



Bringing *eLife* to Life:
The 2012 eLife Sciences Annual Report



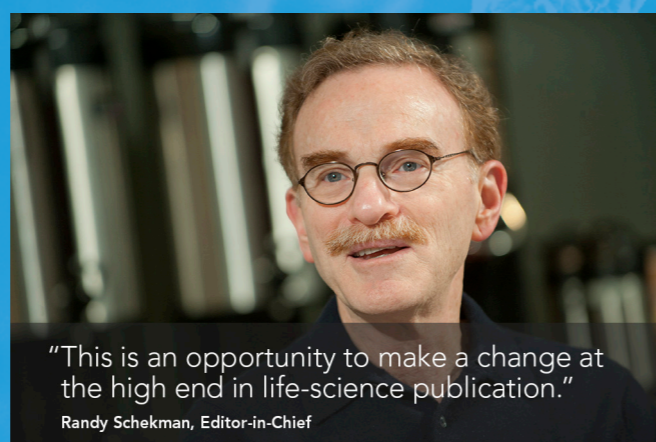
About eLife

In June 2011, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Max Planck Society, and the Wellcome Trust announced eLife Sciences – a disruptive, refreshing new model for the publishing and dissemination of cutting-edge scientific research. It is built on digital technologies, and driven by the needs of academic science, the research community, and the broader population interested in science.

eLife Sciences is a collaboration between the funders and practitioners of research, committed to removing the barriers and practices that often hamper the timely, effective communication of new research findings. The first steps towards realizing the eLife Sciences founders' vision were rapidly identified:

- 🌐 **Create** an editorial team of accomplished scientists, putting the world's top researchers in charge of content decisions
- 🌐 **Ensure** expeditious assessment and selection of research through a streamlined, constructive and interactive editorial process
- 🌐 **Build** a unique online publishing venue to maximize the reach of scientific advancements through open access and creative digital media approaches, increasing the exposure and value of work selected for publication

In December 2012, the launch of the *eLife* journal was completed, laying the foundation for our efforts to inspire broader reform in science publishing.



The Science of eLife

At the heart of eLife Sciences is a commitment to the highest standards of science. Not only will we maximize the reach and influence of important research that is selected for publication, the quality of the work will also ensure that the eLife Sciences initiative inspires broader reform in science communication.

One of the most important early tasks for the editors who run the *eLife* journal was therefore to define the criteria for publication. The editors agreed that great science can have different characteristics, and that *eLife* should include contributions that fulfill any of the following requirements:

- 🌐 **The work moves a field forward, provides fresh understanding, corrects established beliefs, or answers a long-standing question**
- 🌐 **The work inspires important new approaches or opens up areas of investigation**
- 🌐 **The work has profound real-world impact**

With the leadership of the editors, *eLife* has risen to the next challenge, to attract work that meets these criteria. Our success here is certainly also due to the sponsorship of the project by three of the world's most noteworthy research funders, who are themselves synonymous with excellence in science. Our standards for quality, coupled with an editorial process that reflects the aims and needs of researchers themselves, are helping *eLife* to win hearts and minds.



Optimizing Access

In accordance with our open-access mandate, every *eLife* article is available to a global audience for free immediately upon publication.

- 🌐 We publish content under the terms of the Creative Commons-Attribution license
- 🌐 We deposit all content into PubMed Central, a free archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature at the U.S. National Institute of Health's National Library of Medicine. We also ensure that *eLife* content reaches other potential users by interacting with a growing number of services including: GitHub, Mendeley, EuropePMC, Fluidinfo, Scribd
- 🌐 We comply with all the open-access policies that have been developed by research institutions and funders throughout the world

The following are three examples of the articles in very different areas of life science and biomedicine that were published in 2012:

A receptor for the hepatitis B and D viruses

Sodium taurocholate cotransporting polypeptide is a functional receptor for human hepatitis B and D virus

The identification of a functional receptor for the hepatitis B and D viruses could lead to new strategies for tackling these diseases.

H Yan, G Zhong, G Xu, W He, Z Jing, Z Gao, Y Huang, Y Qi, B Peng, H Wang, L Fu, M Song, P Chen, W Gao, B Ren, Y Sun, T Cai, X Feng, J Sui, W Li

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7554/eLife.00049>

The effect of fog on car drivers

Foggy perception slows us down

Virtual reality experiments show that motorists slow down when driving in fog, but they speed up when visibility is reduced equally at all distances.

P Pretto, J Bresciani, G Rainer, H Bülthoff
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7554/eLife.00031>

The evolution of chromatin

Chromatin is an ancient innovation conserved between Archaea and Eukarya

Similarities between the chromatin in archaea and eukaryotes suggest that it might have been involved in gene regulation before its role in DNA packaging evolved.

R Ammar, D Torti, K Tsui, M Gebbia, T Durbic, G D Bader, G Giaever, C Nislow

<http://dx.doi.org/10.7554/eLife.00078>

To read *eLife's* recent papers, visit elifelife.org

Optimizing Presentation

At *eLife*, science comes alive online. *eLife* presents articles in a clean, uncluttered format, allowing for the science to shine in a presentation that provides an enjoyable reading experience.

Our aim is to make the publishing part of the research life cycle the best it can be. As an online-only publication, we are not limited by the outdated and restrictive mechanisms of print and can approach the sharing of scientific knowledge through leading-edge methods. Authors have the space and opportunity to tell their story in full and we are committed to continually improving the presentation of new research findings in ways that offer the most benefit to the advancement of science.

Letter from the Chairman

The Board is very proud of the *eLife* Sciences team's accomplishments in 2012, including the initial development and operation of the journal and the warm and open reception from the research community.

