



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF REPRODUCTION

Newsletter

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From the President—

“Steel” yourselves for a great Annual Meeting

Let me start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year. In many ways 2008 was a difficult year for our nation, but the winds of change have blown upon us and we look toward 2009 and beyond with optimism and hope. As it was with all of us, the finances of our Society were not immune to the economic downturn, and as I indicated in my Endowment appeal letter our investment funds decreased by at least \$1 million. However, it was heartening to note that even in these difficult financial times, your belief in SSR and what it stands for was so wonderfully apparent. Many of you contributed generously and for that the Society thanks you. Our donations for 2008 exceeded \$50,000, which is phenomenal!!!

Now to our upcoming Annual Meeting. I hope all of you have had a chance to see the preliminary program on the SSR Web site. Pat Hunt and her committee have done a fabulous job in developing a program which we hope will be enjoyed by one and all. Our theme for the meeting is *Science for the Public Good*. The theme was chosen to emphasize the importance of the basic research we all do and to translate its impact on both human and animal health. In this era of “translational research” we felt that it was important to emphasize the wonderful research being done by our members and the invited speakers that ultimately benefits society. The Keynote Address will be given by Professor

David Barker, the father of the concept of fetal origins of adult disease. The President’s Symposium will have somewhat of a different twist this year. It will focus on the advocacy of science and will emphasize the concept of reproductive policy and its impact for the public good. Three dynamic speakers—Tom Holder, Mary Woolley, and Pete Myers—will address the importance of animal research, research support and funding for science, and the impact of public policy, respectively, to move the scientific agenda forward in the 21st century. I am certain that these speakers will educate us all. The State-of-the-Art Symposia will address three of the hottest topics in science today. Dr. Kjersti Aagard-Tillery will describe her work on the effects of obesity on prenatal health, Dr. Shuk-Mei Ho will speak on the topic of epigenetics and cancer, and Dr. Marcus Stoffel will enlighten us on the therapeutic opportunities that micro RNAs offer. This outstanding preliminary program, together with the excellent minisymposia, Exchange Lectures, and Historical Perspective Lectures, will make this a very special meeting. I urge all of you not only to make plans to attend but also to submit abstracts describing the very best work from your laboratories.

The venue is superb. Judy Jansen, Gwen Abramson, Pat Hunt, and I visited the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh in early December. Pat Hunt’s article in this

newsletter gives you a glimpse of this fabulous “green” venue. The meeting Web site also has some excellent links describing the rebirth of Pittsburgh and the wonderful opportunities for exploring this truly fascinating city. Dr. Tony Plant and his Local Arrangements Committee are also working very hard to make your visit to Pittsburgh as memorable as possible. The social events being planned will be in keeping with the best of SSR traditions and will be kicked off with a culinary event entitled “A Taste of Pittsburgh.”

I also want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank John Eppig and Mary Ann Handel for their outstanding service as Editors-in-Chief of *Biology of Reproduction*. Under their editorial leadership the journal has continued to flourish and has become the premier scientific research journal in the field. This summer they will hand the reins to Bernard Robaire and Bruce Murphy. Unfortunately, this means that when Bruce and Bernard take over the stewardship of *BOR*, Bruce will be stepping down as Treasurer. As all of you know, Bruce has done an absolutely fantastic job managing the finances of the Society, even during these uncertain times. We all owe him a huge debt of gratitude for his sound fiscal leadership. Please join me in thanking Bruce for his years of service as Treasurer and also thanking both the outgoing and incoming Editors-in-Chief of *BOR* for their commitment to the Society and the Journal.

I would also like to inform the membership that *BOR* is now in compliance with the “Revised Policy on Enhancing Public Access to Archived Publications Resulting from NIH-Funded Research.” The National Institutes of Health (NIH) published its “Enhanced Public Access Policy” with respect to scientific publications resulting from research supported in part or fully by NIH funds: (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-08-033.html>). The rule requires

that, as of 7 April 2008, all investigators funded by the NIH must submit an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts, upon acceptance for publication, to the National Library of Medicine’s PubMed Central (PMC). These must be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication. Moreover, all papers derived from research supported by HHMI, CIHR, MRC, or Wellcome Trust must also be deposited in the public archive as required by the funding agency. Effective with the October 2008 issue, *BOR* on behalf of authors will deposit all applicable articles in PMC; thus everyone who publishes in *BOR* and whose research is supported by one of the funding agencies will be in compliance with the law.

