

Newsletter No: 189 June 2006



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

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SRF Chairman's Thoughts

Six months have passed since the publication of our last newsletter so it is time to update SRF members on the activities of the Council since January 2006 and to report on the progress of our journal *Reproduction*.

Uppermost in our thoughts at this time of year is the SRF Annual Conference. You will see from the programme secretary's report that Henry and the team at WEM have been working hard to organise the scientific programme and social events for Leeds in July. If you have not already registered, it is not too late to do so. Please come along and contribute. These conferences can only survive if SRF members both attend and present their work. To encourage younger members to join the Society and also to help underwrite the costs of attending SRF conferences, Council has introduced a new grant scheme to support postgraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows. This scheme will run for the first time in July. Please be reassured that the new scheme does not replace our long-standing travel grants but rather it compliments them. Further information on eligibility and how members can apply to SRF for either a travel grant or a grant to attend the Annual Conference are detailed on the SRF website. We hope the new scheme will also encourage students and postdoctoral fellows to join the Society. Plans for the next joint fertility societies' meeting in York in April 2007 are continuing at a pace. Additionally, discussions with our sister societies in Australia (ARB), USA (SSR) and Japan regarding the proposed first World Congress in Reproductive Biology in Hawaii in May 2008 are looking exciting.

Council are conscious of the continuing need to regenerate the Society by recruiting new members. In this regard Eduardo has recently reviewed the

demographics of our current membership. Some of his findings are published in this newsletter. It will be very interesting to see how the new grant scheme we have introduced will change our membership statistics over the next few years. We will continue to update our membership database with relevant information and review the figures on a year-by-year basis.

The news from our Journal is very encouraging. As you will see detailed in the Editor's report, Council continues to support John Carroll in his efforts to modernise the Journal. We are all hopeful that this investment will support the continued submission of high quality research papers and also speed up the turn around time for publication. The latest increase in the Citation Index for *Reproduction* detailed in this newsletter is very encouraging and serves to endorse this agenda. Advanced e-publication is soon to be implemented as part of the strategy to keep *Reproduction* competitive. While technology is driving new publishing practises, Council has not lost sight of the importance of the Society's older published papers. Consequently, we are looking at how best to digitise papers published in the *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* (JRF) and in *Reviews of Reproduction*. It is our intention to create a searchable digital archive accessible to members and non-members alike. To achieve this goal, we need to locate a complete series of JRF for digitization. Unfortunately this resource will not be returnable, as the journals must be dismantled to enable electronic processing. If any member can help locate /donate a complete series of JRF from a library or private collection please contact the SRF Secretariat.

Many of the items detailed in this newsletter together with the annual report from the Treasurer will be discussed in detail at the AGM in Leeds.

Please come along to this meeting to listen to the activities of Council on behalf of the Society and to contribute your thoughts on the management of SRF. If you are interested in contributing to the running of the SRF please think about nomination for election onto Council at the AGM as places for new Council members will become available. In this respect Keith Jones, former Treasurer, and Joanne Murray, Chair of the Publication Committee, will come to the end of their term of office on Council at this year's AGM. So, on behalf of SRF, I will close this article by thanking Keith and Joanne for their hard work over the last four years.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Leeds in July.

Helen Picton

Members of SRF Council

Chair:	Helen Picton
Treasurer and Company Secretary:	Martin Luck
General Secretary:	John Parrington
Programme Secretary:	Henry Jabbour
Editor in Chief:	John Carroll

Committee Chairs:

Finance:	Martin Luck
Meetings:	Henry Jabbour
Education & Development:	John Parrington

Ordinary members:	Richard Anderson Paul Fowler Colin Duncan Franchesca Houghton Eduardo Roldan
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Post-grad/doc Rep:	Bob Robinson
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Travel Grants and Vacation Scholarships

All non-statutory members of the Society are eligible to apply for travel grants to attend conferences organised by the SRF or other bodies. For further information including an online application form, please visit the website (www.srf-reproduction.org) or contact the SRF Business Office.