Critical to *eLife* Sciences' success has been the driving force of our talented academic editorial team. Led by Editor-in-Chief Randy Schekman (University of California at Berkeley, USA), and Deputy Editors Fiona Watt (King's College, London, UK) and Detlef Weigel (Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology, Germany), the team has devised an open and transparent editorial process that has been welcomed by the scientific community.

It has been *eLife's* goal to quickly attract the highest calibre of content and to build a reputation for excellence in editorial standards. Given that *eLife* is competing with established and influential venues for the most important scientific work, this is a considerable challenge. It is, therefore, hugely gratifying that well over 200 research articles that meet our high standards of excellence have already been published by the end of 2013.

It is important to remember, however, that the *eLife* Sciences project is about more than launching a journal. It is about exploiting the potential of a new medium to communicate and share the results of scientific research. The digital medium has had profound and widespread effects on the way we conduct our lives, and yet has had limited impact on journals and research communication in general. The *eLife* Sciences Board will also therefore assess the progress of the initiative in terms of how journals and publishing practices change more broadly.

The Board could not be happier with the start that *eLife* Sciences has made, and we congratulate all involved, most especially the researchers who have taken part – as editors, reviewers or authors – in this unique opportunity to transform the dissemination of knowledge and stimulate scientific innovation.



Toby Coppel
Partner, Virgin Management
Chair, *eLife* Sciences Board of Directors

For the full Chairman's letter and complete audited accounts of *eLife* Sciences Publications Limited, visit 2012.elifesciences.org

How it Works

Optimizing the editorial process

Our first undertaking was to bring together a team of the most distinguished scientists from around the globe to develop the editorial strategy that would become the hallmark of our new initiative.

From the senior editors to the more than 150 researchers who serve on our Board of Reviewing Editors (BRE), the editorial team represents a broad array of disciplines in the life and biomedical sciences. As active researchers themselves, they also have a profound understanding of the frustrations and challenges their peers often face regarding the publication of findings, and an appreciation of the benefits of a positive publishing experience.

The aim of the eLife editorial team is to:

- Provide a peer-review service that is prompt, constructive and scholarly, featuring an interactive and collaborative approach
- Promise a process that is both selective and inclusive, encouraging submission of the best work of our colleagues at every career stage to ensure the open availability of first-class science
- Maximize the influence and reach of every published article, and demonstrate its impact
- Promote the careers of researchers, especially those who are in the early stages of their working life



Financial Summary

The founders of eLife Sciences – the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Max Planck Society, and the Wellcome Trust – launched the initiative to lead change in the way scientific results are selected, presented, and shared. As well as establishing *eLife* as a new and prestigious publication, our intentions include the development of new technology, methods and infrastructure to optimize digital research communication.

To support these ambitious goals, the founders have together committed more than £15 million to eLife Sciences. Over the long term, we will explore opportunities to collaborate with additional agencies, and new revenue streams such as publication fees.

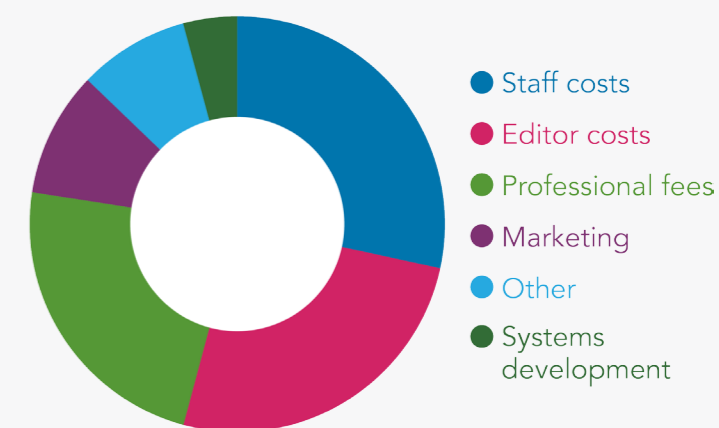
TABLE 1
Statement of activities, year ended December 31st, 2012
(in £ thousands)

REVENUE	
Grants	3,231
Other income	1
Total	3,232

EXPENSES	
Journal expenses	1,721
Management & general	529
Total	2,250

Change in net assets	982
Net assets beginning of year	nil
Net assets end of year	982

Table 1 summarises overall income and expenditure. In 2012, the specific contributions from the founders were: £1.46 million (HHMI); £0.31 million (Max Planck Society); and £1.46 million (Wellcome Trust).



The full audited accounts for eLife Sciences Publications Limited for 2012 are provided at 2012.elifesciences.org. As a U.S.-registered tax-exempt organisation, we also publish detailed financial information in our Form 990.

Looking Ahead

In 2012, we completed the first phase of an important new initiative in research communication. The team, the processes and the necessary infrastructure were all put in place to enable us to launch *eLife* and publish our first research articles.

However, *eLife* Sciences is about much more than a journal; we are charged by our founders to explore, experiment with and inspire improvements in all aspects of the communication of new research findings. We will therefore continue to grow and develop.

“This is our one chance to do something completely different.”

Fiona Watt, Deputy Editor

In the longer term, *eLife* Sciences will investigate new infrastructure to support the communication of research, to make processes faster and more cost-effective, and to support fully the broader goals of science and scholarship. We are already inspired by the encouragement of so many of our published authors as well as reviewers and readers. Their words energize us to continue the good work we have begun for the sake of our colleagues in the scientific community and for our fellow citizens worldwide.

Follow the development of the *eLife* Sciences initiative at elife.elifesciences.org.