

Newsletter No: 190 December 2006



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

Newsletter compiled by John Parrington (SRF General Secretary).
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SRF Conference 2007

Part of Fertility 2007

York University, April 15th-18th

PhD student and post-doc SRF members presenting work eligible for £350 support

8th January Deadline for abstract submission

28th February Deadline for Early Bird Registration

SRF Chairman's Thoughts

Over the last 12 months the Officers of the Society have worked hard to support the activities of the members of SRF and the management of the Society. Many challenges face the SRF over the next few years. Over the last 12 months the activities of Council have focused on four key areas.

1) Audit of SRF Finances.

Under the direction of our new treasurer, Martin Luck, the Finance committee has audited the Society's investments, and we have reviewed how these funds are managed on our behalf. We have given considerable thought to our stewardship of this funding and how we might use our investments to support and promote the activities of the SRF and its members. We have already implemented a strategy to support our postgraduate and postdoctoral members to attend our annual conference and present their work. We continue to provide support to our members in terms of travel grants, educational grants for vacation studentships and also sponsorship for meetings.

2) Journal Modernization.

Reproduction evolved following the merger of *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* and *Reviews of*

Reproduction. Prof Bob Webb initiated these changes and they have continued under the jurisdiction of our current Editor-in-Chief- Prof John Carroll. John is backed by BioScientifica and a team of sub-editors. Under John's direction, SRF have invested in an on line referee management system to shorten the turn around time for journal submissions and the review process. To maintain a competitive profile for *Reproduction* compared to similar journals from our sister societies, Council has agreed to support plans for electronic pre-publication of accepted papers. We are looking at the cost and feasibility of the retro digitisation of all archived issues of *JRF* and *Reviews of Reproduction*. We are hopeful that we have identified a source of the back issues required for this extensive piece of work. A major concern for us has been the relatively low impact factor of *Reproduction* and many of the changes to the journal have focussed on increasing the impact factor to 3 or better this year. We have already exceeded this expectation as the impact factor just published for *Reproduction* has increased from 2.44 last year to 3.14 in the last 12 months.

3) Review Of SRF Membership.

The membership database has been completed by our secretariat at Procon. All duplicate data entries, incorrect/ old addresses have been removed or updated. We now have an accurate index of membership numbers and categories. We have already started to interrogate the database to provide insight into the distribution of our membership by country and by category. Some of this data has been included in the latest newsletter. This base line information will prove invaluable in assessing whether strategies introduced to increase membership are effective. We have invited Dr Eduardo Roldan from Madrid onto Council to help us support SRF members based in main land Europe.

Paul Fowler
Colin Duncan
Franchesca Houghton
Eduardo Roldan

Post-grad/doc Rep: Bob Robinson

4) Review Of SRF Annual Conferences

This is an ongoing process requiring input of SRF members and feedback from conference delegates as well as Council. We are all agreed that SRF annual conferences can only continue if meeting attendance improves. This can only be achieved if SRF meetings have a high quality but sufficiently varied programme of symposia which cater to the broad interests of SRF members. We also need to promote scientific discussion and encourage abstract submission and presentations by members and delegates. To support this agenda Council have introduced the new conference grants to encourage postgrad and postdoctoral members to regularly attend SRF meetings and present their work. We will continue to support the format of the Joint Fertility Societies meetings in 2007 and will review this approach in April 2007. We are currently engaged in discussions with our sister societies across the world with regard to the first World Congress on Reproductive Biology. The first such meeting is likely to take place in May 2008, in Hawaii.

I hope this overview will demonstrate how Council are tackling the many challenges facing societies such as SRF in the face of an increasingly fragmented environment of Reproductive Biology Research.

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

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 (<http://srf-reproduction.org>) or contact the SRF Business Office.

Recently travel grants were awarded to Melanie Ball, Inchul Choi, Hilary Critchley, Francesc Xavier Donadeu, Isabelle Hue, Keith Jones, Natalia Karpovich, Tom McEvoy, Alfredo Medrano, Minerva Munoz-Gutierrez, Charlotte Oddsdottir, Allan Pacey, Nina Satake, Kevin Sinclair, and Bryan Woodward.

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. Please note that students at all stages of their undergraduate degree are now eligible.

Over the summer vacation scholarships were taken up by Tina Tremaine, Katie Dickinson, Victoria Crossland, Sarah Cassie, Anna Mathers, Esther Couce, James Duffy, and Karolina Skorupskaite.

All travel grant recipients are required to write a short report about the meeting they attended and to acknowledge SRF support on any poster or oral presentations. These reports should be sent to the SRF General Secretary via the Business Office and may be published in the SRF newsletter.

