

## EDITORIAL

# Zooming into 2021

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The past year has been challenging. On the one hand, science has never been more prominent or important in the news and public mind; on the other hand, many of us have had to worry about friends and family, struggle to cope with home, research and teaching commitments, and deal with anxiety and uncertainty. None of us could have foreseen the events of 2020 and the consequences they have had. Given the circumstances, however, it has been inspiring to see the resilience and strength of character of so many. This is certainly true of the staff working for Development. Throughout the period, our editors have managed to continue handling papers with the efficiency and diligence you've come to expect, even as they coped with their own difficulties. Equally importantly, all internal staff at The Company of Biologists, who you may be less familiar with – the in-house editors, administrators and production team – kept the journal going as they transitioned to working from home, and authors, referees and readers continued to receive the highest quality service. We would like to thank all the staff for their dedication and commitment; it is much appreciated.

We have done our best to support the developmental biology community through this period. For both reviewers and authors, we have been able to extend journal deadlines when needed. Of course, our scoop protection policy means that authors do not need to worry about being scooped once a manuscript is submitted and even if a similar paper has recently been published, we are often able to consider your study. Do get in touch if this is relevant to you. We re-emphasised to reviewers that requests for revisions should be limited to those essential to support the conclusions of the paper and, as editors, we try to provide guidance on the revisions that are necessary when we send the reviewers' reports. We also encourage authors to discuss revision plans with editors, if that would be helpful. Our Reviews Editors Seema Grewal and Alex Eve also spent time providing useful tips to authors and referees through the Node (see <https://thenode.biologists.com/an-introduction-to-writing-review-articles/careers/>; <https://thenode.biologists.com/getting-involved-in-peer-review/careers/>; <https://thenode.biologists.com/another-look-at-peer-review-reviewing-review-articles/resources/>).

We have closely monitored the submissions we have been receiving over the past 9 months. You can read the full details at <https://thenode.biologists.com/development-through-the-pandemic/news/>. We haven't noticed any obvious change in the number of papers submitted, nor in the average time taken for referees to review papers. As working from home can disproportionately disadvantage women, we've also looked at whether there has been a decrease in the number of papers submitted with female corresponding authors or female first authors. While the methodology is not perfect, the data suggest that, for Development, there has not been a decrease in the proportion of female authors, compared with previous years.

We hope this reflects the supportive and collegial nature of the field, as well as the grit and determination of individuals.

Even before 2020, we had begun to think about disparities and biases in academia and in science publishing, and the events of the past year have only brought these issues into sharper focus. In February, we launched the Node Network, a directory of developmental and stem cell biology researchers designed to help conference organisers, journal editors and seminar organisers by creating a diverse list of people in the field. It is an inclusive directory for all of the developmental biology and stem cell communities in which, alongside your scientific interest, you can list, if you so wish, your gender, ethnicity, etc. It already has more than 800 members. If you would like to join the Network, or if you are looking for ideas of who to invite to a conference or seminar, the directory can be found at <https://thenode.biologists.com/network/>. Over the summer, we also joined with other publishers 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/>). By working with other publishers, we aim to better understand and reflect the diversity in our communities, and to improve representation and inclusivity of diverse groups in our activities. Of course, we are still at the beginning of addressing these long-running issues. We recognise that there is much more we need to do, but we hope these first steps help improve diversity and inclusivity in our field and community.

The suspension of international travel has meant that many conferences this year have gone online. This was true for Development's 'From Stem Cells to Human Development' which took place in September. You can read a report at <https://www.biologists.com/stories/behind-the-scenes-of-development-meeting-2020-from-stem-cells-to-human-development/>. While it certainly wasn't the same as meeting in-person, the science presentations were fantastic and the software we used allowed informal conversations between small groups of participants, replicating at least a little of the feel of a good conference. Virtual conferences do have some advantages, of course. They are more sustainable and eco-friendlier than in-person conferences, and also help to broaden accessibility to those unable to travel due to financial constraints, caring responsibilities or for any other reason. Given these considerations, our publisher, The Company of Biologists, has launched a new Sustainable Conferencing Initiative (<https://www.biologists.com/sustainable-conferencing/>) to supply information through an online hub, to experiment with different formats, to learn how to adapt virtual conference technologies to support hybrid conferences and to support sharing research in more sustainable ways. Relevant grants will also be offered in due course. We are particularly keen to gather feedback from the community on sustainable conferencing, so please do get in touch at [sustainability@biologists.com](mailto:sustainability@biologists.com).

Given that virtual events provide the opportunity for wider participation, we recently started Development Presents, a monthly free webinar that anyone can attend, in which we showcase the latest

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developmental biology and stem cell research. Each month a different Development Editor acts as the host and invites talks from authors of exciting new papers and preprints. We particularly encourage the first authors to present their work and our intention is that the series becomes a forum for supporting early-career researchers. As well as presentations and live Q&A sessions, there is the opportunity to meet the speakers, fellow participants and Development Editors at interactive virtual tables after the talks. It's also a chance to meet up with and have a quick chat with developmental biology friends you might not have seen for some time. The next Development Presents is on January 13 and will be hosted by Swathi Arur – for more details and to register, see <https://thenode.biologists.com/DevPres/>.