Finally, I would like to address the topic of SSR awards. The Society honors the scientific and service achievements of its members annually through the Carl Hartman Award, the SSR Research Award, the Distinguished Service Award, the New Investigator Award, and the Trainee Mentoring Award. I am certain that all of us know individuals who are deserving of recognition, and I urge you to nominate your colleagues whom you hold in high esteem for these awards. The nomination procedure is very simple, and I hope that this fall you will take the opportunity to nominate individuals who you would like to see honored and recognized for all their achievements.

May I please ask you to convey your opinions regarding the governance of the Society to the Board of Directors? SSR is your Society and it is your collective wisdom and active involvement that will continue to grow our Society and help it remain strong and viable.

Thank you and see you all in Pittsburgh. ■

—Asgi Fazleabas

SSR 2009: Go green!

The program for the 2009 Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh is really taking shape. Mark your calendar for July 18–22. The plenary sessions and minisymposia are posted on the meeting Web site (www.ssr.org/Meetings.shtml). Follow the link and you'll find some new and exciting topics. All that remains to organize are the platform and poster presentations; for this, we need you to submit abstracts (remember, the deadline is March 16—submit often and early).

Judy Jansen, Gwen Abramson, Asgi Fazleabas, and I toured the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in early December with local hosts Tony Plant and Kyle Selcer. What we found pleased and excited everyone: The David L. Lawrence is the first green convention center in the world, and it sets new standards for convention centers. In addition to being energy efficient and environmentally minded, the venue is just downright fabulous. Walls of windows with incredible views of the river and the city of

Pittsburgh guarantee that there will be inviting spaces to congregate with your colleagues to discuss collaborations, share a quick lunch, or simply gossip.

The meeting will start with a bang this year, so book your hotel and plan to be there at the outset. The opening session will include the Keynote Lecture by David Barker, the father of the field of the developmental origins of adult disease. His lecture will be followed by the Opening Reception, “A Taste of Pittsburgh,” a culinary welcome to the Steel City.

For an in-depth look at the nonscientific attractions that await you in Pittsburgh, check out Jeff Schlegel's recent article in the *New York Times* (<http://travel.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/travel/06hours.html?emc=eta1>) and peruse his suggestions for fine dining and entertainment. ■

—Pat Hunt, Chair
2009 Program Committee
E-mail: pathunt@wsu.edu

More details about the Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh

Since our last report, the Local Arrangements Committee has been working closely with Kyle Selcer (chair, Annual Meeting/Industrial Relations Subcommittee of the Development Committee), Asgi Fazleabas, and the SSR office in Madison to coordinate fundraising for the Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. Michelle Wood and her crew have been hard at work evaluating bands for the dance and are in close touch with Gwen Abramson on this issue. We have decided that Steve and Monika's *Hawai'i* (their superb four part

travelogue about the island state) is an impossible act to follow and in lieu recommend that you visit www.post-gazette.com/pg/06121/689535-37.stm, which provides nice details for walking and visiting in Pittsburgh. We would like to reiterate that we are looking forward to welcoming colleagues to Pittsburgh in July and will do our best to answer any questions you may have about our city. ■

—Tony Plant, Chair
2009 Local Arrangements Committee
E-mail: plant1@pitt.edu

What do changes in Washington mean for biomedical research?

For more than a year, our national attention was consumed by the historic election which culminated with the election of Barack Obama. Now that the new President has been sworn in, scientists want to know: what is the outlook for biomedical research and science policy under our new national leadership? Many high-profile researchers supported President Obama's campaign, including 61 Nobel Laureates whose public endorsement letter declared that, "Senator Obama understands that Presidential leadership and federal investments in science and technology are crucial elements in successful governance..."¹ Is this true and what does it really mean for medical research? And will the new Congress support this vision?

