

## Title

SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING: Launching *eLife*, Part 1.

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## Standfirst

The new open-access journal *eLife* has launched, making its first content available in PubMed Central. In addition to publishing science of the highest quality, the journal aims to improve both the peer-review process and the presentation of new research results.

## Text

*eLife* is an unprecedented collaboration between the funders and practitioners of life and biomedical science, aiming to catalyse fundamental change in research communication. Motivated by the tremendous opportunities afforded through digital media, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Max Planck Society and the Wellcome Trust have come together with the research community to create a new and transformative journal, as a first step in the broader *eLife* initiative.

The three legs of *eLife*'s initial mission are: to publish outstanding science under an open access license; to create an unparalleled editorial process that is decisive, fair and efficient; and to fully utilize digital media in the presentation of new research. The guiding principle of the project is to serve the interests of science, scholars and society.

Since the announcement of the journal in June 2011, we have recruited a world-class community of academic editors to run the journal along with a staff team of experienced professionals. In partnership with a number of different organizations, we have also established the essential publishing infrastructure required to meet *eLife*'s objectives.

*eLife*, the journal, opened for submissions in mid-June, and within two months about 100 submissions had been received, including several exceptional articles that met the standards for scientific excellence required for publication in *eLife*. A key goal for *eLife* is to eliminate unnecessary delays in the publication process, and the fact that the first articles were accepted in August demonstrates that our editorial and peer-review processes [<http://www.elifesciences.org/the-journal/review-process/>] are equal to this challenge. One innovation is for the reviewing editor to consolidate all the comments from the reviewers into a single set of instructions to the authors. This editorial decision letter and the authors' responses are shown at the end of each article. We will be evaluating the success of all aspects of these processes over the months ahead.

Given that we were able to accept several articles quickly and that the launch of the *eLife* journal website is still several weeks away, we have been considering ways to avoid any unnecessary delays in making publishing these articles available. To that end, as of October XXX, we are listing articles on the *eLife* website [[elifesciences.org/articles](http://elifesciences.org/articles)] as soon as they are ready to be published and

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releasing the articles themselves on PubMed Central (PMC), the public archive for life and biomedical science literature at the US National Library of Medicine. The articles are available in full-text HTML and fully formatted PDF versions. They are the final published versions, each one complete with a broadly accessible summary (the eLife Digest). Each of the first four articles is also accompanied by a short Insight article that offers the perspective of an expert in the field. Newly published articles will continue to be added over the coming weeks, with links to the content in PMC.

The initial collection of content covers a broad range of topics, reflecting our goal to encompass biomedical and life science from the most basic research through to translational, applied and clinical work. One article identifies a critical signalling molecule involved in the interaction between a primitive eukaryote and a bacterium, which is an important advance in efforts to understand the evolution of multicellularity. This article received substantial publicity [<http://www.elifesciences.org/tag/accepted/>] after one of the principal authors, Nicole King, presented the work (already accepted for publication in *eLife*) at the Society for Developmental Biology meeting, and then posted the accepted article on her own lab website. The article was downloaded over 1000 times in the first 30 days.

How cells cope with the stress of poorly folded proteins is the theme of a second article, which uncovers how fission yeast deploys the same cellular machinery in an unusual and very different way from other organisms. Another article describes the results of a two-year field trial that demonstrates how a specific group of chemicals released by plants in response to herbivore attack can increase the plants' fitness. And to complete this collection of four articles, a significant advance in aging research is provided by researchers who show that a hormone involved in the response to starvation dramatically increases the lifespan of mice in which it is overexpressed. As well as representing diverse areas of research, importantly, the four articles send a strong signal about the calibre of the science that we seek to publish at *eLife*.

Releasing the first content from *eLife* on PubMed Central is an unusual step, and there are one or two aspects of the content that are not perfectly presented at this stage. For example, one thing to note is that all of the elements of the article (abstract, eLife digest, figures, tables, additional files etc.) have a unique identifier (Digital Object Identifier or DOI), which is derived from the main article DOI. In time, these DOIs will be a way to link to (as well as cite) the specific item, but this mechanism will not be in place until we have launched the journal website. We would like to take the opportunity to thank our colleagues at PubMed Central who have been enormously helpful in publishing these first articles.

We will be publishing further content on PubMed Central in the coming weeks. But it is at the *eLife* journal website where we will have the most scope to experiment and explore new territory in research communication, beginning with the launch of the first version of the site towards the end the year.



We hope that these first articles will inspire many more of our colleagues throughout the world to submit their best work to *eLife*, where they will benefit from a constructive and swift publishing experience, a flexible online platform that allows them to tell their research story in full alongside other outstanding work, and the full recognition and attention of peers and interested readers without limit.

We would like to close by thanking our supporters, and editorial and staff colleagues for their hard work and commitment in getting us this far, and especially the initial authors, who have taken a bold step to get *eLife* off to such a flying start.

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