



The eLife Sciences Annual Report 2015



Image: Maloy (CC BY 2.0)

Helping scientists accelerate discovery



Letter from the Chairman

The centre of the stage at eLife in 2015 was occupied by a new human ancestor – *Homo naledi* – discovered by scientists in an extraordinary find in South Africa and published in eLife in two stunning papers in September. The work was covered by media outlets throughout the world, not just because of the scientific significance of the discovery but also because of the openness with which the research and its associated materials were distributed. That these scientists chose to publish such ground-breaking findings in eLife is testament both to the journal's growing significance, and to the steady cultural shift towards greater transparency and collaboration in science, which lie at the heart of eLife's mission.



Our goal is to invest further in eLife to enable more scientists to present their best work openly to the world.”

Our rate of publishing almost doubled during 2015, reaching around 90 articles per month by the end of the year, and reflecting another strong year of growth in submissions. The significant and fascinating science published in 2015 covered the effects of moonlight on the reproductive biology of coral, the sensation of pain in human infants, the use of molecular tweezers in HIV control, and a project in drug discovery using a citizen science approach. However, there is still far too much important work being published behind subscription barriers, and our goal is to invest further in eLife to enable more scientists to benefit from the efficient and rigorous eLife process and present their best work openly to the world.

Toby Coppel,

Co-Founder and Partner at
Mosaic Ventures
Chair, eLife Board of Directors



Besides the progress at the journal, in 2015 there has also been a great deal of work at eLife on technology and innovation. Just announced was the release of the open-source Continuum publication platform, the culmination of a year-long project which has enabled eLife to take complete control of our journal website. In 2015, we continued to collaborate with developers from Substance and helped to introduce Lens Writer. We also initiated a collaboration with Publons to help give researchers credit for their peer-review contributions. Later this year, users will benefit from a radical redesign of the entire website which has been developed by the eLife product and design team. This work reflects an important part of the eLife strategy: to research and develop new tools and methods in support of open science, and to make our findings and resources available openly so that others can benefit.

Continuing our work with early-career researchers, we introduced a series of webinars about funding opportunities and introduced a new travel grant program to support selected early-career authors with travel to meetings.

Our founding funders continue to believe that eLife will catalyse and inspire widespread change in the ways that scientific research is communicated and utilised. The eLife Board is therefore excited to see strong progress with our journal and with the development of our technology platform, both of which will help to drive the kind of changes that are needed in science, to support early-career researchers and to accelerate scientific discovery.

JAN

FEB

MAR

Highlights from 2015

Editors describe the ideal eLife paper

In a new editorial, Senior Editors Vivek Malhotra and Eve Marder explain that “the ideal eLife paper... makes others in the field think differently and... should give the reader the pleasure of reading about elegant or clever experiments, of learning something new, of being challenged...”

Image: Charlop-Powers et al. (CC BY 4.0)



Scientists develop drugs from dirt

Analysis of soils from five continents by researchers at Rockefeller University revealed top places to mine untapped drugs. Charlop-Powers et al. eLife 2015;4:e05048

Epidemiology of air travel

Scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles, show that the effectiveness of airport disease screening depends on several factors and, even in the best-case scenario, screening will still miss the majority of infected passengers. Gostic et al. eLife 2015;4:e05564

eLife invites Tools and Resources papers

eLife introduces a new article type – called Tools and Resources – to highlight new experimental techniques, datasets, software tools and other resources that have the potential to lead to important breakthroughs in one or more areas of the life sciences.

eLife helps with policy compliance

The Jisc Publications Router automates the direct delivery of research articles from publishers to institutional repositories. eLife was the first content provider to link up with Jisc. It helps us to provide our content quicker to more destinations, and eases compliance with the REF policy for authors based at UK institutions.

Image: John Mayer (CC BY 2.0)



APR

MAY

JUN



eLife adds a third Deputy Editor

Eve Marder, Professor of Neuroscience at Brandeis University, is appointed as eLife's third Deputy Editor. Randy Schekman, Editor-in-Chief, highlights Marder as "one of our most committed champions" and welcomes her to the eLife leadership team. Marder regularly contributes to eLife through her 'Living Science' series, in which she has written passionately on topics including the use of metrics in research and the rewards of a career in science.

Reviewers invited to take credit

eLife partners with Publons, a free service that makes it possible for reviewers to take credit for their peer-review activity.

RIPOSTE supports reproducibility

The introduction of RIPOSTE (Reducing Irreproducibility in labORatory STUdiEs), a framework developed to support early and regular discussions between scientists and statisticians in order to improve the design, conduct, and analysis of laboratory studies and to increase reproducibility.

