

Development in 2007: new developments and sad goodbyes

Last year's Editorial mentioned several ways in which *Development* was changing. These included a change in design, the introduction of the Research Report (short reports) section, free electronic reprints and the digitisation of our back issues, which are freely available online at *Development's* website. We also said farewell to one of our longest-serving Editors, Denis Duboule. This year may have seen fewer changes, but they are none the less significant.

For Editors, authors and referees, the most obvious innovation took place in October, when we switched our electronic submission system from Espere to Bench>Press. This change (which involved a great deal of hard work by staff at *Development* and the Company of Biologists) should make manuscript submission easier, simplify the task of refereeing papers, and improve efficiency. Overall, the new system should increase the already rapid speed with which we handle manuscripts and get them published, particularly online. Among the changes introduced, Bench>Press now allows authors to specify second- and third-choice Editors, in case their Editor of choice is away or otherwise unable to handle the manuscript, and it also allows authors to suggest and exclude potential reviewers. Speaking as an Editor, I greatly appreciate suggestions as to referees, but I should make it clear that I do not necessarily use them! My colleagues and I do, however, always respect requests to exclude reviewers (within reason; it is not possible, for example, to exclude scientists from a particular country or region as referees, and should such a request be made we'll always get back to the author, asking her or him to be more specific). The other helpful feature of Bench>Press is that it allows much more efficient communication between Editors, so that if I, for example, am assigned a manuscript concerning Smad signalling in *C. elegans*, I can readily seek advice from Iva Greenwald, *Development's C. elegans* Editor. This allows us to set consistent standards across the journal and to take advantage of one of the really important features of *Development* – that we are a journal edited by working scientists, who know their fields well and who value science over fashion.

I mention consistent standards because, over the last few years, the acceptance rate at *Development* has been falling as my colleagues and I strive to publish only the very best research into developmental biology and to produce a journal where every paper counts. This has not always been an easy job, and my colleagues and I are sometimes taken to task, often in an unnecessarily aggressive and personal manner, by authors who point out that their paper, just rejected, would have certainly have been accepted a year ago. Like Pernille Rørth at *The EMBO Journal* (Rørth, 2005), we read all such letters of rebuttal very carefully, but the fact is that they rarely cause us to change our minds and if anything they serve only to waste time that authors might better use doing more experiments or resubmitting their paper somewhere else. Our decisions are not made lightly and, importantly, they are made in the context of all the papers received by the journal.

In our quest to reduce our reviewing times further, and to save work for our referees, *Development* is also increasing the number of papers that are rejected editorially; that is, without review. To refer again to Pernille Rørth's excellent editorial in *The EMBO Journal* (Rørth, 2005) we do this because we are very confident that, had the paper been sent out for review, the reviewers would have recommended rejection.

One effect of our increased stringency has been an increase in the so-called Impact Factor of *Development*, from 7.15 to 7.66. An increase in Impact Factor is not an end in itself, but I hope that it indicates that the journal is going in the right direction, and publishing the best work in developmental biology.

Finally, and with great regret, I must report the departure of three of *Development's* Editors.

Judith Eisen has been with the journal since 2004. She was the journal's first Editor to specialise in zebrafish development, a long overdue appointment in light of *Development's* commitment to this subject, a commitment highlighted by the famous zebrafish volume, published in 1995, complete with its flip-the-page movie of early zebrafish development! Judith was a terrific Editor who had a great eye for what was important and she has done much to maintain *Development's* portfolio of zebrafish work.

Ruth Lehmann has been Deputy Editor-in-Chief since 2003, and she has brought to *Development* her considerable expertise in *Drosophila* developmental biology. Ruth has been a wonderful colleague and advisor, and I have greatly enjoyed working with her. She leaves because she has recently taken over as Director of the Skirball Institute, a position that, unfortunately for us, will take up any spare time she has when she's not in the lab. We congratulate her on this well-deserved appointment and wish her well. Thanks for everything, Ruth.

And finally, the other Editor to leave is Andrew Lumsden. Andrew has worked with *Development* for no fewer than 11 years, and has done more than anyone to establish our profile and position in developmental neurobiology. Andrew too has been a great colleague and a great Editor, and he has always worked hard to ensure that the very highest standards are maintained. Eleven years is a long time, and my colleagues and I will all miss Andrew, who has managed, of course, to produce some very important science at the same time as being an Editor. He leaves to establish a new journal in the field of developmental neurobiology, and we'll follow its progress with interest!

It is a mark of this journal's standing in the field that three such superb scientists have agreed to work as Editors at *Development*. And it is in this tradition that I am extremely pleased to welcome another tremendous scientist to the journal. Steve Wilson is a Professor at the Department of Anatomy and Developmental Biology at University College London. Steve has long been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of *Development*, and has frequently provided help and sage advice to the journal, so I am delighted that he is joining us. Steve's interests are in developmental neurobiology, particularly in the zebrafish, and in this regard he provides some of the expertise we lose with the departure of Judith and Andrew.

By the time you read this, there will be two new editors to provide more expertise in *Drosophila* development and in developmental neurobiology. These will be the subjects of another short editorial. Until then, let me thank everyone involved in *Development*, especially Executive Editor Jane Alfred, and all our staff, authors, reviewers and readers, for their work and interest, and let me wish everyone a happy and successful year.

Reference

Rørth, P. (2005). Editor's Note. Authors, reviewers and editors at *The EMBO Journal*. *EMBO J.* **24**, 3831-3833.

Jim Smith (Editor in Chief)