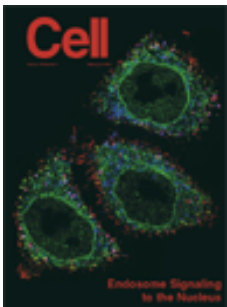


Communicating your science

Bodo Stern

Amy Brand



Science



PLOS BIOLOGY



Today's presentation

Bodo: publishing papers

Amy: post-publication communication



The need for effective communication grows during a scientific career

- being broadly interested and enjoying science writing for the general public can be detrimental or distracting for a graduate student or postdoc.

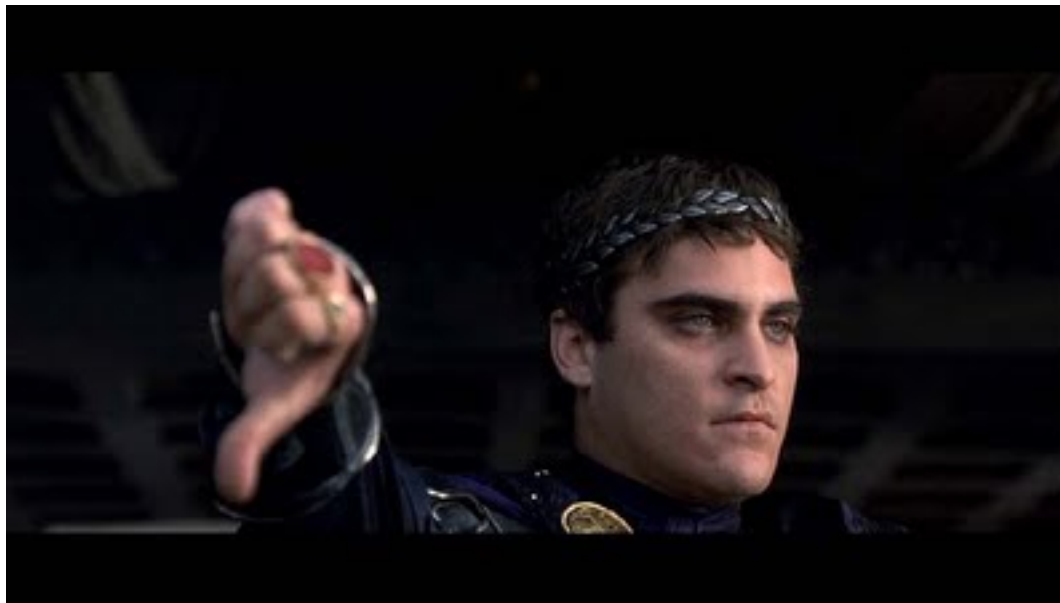
But the tables turn for a young group leader:

- It is critical to be an effective science communicator to convince non-experts of your research program (program officers at NIH / NSF, editors at high impact journals, faculty colleagues).

Navigating the publication process

- Teach you what a scientific editor is trained to do.
- Translate that information into some do's and don'ts for writing papers and interacting with editors.