Despite all the unusual and unanticipated activity this year, we have still found the time to make changes to Development to reflect and support our changing field. In February 2020, we welcomed five new Associate Editors to cover new and growing areas of developmental biology: Paul François (McGill University, Canada), providing expertise on the physics and computational modelling of developmental biology; Matthias Lutolf (EPFL, Switzerland), focussing on bioengineering; Irene Miguel-Aliaga (Imperial College London, UK), covering the intersection between metabolism and development; Samantha Morris (Washington University in St Louis, USA), focussing on single cell approaches; and Ken Poss (Duke University, USA), covering the field of regeneration. They are helping us to assess and handle papers in these areas, and to encourage the highest quality submissions.

We are also pleased to welcome James (Jim) Wells as a new Academic Editor. Jim is a Professor in the Divisions of Developmental Biology and Endocrinology, and Chief Scientific Officer of the Center for Stem Cell and Organoid Medicine at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. His research focusses on the development of gastrointestinal and endocrine organs using both *in vivo* and in human organoid systems. We hope you share our excitement for Jim joining the team. Jim is taking over from Gordon Keller, who is hanging up his editorial hat after 10 years of service. We are very grateful for Gordon's support for Development over the years and wish him well for the future.

In addition, it's a pleasure to introduce Hanna Mikkola as an Associate Editor. Hanna is Professor of Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology at UCLA, where she studies haematopoietic stem cells and the embryonic origin and differentiation of blood and immune cells. She will provide Development with expertise in these growing areas of interest. We are also delighted to announce that we have recruited two outstanding Guest Editors – Florent Ginhoux and Paul Martin – for our 2022 Special Issue, which will focus on the role of the immune system in development and regeneration. You can find out more about this Special Issue at <https://dev.biologists.org/content/immune>. And if you haven't yet seen the announcement of our 2021 Special Issue 'Imaging Development, Stem Cells and Regeneration', all the details can be found at <https://dev.biologists.org/content/imaging> and the submission deadline is the end of March. Following on from our 2020 Special Issue on The Origins and Mechanisms of Developmental Disorders (<https://dev.biologists.org/content/147/21>), we're also looking forward this year to a joint conference with our sister journal Disease Models & Mechanisms. We will be bringing together developmental biologists, human geneticists and clinical researchers who are united in the goal of understanding and treating developmental disorders, and we hope it will help build bridges from the bench to the

clinic. The Meeting will take place from 12-15 September 2021 and more details can be found at <https://www.biologists.com/meetings/mechanismtotreatment2021/>.

Although, at times, it may have felt as though the world stopped this year, the scientific landscape has continued to evolve, both in terms of new initiatives to improve the way in which manuscripts are assessed for publication and in terms of the Open Access agenda. On the first front, Development is working with Review Commons to pilot journal-independent peer review. With Review Commons, you submit your manuscript for peer review agnostic of the intended journal. You can then 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 rebuttal and our editorial assessment, and we are generally able to decide relatively swiftly on the appropriateness of the paper. So far, we have been pleased with our experience of this initiative; the quality of the peer review has been high and focussed on the science, and papers transferred from Review Commons have actually had a higher acceptance rate than those submitted directly. While we have only published a few Review Commons papers to date, we have several more in the pipeline and look forward to our continued collaboration with the platform.

From an Open Access standpoint, we were excited to announce earlier this year that Development, together with our sister titles Journal of Cell Science and Journal of Experimental Biology, became the first journals to be given 'Transformative Journal' status by cOAlition S (see <https://dev.biologists.org/content/147/18/dev196824> for more details). This represents the next step in our Open Access journey and signals our commitment to Open Access, while allowing us to offer publishing options for all our authors. From a practical perspective, it gives authors three options for publishing in Development. First, authors can continue to pay nothing to publish. In this case the article is available to our subscribers for 6 months and is then freely available to everyone after this time. Second, authors can pay an article-processing charge (APC; currently £2750) to publish their article Gold Open Access and it will be available to everyone immediately upon publication. Finally, if you are from an institution with a 'Read and Publish Agreement' you will have unlimited access to all of our content and, as a corresponding author, unlimited free Open Access publication for research papers (see <https://www.biologists.com/read-publish/participating-institutions/> for a full list of participating institutions). We hope that these three options mean that all authors are catered for, whatever their funder or financial status, and that it allows us to make research accessible to everyone, as quickly as possible. As a Transformative Journal, we are also committed to greater transparency in our processes, and you can find information about our acceptance rates and decision speeds, as well as some analysis of our costs, here.

Finally, let us finish by thanking you – our readers, authors and referees (all those who reviewed and co-reviewed papers for us are listed in the Supplementary Information) – it has been an extraordinary year and we are very grateful to you all for your support. Without you, there would be no Development. We expect you are looking forward to a calmer and more predictable 2021 where the challenges are, once again, scientific. Us too. As always, we're interested in hearing from you; whether you have feedback, suggestions or want to tell your story, please feel free to get in touch.