

Newsletter No: 196 / Winter 2010



Society for Reproduction and Fertility

Newsletter compiled by John Parrington (SRF General Secretary).
Contact me with comments/queries via:

E-mail: SRF@portland-services.com

60th SRF Annual Conference 2010

Sutton Bonington Campus, University of Nottingham

Sunday 11th July – Tuesday 13th July

Abstract Deadline: 29th March 2010

Early Bird Registration: See website for details

PhD student and post-doc SRF members presenting work eligible for £375 support

Further details on <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/>

Deadlines

29th March - Abstract submission/early bird registration for 60th SRF conference

<http://www.srf-reproduction.org/meetings/default>.

31st March Summer Vacation scholarships <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/education/vacation>

31st March Undergraduate Essay prize <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/education/essay>

15th April Travel grant deadline for next meeting <http://www.srf-reproduction.org/grants/travelgrant>.

SRF Chairman's Thoughts

This is my first report to you all as I try to fill the shoes of the previous SRF Chair Helen Picton. First of all, I would like to acknowledge Helen's sterling efforts on behalf of the Society. We owe her and the other Council members who stood down recently, in particular the last Treasurer Martin Luck, a vote of thanks for steering the society through some rough seas, especially the surprise collapse of our previous secretariat and the global economic downturn, which affected the Society's investments. Many of the changes brought in under Helen's leadership are bearing fruit and I see our future strategy as one of consolidation, extending the strategies that are clearly working for us and finding good solutions to ongoing problems. As you will read in the other sections our financial situation and membership numbers are looking very healthy and we will be working hard to

keep them in that happy state. I want to outline some of these developments briefly below, but for more detail see the reports from various Council officers.

SRF Secretariat: Portland Press has very ably handled a quite painful transition and the system is settling down well. The establishment of clear procedures that are aimed at increased efficiency and making SRF members' experiences with the secretariat faster, easier and more satisfying. Meanwhile please bear with us as the final changes, such as the need to renew direct debits etc, are worked through.

SRF Vice-Chair: Cheryl Ashworth has taken on this role and is focusing on membership issues. What do SRF members want and what will help them most? How can we benefit all levels of the membership, from students right up to the old guard? She will be updating the membership on developments in this and future newsletters.

SRF website: Together with Portland we are intent on greatly improving the website, both in terms of its currency and its utility to members. In terms of utility to members, the provision of streamlined on-line processes for a wide range of membership activities is an essential improvement for imminent rollout.

SRF charitable activities: As a charity it is important that the SRF continues to support education and research within the field of reproductive biology. We therefore continue to do our best to keep SRF conference fees as low as possible and to offer financial support to as many SRF members as possible. The SRF is also offering sponsorship to organisers of reproductive biology meetings and conferences. This includes our first ever sponsorship of a prestigious Gordon Research Conference. SRF is a constituent member of the Society of Biology (<http://www.societyofbiology.org/home>) created by the unification of the Biosciences Federation and the Institute of Biology and Council members are becoming regular attendees at various interest group meetings, such as the education and animal sciences groups.

Reproduction: As you will see in the Editor-in-Chief's report our Journal continues to do well and there are a number of exciting initiatives in the pipeline. The retrodigitisation of the Journal has also proved very successful.

SRF is 60 this year: At the Nottingham meeting (11-13 July 2010) SRF will celebrate its 60th birthday and the Council strongly encourages the membership to make an even greater effort to attend and contribute than usual.

SRF awards: In recent years the Council has played a major role in proposing recipients for awards including the Distinguished Scientist and Marshall Medal. At the same time nominations for the New Investigator award have been somewhat thin on the ground and I therefore call on the membership to be more proactive in future. Please give serious consideration to these key awards made by SRF. The Council looks forward to receiving many more nominations and suggestions from you all in future.

SRF undergraduate initiatives: The vacation scholarships offer members the chance to have eager undergraduates complete projects within their laboratories. I would like to remind members to encourage first-rate students to come forward and apply for a vacation scholarship. Potential supervisors of such students should bear in mind that the supervisor must, without exception, be a fully paid-up current SRF member. In addition, the undergraduate essay prize is another way of encouraging new blood into our field, so please draw this prize to the attention of relevant undergraduates and teaching staff.

Finally, I would like to add that despite the various problems facing us as researchers, such as government cuts in funding to universities and continuing constraints on research funds, the coming year has considerable scope to turn out to be a good year for the SRF and its members. I wish you all the best of luck in your endeavours.

Paul Fowler

From the Vice-Chair

SRF membership

As you (we hope!) know, there are many benefits of SRF membership for both student and full members. These include reduced subscription charges to major reproductive biology journals, generous assistance with travel costs to SRF Conference and other relevant meetings, reduced rates for attendance at our annual meeting and the bi-annual joint fertility meeting, vacation scholarships for undergraduates and, of course, the opportunity to network with reproductive biology colleagues within a supportive and friendly society.