The usual scientists' view of editors



Editors as gatekeepers

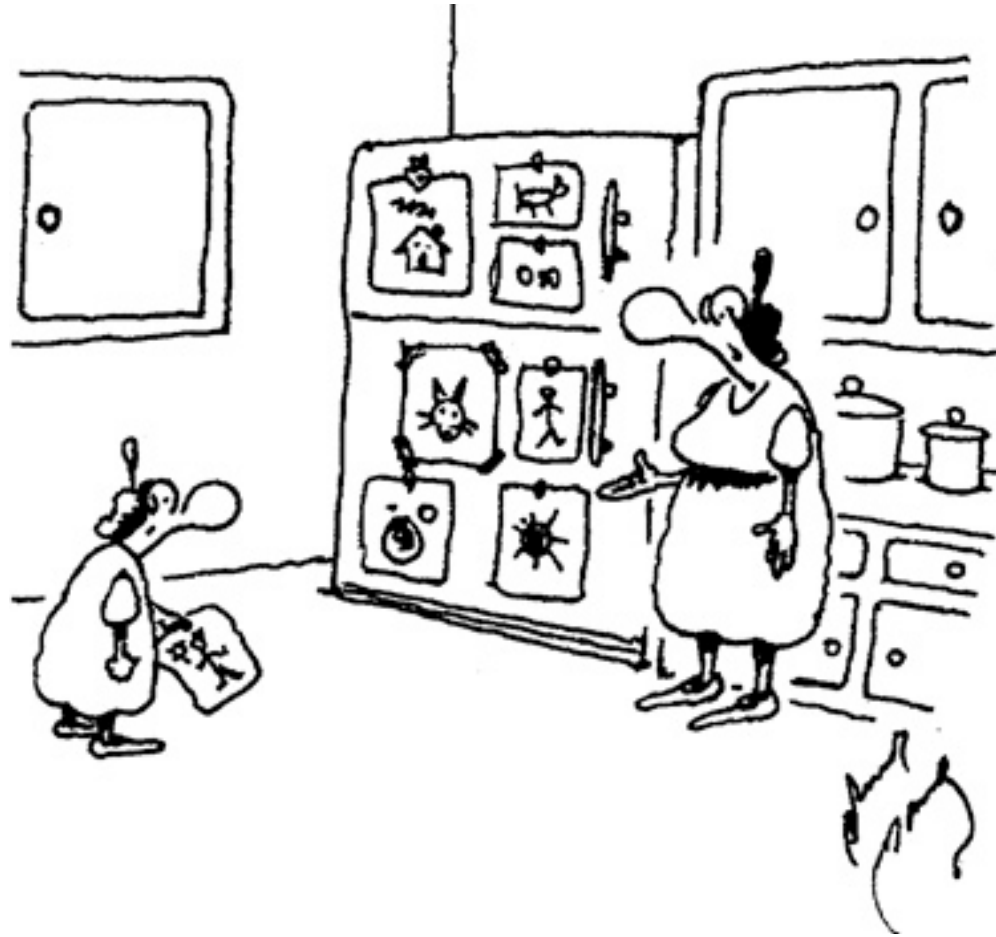


- Whether to review the paper in the first place



- Whether to publish the paper based on the reviewers comments

The Editor's first decision...



“Thank you very much for your great submission. We get many submissions, but, regrettably, only a limited amount of space is available to fill.”

Editors as mediators



Common interests of Editors and Authors

Both editors and authors - unlike reviewers - profit from publishing breakthrough stories (even if the these stories are incomplete).

Talk to and meet the editors!

- find out what fields the editors of a journal are particularly interested in. Especially new journals are often keen to get submissions and are more risk friendly.
- Identify editors who you work well with.
- Discuss findings with editors at conferences or through pre-submission inquiries.
- If your paper is competitive: can the editor make a fast decision?
- Review papers for the journals you publish in.

Editors look for conceptual advance and general interest

- How significant is the advance? Could the results have been predicted? Do they answer a longstanding question?
- Are the experiments logically designed? Do they directly test an experimental hypothesis or are they merely consistent with it?

Domain of the reviewers: technical quality

How can you help an Editor make the correct assessment of your paper?

- **Cover letter:** convey why the paper is important for the general readership and which fields may find the results of interest. What was known before? What important question does the paper answer? Key results? You can be bolder in the cover letter since it is only seen by the editor. Suggest and exclude reviewers!!
- **Pre-submission Inquiry:** If you are not sure a paper is appropriate, you can ask an editor for advice. But be prepared to accept their advice if you ask for it.

More tips on how to write your paper...

- write the paper so that a science-proficient non-expert, like an editor, can understand the logic and importance of your findings.
- If you put the work in context, the “sexiness” takes care of itself, avoid spinning or over hyping the work.
- Make the figures self-explanatory and easy to understand.
- Bad English is often not the main reason for a badly written paper: it is more often bad logic and a lack of focus!
- Get feedback on the paper from colleagues outside the field. They can flag problems with clarity that insiders may not spot.

A resubmission invitation letter...



“We’ re really, really interested. Now take it home and make it sing.”

