

Contacts

Publisher: Ben Crowe
Editor: Paul Smaglik
Marketing Manager: David Bowen

European Head Office, London

The Macmillan Building
 4 Crinan Street
 London N1 9XW, UK
 Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
 Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
 e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Senior European Sales Manager:

Nevin Bayoumi (4978)

UK/ RoW/ Ireland:

Matt Powell (4953)
 Andy Douglas (4975)
 Frank Phelan (4944)

Netherlands/ Italy/ Iberia:

Evelina Rubio Hakansson (4973)

Scandinavia:

Sille Opstrup (4994)

France/ Belgium:

Amelie Pequignot (4974)

Production Manager:

Billie Franklin
 To send materials use London address above.
 Tel +44 (0) 20 7843 4814
 Fax +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
 e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

International

Advertising Coordinator:

Hind Berrada (4935)

Naturejobs web development:

Tom Hancock

Naturejobs online production:

Ben Lund

European Satellite Office

Germany/ Austria/ Switzerland:

Patrick Phelan, Odo Wulffen
 Tel + 49 89 54 90 57 11/-2
 Fax + 49 89 54 90 57 20
 e-mail: p.phelan@nature.com
o.wulffen@nature.com

US Head Office, New York

345 Park Avenue South,
 10th Floor, New York, NY 10010-1707
 Tel +1 800 989 7718
 Fax +1 800 989 7103
 e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

US Sales Manager:

Peter Bless

US Advertising Coordinator:

Linda Adam

Japan Head Office, Tokyo

MG Ichigaya Building (5F),
 19-1 Haraikatamachi,
 Shinjuku-ku,
 Tokyo 162-0841
 Tel +81 3 3267 8751
 Fax +81 3 3267 8746
 e-mail: k.johnson@naturejpn.com

Asia-Pacific Advertising Manager:

Kewyn Johnson

Patenting success

When Laura Coruzzi finished her postdoc at New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 1981, her scientific future looked uncertain. Grant money had dried up, owing to federal cutbacks. Even established faculty had problems finding funding. Such a grim outlook often leads people to look for alternatives, and Coruzzi was no exception.

Through a combination of personal contacts and serendipity, she met Leslie Misrock, a partner at Pennie and Edmonds, a New York law firm that was looking to capitalize on the anticipated boom in biotech patents. She joined the firm, along with Jennifer Gordon, a biochemist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who didn't fancy a future standing next to a fermenter. The 'patent twins' clerked for the firm (which covered the cost of law school) by day, attended Fordham University School of Law by night, and studied whenever they could.

They are now both partners in the firm, and their experience is instructive for any scientist considering a career beyond the bench. First, there's location. Being in a city like New York, with a concentration of academic institutions (see Regions, page 4) and science-related business opportunities outside the ivory tower, increases the chance of a successful move.

Then there's hard work. Few people who have slogged through a PhD welcome the thought of more formal education. But to cross over successfully, a law degree, MBA or other professional qualification is often helpful. Finally, there's expectation. Misrock convinced Coruzzi and Gordon that there'd be a need for their services, so they took the plunge. And their hard work paid off. Scientists who follow a similar plan can be equally successful, even if they choose a career other than law and a city other than New York.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



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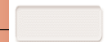
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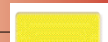
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