

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
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For many people in the developed world, the Internet has become an extension to their everyday lives. They use it to shop, to get restaurant recommendations and to search out good deals for holidays. In the not-so-distant future, scientists may well be using the web for a spot of shopping and recommendations of their own as they seek the best laboratories to join.

A website is often the first point of contact people have with a laboratory — a sort of digital window into the workings of the place. Most lab websites articulate research programmes and give names and contacts of the lab's members. Good sites also provide ways to seek collaborations. And excellent ones allow potential future members to see what past and present lab participants have gone on to do.

If I was searching for a new lab, I'd want to know that the previous members have published under the principal investigators and have gone on to positions that I'm interested in exploring — whether in academia, industry or government, both on and off the bench. I'd also want to know about lab culture. Do the members interact both professionally and socially? Do they have some sense of humour and a culture of cooperation?

To explore these 'best practices', graduate student, stem-cell scientist and blogger Attila Csordás is hosting a laboratory website competition on his blog (<http://pimm.wordpress.com>). Csordás' thesis is that few lab websites take full advantage of the medium's technology and don't give visitors the information they want about a group's science and culture. "Am I alone with my opinion that most academic laboratory web pages simply do not meet any advanced, current, dynamic web standards, although this would be crucial for them?" Csordás writes in his blog. He provides a few examples of sites in his discipline that come close, but is challenging life-science labs around the world to share their best efforts. Taking on this challenge will help labs sell their science — and might also attract promising young scientists to their groups.

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