In good news, all initial signs are positive, and perhaps speak to a more hopeful time for research after six long years of flat funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). During his campaign, President Obama pledged to double the basic research budgets at NIH and the National Science Foundation (NSF) over a ten year period.² In making that pledge, the incoming President used rhetoric that resonated throughout the biomedical research community, stating, "[O]ur science agencies are often able to support no more than one in ten proposals that they receive, arresting the careers of our young scientists."³ The President's support for medical research is underpinned by a deeply personal connection, as he often spoke of the need for more investment in the context of his mother's final battle with ovarian cancer.⁴

¹ "An Open Letter to the American People." (September 25, 2008) <http://sefora.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/nobelists-for-obama.pdf>

² ScienceDebate2008. (August 30, 2008) Candidate Barack Obama's response. <http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/index.php?id=40>

³ Ibid

⁴ Obama, B. (August 27, 2007) Obama praises Armstrong's efforts to raise cancer awareness. http://www.barackobama.com/2007/08/27/obama_praises_armstrongs_effor.php

The new Congress, too, seems primed to restore a commitment to biomedical research. Democratic leadership has struggled to provide increases for research funding under the strict spending limits set by the Bush administration. Although NIH enjoys broad bipartisan support, last fiscal year the agency became a pawn in the political gamesmanship of overriding a Presidential veto and ultimately remained flat-funded. But the leaders in Congress, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), and the powerful appropriations chairs, Congressman David Obey (D-WI) and Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), have all spoken strongly in favor of increased NIH funding. Although Senator Byrd has stepped down as chair, it seems likely his replacement, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), will continue his commitment toward medical research. With a president willing to sign funding bills that invest in domestic priorities, such as science, the chances of seeing a significant increase in NIH funding is greater than it has been at any point since the doubling of the budget ended in 2003. FASEB has been compiling information on the more than 60 freshman members of the 111th Congress which may be accessed at:

<http://opa.faseb.org/pages/Publications/FreshmanClassDirectory/main.htm>

Unfortunately, the landscape is not entirely without obstacles. Campaign promises and pledges of support must be taken in the context of our current economic situation and other national priorities. The national debt is expected to exceed \$10 trillion, a figure that is likely to continue to grow as we spend money on financial rescues, economic stimulus, and the ongoing war in Iraq.⁵ Congress and the new administration will be

⁵ Associated Press. (November 25, 2008) Money is gushing out of Washington, and lots more spending is on the way to revive the economy.

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/O/OBAMA_ECONOMY_GLANCE?SITE=NVREN&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

dedicating a large part of their early agenda to trying to revive our economic health. President Obama has outlined ambitious plans for healthcare reform, energy independence, mitigation of climate change, and strengthening of social security programs. Achieving these goals will require money and dedicated attention from Congress; biomedical research may be pushed further back in the queue. What's more, the partisan bickering and lack of consensus that contributed to the previous Congress's ability to make significant legislative progress still remain unresolved, and may only be exacerbated in the absence of election-year concerns and the serious problems facing the nation. As of this writing, a House proposal for economic stimulus included significant funding for NIH, NSF, and other science agencies. Their inclusion may be an indication of where research ranks in the priority list of our nation's new leadership.

Of course, funding is not the only issue of interest to researchers, and the scientific community can look forward to a return to respect for science during the Obama administration. We can expect one of the first actions that President Obama will take to be the overturning of the Bush policy restricting federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. Furthermore, the incoming administration supports increasing independent, scientific advice as part of the policymaking process, and has pledged to reinstate the Presidential Science Advisor, who also serves as head of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), to a cabinet level position.⁶ While Obama's choice for science advisor, Dr. John Holdren, is a physicist, he has long worked at the intersection of science and policy, and as head of the Woods Hole Research Center, he has undoubtedly gained an appreciation for fundamental biological research from his neighbors at the Marine Biological Laboratories. Former NIH director, Dr. Harold Varmus, and founding director of the Broad Institute, Dr. Eric Lander, have been named co-chairs of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). While PCAST has been ineffective and uninfluential during the Bush administration, Obama has pledged to strengthen the group's role in science policy decision making.

⁶ Ibid

With new policy opportunities come new challenges, and there are a number of issues to which biomedical scientists will need to pay attention under the Obama administration and Democratic Congress. Questions related to conflict of interest in medical research continue to haunt the scientific community and are unlikely to disappear. There will likely be increased scrutiny on human subject protection and the welfare of animals used in research. In addition, although President Obama has declared strong support in peer review and scientific decision making, as well as transparency in the earmarking process, based on recent legislative history the vast majority of bills introduced to direct research at NIH toward specific diseases have been introduced by Democrats.⁷

