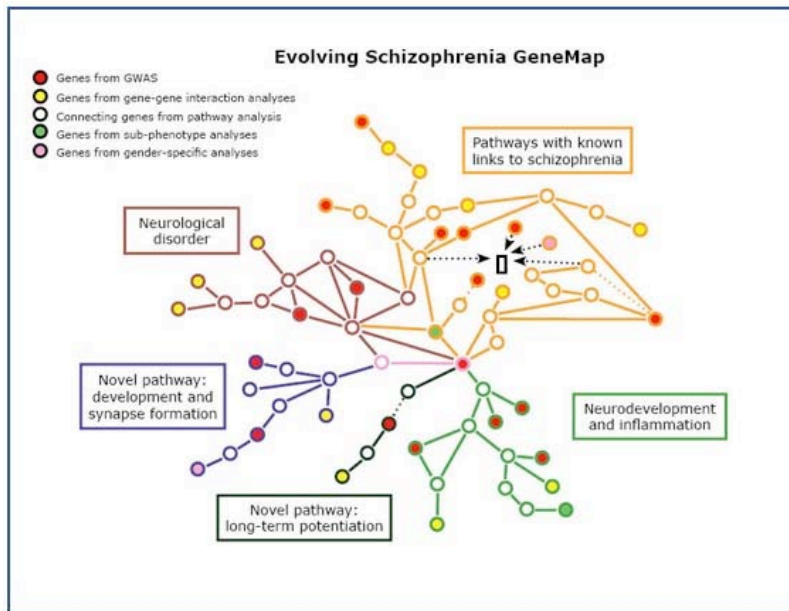
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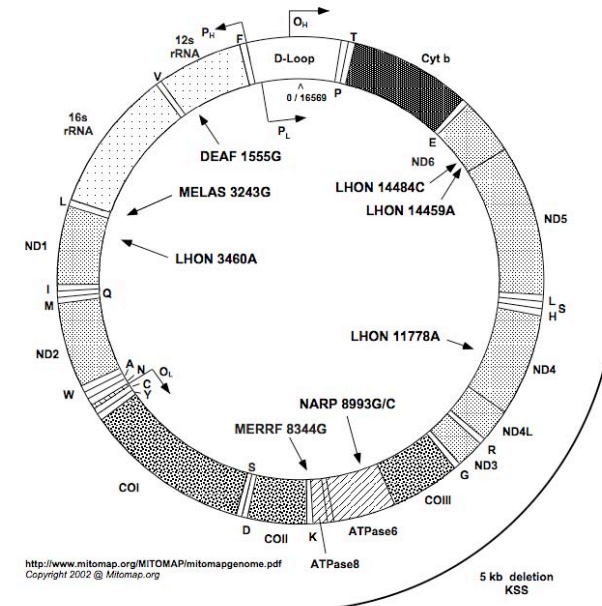
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# The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

