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Brought to book

If a book makes it onto the bestsellers list, the publishers can be confident that they have struck a chord. For foundations, which generate a constant stream of white papers and reports, success is best quantified in terms of Internet downloads. In this vein, a book published earlier this year by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) in Chevy Chase, Maryland, has earned a 'greatest clicks' award for career advice.

The popularity of the institute's *Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty* says something about how much help young scientists feel they need as they face one of their biggest career challenges — moving from a postdoc to becoming an independent researcher (www.hhmi.org/grants/office/graduate/labmanagement.html). The hunger for information is clear from the number of hits the HHMI initially received: in February and March, about 10,000 copies of the book were downloaded each month.

The need for this book became apparent a few years ago, when the HHMI canvassed its new investigators to find out what they saw as their greatest skill gap. Focus groups had revealed that there was a lag time of several months before grantees received their funding and were finally up and running. Many said that a lack of lab management and grant-writing skills were to blame, so, working with the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the HHMI engineered a course to address the issue. As the course's popularity grew, a book based on the teaching materials was put together.

The next step may be to modify the training advice to meet the requirements of different countries' career paths. To the HHMI's credit, it has built the electronic version of the book in a modular fashion, and is encouraging people to adapt it to their own needs. This 'shareware' approach to careers advice means that the HHMI is likely to have an electronic hit on its hands for many months.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



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