Responding to Reviews

- A resubmission invitation is a letter that clearly states: “We would be happy to consider a revised manuscript”. The level of editorial enthusiasm can vary dramatically:
Minor revisions >> One or two additional experiments >>
Interesting but too preliminary >> Interesting but significant flaws
- Contact the editor with your plan of action, even if you have decided to go to another journal.
- Your response should provide a detailed point-by-point response to reviewers’ comments outlining how you have addressed them with additional data.

Responding to Rejection

- **Wait at least 24 hours with a response!**
- If you feel too emotional, ask a colleague you respect to help you assess the reviews.
- Editors make mistakes – they have to make many decisions every day. You may be able to persuade them to reconsider the decision. Don't be afraid to write an appeal letter or contact the editor directly.

Appealing a decision

- STICK TO THE SCIENCE
- Recognize that there is usually something to learn from every criticism, and act respectful (even if you don't feel it). It is not productive to insult the editor or reviewers. If they have missed something important make an attempt to make the point more clearly.
- If a reviewer is truly off track, use the literature and scientific reasoning to highlight this fact.

Accepting a decision

- Repeatedly trying to argue or force your work into journals will earn you a bad reputation; it also sets a negative and combative tone in the lab.
- Not all work is of sufficient significance to merit publication in the highest impact journals.
- Learning when to let go and to send the paper to another journal is a good skill to develop.

How to review a paper

- Most important: evaluate technical quality; review significance and context of submitted paper, organization, clarity.
- you can comment on whether you would publish or not either in the comments to authors or in comments to editors. But make sure that comments to editors are not diametrically opposed to what you say to the authors.
- be explicit what revisions are critical; be constructive; no laundry list! “reviewer’s experiments”
- Involve people in your lab in the review process! They learn a lot! But acknowledge who helped you.
- keep your review confidential, even if you are positive!

Summary: You are an active participant in the publishing process

- Often young faculty feel publishing is a process out of their control.

BUT:

- Editors want to connect with you since they know that young produce the next breakthrough stories.

Therefore, as a community you have some control over which journals are going to have the “best” content.

Discussion: Improvements of the publishing process

- pay reviewers ?



- Professional versus academic editors?
- Are editors, authors and reviewers too busy?
- Conceptual advance versus technical quality?

