

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Two seemingly opposite definitions of the word 'career' came into play earlier this month at a round-table discussion of professional opportunities in science, sponsored by *Naturejobs* at the University of Birmingham, UK. "A course or progress through life...an occupation or profession engaged in as a life-work" are definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the ones that probably first come to mind. They indicate a certain amount of planning and imply some sort of linear progression.

But Alison Cooper, a lecturer in pharmacology at the University of Birmingham, cited another definition that applied to all seven of us panellists: "Move or swerve about wildly."

The job in which one ends up is very rarely completely due to chance. But, like many discoveries in science, a certain amount of serendipity — and conditions in the real world — had come into play in our cases. Cooper originally intended to focus on *in vivo* pharmacology, but at the time she finished her PhD, there was little demand for those particular skills in industry; that, of course, has changed completely over the past decade. So she became an instructor.

Andy Garner, a group leader in drug discovery at AstraZeneca, applied for a job at the company and attended the interview just for practice — and landed a position.

And I intended to be a medical writer for newspapers, but quite literally by accident (see *Nature* **430**, 705; 2004) found myself teaching and carrying out research at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, before spending the past ten years writing for a scientific audience.

Despite this erratic 'careering', none of the panelists' current destinations was a complete accident. All had identified transferable skills, then broadened them, weathered storms of rejection, tapped into personal and professional networks, and, perhaps most important, sought the best person, place and project to fit their skills and interests. In doing so, we all met the first definition of 'career' as well.

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)
Southwest UK/RoW:
Nils Moeller (4953)
Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal/Italy:
Evelina Rubio-Hakansson (4973)
Northeast UK/Ireland:
Matthew Ward (+44 (0) 20 7014 4059)
North Germany/The Netherlands:
Reya Silao (4970)
South Germany/Austria:
Hildi Rowland (+44 (0) 20 7014 4084)

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:
Jasmine Myer
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@natureny.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