## Gene maps are essential — but not sufficient



Schizophrenia GeneMap









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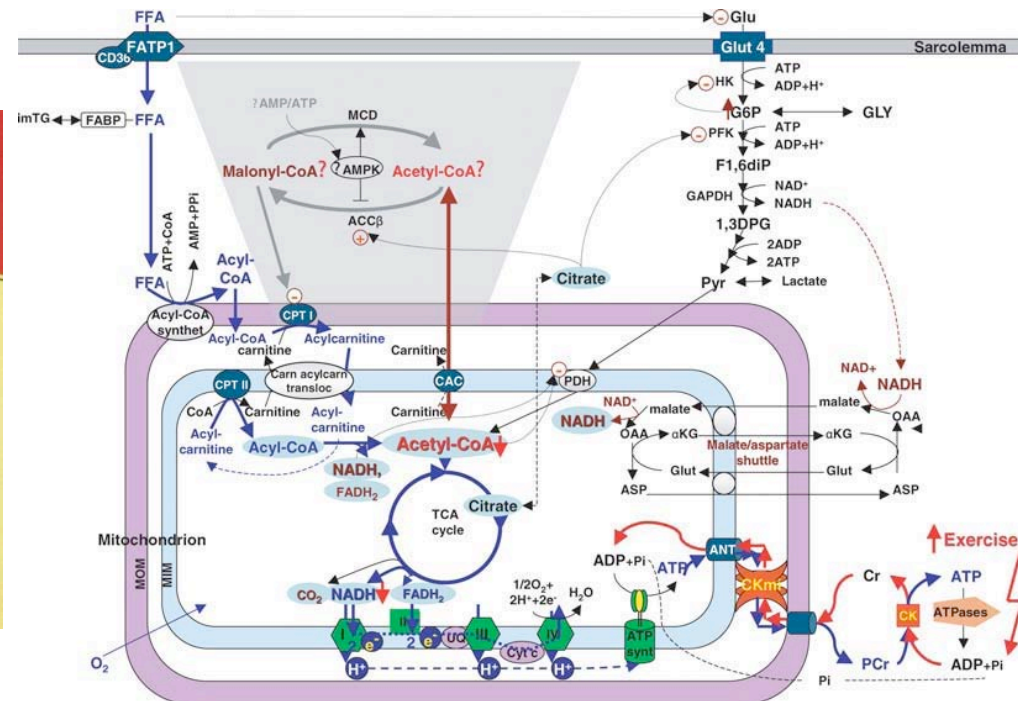
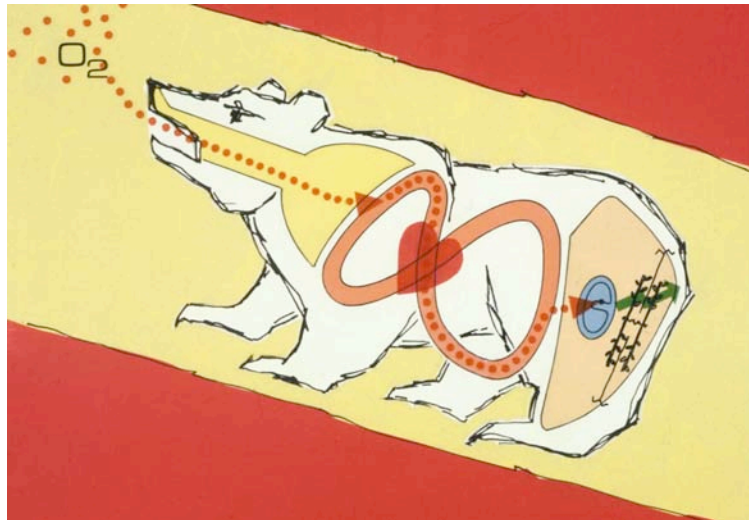
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# The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