Researchers map disease-carrying mosquitoes

Scientists at the University of Oxford predict the global distribution of mosquitoes that transmit dengue and chikungunya. Kraemer et al. eLife 2015;4:e08347

Oxford authors suggest babies feel pain like adults

A brain-scanning study at the University of Oxford suggests babies experience pain like adults. Goksan et al. eLife 2015;4:e06356



Image: Matt Berlin (CC BY SA 2.0)



eLife helps others adopt Lens

eLife Lens is an open-source technology that improves the reading and use of scientific articles, as it takes advantage of the internet's flexibility. eLife Lens developers from Substance and eLife discussed how Lens might be extended to other organisations or stages in the research process in a webinar.

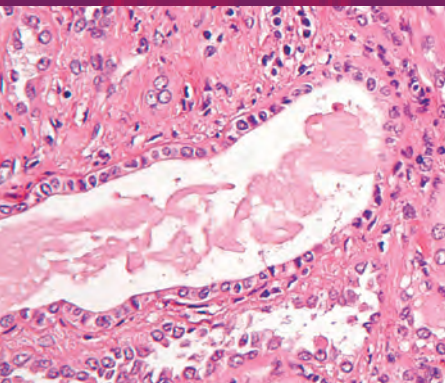
Medium.com offers 100 digests

Between December 2014 and July 2015, eLife republished a selection of 100 eLife digests to Medium.com, a blogging site that attracts a community of readers of all interests. Digests are the non-technical summaries published as part of Research Articles in the journal. Digests in medium are organised in four categories: Health and Disease, Brains and Behaviour, Life on Earth, Life's Building Blocks, and Roots and Shoots.

Twitter gets a taste of life in the field

The Amboseli Baboon Research Project takes over eLife's Twitter account to offer a flavour of life outside the lab through its work in Kenya.

Image: Nephron (CC BY SA 3.0)

**New insights into tumour formation**

Scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, reveal how cancer-causing mutations in the TERT protein-coding gene can promote tumour formation
Chiba et al.
eLife 2015;4:e07918

Image: Silke (CC BY 2.0)

eLife expands the editorial board

Another 41 scientists join the eLife Board of Reviewing Editors (BRE), bringing expertise in 13 major subject areas and helping to strengthen eLife's consultative approach to peer review during a steep phase of growth.

One of the 41, Ben Cooper, joins the eLife BRE with experience in mathematical modelling, epidemiology, and global health. Ben holds an MRC Senior Research Fellowship and is Associate Professor at the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit in Thailand. The current focus of his work is on combating multi-drug-resistant bacteria via rational use of antibiotics.

**eLife editors set out their standards for excellent science**

The editors of eLife are working scientists and they can put forward for publication as many outstanding papers as they identify. To help prospective authors better understand our editors' expectations, eLife introduces a set of questions for authors to consider ahead of submission and address in their cover letter.

HIV tweezers

Scientists at Ulm University Medical Center and Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania discover a "molecular tweezer" that blocks HIV and infection-boosting proteins in semen.

Lump, Castellano et al.
eLife 2015;4:e05397

eLife offers fellowship webinars

As part of its ongoing program to support early-career progression, eLife hosts its first set of webinars on postdoctoral fellowships from the Human Frontier Science Program, the Royal Society and the Wellcome Trust, and the U.S. National Institutes of Health. The program is informed by the eLife Early-Career Advisory Board.



Image: Berger et al. (CC BY 4.0)

Scientists unveil new human species

Scientists at the University of the Witwatersrand unearth a new species of human relative in a South African cave. The findings are jointly released in eLife and National Geographic.
Berger et al.
eLife 2015;4:e09560

eLife supports Lens Writer

eLife introduces Lens Writer by Substance, the developers of eLife Lens. Lens Writer is an independent web-based editing component tailored for the creation of scientific content, and ready to be customised and integrated into publishing systems.

OCT

Editors invite papers in Epidemiology

In an editorial, 'What makes an eLife paper in epidemiology and global health?' editors Prabhat Jha, Mark Jit, and Eduardo Franco emphasise that non-experimental papers are also welcome. "Eureka moments exist in epidemiology; we wish to display them prominently in eLife."

Helping scientists
accelerate
discovery by
operating
a platform
for research
communication
that encourages
and recognises the
most responsible
behaviours in
science.

- *The eLife mission*

NOV

eLife editors assemble

Around 80 eLife editors attend the annual General Assembly in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to discuss editorial policy and the state of the journal. Over two days of discussions a number of themes and actions emerged, one of the strongest being that the consultative editorial process remains a unique and valuable part of what eLife offers.

DEC

Labs showcases new tools

eLife Labs opens up to showcase new tools created by external developers for online scientific communication, through "Guest Experiments". eLife Labs is a platform to highlight innovative technologies to accelerate the writing, publishing, and sharing of scientific breakthroughs.

Travel grants are introduced

eLife introduces a pilot travel grants program to help early-career scientists who have authored with eLife gain exposure and recognition for their work at scientific meetings.