"We are a land of moon shots and miracles of science and technology that have touched the lives of millions across the planet."⁸ This quote by President Obama seems to capture the optimism inherent in science, an optimism echoed by the research community as we look to the near future for biomedical research. Because of the extraordinary opportunities and looming challenges ahead, it is critical that investigators advocate for and convey the importance of medical research, and that we bring this message to our members of Congress, to the new President, and to our neighbors in the public. The research community must not grow complacent in educating policymakers about the need for investment in research and the pathway from basic discovery to medical advancement. Scientists finally have national leadership that is willing to listen: it is up to us to make sure we have something to say. ■

—Carrie D. Wolinetz, Ph.D.
FASEB Office of Public Affairs

⁷ National Institutes of Health. (November 25, 2008) Bill tracking. <http://olpa.od.nih.gov/tracking/>

⁸ Obama, B. (October 8, 2007) "Real leadership for a clean energy future." Remarks made in Portsmouth, NH. http://www.barackobama.com/2007/10/08/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_28.php

Lipstick on a pig

The Pig

The financially challenged year 2008 stuttered to a close with world equities markets badly wounded. Over the year, the benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 Index (S&P) declined by 38.5%. The SSR portfolio comprises four separate accounts: one unrestricted fund, known as the SSR Investment Fund, and three restricted endowment funds—the SSR Endowment Fund (includes the Legacy Fund), the Mahesh Neuroendocrine Fund, and the New Investigator Fund (initiated in 2005). The overall unrealized loss in the SSR portfolio for 2008 was 37.4%, slightly less than the S&P loss.

The Lipstick

From another perspective, we can look at the evolution of the portfolio over the last 5 years (see table below). We see that the wealth of the Society has grown over this period, some growth due to contributions to the Endowment Fund, but mostly to unrealized gains in funds invested in the equity markets. The years ahead are fraught with

uncertainty, and it is not clear whether the markets have reached their nadir as this is being written. Indeed, there was a low spot in late November when the S&P fell to less than 800, but it has since recovered slightly. In addition, our broker, Smith Barney, is part of Citigroup, which will soon to be consolidated with Morgan-Stanley. While we expect this will have no effect on our portfolio, it may signal a time to change brokers to seek better service and timely advice. We do not believe that this is the time to sell, but it might be a time to consolidate and readjust the portfolio to weather the storms that may occur in the short term.

The Good News

SSR has had another year in which the budget balanced. This was due to positive balances in the Annual Meeting and Publications categories. We will continue our strategy to maintain income over expenditure, and, to the best of our abilities, to continue to build the wealth of the Society. ■

—Bruce Murphy

FUND	DATE	12/31/03 \$	12/31/07 \$	12/31/08 \$	difference 2007-2008 %	difference 2003-2008 %
SSR Investment Fund		1,096,690	2,275,006	1,495,784	-38.60	+36.39
SSR Endowment Fund		223,552	550,364	361,087	-39.07	+61.52
Mahesh Neuroendocrine Fund		54,443	100,517	71,502	-34.39	+31.33
New Investigator Fund		N/A	41,049	25,006	-39.08	N/A
TOTAL PORTFOLIO		1,374,685	3,128,174	1,957,368	-37.43	+42.38

Transfer of *BOR* editorship is progressing smoothly

As you are all aware, the editorship of *Biology of Reproduction* will change hands, effective July 1, 2009. The current Editors-in-Chief (John Eppig and Mary Ann Handel) are working with the future Editors-in-Chief (Bruce Murphy and Bernard Robaire) to ensure a smooth transition. Late last summer, John and Mary Ann prepared a comprehensive document for Bernard and Bruce, outlining current practices and helpful advice for the day-to-day running of the editorial aspects of the journal. In November, a meeting was held in Montreal that included John and Mary Ann, Bruce and Bernard, and Judy Jansen, Managing Editor of the journal. We did “hands-on” processing of new assignments and decisions using the Bench>Press editorial management system, discussed flow and timing of manuscript progress, and dealt with other issues of a practical nature. We have also worked out a fair policy for handling papers that will be “in the pipeline” at the time of transition.

The B & B team (Bruce and Bernard) believes that we will have a hard act to follow, as the journal has improved greatly under the current stewardship. We recognize the enormous amount of effort that Mary Ann and John along with the group of current Associate Editors have expended to establish and maintain an impartial and rigorous system of evaluation. We intend to maintain the high standard of quality review and publication that has been set by our predecessors. The reviewing structure that is currently in place will also be retained; we have selected a new slate

of highly qualified Associate Editors with expertise across the spectrum of reproductive biology: Jay Baltz, Daniel Carson, Paul Cooke, Dirk DeRooij, Jodi Flaws, Mary Hunzicker-Dunn, John McCarrey, Terry Nett, Debbie O'Brien, Lois Salamonsen, Susan Suarez, and Robert Viger.