## The case of mitochondria

Involves the organism

Functional map: Fuel oxidation



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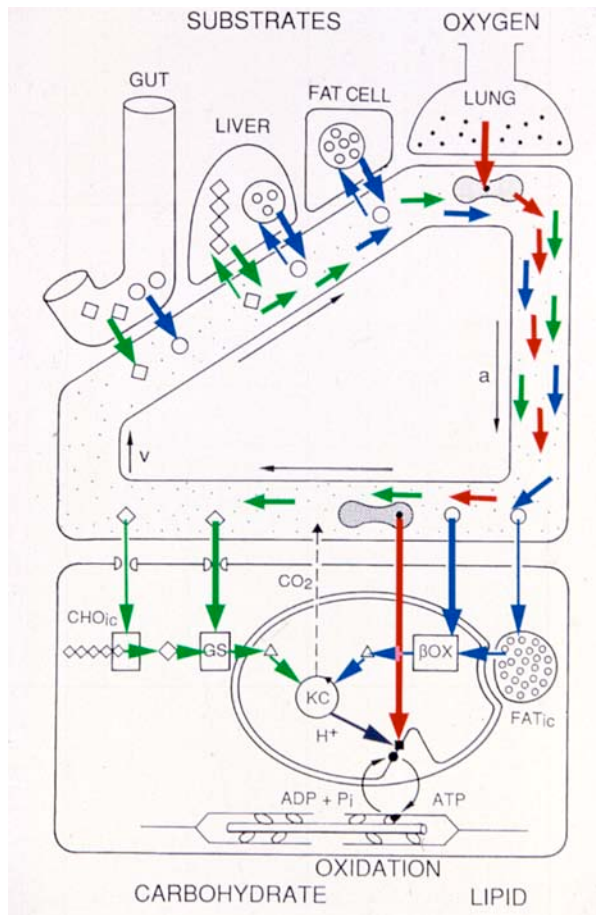
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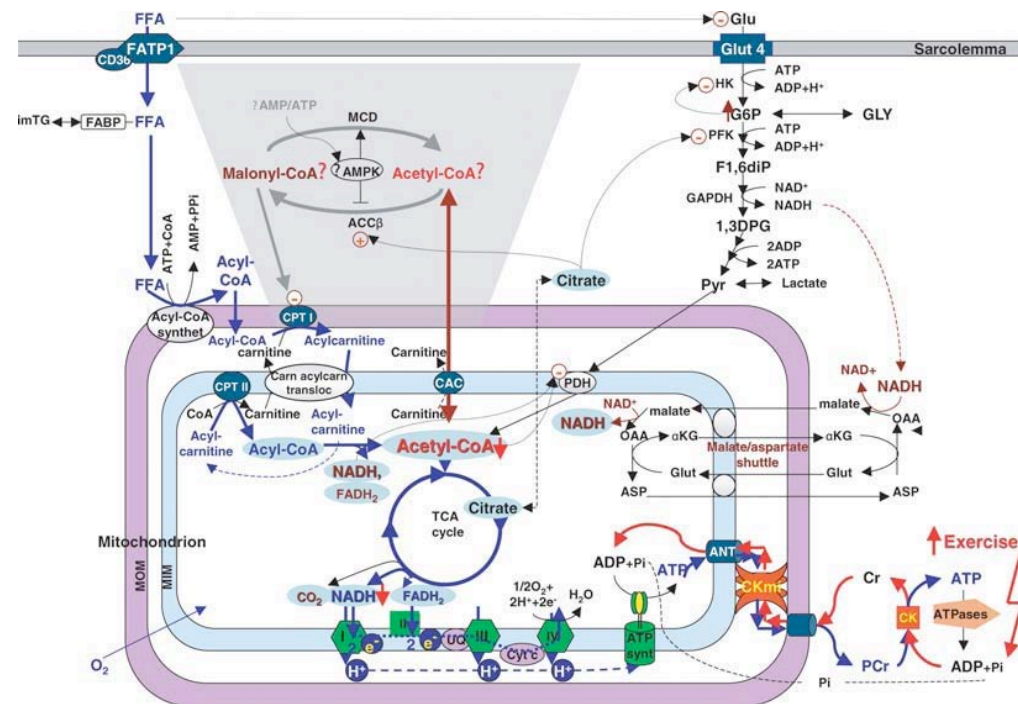
# The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

