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Beyond publishing: introducing *Interviews with authors*

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What lies beyond publication in the life cycle of a successful scientific article? Were there any struggles that led the authors to alter their preferred course of action? Was the motivation for the research project personal or societal?

Frustratingly, we rarely get any answers to these kinds of questions when we read an article. On the one hand, conferences might provide a rare opportunity to satisfy our curiosity – should we be so lucky to meet the authors in person. But with the frequency and dynamics of personal interactions radically changing at the start of the present decade, it is now possible to have a friendly chat with authors online without having to wait for a summer fixture.

Making effective use of these new means of communication, we have decided to start meeting willing authors online after their research has been published in our journal. Why? Fundamentally, because we care about the answers. We edit a journal of the International Union of Crystallography (IUCr), which is a body that was created by scientists, including structural biologists like ourselves, for the common good. And there are so many ways in which these – completely voluntary – interviews will serve the community.

First, there is improved visibility. A list of names on an article does not necessarily reflect the wonderful diversity of the structural biology scene; also, social inequality, affinity bias, groupthink, deeply ingrained hierarchies, time and space constraints, and associated ills can make it difficult for conferences to showcase the obvious diversity of an International Union. In interviewing first authors, we aim to amplify the voice of early career researchers across the world, boosting their profiles and sharing their experiences with the community.

Second, because interviews provide an opportunity to engage the public. Interview videos are attached to articles in the journal so they are easily findable, but importantly our videos are published on the IUCr's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@theIUCr>) and publicized on social media. Anyone can tune in and listen. And so that anyone can also understand, all interviews will commence with a lay summary of the presented research. Because it is not just the general public who might be interested in the results: policymakers have communicated time and again that it can be hard to distil the findings of a study from either an overly technical article or a potentially overblown press release. Lest we forget that science has a strong social role to fulfil.

Finally, in a world dominated by the media, bringing these interviews to as many authors as possible will help propagate interview experiences and skills worldwide. We do hope the initiative will be well received by the community. The series has recently started, with the first episode of *Structural Biology Communications: Interviews with authors* featuring Sintayehu Manaye Shinkutie (Hawassa University, Ethiopia) and Jon Hughes (Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Germany) discussing their article on the photosensory module of phytochrome B from *Sorghum bicolor* (Shenkutie *et al.*, 2024).

Want to have a chance to talk to the community about your research, let them get to know you and share advice with them? Submit your articles to *Acta Crystallographica F – Structural Biology Communications* and get your own episode of *Interviews with authors*!

References

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