The publication landscape continues to change rapidly, and, at some point, *Biology of Reproduction* will be an entirely electronic journal, with, perhaps, print-on-demand capability. We have been developing new concepts to augment the traditional content of the journal and to exploit the potential of electronic publication, with the overall goals of better serving our constituents and increasing the profile of the journal. We intend to finalize these plans over the next months and very much welcome input and ideas from SSR members to help us meet these goals. We look forward to the challenge of editing the highest impact journal for original research in the reproductive sciences. ■

—*John Eppig and Mary Ann Handel*
Current Editors-in-Chief

—*Bernard Robaire and Bruce Murphy*
Future Editors-in-Chief

Current status of open access and public access

B*iology of Reproduction* currently provides both *public access* and *open access*. *Public access* is provided in the form of *Papers-in-Press*, which are available to everyone without a subscription to the journal before the articles are formatted and copyedited, and which continue to be available in that form after formal publication. After formatting and copyediting, the articles come under access control for 12 months, and then they become freely available to the public. Authors who want their final, copyedited articles to be freely available to the public immediately upon final publication can do so by selecting the option of Authors' Choice.

The policy set by NIH to require NIH-funded investigators to submit their accepted manuscripts to PubMed to be reformatted and released to the public no later than 12 months after publication is now in force. As a service to its authors, *Biology of Reproduction* is depositing the final copyedited version of all accepted

manuscripts funded by NIH in PMC. The impact of these actions on journal subscriptions is not yet known. With the change in the NIH directorship, the question of just cross-referencing the original article rather than reformatting and republishing has been raised again with the Obama transition team. In addition, Congressman Howard Berman, chair of the Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property, has introduced HR 6845 entitled "Fair Copyright in Research Works Act," which is under discussion and if passed would reverse the current NIH policy. Thus the current environment is unstable and changeable. The Publications Committee is carefully examining the changes in national publication policies and their impact on *Biology of Reproduction*. ■

—Virendra B. Mahesh, Chair
Publications Committee

Update from the Committee on Reproduction and the Environment

The Committee on Reproduction and the Environment (CoRE) is an active ad hoc committee, currently with 34 like-minded members. This past year we contributed ideas and proposals to the Program Committee and are gratified to see that many of them were incorporated into an exciting Annual Meeting program with the theme *Science for the Public Good*.

CoRE plans to put together an informational booth at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh and is developing a proposal for a short course in conjunction with the 2010 meeting in Milwaukee.

Because we would like to include all members with a common interest in reproduction and environment, and because committee membership rolls over year to year, we encourage interested individuals to attend the CoRE meeting in July and volunteer for this committee when the SSR president sends out a call for new members. ■

—Sally Perreault Darney, Chair
Committee on Reproduction and the Environment

Emeritus Committee activities

At three previous Annual Meetings the Emeritus Committee sponsored and organized a breakfast at which one of our deceased members was remembered. We will continue this tradition at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. The Emeritus Breakfast will be held on Monday, July 20. This year's honoree will be Larry Ewing. Barry Zirkin from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, a former colleague of Larry's, will make the presentation.

Last year, the Emeritus Committee decided to extend an invitation to attend the Emeritus Breakfast, not only to emeritus members but to other members as well, including trainees. The reason for including other members of the Society in our invitation was to expand the educational value of the presentation to include the younger set, especially students, who might be interested in the origins of the Society and those involved in its formation and growth. The committee has decided to follow the same procedure for the Pittsburgh meeting as we did last year.

A small minority of our committee believes that more than one person should be honored at the Emeritus Breakfast, including emeritus members who are alive. This idea was rejected by the majority for two reasons: because of time constraints and because the Society already has a mechanism to honor its living members, viz., its awards program

Our committee is working on a new initiative that involves contacting emeritus members, especially those who were active in the Society

during their "working years." As a pilot run, each of our members will contact two persons who fall into this category and request an e-mail in which they describe their activities in retirement. We anticipate that some of these responses will be published in the June issue of the SSR Newsletter. We anxiously await the result, but many on our committee feel that our retired members continue to lead productive lives independent of recreation. Emeritus members of the Society who wish to participate in this experiment should send an e-mail describing their postretirement activities to John Resko (reskojm@verizon.net).