This year travel grants were awarded to Yuhong Bian, Pawel Bartlewski and Gareth Evans

The Society also sponsors Vacation Scholarships which help to fund promising undergraduate students who wish to carry out research projects in

their Easter or summer holidays. If you have a project, or know of a suitable student, please visit the website for further information about how to apply.

This year vacation scholarships were awarded to Tina Tremaine, Katie Dickinson, Victoria Crossland, Sarah Cassie, Anna Mathers, Esther Couce, James Duffy, Karolina Skorupskaite

From the Programme Secretary

The date for our up-coming SRF conference is fast approaching. This is held at The University of Leeds and is organised in conjunction with the National Ovarian Workshop (NOW). NOW will run on July 3rd with the SRF conference commencing with our Welcome reception in the evening of July 3rd and continuing over the following two days.

As you may already know, the conference will comprise of two symposia entitled "Endocrinology of Reproduction" and "Molecules of Reproduction". Professors Bruce Campbell and Anthony Flint will chair these sessions. The talks within these symposia will be delivered by excellent speakers invited from within UK, Europe, USA and Israel; the topics should appeal to a large section of our SRF membership. The conference will also include the Distinguished Scientist Lecture entitled "Estrogen action in the ovary" which will be delivered by Professor Jock Findlay from Prince Henry's Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, Australia. The 2006 recipient of the Marshall Medal will be Professor Anthony Flint from The University of Nottingham. Professor Flint will be presented with the Medal at our conference dinner on Tuesday 4th of July hosted at The Refectory of The University of Leeds. We will also have a session of the New Investigator Scientists. The SRF New Investigator Scientist for 2006 is Dr Bob Robinson from The University of Nottingham and he will give a lecture entitled "Physiological Control of angiogenesis in the corpus luteum". The SSR New Investigator Scientist is Dr Robert Viger and he will deliver a lecture entitled "The role of GATA transcription factors in mammalian reproductive function". For full details of the scientific programme of our 2006 conference please go to our webpage: <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/events/conf2006/overview.htm>

We have had a good submission rate of abstracts to this conference and our student members will make a strong presence in Leeds. We had a high number of abstracts submitted for consideration for the SRF student prize. Six abstracts have been short-listed for this prize and the students will present their work in an SRF student prize oral session.

Can I remind everyone that the postgradoc quiz will be hosted again this year (Monday evening after the Welcome reception) and both junior and senior

members of our society are invited and encouraged to attend. This is a great opportunity for our young members (especially those attending from far afield) to meet and mix with our more senior scientists. Similar to last year, the winner of the quiz will receive a free subscription to Reproduction.

I look forward to welcoming you all to what promises to be an excellent scientific gathering in Leeds.

The organisation of our SRF 2007 conference is underway and will be held in York from April 15-18 as part of the Fertility 2007 conference. This is a joint meeting of the UK fertility societies and will include SRF, British Fertility Society (BFS) and the Association of Clinical Embryologists (ACE). We are currently finalising the scientific programme and further information will follow in due course. The deadline for abstract submission for Fertility 2007 will be early next January.

Finally, council is always happy to receive nominations for future Marshall Medallists and for the SRF Distinguished Scientist Award. Each should take the form of a letter of commendation accompanied by an abridged CV for the candidate detailing:

- The area of expertise of the nominee
- Major contributions of the nominee to the field of reproductive biology
- Details of any professional honours already bestowed on the nominee
- An outline of the publication record of the nominee (total number of publications, indicating year of first publication)

Although nominations can be made by any individual member of the Society (irrespective of non-statutory or statutory status), the letter of commendation should list other members of the Society prepared to formally endorse the nomination.

In the first instance, nominations for the above award should be submitted to the SRF programme Secretary via the Business Office. Please send any nominations for our 2008 conference by March 1, 2007.

