

EDITORIAL

Another year of Developments

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Before we look ahead to a fresh new year, we would like to take a moment to look back at 2021. It's a year that many of us won't forget in a hurry, even though some of us might want to. The pandemic continued to dominate both personal and professional lives. But, despite the disruption and challenges of the last 12 months, we are pleased to say that *Development* remains in fine form. This is in large part down to our staff and editors, so we'd like to thank all of them for their continuing dedication and commitment to the journal. Similarly, thanks are owed to our authors, who sent us high-quality submissions during these testing times, and to our referees, who have continued to give their time to the journal and provide the high-quality and constructive feedback editors and authors have come to expect from *Development*.

We've been fortunate to publish some really exciting science over the past year. Of course, as editors, we would never dream of having favourites – we love all our papers equally – but it was great to see the quality and diversity of our content was maintained throughout the year. This was certainly exemplified in our Special Issue on 'Imaging Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration', which contained studies that ranged from single-molecule imaging to whole-organ CT scans (<https://journals.biologists.com/dev/issue/148/18>). We've also published a number of articles as part of our Special Issue on 'The Immune System in Development and Regeneration' (<https://journals.biologists.com/dev/issue/149/8>). This Special Issue is being coordinated by two outstanding Guest Editors – Florent Ginhoux and Paul Martin – and contains a collection of primary research papers, reviews and commentaries that explore the involvement of the immune system in development and regeneration. This is a topic that is of increasing interest and importance to the field so we hope that this Special Issue, which will be completed later this year, offers a fresh perspective and new insight, as well as encouraging more submissions in this area to *Development*.

Our mission as a not-for-profit organisation and a community journal took on a new significance during the pandemic, as disruption and delays have become common place. As in 2020, we continued to extend journal deadlines when needed, for both referees and authors. Our scoop protection policy means that there is no need to worry once your manuscript is submitted to *Development* or deposited on a preprint server. Moreover, even if a similar paper has been published recently, we will often be able to consider your study; just get in touch and we'd be happy to discuss. Also, note that all research papers submitted to the journal are handled by Academic Editors and our aim is to help authors through the publishing process because we want to see the best science published in *Development*. We try to ensure that

requests for revisions are limited to those essential to support the conclusions of your study and we are always happy to discuss revision plans with authors. It's worth remembering that 95% of the studies we invite for revision end up being accepted for publication.

As international travel was difficult or impossible for most of the year, we also continued with 'Development presents...' – the free monthly webinar series that we launched back in 2020 to bring the community together during the pandemic. It's been fantastic to see so many new and familiar faces coming together each month to listen to some of latest research in the field. We were especially thrilled to see so many people at the most recent event, which celebrated 25 years of the publication of the Zebrafish Special Issue of *Development* (<https://journals.biologists.com/dev/collection/6980/The-zebrafish-issue-25-years-on>). Our 2021 journal meeting was also held online. This meeting was jointly organised with our sister journal, *Disease Models and Mechanisms*, and the theme was 'Developmental Disorders: From Mechanism to Treatment'. It provided a forum for physicians, clinical geneticists and basic scientists working to understand and treat a wide variety of diseases. Despite missing some of the benefits of an in-person meeting it was a superb conference; you can read a report from two of the attendees on the Node (<https://thenode.biologists.com/meeting-report-developmental-disorders-from-mechanism-to-treatment/meeting-reports/>). The science was very strong, there was great engagement from the virtual audience, and the format allowed innovative features, including a session where we heard directly from patients.

An advantage of online conferences, of course, is that they widen participation as people unable to travel for financial reasons, caring responsibilities, visa restrictions or any other reason can attend. This has certainly been the case for our online events, where we've welcomed people from across the globe. Virtual conferences also remove the need to travel and so are more sustainable than in-person conferences. Conscious of this, our publisher, The Company of Biologists, recently launched a Sustainable Conferencing Initiative. This initiative aims to support efforts to trial virtual conference technologies and formats, whether these are entirely online or hybrid conferences involving a mixture of in-person and virtual attendance. As you plan your meetings and conferences for this year and beyond, we encourage you to think about sustainability, and whether we can help (see here for more information: <https://sustainability.biologists.com/>).

Another trend that has continued throughout the pandemic is the increasing use of preprints in the field. We are pleased to see this because *Development* has supported preprint use for several years. We encourage authors to post preprints and have made it easy to transfer manuscripts between *Development* and bioRxiv and vice versa. We also realise it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the latest and most relevant preprints in the field so, to help with this, we are involved in several initiatives. The Node, our online community site, posts monthly lists of preprints relevant to

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developmental and stem cell biology (<https://thenode.biologists.com/monthly-preprint-list/>). In addition, the community platform preLights (<https://prelights.biologists.com/>), which was set up by The Company of Biologists, features short summaries of notable preprints that are selected and written by early career researchers. We are also continuing to develop additional initiatives that we hope will help Development readers navigate preprints...so watch this space!

