

EDITORIAL

How Development supports early career researchers

James Briscoe*[§] and Seema Grewal^{†,§}

Development is a not-for-profit journal; our publishing company, The Company of Biologists, is a registered charity and it, as well as the journal itself, is run by scientists for scientists. What this means for us is that, alongside publishing high-quality articles, our mission is to support our community – stem cell and developmental biologists like you. As an important part of this mission, we aim to provide resources and support for early career researchers (ECRs). We recognise that undergraduate researchers, PhD students, post-docs and those recently appointed to their first independent position are at the heart of the field and represent its future. We also know that being an ECR is challenging: funding can be very competitive, employment can be insecure and gaining experience in the skills needed to be a successful researcher can be difficult. To support ECRs and help them navigate the hurdles and opportunities of a research career, Development has been working hard in recent years to establish and fund several initiatives designed specifically with ECRs in mind.

In this issue, we are pleased to introduce another new initiative – ‘Transitions in development’. This series of articles features interviews with principal investigators (PIs), assistant professors and their equivalents who are within the first five or so years of establishing their own research group. Each of the articles will chart the individual career paths of the investigator and discuss the pleasures and pains they’ve encountered as they’ve transitioned from post-doc to PI. Our aim is to illustrate that there is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ when it comes to securing an independent position and setting up a research programme. Instead, each story is unique and often highlights a less than conventional path. In addition, by discussing some of the challenges and difficulties new investigators have met and overcome, we hope to offer encouragement to other ECRs and stimulate discussion. The first two articles in this series feature Tom Nowakowski (Eve, 2021) and Rosa Uribe (Galander, 2021), and in upcoming issues you will hear more from other ECRs across the world.

Complementing the ‘Transitions in development’ series, we will also continue with our ‘The people behind the paper’ interviews. In these articles, which originated on the Node (another initiative run by and funded by Development) and now feature more prominently in the journal, we interview the authors of select Development papers to find out a little more about the backstory to a study. We enjoy hearing about where ideas came from and how a study developed over time. It’s also interesting, and sometimes surprising, to learn a little more about the researchers themselves. We hope these articles offer a new perspective on some of the research articles we publish and further support the community feel of the field.

We are also continuing ‘Development presents...’ – our free monthly webinar series that anyone can attend. Each month,

a different Development Editor acts as the host and invites talks from authors of exciting new papers and preprints. We launched this series back in October 2020 in an attempt to bring the community together during the pandemic. We were also aware that the lack of in-person conferences during the pandemic meant that ECRs were missing out on the opportunity to present and discuss their research, and to get feedback from colleagues. With this in mind, we have been encouraging ECRs (e.g. first authors) to speak at these webinars and we are pleased to see that, a year on from the first webinar, the series is becoming a forum for supporting ECRs as well as showcasing the latest research in our field. To find out more about ‘Development presents...’, and to sign up to attend future webinars, please head over to the Node: <https://thenode.biologists.com/devpres/>.

We also recognize that navigating and participating in the peer-review process is an important part of training for many ECRs. For this reason, Development encourages the involvement of postdocs and other ECRs in the peer-review process. We simply ask that the name of the ECR co-reviewing the article is reported to the journal, not only so that we can send them a thank you email, but also so that we can ask if they want to be added to our list of reviewers, allowing us to approach them directly in the future. In line with this, we are excited to announce that we are part of ASAPbio’s ‘Preprint Reviewer Recruitment Network’ (<https://asapbio.org/preprint-reviewer-recruitment-network>). This pilot scheme aims to provide journals and editors with access to potential reviewers while also helping researchers, especially ECRs, break into reviewing or editing roles. Although it’s still early days for the pilot, we are looking forward to seeing how it pans out. For ECRs interested in gaining additional science writing and editing experience, preLights provides an excellent opportunity. Set up by our parent organisation The Company of Biologists, preLights is a community platform for selecting and highlighting preprints in the biological sciences. It’s run by a team of ECRs (called ‘preLighters’) who write short summaries of new preprints they are interested in. As part of this summary, the preLighters include their thoughts on the significance of the preprint and highlight questions they have for the preprint authors; in the majority of cases, we also see the preprint authors answering these questions, often leading to a fruitful dialogue. If you are an ECR and would like to write for preLights, please do get in touch with the preLights team (prelights@biologists.com).

Promoting diversity and inclusion within our research community is also important to Development (Briscoe and Brown, 2020). In January 2020, we launched the Node Network – a directory of developmental and stem cell biologists. The aim was to create an inclusive and diverse list of people in the field that allows researchers to list, for example, their gender, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation, alongside their scientific interests. The network now has almost 1000 members and is used by conference organisers, journal editors and seminar organisers to identify appropriate speakers and referees. We think the Node Network is particularly useful for ECRs, who might not yet be as well-known as more established investigators. If you would like to

*Editor-in-Chief, Development. †Acting Executive Editor, Development.

[§]Authors for correspondence (james.briscoe@crick.ac.uk; seema.grewal@biologists.com)

^{id} J.B., 0000-0002-1020-5240; S.G., 0000-0001-6372-8590

join the network, or if you are looking for ideas of who to invite to a conference or seminar, you can view it at <https://thenode.biologists.com/network/>. Do also remember that the Node itself is full of resources for ECRs and more senior researchers alike, providing a place where you can debate science, advertise events, look for jobs and generally interact with the community.

Finally, as the world begins to open back up after the pandemic, don't forget our workshop programme, which provides funded places for ECRs (<https://www.biologists.com/workshops/>), and our Travelling Fellowships (<https://www.biologists.com/travelling-fellowships/>). These fellowships, which form part of The Company of Biologists' long-running grants programme (<https://www.biologists.com/grants/>), offer up to £2500 to PhD students and post-doctoral researchers to support collaborative visits to other laboratories. The funding is to help cover the cost of travel, accommodation and other related expenses. There is no restriction on nationality or location, and the application process is straightforward. You can read about some of the experiences of

fellowship recipients on the Node (<https://thenode.biologists.com/tag/travelling-fellowship/>) and see how they have helped advance projects and stimulated new ideas.

We hope these programmes – from the long-standing schemes to the newer initiatives – are useful to ECRs within the community. We are always looking for ways in which we can improve or add to the work we do to support developmental and stem cell biologists. If you have a new idea, or suggestions to improve existing schemes, or you simply want to express your support for what we are already doing, please do get in touch. We are always interested in hearing from our readers.

References

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