## The case of mitochondria

Involves the organism



Functional map: Fuel oxidation





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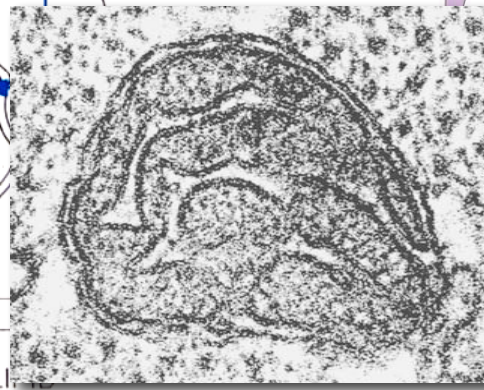
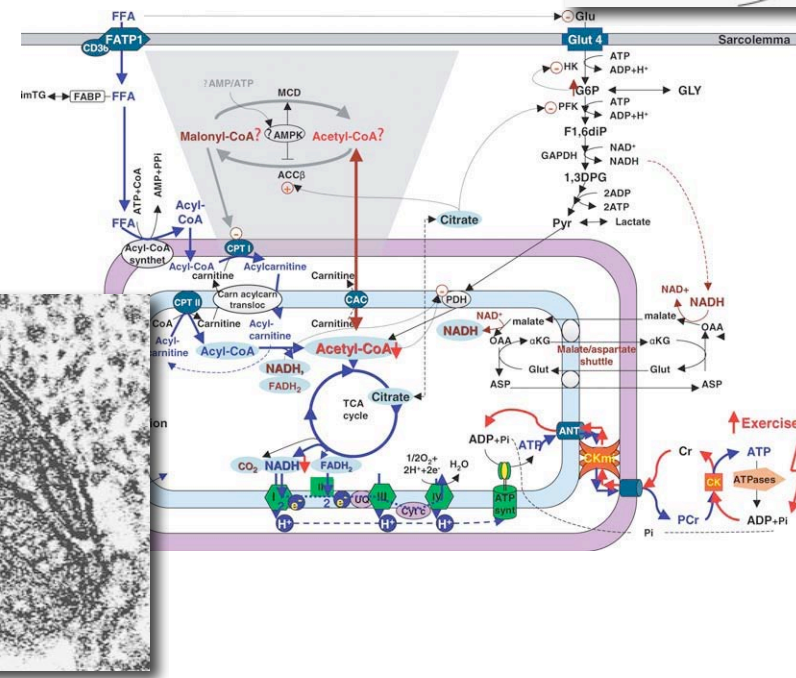
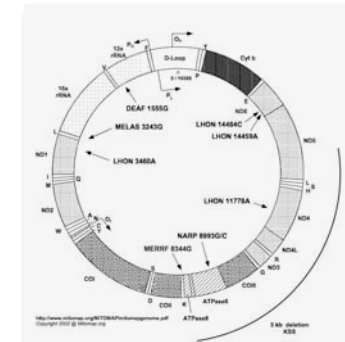
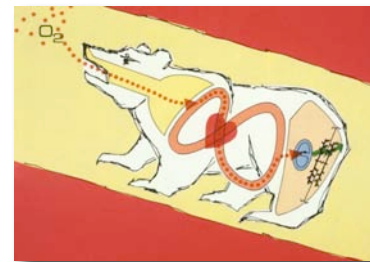
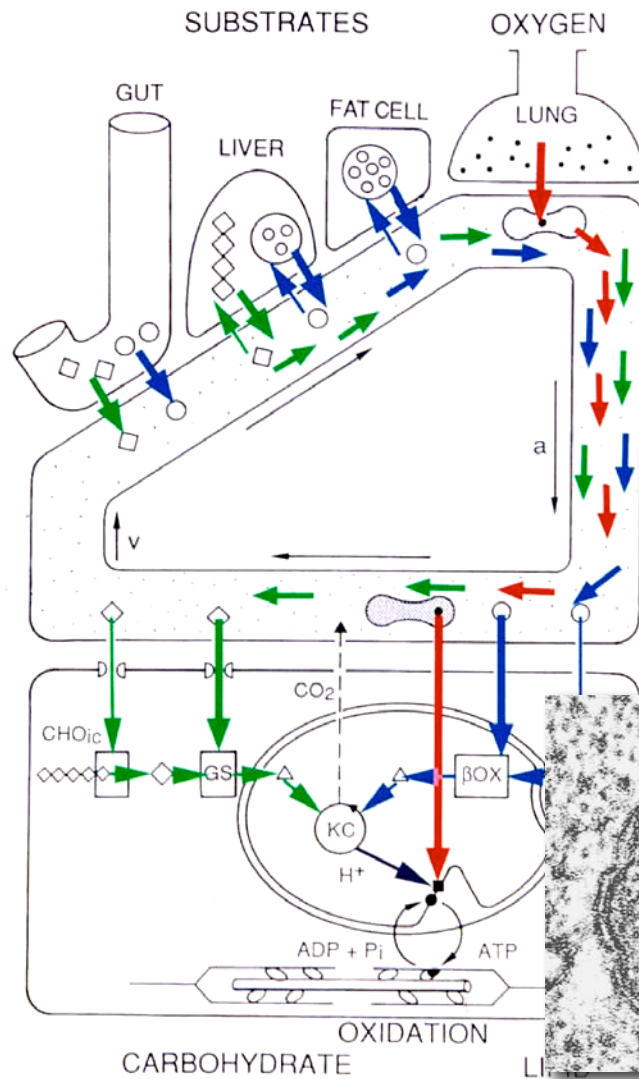
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# The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

