

Community reflections

This month, we take a look back on the first year of the online Springer Nature Protocols and Methods Community.

Methods are at the heart of all research projects. Not all researchers can call themselves method developers, but you would be hard-pressed to find a researcher who is not a user of methods, tools and protocols. To help bring together method developers and users, across research fields and around the world, the online [Springer Nature Protocols and Methods Community](#) was launched in January 2019.

This Protocols and Methods Community launch followed on the heels of other successful [Communities](#) facilitated by Springer Nature, in fields including microbiology, cancer, ecology and evolution, chemistry, and several other areas. *Nature Methods* editors are participating in the Protocols and Methods Community, along with [Nature Protocols](#) editors, [Springer Protocols](#) editors, and members of the [Springer Nature Experiments](#) team. We also welcome contributions from other Springer Nature journal editors and authors publishing methodological research.

The traditional medium of a monthly journal issue allows us to curate and disseminate research, reviews, news and opinion pieces to our readership. Social media platforms such as Twitter ([@naturemethods](#)) and WeChat enable us to promote our authors' work and share other items of interest to a broader audience. The online Protocols and Methods Community now provides us with a less formal way for us to interact with our readers, unconstrained by the somewhat rigid formats of a journal (and by the character count of Twitter!).

The "[From the editors](#)" channel enables us to highlight journal features, news and events. Readers can even peruse interviews with *Nature Methods* editors to learn what interests us and hear how we got our starts in our careers. Editors have also posted about their experiences at conferences in the "[On the road](#)" channel; one of the most-viewed [posts](#) featured a *Nature Methods*

editor's take on the 2019 Single Cell Biology Keystone Symposia conference. Readers will find information about world events related to methodological research in the "[News](#)" channel; one of the most popular [posts](#) described the launch of the Vertebrate Genomes Project last year.

For readers who might recall *Nature Methods*' now-retired Methagora blog, we've migrated the content that is still relevant today to the "[Methagora](#)" channel of the Community. In fact, two posts dating from 2013, featuring our tips on [how to write a cover letter](#) and on [how to write an appeal letter](#), were among the most-viewed content in 2019.

However, the Protocols and Methods Community is not intended as just a blog for us editors. We aspire for it to be much more than this, a place for everyone in the research community to come together to share news, knowledge, stories and opinions — as long as they are of relevance to the Community's focus on methods for research. We also encourage commenting on posts and sharing posts on social media; we hope the Community will help facilitate some lively discourse.

The Community is open to anyone who would like to join as a member, and we invite our members to share their own opinions and newsworthy items or post about events or initiatives. Those who would like to contribute their own posts need simply send an email to communities@nature.com. All posts are moderated by our in-house team, but to promote an open spirit of sharing, posts are not edited nor are they peer-reviewed. Contributors can find many helpful tips about how to create posts, where to find images, how to embed videos, and more on the "[About us](#)" channel.

All authors of accepted papers at *Nature Methods* (and also authors publishing methods papers in other Springer Nature journals) are invited to share the back stories of their research in our "[Behind the paper](#)"

channel. Contributing a "Behind the paper" post provides authors, especially young authors at the beginnings of their careers, with a unique opportunity to 'introduce' themselves in their own voices to a broader community. To date, there have been 48 contributions representing papers published in 7 different Springer Nature journals. A recent [post](#), for example, recounted how a large-scale competition to evaluate deep-learning-based methods for image classification was established; this back story might benefit other researchers wanting to set up their own competition experiments. We hope that readers will find other useful bits of information as well as entertaining accounts in these "Behind the paper" contributions.

This year, we will also be asking authors of selected *Nature Methods* papers published in past years to contribute "After the paper" posts. We look forward to reading some interesting stories about how various fields have grown and developed following the initial report of a new methodological approach.

Our goal is to help build and grow the Protocols and Methods Community into a useful source of methodological information and news for a broad community. By covering a wide-ranging array of topics of interest to methods developers and users, we hope that new networks and multidisciplinary connections between researchers, and even between research fields, can be forged. We look forward to seeing more news about events affecting the research community, more coverage of hot topics, and more lively discussions.

As always, we welcome your feedback about what type of content you'd like to see and how we can help facilitate the growth of a vibrant Community. □

Published online: 4 February 2020
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41592-020-0757-4>