The Emeritus Committee was pleased to learn that two Historical Perspective Lectures will be presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting. Fuller Bazer (Texas A& M) and John McLachlan (Tulane) will place the general topic of Implantation and Environmental Estrogens, respectively, in a historical perspective.

Finally, *In Memoriam*: Emil Steinberg, M.D. (d. October 12, 2008; SSR charter member); Robert Foote, Ph.D. (d. October 27, 2008; SSR Past President); Robert Ryan, M.D. (d. October 2008; SSR Past President); Keith Parker, M.D., Ph.D. (d. December 13, 2008; SSR member); Xiangzhong Yang, Ph.D. (d. February 5, 2009; SSR member). ■

—John Resko, Chair
Emeritus Committee

SSR trainee report

It is that time of year again when trainee members of SSR are preparing for the upcoming Annual Meeting. We would like to alert you to a few important events that are coming up in the next few months.

Three trainees have stepped forward to run for the next SSR Trainee Representative position. The candidates include Dan Poole (Ohio State University/Pennsylvania State University), Denise Archambeault (University of Illinois), and Kristin Happ Molitoris (University of Maryland School of Medicine). The election (online) will begin on or near April 1 and end a month later, coincident with the SSR election of Officers and Directors. We encourage each of you to vote for your new Trainee Representative.

I am sure that everyone is busy putting together abstracts for our Annual Meeting. Don't forget to pay your dues by the abstract submission deadline so that you are eligible for Trainee Research Awards, Travel Fellowships, and LEMTTF grants. Kristin Happ-Molitoris will be managing the LEMTTF grants for the 2009 Annual Meeting. Trainees are eligible for the LEMTTF if they are current trainee members of SSR (dues paid) at the time of the deadline for submission of abstracts (March 16), and have an abstract accepted for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

When you register for the meeting, don't forget to sign up for the Trainee/Mentor Luncheon. Denise Archambeault is coordinating the 2009 Trainee/Mentor Luncheon, which provides trainees with a captive audience of

regular members of SSR. This luncheon is a great opportunity to ask about research, funding, starting a laboratory, and balancing responsibilities.

A volunteer committee was organized and run by trainee members of SSR in 2008. Dan Poole and Brandon Lingenfelter have agreed to co-chair the volunteer committee for the 2009 meeting. They are looking for motivated trainees to step forward to serve their Society. Please contact me if you are interested in volunteering during the 2009 Annual Meeting. There are many opportunities for involvement to suit each individual.

The trainees have voiced their opinions on potential topics for the next Trainee Forum. Many trainees are trying to understand all of the career opportunities they can pursue. We are currently organizing a panel of individuals who have chosen different career paths. This might include representatives from level 1 research institutions, small undergraduate teaching institutions, private industry, and NIH/USDA government jobs. If you have recommendations for speakers who plan to attend the meeting, please voice your opinions.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact us (Rebecca.Bott@sdstate.edu) at any time. We are here to serve your interest, so let your voices be heard. ■

—*Rebecca Bott and Chrissy Cochran*
SSR Trainee Representatives

Have you ever . . . ?

Have you ever been in a conversation with people outside our field who genuinely believe in the importance of reproductive biology and the contributions it makes to society? Sometimes such conversations lead **almost** to the point of philanthropic giving but fall short, needing only a bit more formalized contact and follow-up about us, our work, and the critical importance of basic research in reproductive biology.

To help you with this process, the Development Committee has drafted a template letter meant to help you in following up on correspondence with potential donors. It briefly describes our Society's history, significant contributions, and the importance of reproductive biology research to current problems in our society. The *Endowment* and *Legacy Funds* and the Annual Meeting are

highlighted as emphasis areas for giving. The letter is a working template that can be tailored to better suit individual situations. Copies can be obtained from the Business Office. If you initiate correspondence with a potential donor, please also notify the Business Office and a member of the Development Committee. Committee members are also available to help draft letters.

Make giving a habit!

—David Schomberg, Chair
Development Committee

—Janice Bailey and S.K. Dey, Co-Chairs
Endowment Subcommittee

—Kyle Selcer, Chair
Annual Meeting/Industrial Relations Subcommittee

Nominees for SSR Officers and Directors

The election for SSR Officers and Directors will commence at the beginning of April. Following is the list of candidates approved by the Society's Board of Directors at its midwinter meeting in Albuquerque.