Henry N Jabbour

Marshall Medal

The 2006 recipient of the Marshall Medal will be Professor Anthony Flint from The University of Nottingham. Professor Flint will be presented with the Medal at our conference dinner on Tuesday 4th of July hosted at The Refectory of The University of Leeds.

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A list of past recipients of the Marshall Medal is available on the SRF website.

Membership Renewal

The Society's membership year runs from the 1st December until 30th November. Unfortunately, members who join the Society part way through a year will be served with a renewal notice before they have received 12 months member's benefits. However, in the interests of keeping administration costs to a minimum it is not possible to allow members to renew on the anniversary of their application being approved.

In order to allow members the opportunity to renew, the Members Only area of the website will remain accessible using your existing password until the end of February 2006, when new passwords will be issued to those who have returned their renewal forms. If you have any difficulty in renewing your membership, or would like new copies of the renewal form to be issued, please contact the Business Office.

Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

At SRF 2006, your new postgrad-doc representative will be elected. In our opinion, this is a fun and challenging role. The newly elected postgrad-doc

rep will hold office for 2 years and sit on the Meetings committee (which is quite an experience!!). If you want more information on what's involved or are interested in becoming SRF postgradoc representative then contact either myself or Suzanne.

Further to last year's phenomenal success of the postgradoc's quiz, this event will be repeated at SRF 2006. This will take place on the Monday evening after the Welcome Reception (details to follow). Following on from last year's Council baby photo competition further secrets of the Council will be revealed. To keep you all guessing details will be announced at the quiz. The main objective of this fun event is to allow postgrad-docs to mingle with other SRF members from different institutions. We feel that it is important that everyone gets the opportunity to see the council members in a new light. As it is not an experience to be missed!!!

Finally if you have any competition ideas, issues which you feel need raised or general queries about the Society and postgradoc elections then please contact myself or Suzanne:

Bob Robinson, University of Nottingham (Bob.Robinson@nottingham.ac.uk) or Suzanne Madgwick, University of Newcastle (suzanne.madgwick@ncl.ac.uk)

Bob Robinson

Publications

Dear SRF members,

Publishing papers: pressures, policies and editors

Recently, I was forced into a bout of reminiscing about my experience of publishing papers in years gone by. This was invoked by an office move and a clear out of all those reprints that I never quite managed to send out to colleagues (or that colleagues did not want). In a typically ineffective effort at multi-tasking I was also trying to decide where to send our latest paper and the pile of reprints reminded me of the days when submitting a paper was a relatively simple decision. Generally, it was based on choosing the Journal most appropriate for the subject of the research. These were heady days and my fellow PhD students and I spent many an hour celebrating papers we managed to publish in the Journal formerly known as *JRF* (now *Reproduction*).

In these days of league tables and metrics, the decision of where to send your paper is dependent on a plethora of outside influences and pressures. The increasing use of Impact Factor as a metric for research performance inevitably means this is a

major consideration. This has at least two effects that influence the behaviour of authors and editors. First, as authors we tend to aim high and often end up with one or two rejections (unless you get lucky of course) before the paper settles to its more natural home (such as *Reproduction*). Second, as editors, we develop strategies to increase the impact factor of the Journal with the aim of convincing authors to submit their best papers to *Reproduction*.

Attracting submissions

Editorial policy at *Reproduction* has been developed to promote the submission of more manuscripts investigating the molecular and cellular basis of reproduction. Focused reviews, new Editors and promotional material all emphasised the editorial direction of the Journal. This increase in scope has been widely welcomed since it represents a major growth area and reflects the research activity of many members of the Society. It goes without saying that this was designed to compliment rather than compete with the Journal's traditional strengths in reproductive physiology and endocrinology, to which we remain as committed ever (just check my address).