SRF Council is currently looking at options to make membership of SRF even more attractive. Several benefits are currently being considered, but we would also like the views of our membership. Please let me (cheryl.ashworth@roslin.ed.ac.uk) know what additional member benefits would be of value to you. Please could I have your responses by the end of April 2010.

Finally, please continue to encourage your reproductive biology colleagues, post-docs and PhD students to join our society.

Cheryl Ashworth

Programme Secretary's Report

The start of the new decade finds the programme committee planning yet another annual meeting 11-13 July 2010 – this one however is very important as it will commemorate 60 years of SRF. To celebrate this very special anniversary SRF will be returning to the University of Nottingham at Sutton Bonington. The rich historical associations between SRF and Sutton Bonington make it an appropriate venue for this commemorative conference. The highlight of the proposed programme is a 60th anniversary symposium featuring some of the highlights of reproductive biology of the past sixty years. Details of the programme will be available on the SRF website in early February 2010. The venue for *Fertility 11* in January 2011 is Dublin. Outline programme plans are in place and more details will become available in March.

It is to be hoped that members will encourage young scientists to join the society as well as attend and present at the society's various conferences. Grants of up to £375 are available for student members as well as post-doctoral researchers at the early stages of their careers.

Can I please urge all of you to be more forthcoming with regard to nominations for the Society's various

awards such as the SRF Distinguished Scientist Award which is the premier award of the Society, the Marshall Medal and New Investigator Award. Your nominations are important for ensuring that the recipients of these awards of the Society are the most deserving and of the highest calibre. In the first instance, nominations for the above awards should be submitted to the SRF programme Secretary via the Business Office. As always, feedback from members on matters relating to SRF meetings are very welcome and can be forwarded to me at rabayase@rvc.ac.uk.

Robert Abayasekara

From the Treasurer and Company Secretary

This has been a challenging year for the society since not only have we continued to support our members in an economically unstable environment, we have also had a change in secretariat which has involved some changes in the financial management processes used by the SRF. From July 1st, Portland Customer Services (PCS) took over the running of bank accounts, cheque books, expense claims and other payments. Moreover, from January 1st this year (2010), PCS also took over the book-keeping services previously run by Peters, Elworthy and Moore (Chartered Accountants and Tax Advisors) who will remain as our auditors. As the previous treasurer (Martin Luck) outlined in his summer report, this effectively means that I have more support in many routine financial management activities and therefore more time to focus on strategy and decision-making.

The SRF is a small society with a remarkably stable financial underpinning and this has enabled it to survive despite the impact of the credit crunch on the economy. Although our investment portfolio with Credit Suisse has recently been in deficit, the first half of 2009 has seen a reduction in this deficit from minus 5.7% in the first quarter to minus 0.3% in the second. The good news now is that in the third quarter of 2009 the society investment brokers reported a +12.6% return and reassurance that the global economy is in a recovery phase. Indeed, our investment brokers indicate that the SRF investment portfolio is "well positioned to take advantage of this recovery".

The main source of income to the Society is from our Journal *Reproduction* which is effectively managed by our publishers Bioscientifica and our general running costs tend to be covered by membership subscriptions. The difference this year is that the positive return from our investment portfolio, rather than the deficit of last year, further improves the financial status of the society.

The excellent relationship between SRF and BioScientifica has resulted in Council's endorsement of a renewed contract for a further 5 years. This will see further improvements in the Journal's web platform, the appointment of a new Journal sales person by Bioscientifica who will target libraries and

improve awareness of the benefits of subscribing to *Reproduction*, and the use of anti-plagiarism software.

One of the key charitable activities carried out by SRF is the availability of 'Support for Conference Attendance' grants aimed at younger members of the society. In 2009, 14 members received this grant to attend Fertility 2009 in January with a further 28 delegates receiving support to attend the SRF annual conference in Oxford in July. In total, the SRF awarded £15,660 in conference attendance grants. For the next financial year the value of these awards will remain at £375 and support will be available for the Annual Conference in Sutton Bonington. If you are eligible for these awards, please note that previous awards do not affect your future right to apply.

Additional charitable activities carried out by the society in 2009 include the award of 6 vacation scholarships totalling £12,000 and 7 travel grants totalling £2,525. We have also provided financial support to the National Ovarian Workshop and the Zoological Society meetings, both of which were a great success.