Nominees for President-Elect:

Sally Perreault Darney, Ph.D.

Patricia B. Hoyer, Ph.D.

Nominees for Treasurer:

Martin M. Matzuk, M.D., Ph.D.

Michael F. Smith, Ph.D.

Nominees for two seats as Director:

Thomas E. Curry, Jr., Ph.D.

Norman B. Hecht, Ph.D.

Patricia A. Hunt, Ph.D.

Alan L. Johnson, Ph.D.

Report from the Membership Committee

Membership has increased. The goal of the Membership Committee is to have all SSR members renew their membership before the end of the calendar year. In this way, the membership extends from January 1 through December 31 of each year. I have good news!! Membership increased 22% compared to membership on May 1, 2008. There were increases in all four categories, namely Regular, Associate, Trainee, and Emeriti. The biggest increases in membership occurred in the Associate and Trainee categories.

Those SSR members who did not renew will be receiving a friendly reminder from the Membership Committee person in charge of the region in which the SSR members reside. What is meant by "region"? The world is divided into regions and one Membership Committee person is in charge of contacting the non-renewed SSR members in that region. This pyramid model enables the SSR Membership Committee to contact SSR members throughout the world.

Mentors of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. You have a key role in the education of the next generation of scientists. You, probably more than anyone else, are in the position to tell the trainees in your lab about the role of scientific societies in our scientific endeavors and to encourage your trainees to become members. The following is a listing of activities and opportunities that scientific societies can provide for their trainees. These reasons were the outcome of a survey of SSR trainees a year ago.

- Allow trainees to present their research and get feedback at Annual Meetings.
- Provide opportunities for trainees to network (interact) and meet experts in their field. The Trainee/Mentor Luncheon, where one mentor is seated with 6–8 trainees, has been used successfully by SSR.
- Encourage mentors to make a special effort to introduce trainees to established and junior scientists in their field. Trainees need to feel that the scientific society is a

welcoming organization which will enable the trainee to get involved in the scientific society and establish a lifetime commitment as a member.

- Recognize trainees who have submitted outstanding abstracts and give excellent oral or poster presentations.
- Disseminate information on jobs and positions.
- Provide education via a workshop or some other means regarding preparation of CV, preparation of cover letter, interviews, how to find the perfect postdoctoral positions, how to set up a laboratory, etc.
- Give support to enable trainees to travel to scientific society meetings.
- Encourage trainees to have a Web site supported by the scientific society where they can communicate with one another.
- Provide social gatherings at annual meetings which enable the trainees to meet the regular members of the scientific society. Many times these informal gatherings foster friendships and even future collaborations.

Viewpoints requested. I have always considered the unfolding of one's life as a series of chapters. SSR, as a 40+-year-old society, is also entering a new chapter. As chair of the Membership Committee, I welcome your ideas and thoughts on these questions: Is SSR serving the needs of its members? How do we expand our membership, both in the US and internationally? What can be done to increase the diversity of SSR? Is the participation of trainees in SSR adequate to interest them in making the transition from a trainee to a regular member of SSR at a later time? Please send your comments to Janice Bahr. I will appreciate hearing from you. ■

—Janice Bahr, Chair
Membership Committee
E-mail: jbahr@illinois.edu

New members

Regular

Tadashi Baba
Paul S. Burgoyne
Douglas A. Kniss
Megan Mahoney
Graeme B. Martin
Matthew R. Milnes
Idowu S. Ola
Sergei G. Tevosian

Associate

Laurel Quirke
Syohei Toda

Trainee

Tom Adriaenssens
Diana V. Arbona
Atsushi Asano
Chen Chen

Yohan Choi
Amit Cohen
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Change of status

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Satoshi Ohkura
Jason W. Ross
Venkataraman Sriraman
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To Associate:
Melissa Donaghay
Jacquelyn B. Hoffman
Carla Morrow
Kalidou Ndiaye

To Trainee:
Jackye Peretz

SSR awards for 2009

- ◆ *Carl G. Hartman Award*—**Terry M. Nett**, Ph.D.
- ◆ *SSR Research Award*—**Richard M. Schultz**, Ph.D.
- ◆ *SSR Distinguished Service Award*—**Fredrick Stormshak**, Ph.D.
- ◆ *SSR New Investigator Award*—**Wei Yan**, M.D., Ph.D.
- ◆ *SSR Trainee Mentoring Award*—**Fuller W. Bazer**, Ph.D.