The increase in the scope of *Reproduction* has been accompanied by a focus on papers that inform on mechanisms of reproductive biology, that is, how it works, rather than what it looks like. Descriptive papers and papers of a more technical and applied nature can make very important contributions to a field, particularly when being described for the first time in any species. This aspect of novelty is what Editors look for when making decisions on these papers.

Keeping *Reproduction* at the forefront

The SRF Council remains very supportive of developing the Journal. For the Journal to be attractive to authors we need to ensure we have the latest functionality in electronic publishing. *Reproduction*-online has proven very popular and we will be soon introducing *Reproduction Advanced Publication* where manuscripts are published online the day after being accepted. This will reduce publication times by three months – all very important in this increasingly competitive environment.

The editorial and refereeing system have now moved over to a web-based system that Editors are finding much more efficient than the original email based system. We have been guilty of perhaps not being as hasty as we could be in the time it takes us to give authors the first decision on their manuscript. Improvements have been made in the last couple of years so that the mean time using the email system was reduced to 34 days. The good news is that using the new web-based system, the first 42 papers have been returned to authors after an average of 21 days. Let's hope this enthusiasm is maintained because it far outstrips our initial target of 28 days. Finally, we are not averse to some good

old fashion financial incentives and SRF Council continue to support the policy to keep publishing in *Reproduction* free for authors, that is, no page charges and free colour. Go on, submit your papers to *Reproduction* and spend your money on something more useful, like half a dozen new Gilsons or even attending the SRF Conference in Leeds.

More and more manuscripts

So, are we attracting more papers? The number of submissions to *Reproduction* has increased by 30-35% each year since moving to our new HighWire website, www.reproduction-online.org, in January 2004. This has resulted in a significant increase in the workload of our tireless and continuously impressive Editors and Referees, to whom I remain eternally grateful. This increase in the number of submissions has not been matched by an increase in the number of papers published with the result that our rejection rate has increased from about 40% to just beyond 60%. Provided we are choosing the right papers this also bodes well for the Impact Factor in the future. The full effect of the new website and editorial policies will not be seen until 2008 but we should start seeing some effect feeding through over the next couple of years.

Reviews – welcome Kevin Sinclair

Focus issues have proved to be a popular format and publication of topical exciting reviews is an important part of the Journals remit. To give the reviews the attention they deserve I have appointed Kevin Sinclair as the Reviews Editor. Kevin has shown great energy and enthusiasm that will be evidenced later this year by Focus Issues on TGFbeta signalling and another on Stem Cells in Reproduction. Also out next year will be Focus on Reproductive Aging and Focus on Female Health and Egg Quality. We are also looking for research manuscripts to accompany the reviews so please keep an eye out on the website for the timing of the Focus issues.

The Editors of *Reproduction* are committed to making the Society's Journal one of the best in the field. To do this we need to attract the best papers. So next time you are considering where to send your manuscript give Nature a miss and submit online at www.reproduction-online.org. In the meantime, we would welcome any comments or suggestions, whether it is for reviews or a new member of the Editorial Board.

* Late Breaking News! *

New impact factor for *Reproduction*: 3.14.

This is a big increase on last year's 2.44 The Journal's Editorial Board, SRF council, and our publishers, Bioscientifica, have all been working toward hitting 3 as our first target. Further increases can be expected in the coming years as the full

effect of reproduction-online and editorial policies take effect. A similar increase next year will put *Reproduction* amongst the top rated Journals in Reproductive Biology. Even more reason to send your best papers to your Society's Journal.

Education and Development

A key function of the Education and Development committee of the SRF is helping to develop the scientific careers of young and not so young reproductive biologists through awarding Travel Grants and Vacation Scholarships. However we also have another potential role which is facilitating the public understanding of new developments in reproductive biology and generating interest in our field of research among young people who might be considering careers in science. In this context we are very well placed in the UK as there are not only a variety of science festivals throughout the year but there are now a host of other recent developments such as the Science Learning Centres aimed at improving the teaching of science in schools, and new initiatives from the British Council, Royal Society, British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. The Science Media Centre is another recent development whose aim is to facilitate exchange between scientists and the media with the aim of promoting the voices, stories and views of the scientific community to the news media when science is in the headlines. The Education and Development committee would be very interested in hearing from SRF members who have been involved in science festivals or other events involving communication of science to the public, as well as interactions with the media, positive or otherwise. We would also welcome suggestions as to what scope there might be for sponsoring public understanding of science events where there is a reproductive biology theme.