Savage Chickens

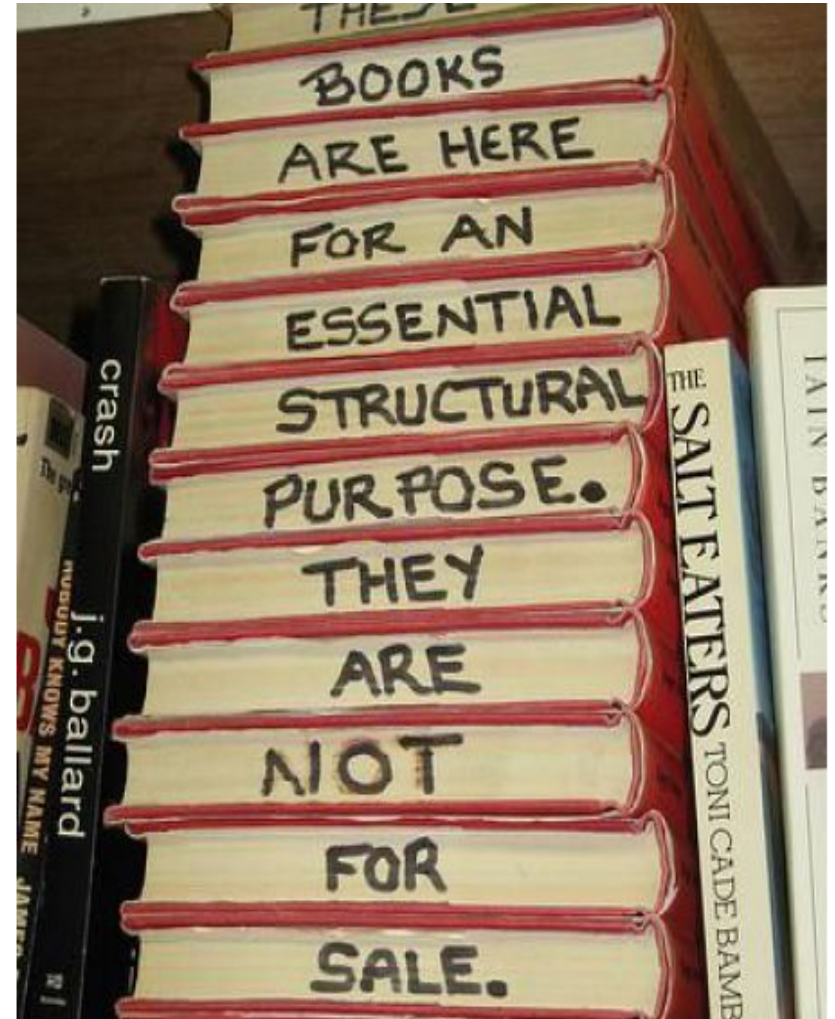
by Doug Savage



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- Managing your own scholarly record



Publishing workflow

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Peer review process

Reviewers may suggest revisions; revise and resubmit

Paper accepted

“Author’s Final Peer Reviewed Manuscript”

Copyright Transfer Agreement

Copyediting

Correspondence w/ author to implement some changes

Manuscript is typeset and page proofs sent to author

Major changes are discouraged here (looking mainly for typos or technical errors in the proofs)

Publication

Final published version – “version of record”

“Author’s final manuscript”?

- The last document that you send to the publisher, including edits that result from the peer review process (but before copy editing).
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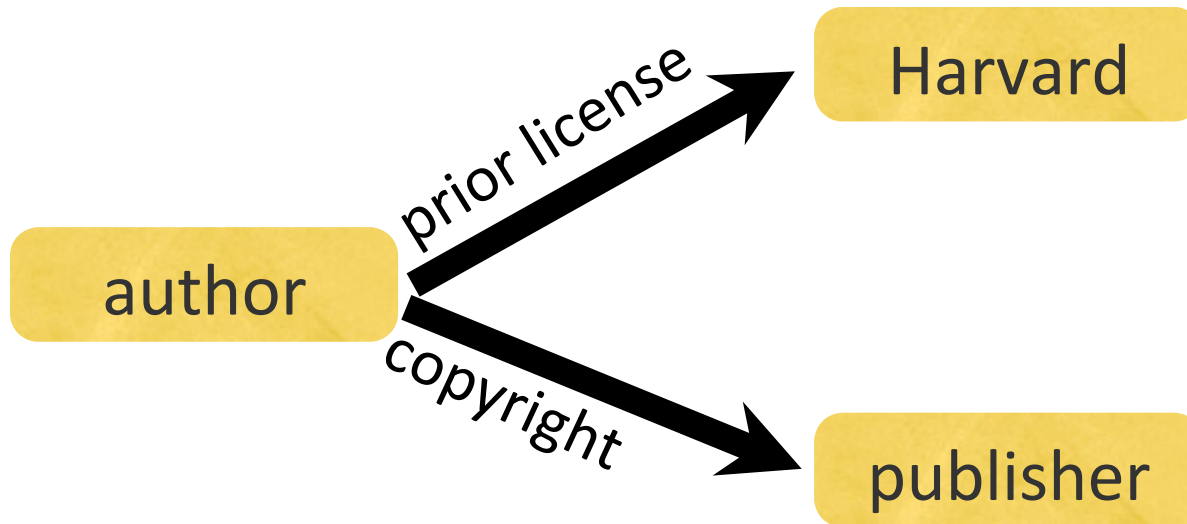
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- Otherwise, you must either use Harvard's addendum to retain self-archiving rights, or obtain a waiver of Harvard's prior non-exclusive license in your work