The SRF would like to encourage Vacation Scholarship award recipients (student or supervisor) to present their results as a poster presentation at the next SRF meeting. Registration will be waived for students presenting their scholarship data at the SRF conference. In the event that the student/supervisor is unable to attend the SRF conference a full report will be required detailing the findings of their investigation. This report may be published in the SRF newsletter.

From the Programme Secretary

Thanks to those Society members that supported the last SRF annual meeting held in Leeds. The meeting was held in conjunction with the National Ovarian Workshop (NOW). NOW was held on July 3rd with the SRF conference commencing with a welcome reception on July 3rd and continuing over the following two days. We hope that those of you who attended the meeting enjoyed both the scientific content and the social programme.

The SRF conference featured:

- Two symposia entitled “Endocrinology of Reproduction” and “Molecules of Reproduction”. The talks within these symposia were delivered by excellent speakers invited from within the UK, Europe, USA and Israel. The topics were diverse and were planned to appeal to a large section of our SRF membership.
- SRF/SSR New Investigator session. Dr Bob Robinson from The University of Nottingham was the recipient of The SRF New Investigator Scientist Award for 2006. Bob delivered his award lecture entitled “Physiological Control of angiogenesis in the corpus luteum”. The SSR New Investigator Scientist, Dr Robert Viger delivered a lecture entitled “The role of GATA transcription factors in mammalian reproductive function”.
- The Distinguished Scientist Lecture entitled “Estrogen action in the ovary” was delivered by Professor Jock Findlay from Prince Henry’s Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, Australia.
- Professor Anthony Flint from The University of Nottingham was the recipient of the 2006 Marshall Medal and this was awarded at our conference dinner on Tuesday 4th of July hosted at The Refectory of The University of Leeds.

For full details of the scientific programme and abstracts 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. Our student members made a strong presence in Leeds. We had a high number of abstracts submitted for consideration for the SRF student prize. Six abstracts were short-listed for this prize and the students presented their work in a SRF student prize oral session. Congratulations to

Jemma Evans and Emma Bowles who were joint recipients of the SRF student prize for 2006.

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). Each day begins with a Plenary Symposium of wide appeal followed by a Distinguished Prize Lecture from one of the constituent societies. An innovation of the meeting is the introduction of ‘Society Updates’; sessions in which leading authorities introduce, and lead discussions on, the latest developments in their fields. The deadline for abstract submission for Fertility 2007 will be January 8, 2007.

Henry N Jabbour

From the Treasurer

This year, the Society introduced a new scheme to encourage younger members to attend the Annual Conference. Some 36 posdocs and post grads, representing 28 different research groups, received grants to a total of £11,200. Membership of the Society is a condition of these awards, and we are therefore delighted and encouraged by the response to this initiative. It is likely that the scheme will continue for the foreseeable future.

The recent success of *Reproduction* in raising its impact factor has financial implications for the Society. Our arrangement with Bioscientifica, who publish *Reproduction* on the Society’s behalf, includes a limit on the number of pages which make up the journal over the course of a year. Exceeding this number eats into the small profit which the journal currently makes. As the Editorial Board are having to deal with increasing numbers of high quality manuscripts, this inevitably results in higher rejection rates. There is no direct relationship between journal quality and the number of subscribers and so any expansion of the journal, albeit from the best of reasons, puts financial pressure on the Society. We are of course delighted by the journal’s success and wish to support its further development. We will be working closely with Bioscientifica and with John Carroll and his team to ensure that the journal is securely funded in the medium term.

Another area of change is in conference management and finance. The days when the Annual Conference could be organised by a local team of members in their spare time are long gone. Professional conference organisers are essential. Conference venues, whether in a university or elsewhere, are expensive to hire. There is also a trend away from running myriad parallel sessions

towards more symposia, led by invited speakers, with posters as the vehicle for free communications. The SRF conference is not immune from these developments particularly when, as in 2007, it meets jointly with sister societies. The financial effect of these changes is that delegate rates need to rise if conferences are to break even. Members should be prepared for this to happen and research groups will need to build the extra costs into their budgets. Nevertheless, SRF remains cost-conscious and will continue to recognise the value of the annual conference to its younger members.

Martin Luck

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 2007, 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.

Marshall Medal / SRF Distinguished Scientist Award

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 2007, the Marshall Medal will be awarded to Professor Peter J Sharp and the SRF Distinguished Scientist Award will go to Professor Fuller W Bazer.

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 2008

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

Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

It was fantastic to see so many post-grad/docs at SRF2006 in Leeds, especially since you were all so active and producing great work. I was particularly impressed by the quality of the student prize oral presentations, so congratulations to you all and whole-heartedly encourage everyone to apply next year. Special congratulations to Jemma Evans and Emma Bowles who were the joint winners of the prize. At SRF2006, Michelle Myers from the University of Edinburgh was elected as your representative.