John Parrington

Honorary Members

Would you like to nominate a colleague for the distinction of becoming an Honorary Member of the Society for Reproduction and Fertility? If you consider someone to be worthy of this tribute, please pass their details forward to the General Secretary, giving justification for your nomination and the name of a second, supporting member of the Society. Proposals for Honorary Membership may be put forward by both Statutory and Non-Statutory members of the Society.

New Investigator Awards

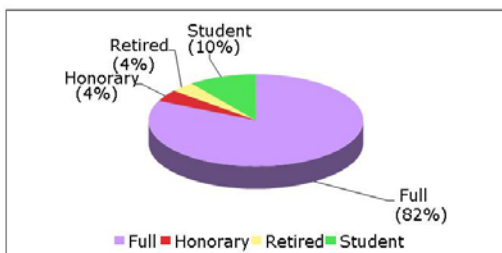
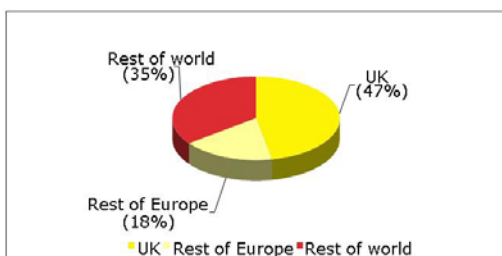
Recipients of the SRF New Investigator Award are selected from a short-list of eligible candidates on the basis of their abstract submission to the Annual Conference, their curriculum vitae and letters of support from senior colleagues. Eligible candidates will have completed ten years (or less) of post-doctoral research. We are currently interested in nominations for 2007.

SRF Website

We are introducing a new feature to the SRF website, dealing with the history of the Society. The first item will be the piece that appeared in the last newsletter by John Clarke. We would welcome suggestions for other items for this section. In the digital age the website will assume an increasingly important role as a way for members to follow the activities of the Society. We are always interested in suggestions for ways in which we can improve the website and make it more interactive.

SRF Membership

Eduardo Roldan has carried out a very interesting survey of SRF membership. Some of his findings are illustrated in the two pie charts below.



The following trends have emerged:

- Although the society is UK-based, there are a substantial number of members from other European countries (18%) and the rest of the world (35%), thus giving the society a true international projection.
 - There are members from 38 countries, in 4 continents. About 25% of members come from countries where English is not the native language.
 - Students (i.e. pursuing a PhD) make up 10% of members of the society, with a small proportion of retired scientists (4%) still involved.
 - In future, we would be interested in learning more about full members (82% of total), in terms of the stages they are at in their careers, whether they are post-docs or group leaders, how long they have been post-docs, etc.
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Amendment to SRF constitution

There is a potential ambiguity in the SRF constitution. The articles of the association state that:

32. At every AGM all councillors who have served for a continuous term of four years shall retire from officeunless elected as an Officer pursuant to the provisions of Articles 48 and 49.

48. The provisions of Articles 32, 33 and 35 [33 and 35 relate to election, not relevant to duration of office] shall apply to the appointment of Officers provided that the Officers shall retire at the end of each year but shall immediately be eligible for re-election save that the Officers shall not be eligible for re-election at the fifth AGM following first election.

This is clear for non-Officers but not for Officers. SRF Council suggests adding to Article 48 'therefore Officers may hold office for a maximum of 4 years in addition to time served on Council as non-Office holders.'

The proposed change will be voted upon at the AGM.