

EDITORIAL

Focussing on the past, the present and the future

Helen L. Zenner^{*,§} and Seema Grewal[‡]

FocalPlane (<https://focalplane.biologists.com/>) is a microscopy community site hosted by Journal of Cell Science that aims to facilitate communication within and across the microscopy community including cell biologists, chemists, engineers and bioimage analysts. It was launched almost three years ago, in July 2020 (Ahmad et al., 2020), at a time when access to labs was limited because of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we approach our third birthday, and as we see glimpses of a return to 'normal' following the pandemic, now seems like a good time to reflect on how the site has progressed and let you know our plans for the future.

The beginnings of FocalPlane came well before the website was launched; you can read about the origins of the site in the launch day blog post from Sharon Ahmad, the former Executive Editor at Journal of Cell Science. But we're pleased to see that, since its launch, FocalPlane has become a place for all the different communities involved in bioimaging to interact, whether that's through blog posts or sharing job adverts and events listings. Our blog posts are divided into eight main categories: Discussions, How to, Tools, Case studies, Interviews, Events, Education and Blog series. The 'How to' and 'Tools' categories are proving to be our most popular sections and are used by microscope developers and bioimage analysts to highlight new tools and offer tips and tricks in a more informal setting than a traditional publication. Going forward, we would love to hear more from the cell biology community on the application of microscopy to research, as well as wish lists for your imaging needs. Also look out for our 'Events' and 'Discussions' sections, which include calls for courses and details of how and where you can access the latest imaging technology.

The timing of the pandemic presented FocalPlane with the opportunity to support the community with a couple of online series, a journal club and our webinar series 'FocalPlane Features'. The webinar series kicked off in 2021 with a talk from Jennifer Lippincott-Schwartz on emerging imaging technologies for cell biology and was followed by webinars covering light-sheet microscopy, cryo-EM, CLEM and bioimage analysis. If you missed out on the webinars, or would like to check back on some details, you can find recordings on the site. Although these are no longer regular events, if you would be interested in hosting a webinar, or a short series of online events, please get in touch to see if we can help.

In 2022, we launched the FocalPlane Network (<https://focalplane.biologists.com/network/>), aiming to build a global database of bioimaging scientists. It is open for anyone in the community to access and join, regardless of career stage, and we hope it will encourage networking, as well as being a place to search for speakers, reviewers and panellists. The Network is

searchable by expertise, location and diversity characteristics. Our aim going forward is that you'll be able to use the Network to search for an expert in that new imaging technique that you've read about on FocalPlane and find out how to apply it to your research question!

At the beginning of 2023, we were delighted to appoint three FocalPlane correspondents, Mariana De Niz, Marta Forcella and Mai Rahmoon, as part of a joint programme with our sister site, the Node. It was wonderful to receive so many fantastic applications for the correspondent role. The applications from Mariana, Marta and Mai stood out because of the creativity of their ideas and their obvious passion for both microscopy and community building. Regular readers of FocalPlane will probably be familiar with Mariana's blog series on Latin American Microscopists, which has already taken her to Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Bolivia. Marianna will also be blogging about frugal microscopy and infectious disease research. Marta will be covering neuroscience and sustainability in microscopy. Finally, look out for Mai's 'How we started' series, taking a look at the imaging communities across the world. We are looking forward to working with Marianna, Marta and Mai throughout 2023, and hope to continue the correspondent scheme into 2024.

The other thing that is different for 2023, is me (H.Z.), the new FocalPlane Community Manager. I'm looking forward to building on the fantastic work of Christos Kyprianou and Esperanza Agullo-Pascual, as well as introducing some new features to the site and meeting the community to find out how FocalPlane can be useful to *you*. We're also looking forward to sharing some exciting news as we continue to build partnerships with the microscopy community.

Of course, FocalPlane wouldn't work without the engagement of the microscopy community, so we would like to thank all our readers, subscribers, and most of all, our contributors. We'd also like to thank our Scientific Advisory Board (Lucy Collinson, Ricardo Henriques, Florian Jug, Christophe Leterrier, Jennifer Li, Jennifer Lippincott-Schwartz and Kota Miura) for their continued support in driving the direction of the site. Remember, FocalPlane is *your* site. Once registered, you are free to post, and if you have suggestions or feedback, you can contact the team at focalplane@biologists.com. We hope that many of you are already regular readers of FocalPlane, but if not, we encourage you to visit the site and get involved!

Reference

Ahmad, S., Kyprianou, C. and Way, M. (2020). FocalPlane – a meeting place for the microscopy minded. *J. Cell Sci.* **133**, jcs250829. doi:10.1242/jcs.250829

*Community Manager of FocalPlane. ‡Executive Editor, Journal of Cell Science.

§Author for correspondence (helen.zenner@biologists.com)

 H.L.Z., 0000-0002-8578-9797