These awards will be presented during SSR's Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. A description of the awards is at www.ssr.org/Awards.html. ■

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SSR member's research featured on National Geographic Explorer

Dr. Tom Spencer, whose work helped discover that sheep need retroviruses for reproduction, was one of the scientists featured in "The Virus Hunters," which aired in January on National Geographic Explorer.

More information about the program is at <<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/series/explorer/3828/Overview>>.

Spencer, an associate professor in the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University, worked with Dr. Massimo Palmarini, a virologist at the University of Glasgow, to discover that endogenous retroviruses are critical during the early phase of pregnancy in sheep when the placenta first begins to develop.

"What we discovered was that if you inhibit production of a particular sheep endogenous retrovirus, it compromises early pregnancy," he said. "The National Geographic program explains how we went about discovering this."

Retroviruses are best known for their ability to cause diseases. HIV is one class of retrovirus found in humans. During the evolution of mammals, some retroviruses infected the cells of the ovary and testis, which pass genetic material to offspring. These are known as endogenous retroviruses, and they are present in the genome of all mammals, including humans.

"Retrovirus genes are inherited and expressed like normal genes once they enter the germline," Spencer said. "During evolution these retroviruses infected certain individuals and are now transmitted from generation to generation."

Endogenous retroviruses are, in general, harmless and contain mutations that prevent

production of infectious retroviruses. However, several endogenous retroviruses appear to provide protection from infection and are involved in reproduction, Spencer explained.

"For instance, the exogenous Jaagsiekte Sheep Retrovirus, or JSRV, causes lung tumors in sheep and led to the death of Dolly, the world's first mammal cloned from an adult cell," he said.

The idea that endogenous retroviruses are important for reproduction in mammals has been around for about 30 years, Spencer said. Studies in cultured cells have shown that a protein of a human endogenous retrovirus might have a role in development of the human placenta. Spencer's research team blocked expression of the envelope, enJSRVs, using morpholino antisense oligonucleotides, which inhibit translation of specific messenger RNA

"When production of the envelope protein was blocked in the early placenta, the growth of the placenta was reduced and a certain cell type, termed giant binucleate cells, did not develop," Spencer said.

The result was that embryos could not implant and the sheep miscarried. Miscarriage is a serious medical problem for all mammals, including humans.

"Our research supports the idea that endogenous retroviruses shaped the evolution of the placenta in mammals and then became indispensable for pregnancy, and thus may be why they are expressed in the placenta of many mammals," said Palmarini. ■

[Adapted from a press release issued January 9, 2009, by Texas A&M University.]

Future directions at NICHD to enhance reproductive sciences

Dr. Louis DePaolo, chief of the Reproductive Sciences Branch in the Center for Population Research at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver NICHD at NIH, wrote a guest editorial that was published online in *Reproductive Sciences* (<http://rsx.sagepub.com>) (on behalf of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation). In this editorial Dr. DePaolo outlines 7 of the 10 future directions that NIH is looking to enhance in the field of reproductive science. The seven directions include the following: (1) Increase efforts to encourage new investigators to pursue a career in the reproductive sciences; (2) Provide a means to retain physician scientists in research careers; (3) Continue to expand and emphasize research addressing the etiology of women's reproductive diseases with greater attention on diagnosing reproductive and gynecologic diseases of pre-pubertal and post-pubertal adolescents; (4) Promote the concept of male reproductive health; (5) Support studies to examine complex polygenic disorders, gene-environment interaction, epigenetic modifications and potential intergenerational effects on reproductive health and fertility; (6) Encourage research on all aspects of stem cell biology; and (7) Pursue investigations at the intersection of immune and endocrine systems.

This article is too long to reproduce in our Newsletter; however, details of each future direction are explained in Dr. DePaolo's article, which can be accessed by clicking on this [link](#). Scroll down to view the text of the editorial.

As we start 2009, funding is potentially foremost on each scientist's mind. The promise of the new Obama administration appears to be increased funding for many federal granting agencies. I believe that members of SSR are major contributors of scientific knowledge in the field of reproductive sciences. I would encourage each of you to read Dr. DePaolo's article and see how your research or education program fits into the future directions of NICHD.

I hope 2009 brings each of you increased funding for your scientific program! ■

—Andrea S. Cupp
SSR Newsletter Editor