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## Rewarding experience

**T**he astute scientist recognizes that research is becoming increasingly multidisciplinary. This week, the London-based Royal Institution is honouring two scientists who are doing such work. Christopher Lowe and Martin Nowak will receive the Henry Dale Prize, funded by the Kohn Foundation, a charity that supports scientific/medical research.

It is perhaps appropriate that the Royal Institution is handing out the £10,000 (US\$16,700) prize, says Lowe, director of the Institute of Biotechnology at the University of Cambridge, because Michael Faraday, a pioneering multidisciplinary scientist, was strongly associated with the institute. "He did chemistry, physics and engineering," says Lowe. "We've lost that over the past 200 years, but now it's starting to come back again."

Lowe and Nowak, who directs Harvard University's programme for evolutionary dynamics, take different approaches to bringing multiple competencies into a research team. Lowe has assembled a team of about 100 scientists trained in different skills, with some intentional redundancy. The most important commonality, he says, is a willingness to communicate and learn about how colleagues' techniques could be applied to their problems.

Nowak recommends preparing for a cross-disciplinary career by switching track between a first degree and a PhD — from maths to biochemistry, for example. Nowak sees as positive the recent trend among US students of doing multiple major and minor subjects during their undergraduate years.

There is no one right way to pursue a multidisciplinary career (see *Nature* 425, 542–543; 2003). But researchers who see that science is heading in that direction, and find the best way for them to follow it, should be rewarded with a successful career.

**Paul Smaglik**  
Naturejobs editor



## Contents

### CAREERS AND RECRUITMENT

The rise of functional genomics p880

Bridging the technological gap p882

### WWW.NATUREJOBS.COM

Career centre  
Information on the scientific job market

FOCUS

SPOTLIGHT

RECRUITMENT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS