

## EDITORIAL

# A new Editor-in-Chief for Development

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As many of you will be aware, The Company of Biologists initiated a search last year for a new Editor-in-Chief for Development, after Olivier Pourquié announced his intention to step down in September 2018. Following community consultation and a shortlisting and interview process, we are delighted to announce that James Briscoe will be the journal's new Editor-in-Chief.

Many of you will already be familiar with James and his research. As a developmental neurobiologist working on the vertebrate spinal cord, he has a particular interest in using quantitative approaches to understanding how signalling pathways (particularly sonic hedgehog) regulate gene expression networks to control patterning, cell fate specification and growth of this tissue. His lab uses a range of *in vivo*, *in vitro* and *in silico* models to gain insight into this question at the molecular, cellular and tissue scales. For those interested in finding out more about James, we invite you to read our Spotlight interview with him elsewhere in this issue (Brown, 2018).

The position of Editor-in-Chief of Development is an important one in the developmental biology field – given Development's position as a key community journal. The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for (among other things) appointing the editorial team, overseeing the handling of papers submitted to us, and setting new priorities for the journal. It was therefore important to us to gather input from the community as we set about appointing a successor to Olivier. We are hugely grateful to those of you – editorial board members, referees, authors and readers – who took the time to respond to our community consultation and provide feedback, not only on who they would like to see running Development, but also more broadly on how we are doing as a journal. Many of you are aware that, as a member of The Company of Biologists' Board of Directors, James was part of the advisory group who initiated the consultation. He stepped away from any involvement in the process as soon as his name began to appear in nominations. The responses were collated by the three of us, and here we would like to share with you some of that feedback.

Your responses were, in general, consistent with our own assessment of the journal's standing. We heard that Development is seen as a high-quality, rigorous venue for publication, with excellent academic editors, a 'tough but fair' review process and good production values. We were delighted that many respondents picked up on some of our more recent innovations – cross-referee commenting during peer review, openness to preprints, and our strong online presence, particularly through our community blog the Node. Given that the Node was launched at least in part in response to the consultation we conducted when looking for a new Editor-in-

Chief to replace Jim Smith, it was fantastic to see how much traction the Node has now gained in the community. A recurring theme in the feedback on the journal's strengths was that Development is the 'journal of reference' for the field, and that Development papers 'stand the test of time'. If this is how we are seen in the community, we are clearly doing something right!

You also told us that Development can be seen as 'hard to get into considering its impact factor' and that competition from newer journals means that Development is sometimes seen as a less attractive choice, especially for early career researchers. These are of course issues of which we are all too aware. As signatories of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), we would argue that impact factor is a poor proxy for journal quality, and an even worse one for individual papers. That this measure still holds so much sway, particularly in certain geographic regions, is disappointing, and is something that The Company of Biologists – as a supporter of the newly revamped DORA project – is trying to change. Nevertheless, Development recognises that you as authors have a wide choice of journals to which you can submit, and the team will continue to work to make the journal an attractive option.

Looking to the future, we were delighted to hear that many respondents feel it is important for Development to maintain and strengthen the focus on stem cells, regeneration and human development. However, this is clearly not the only area in which developmental biology is growing: there was strong support for increased visibility in the genomics, biophysics, quantitative and systems biology, and evo-devo fields. These are all fields that Development has highlighted as future priorities for the journal, and the team looks forward to working with many of you to realise the potential of these areas.

Away from consideration of specific research areas, we heard that Development should do more to support and advocate for the field (this is actually something the Development team is actively working on – look out for news in an Editorial in the near future!) and that we should continue to support our communities through our charitable activities – and, if possible, grow these. Development and The Company of Biologists see these activities – meeting grants, travelling fellowships, workshops and so on – as a key part of our 'raison d'être', and you can rest assured that The Company will continue to give back to the community as much as we can.

On the specifics of the choice of new Editor-in-Chief, your feedback helped us to draw up a 'wish-list' for the kind of person we wanted to lead the journal. We were looking for an individual whose research is at the cutting edge of developmental biology, with interdisciplinary skills, broad interests in the field and a strong vision for the future of the journal – to build on the developments that Olivier initiated, bring new ideas to further strengthen the journal, and be an active advocate for Development. James fulfils all these criteria and more, as evidenced by the fact that his name came up over and over again in the feedback we received; in fact, he was suggested by almost half of those who provided specific names – around four times as often as any other single individual. The unanimous view was that James is an outstanding candidate to

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succeed Olivier, and we are delighted that he has agreed to take on this role.

Over the next few months, James will be working alongside Olivier to ensure a smooth handover when Olivier steps down in September. You'll be hearing more from him later in the year when he officially takes over the editorship. As James gets ready to take the reins, he (and the journal more broadly) welcomes any feedback

or suggestions that you might have for how you would like to see the journal develop. In the meantime, we hope you will join us in congratulating James on his appointment, and in wishing him luck as he steps up to this challenging and important position!

#### Reference

**Brown, K.** (2018). An interview with James Briscoe. *Development* **145**, dev165274.