Journal policies differ

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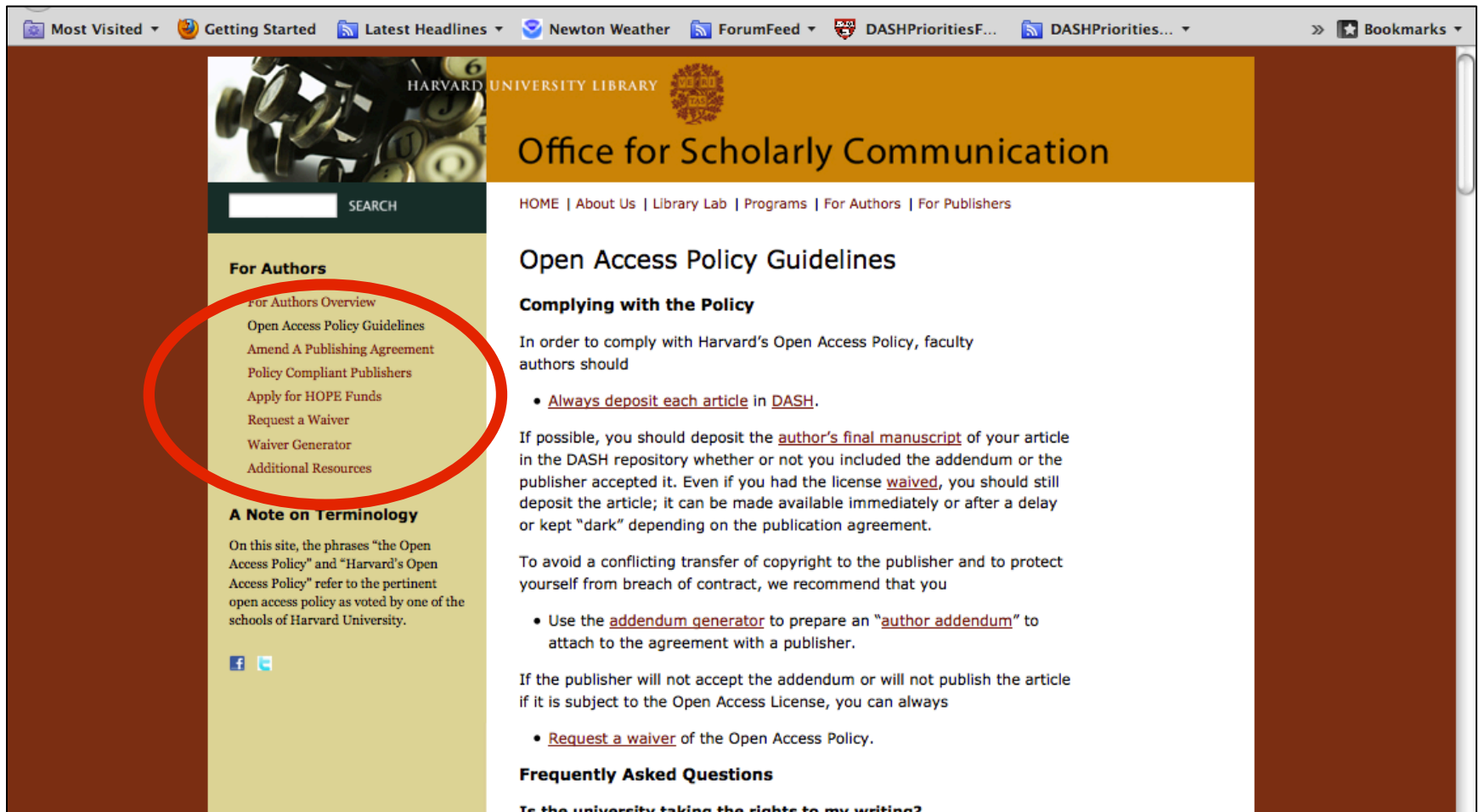
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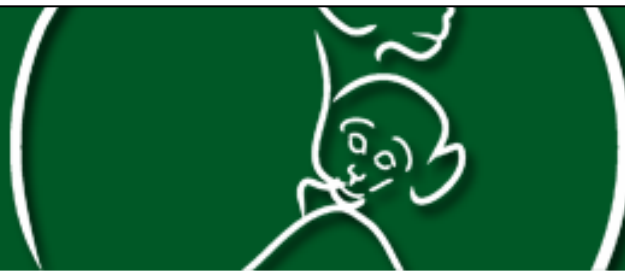
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Jin L, Hinde K, Tao L. 2011. Species diversity and relative abundance of lactic acid bacteria in the milk of rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*). [*J Med Primatol* 40: 52-58.](#)

Sullivan EC, Hinde K, Mendoza SP, Capitanio JP. 2011. Cortisol concentrations in the milk of rhesus monkey mothers are associated with confident temperament in sons, but not daughters. [*Dev Psychobiol* 53: 96-104.](#)



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Selected Publications

A wireless multi-channel neural interface
Szuts, TA, Fadeyev, V, Kachiguine, S, Sher, A, Meister, M (2011)
Nat. Neurosci. 14:263-269.