## The case of mitochondria ...

### ... a case for **systems biology**



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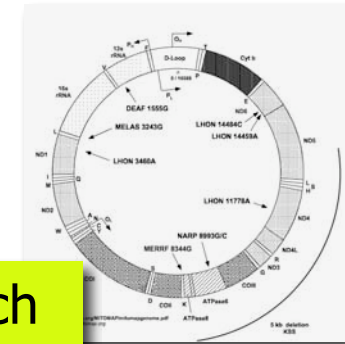
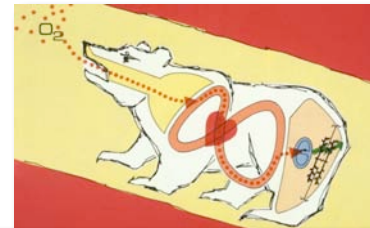
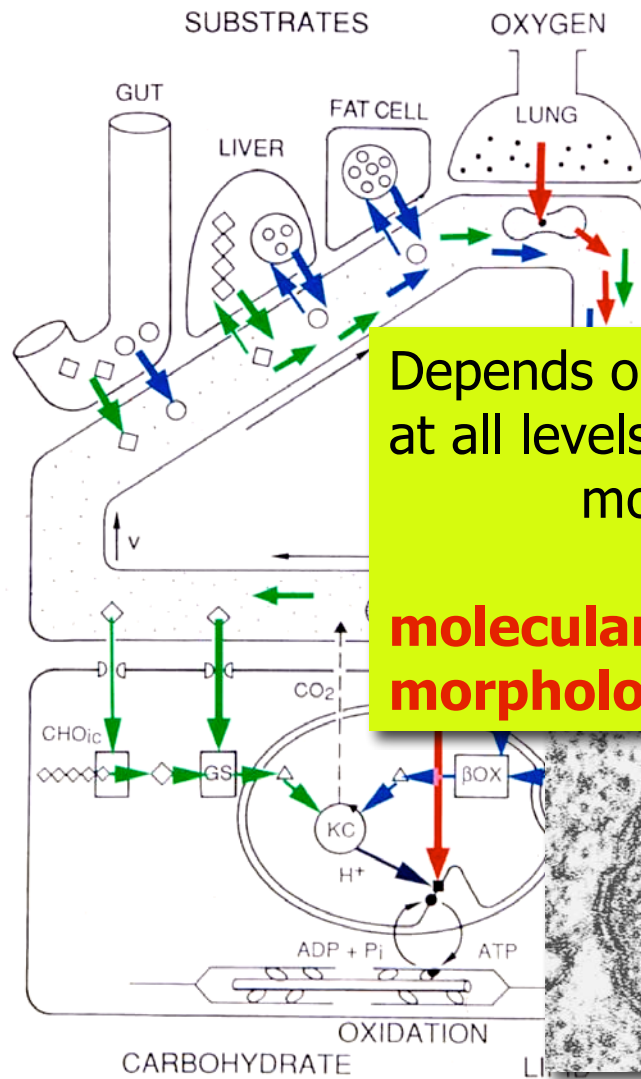
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# The Evolution of USGEB — the shoots

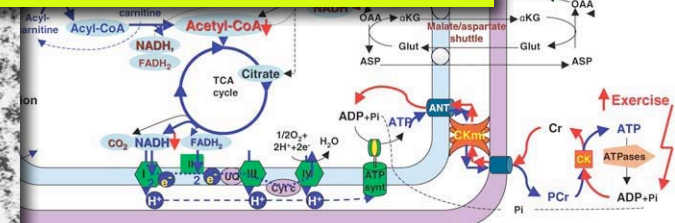
## The case of mitochondria ...

### ... a case for **systems biology**



Depends on structured collaborative research  
at all levels of organization  
molecules - cells - organism

**molecular biology & cell biology &  
morphology & physiology are challenged**



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## The Future of USGEB

### The Mission beyond 2009:

The contemporary translation of the Mission of USGEB should be

- to foster **Systems Biology**  
at **all** its **levels**  
in **all** its **aspects**
- to promote the **integration of structure & function**  
in all research & teaching activity in biology & medicine
- to facilitate the **interdisciplinary dialogue** to help  
bridge the communication gap between specialists

**This should remain the philosophy at the basis of USGEB**

*This is its raison d'être*



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# 40 Years USGEB

of Roots

&

Shoots



**Best wishes for the years beyond !**