Image: Kaniewska, Alon et al. (CC BY 4.0)



The genetics of autism

Important insights are provided into changes to the developing brain caused by an autism-associated gene, in two studies led by the University of Utah School of Medicine and Harvard Medical School, respectively. Martin, Muralidhar et al. eLife 2015;4:e09395 and Tong, Hu et al. eLife 2015;4:e09648

Bad light shed on corals

Scientists at the Australian Institute of Marine Science and Massachusetts Institute of Technology show how coral exposed to artificial light cannot detect moonlight, failing to spawn. Kaniewska, Alon et al. eLife 2015;4:e09991

Financial summary

The grants received during the year were slightly more than the expenditure, resulting in an increase in net assets in the year.

The specific contributions from the founders were: HHMI £1.84m, Max Planck Society £0.47m and Wellcome Trust £1.84m.

Statement of activities, years ended December 31 2014 and 2015 (in £ thousands)

Revenue	2015	2014
Grants	4,154	3,279
Other income	-	3
Total	4,154	3,282

Expenses	2015	2014
Journal expenses	3,544	3,108
Management and general	312	290
Total	3,856	3,398

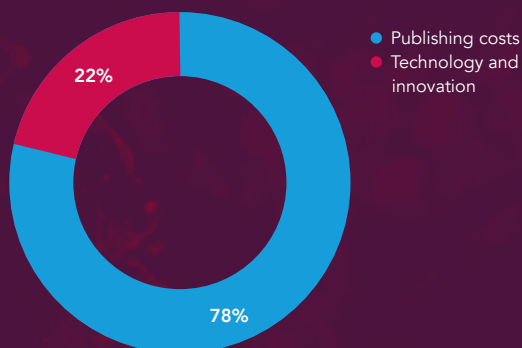
Changes in net assets	298	(116)
Net assets at beginning of year	247	363
Net assets at end of year	545	247

The full audited accounts for eLife Sciences Publications Limited for 2015 are available at 2015.elifesciences.org. As a US-registered tax-exempt organisation, we also publish detailed financial information in our Form 990.

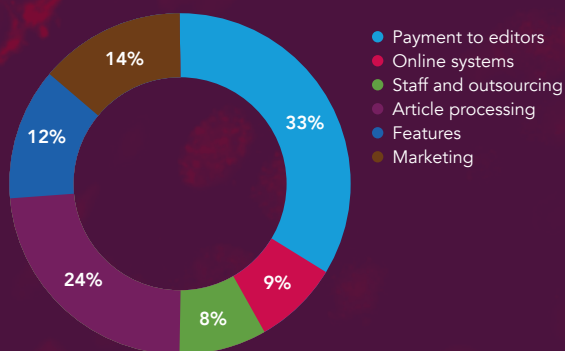
Analysis of expenditure

The growth of over 50% in publishing volumes has led to an increase of about a third in editorial and publishing systems costs, and in payments to editors, and these costs now also represent a larger proportion of total costs. There has also been a continuing substantial level of investment in new systems.

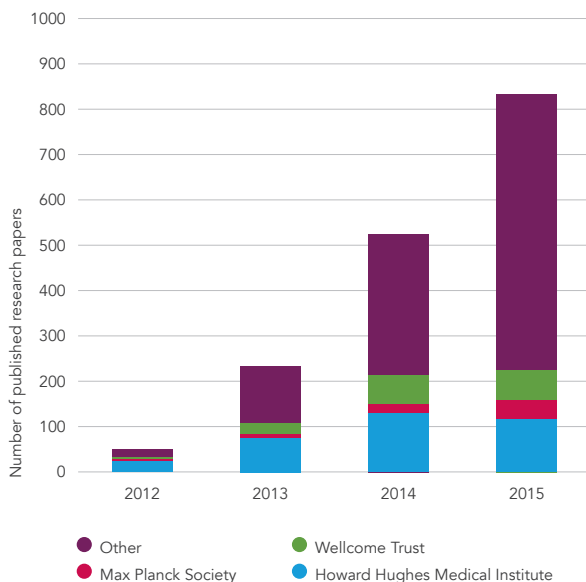
Total expenditure



Publishing costs



Research supported by any funding agency may be submitted for consideration to eLife. The funders most represented to date include the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, European Commission, European Research Council, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Max Planck Society, UK Medical Research Council, US National Institutes of Health, US National Science Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust. (Source: eLife)



2015 by the numbers

833 Research papers published

5,472 Peer reviews submitted

11 New Senior Editors

97 New Reviewing Editors

4 Days from initial submission to initial decision*

33 Days from full submission to decision after peer review*

116 Days from initial submission to acceptance*

* Median calendar days, based on decision dates in 2015

hhmi | Howard Hughes Medical Institute



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