On a personal note, I took over the post of Treasurer and Company Secretary of the SRF at the 2009 AGM. In the preceding year, I shadowed the previous treasurer Martin Luck who has proved to be an excellent mentor and I am very grateful for his help and invaluable advice. The appointment of PCS as our new secretariat has had a considerable positive impact on the financial management activities of the society and I have every confidence that these changes will be of substantial beneficial to the SRF in the foreseeable future.

Richard Lea

Members of SRF Council

Chair:	Paul Fowler
Vice-Chair:	Cheryl Ashworth
Treasurer and Company Secretary:	Richard Lea
General Secretary:	John Parrington
Programme Secretary:	Robert Abayasekara
Editor in Chief:	Tom Fleming

Committee Chairs:

Finance:	Richard Lea
Meetings:	Robert Abayasekara
Education & Development:	John Parrington

Ordinary members:	Rachel Webb Greg FitzHarris Tony Michael Kevin O'Byrne Suzannah Williams Ali Fouladi-Nashta
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Post-Grad/Doc Reps:	Mhairi Laird Leanne Williams
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Postgraduate / Postdoc Corner

Happy New Year everyone! We hope that the Christmas and New Year festivities have put you in fine fettle to start the New Year off with a renewed enthusiasm. For those of us still dwelling on the fun of frolicking in the snow, unfortunately the thaw is almost over, so let's get back to business.

Even though the next SRF conference is a distant summer thought, the deadline for abstract submission is March 29th, this is not too far away folks so please bear this in mind and make sure you get your submissions in on time. Remember prizes will be awarded for best student presentation and poster. Last year the competition was fierce and set a very high standard which we're sure will be maintained this year.

The Society holds its new and younger membership in very high regard and put in place many provisions to support up and coming researchers, so don't forget to check out the website for application/closing date details for this year's undergraduate essay prize, travel grants, vacation scholarships and support for SRF conference attendance.

As representatives of the society's post grads and post docs, each one of you has a voice through us, so please contact either of us if you feel that improvements could be made concerning the provision/opportunities for you. After chatting to some of you at the last meeting a few ideas were raised which included the following: informal social gatherings just for post grads and post docs, this could include some presentations, maybe a chance to deliver your research to a smaller and perhaps less intimidating audience. A face book and twitter page or a chat forum linked to the website was also talked about, giving people the opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge amongst the members of the SRF. This could give you a chance to discuss anything from academic issues through to help and support during those 'writing up' stages of your project, help with travel or accommodation or even finding a travelling companion to another conference. Any feedback pertaining to these ideas would be much appreciated and will allow us to tailor services to your needs so please get in touch.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting in Nottingham; the entertainment plans are well underway and will be kicked off with the increasingly infamous SRF Quiz. Take care and see you all soon.

E-mail us on:

Leanne Williams sbxlw3@nottingham.ac.uk

Mhairi Laird svxml@nottingham.ac.uk

Publications

Dear Colleagues

Just a short update on progress with our journal, *Reproduction*. In my last Newsletter entry in August '09, I was able to report a further increase in our

Impact Factor for this year, now up to 3.075, and we are doing all we can to maintain this upward progression for next year as well. We are making every effort, through the support of all the Editorial Board and the staff at our publishers Bioscientifica, to promote the Journal at all the relevant conferences, to further advance its international reputation amongst scientists across the world, and most importantly, to be vigilant in our review process to ensure we only publish high quality papers and reviews that move the field of reproductive biology forward in an original way of interest to our readers.

Since I last wrote, we have had our Focus issue on Vascular Function in Female Reproduction which came out in December 2009. Henry Jabbour from Queen's Medical Research Institute, Edinburgh, and one of our valued Editorial Board Members, was the Guest Editor and introduced four excellent reviews on angiogenesis and vascular function in the ovary; regulation of endometrial vascular remodelling; regulation of vascular growth in the human placenta; and inflammatory pathways in female reproductive health and disease, all from top authors in this exciting field. Thanks to Henry for his work here, and also to Kevin Sinclair and the Reviews Commissioning Group for their care and consideration in the strategy for having two quality reviews per issue.

We will be very shortly publishing our first Research Highlight articles which are brief, high priority, original research manuscripts reporting a major discovery or advance in a particular field of reproductive biology. Watch out for it, and all researchers should consider this paper format for their most significant discoveries.

Please do contact me if you have comments or thoughts about any aspect of *Reproduction's* activities (tpf@soton.ac.uk).

With very best wishes,

Tom Fleming
Reproduction Editor-in-Chief

Free SSF/SRF supplements

There has been a tremendous response to the opportunity for members to obtain free SSF/SRF supplements. If you would like to receive one or more of these supplements for only the cost of postage and packing, please contact Ros Webb at Nottingham University Press (webb@nupsales.co.uk). This offer is only available for a limited period, so if you would like a free supplement, please contact Ros. Further details can be found on the SRF website