Development is committed to Open Access publishing and, in 2021, over 30% of the research papers we published were Open Access. In line with our commitment to Open Access, Development and the other journals published by The Company of Biologists were the first journals to be given ‘Transformative Journal’ status according to Plan S criteria (defined by cOAlition S; <https://www.coalition-s.org/>). This means that authors now have three options for publishing in Development. First, authors can continue to use the traditional route and pay nothing to publish. In this case, the article is available to Development subscribers for 6 months and is then freely available to everyone after this time. Second, authors can publish their article as Gold Open Access by paying an article-processing charge. This means the article is immediately available to everyone upon publication. Finally, for institutions with a ‘Read and Publish’ agreement, we provide unlimited access to all our content and corresponding authors from these institutions are offered unlimited free Open Access publication for research papers. It is pleasing to see a growing list of institutions on this list (<https://www.biologists.com/library-hub/read-publish/participating-institutions/>). In addition, our agreement with EIFL (<https://www.biologists.com/library-hub/read-publish/library-consortia/eifl/>) enables corresponding authors in 30 developing and transition economy countries to publish Open Access research articles free of charge in the journal. We hope that this range of options means that there is something appropriate for all authors, whatever their funder or financial status, and that it allows us to make research accessible to everyone, as quickly as possible.

In addition to promoting Open Access, Development has been supporting innovation in peer review. During the past year, we have been working with Review Commons to develop journal-independent peer review. This allows authors to have their manuscript peer reviewed in a journal agnostic manner; the paper is submitted to Review Commons and is then sent to referees without an associated journal name. Once reviews are received, authors can respond to the referee comments before deciding to submit the work to one of the affiliated journals. If you choose Development, we use the peer review comments, author responses, and our editorial assessment to decide whether the paper is appropriate for the journal. We have been pleased with our experience of this initiative – the quality of the peer review has been high and we have published several papers that have been reviewed in this way – and will continue to collaborate with Review Commons in 2022.

We have also been participating in ASAPbio’s ‘Preprint Reviewer Recruitment Network’ (<https://asapbio.org/preprint-reviewer-recruitment-network>). This scheme aims to help researchers gain experience in peer review and it also provides journals and editors with access to potential reviewers. In addition, the Node Network – a directory of developmental and stem cell biologists – has continued to provide us with a way of identifying appropriate referees, as well as potential conference and seminar speakers. The directory, which now has over 1000 members, is an inclusive and diverse list of people in the field; researchers can choose to list, for example, their gender, race/ethnicity and sexual

orientation, alongside their scientific interests. It is particularly useful for identifying early career researchers, who might not yet be as well-known as more established investigators. You can join or view the network at <https://thenode.biologists.com/network/>. We hope these initiatives will help promote diversity and inclusion within our research community. Moreover, as a signatory on the ‘Joint commitment for action on inclusion and diversity in publishing’ (<https://www.rsc.org/new-perspectives/talent/joint-commitment-for-action-inclusion-and-diversity-in-publishing/>), we have been working with other publishers to improve our understanding of the diversity in our communities, and to improve representation and inclusivity of diverse groups in our own activities. Although we’re still in the early stages of collecting data, it is encouraging to see from our analysis of gender balance that women made up approximately 35% of our corresponding author and active reviewer pools in 2021, which is in line with our earlier analyses and, we think, likely representative of our community (see Briscoe and Brown, 2020).

Looking ahead to this year, there’s lots to be excited about. We’re well underway with plans for this year’s journal meeting, ‘From Stem Cells to Human Development’. This conference series is now in its fifth iteration, and it has become a ‘must attend’ event for researchers in the burgeoning field of human development. We’re very pleased to have Prisca Liberali (Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research, Switzerland), Samantha Morris (Washington University School of Medicine, USA) and Wei Xie (Tsinghua University, China) on board as organisers and they have lined up a great set of speakers. The meeting will take place in person on 11-14 September at Wotton House, Surrey, UK. You can find out more and register your interest here: <https://www.biologists.com/meetings/humandev2022/>. We do hope to see you there, but if you are unable to attend in person, we will be making some elements of the conference available online.

We are also now accepting submissions for our next Special Issue, which is on the topic of “Modelling Development *In Vitro*”. This Special Issue will be an opportunity for authors to showcase innovative *in vitro* models of development and report on how these are being used to further our understanding of developmental and regenerative processes; you can find out more here: <https://journals.biologists.com/dev/pages/in-vitro>. We also encourage the submission of articles that report the development or application of novel methods relevant to modelling development *in vitro*. The submission deadline is the end of February 2022, so if you have a suitable manuscript please do send it our way, or get in touch with us at devspecialissue@biologists.com if you’d like to discuss a potential submission.

I’m sure we all hope that in 2022 we will begin to put the worst effects of the pandemic behind us. With this in mind, don’t forget our Travelling Fellowships (<https://www.biologists.com/travelling-fellowships/>). Collaboration and exchange have been crucial to progress in developmental biology, and our Travelling Fellowships support this. They form part of The Company of Biologists’ long-running grants programme (<https://www.biologists.com/grants/>) and offer up to £2500 for PhD students and post-doctoral researchers to visit other laboratories for collaboration. The funding can be used to 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.

Finally, let us finish by again thanking you – our readers, authors and referees. It has been another challenging year and we are very grateful for your support. Without the developmental biology community there would be no *Development*. We wish everyone a productive and more predictable 2022 and we hope this year that most of the questions and challenges we are dealing with are once again scientific. We are always interested in hearing from you.

If you have feedback, suggestions or want to tell your story, please get in touch.

Reference

Briscoe, J. and Brown, K. (2020). Inclusion and diversity in developmental biology: introducing the Node Network. *Development* **147**, dev187591. doi:10.1242/dev.187591