Bayesian model of dynamic imaging
Burak, Y, Rokni, U, Meister, M, Sompolinsky, Y (2010)
Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A 107:19525-19530

Eye smarter than scientists believe
Gollisch, T., and Meister, M. (2010)
Neuron 65:150-164.

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10

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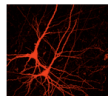
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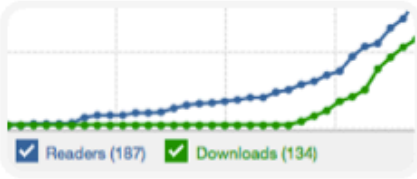


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Smith LM, Bomblies K, Weigel D.

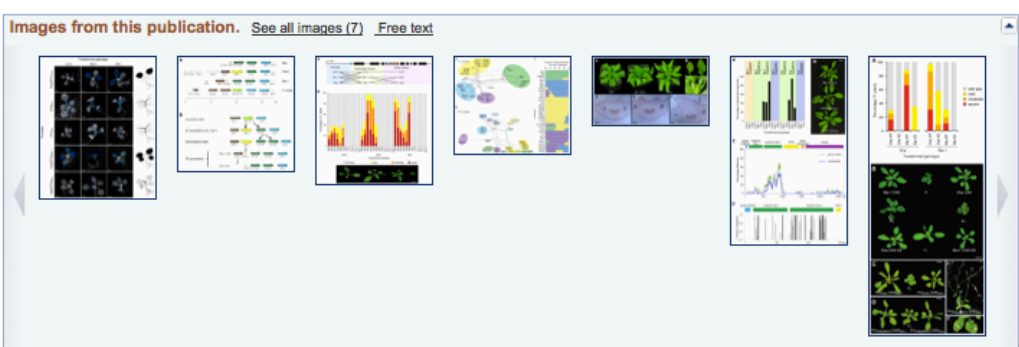
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Abstract

Non-additive interactions between genomes have important implications, not only for practical applications such as breeding, but also for understanding evolution. In extreme cases, genes from different genomic backgrounds may be incompatible and compromise normal development or physiology. Of particular interest are non-additive interactions of alleles at the same locus. For example, overdominant behavior of alleles, with respect to plant fitness, has been proposed as an important component of hybrid vigor, while underdominance may lead to reproductive isolation. Despite their importance, only a few cases of genetic over- or underdominance affecting plant growth or fitness are understood at the level of individual genes. Moreover, the relationship between biochemical and fitness effects may be complex: genetic overdominance, that is, increased or novel activity of a gene may lead to evolutionary underdominance expressed as hybrid weakness. Here, we describe a non-additive interaction between alleles at the *Arabidopsis thaliana* OAK (OUTGROWTH-ASSOCIATED PROTEIN KINASE) gene. OAK alleles from two different accessions interact in F(1) hybrids to cause a variety of aberrant growth phenotypes that depend on a recently acquired promoter with a novel expression pattern. The OAK gene, which is located in a highly variable tandem array encoding closely related receptor-like kinases, is found in one third of *A. thaliana* accessions, but not in the reference accession Col-0. Besides recruitment of exons from nearby genes as promoter sequences, key events in OAK evolution include gene duplication and divergence of a potential ligand-binding domain. OAK kinase activity is required for the aberrant phenotypes, indicating it is not recognition of an aberrant protein, but rather a true gain of function, or overdominance for gene activity, that leads to this underdominance for fitness. Our work provides insights into how tandem arrays, which are particularly prone to frequent, complex rearrangements, can produce genetic novelty.

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