

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

The global plight of postdocs was highlighted by the recent *Naturejobs* contest to select four fellows to write monthly journal entries on our Career View page. We received a host of entries from a number of countries running the gamut of the physical and life sciences. But despite the volume and diversity, the sample entries revealed some interesting similarities.

The word 'crossroads' kept cropping up to describe the fellows' situation. Even though nearly all of the entries came from academic postdocs, many expressed uncertainty about whether university research would be their ultimate destination. Such doubts are worrying and encouraging in almost equal measure. They are unnerving because they underline the number of hurdles that must be negotiated if you want to get established in science — from picking a country and a lab, to work in to worrying about publishing pressures. But they are encouraging because they reveal that the postdocs are still open to alternative career paths, such as publishing, law and policy.

Although all of the entries we received described compelling situations, after several rounds of judging we picked four writers who best seemed to articulate these issues. Maria Ocampo-Hafalla wrote about the pressures she felt as she chose a new position and adviser that meant her switching research focus and crossing the Atlantic (page 564). Unabashed idealist Peter Jordan from Australia hopes his training in mathematical modelling at the US National Institutes of Health will help "make a difference" by somehow improving human health. Christopher Rowan expressed a mixture of excitement and trepidation about his impending move from Britain to South Africa, where he will study rocks. And Moira Sheehan, a plant-biology postdoc at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, is looking to balance lab work and family life as she awaits her second child.

We would like to thank all of the applicants who shared their stories, and congratulate the four who made the final cut. We look forward to hearing what decisions they make at this crucial crossroads in their career.

Paul Smaglik, *Naturejobs* editor

CONTACTS

Editor: Paul Smaglik
Assistant Editor: Gene Russo

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

European Sales Manager:
Andy Douglas (4975)
e-mail: a.douglas@nature.com
Business Development Manager:
Amelie Pequinot (4974)
e-mail: a.pequinot@nature.com
Natureevents:
Claudia Paulsen Young
(+44 (0) 20 7014 4015)
e-mail: c.paulsenyoung@nature.com

France/Switzerland/Belgium:
Muriel Lestringuez (4994)
UK/Ireland/Italy/RoW:
Nils Moeller (4953)
Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal:
Evelina Rubio-Morgan (4973)
Germany/Austria/The Netherlands:
Reya Silao (4970)
Online Job Postings:
Matthew Ward (+44 (0) 20 7014 4059)

Advertising Production Manager:
Stephen Russell
To send materials use London
address above.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com
Naturejobs web development:
Tom Hancock
Naturejobs online production:
Catherine Alexander

US Head Office, New York
75 Varick Street,
9th Floor,
New York,
NY 10013-1917
Tel: +1 800 989 7718
Fax: +1 800 989 7103
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

US Sales Manager: Peter Bless

Japan Head Office, Tokyo
Chiyoda Building,
2-37 Ichigayatamachi,
Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 162-0843
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:
Ayako Watanabe
e-mail: a.watanabe@natureasia.com