Once again this year's post-grad/doc's quiz was runaway success and is becoming the must-attend social event at the SRF conference. It is you the post-grad/docs that make it such a success so please keep coming along to this fun event. This year's winners, in a tightly fought contest, were "Sarah's team" who dazzled us with their knowledge of useless facts such as what a tegestologist collect (beer mats of course) and that male and female Dayak fruit bats produce milk. We also heard embarrassing blasts-from-the-past from the Council's members. This ranged from dressing up in strangle attire (cross dressing n' all) to opening mouth before engaging brain. We would like to thank Amanda Hammond (from Nottingham) for her knowledge of the weird and wonderful which helped make the quiz such a success.

The strong presence of the postgrads really bows well for the future of the Society. Your voice is important to the Society so if you have any queries and ideas to progress and further improve SRF then

please contact myself or Michelle. Can we take this opportunity to thank Suzanne for all her hard work.

Bob Robinson, University of Nottingham
(Bob.Robinson@nottingham.ac.uk) or Michelle Myers, University of Edinburgh
(m.myers@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Bob, Suzanne and Michelle

Publications

Dear SRF members,

There are a number of issues that exercise the mind of the Editor and Editorial Board on a regular basis. The most recent conundrum is that of how we manage the increasing numbers of manuscripts we are receiving. With the number set to break 500 submissions (up from 280 in 2003), the strain is starting to take hold. So far the Editorial Board members are maintaining their stoic and dedicated attitude, working harder all the time to meet the increased demand for space in the Journal. It is not only the workload that increases but also that the pressure to make the best decision becomes increasingly paramount as we aim to maintain the Journal at the current size. No doubt the Manuscript Central Editorial system has been a big help and I would like to thank our colleagues at BioScientifica for their efficient introduction of this new facility. We are also working on new formats, *Reproduction Reports*, short papers (4 Figures maximum) for exciting new data, as well as a revamp of the layout which will help to save space in the Journal.

The increasing strain not only hits at the fevered brow of the collective Editorial Board but also poses a threat to the Society's finances. The publishing business is a strange one. Increased success in the form of a near doubling (some editorial license here) of the number of papers submitted bears a significant increase in cost without any commensurate increase in income. It would be great if this resulted in an increase in the number of subscriptions but, across the board, the opposite is happening and income is maintained through an increase in the cost of subscription. Publication charges to the author are another potential source of income but we remain committed to keeping author costs down. But times are changing!

This business model is only viable in a subscription based market and it is clear that this has a limited life-time. The drive for an 'open-access' model is appealing to all of us as scientists but the transition from subscription-based income to author-based income poses a major threat to the Journals of learned societies in particular. Like many areas of science policy the Wellcome Trust are leading the charge and it is now a requirement that all WT funded research is published on an 'open-access'

site within 6 months of the publication date. All other funding bodies are likely to follow suit in the near future. For many Journals the normal embargo time is one-year and the concern is that reducing it to 6 months will further erode the subscription base. Some Journals have responded by offering to make the paper open access from the date of publication but the cost of publishing a paper is not inexpensive; in the region of £2000. Where this money comes from in our increasingly tight research budgets needs urgent clarification. The latest from the Wellcome Trust website is that the mechanism for paying the publication costs is being examined. In the mean time authors publishing work funded by the Trust are encouraged to request the publication costs from the Value in People monies provided by the Trust to many UK HEIs. This interim arrangement will soon be resolved perhaps through ring-fenced funds either held by the WT or distributed through grants. Certainly, these are challenging times for the Journals and the Societies who run them. We will continue to monitor developments very closely and we will soon need to decide on how we meet these challenges.

Moving to matters closer to hand, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Ashton for all his hard work on the Journal. Paul was our man in BioScientifica and oversaw the move from Cambridge in 2003/4, the introduction of the new website and more recently the web-based peer review system. He ran the peer review system liaising between authors and editors with considerable diplomacy. He represented the Journal at SRF and SSR conferences, tirelessly showing off his wares, despite having been introduced to the Society's formidable social programme. We wish him every success in his new venture. The smooth transition from Paul's era is no doubt testament to the considerable talents of his Lindsay Hook who has taken over the helm.

I am always happy to receive comments and thoughts on *Reproduction* from the membership. It is the Society's journal and needs to reflect their needs. Finally, make sure your Institution has a subscription – it is the best way to ensure those travel grants, studentships and great conferences keep on coming.

All the best,

John Carroll

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. Details of these

awards and the people who have received them recently are described elsewhere in the newsletter. The committee is also now centrally involved in monitoring and improving the SRF website with Dr Eduardo Roldan. The website is currently undergoing a major re-organisation and we would welcome suggestions for ways in which we can improve the website and make it more interactive. These should be sent to the Education and Development Committee via the Business Office. 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.

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.
