

PREFACE

ESSAYS ON DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY-2016

These volumes commemorate the 50th or “golden” anniversary of the founding of *Current Topics in Developmental Biology* (CTDB) in the summer of 1966 by Aron Moscona (1921–2009) and Alberto Monroy (1913–1986) with Academic Press as publisher. In 1966 Moscona and Monroy anticipated the changing tide of developmental biology, from a classical to a more molecular science, and intended that CTDB be a venue for the change. From the beginning CTDB was to serve as “a meeting ground for critical review and discussion of developmental processes”. More than 115 volumes later, still published by Academic Press (Elsevier), CTDB continues to strive to serve this purpose for developmental biologists.

The idea of publishing these essays came about in late 2013 when I realized that 2016 would be the 50th anniversary of the CTDB series. The object was to assemble essays contributed by a large number of outstanding developmental biologists around the world working on different aspects of development with a variety of model organisms. To achieve this goal more than 120 research scientists were contacted individually by e-mail in January 2014 and invited to contribute to this project. The response was surprisingly good with about 90 invitees agreeing to submit essays by September 15, 2015. Many flattering comments accompanied the acceptances, including “I think it is very appropriate to have an anniversary edition of what has been a very influential series over the years” and “CTDB is a review series that I appreciate. It has been, and is, important for my field of developmental biology”. When the late Walter Gehring received my invitation and list of contributors he wrote back immediately saying, “After looking at your impressive list of contributors, I have to join your gang.”

In the end more than 70 essays were submitted for publication by some of the most accomplished and well-known developmental biologists in the world. The essays appear here in alphabetical order according to the invited author’s last name, not according to topic or on some other basis. Just a glance at the Table of Contents reveals the wide breadth of research topics and variety of model organisms discussed. Many essays relate the history of a particular area of research and/or personal experiences in research, whereas

others are quite philosophical about a specific area of research and/or research in general. The authors were encouraged to speculate and in many instances have done so. The essays are not necessarily intended to be comprehensive reviews, however, they provide a window onto the very rich landscape of contemporary research in developmental biology.

I'm grateful to all the authors who devoted a great deal of time and effort preparing their essays. From a personal point of view, it's been a great pleasure to interact via e-mail with so many outstanding developmental biologists during the past 18 months or so. They tolerated my frequent reminders ("nagging") about the essays and, in a few instances, with my pleas to contribute to these volumes of CTDB. Despite a few sleepless nights worrying about who might not deliver an essay on time, overall this turned out to be a gratifying experience. My goal was to assemble 50th anniversary volumes of CTDB that would reflect the current state of developmental biology and be useful to students and investigators for years to come. It's up to you the reader to decide whether this goal was achieved. I can't help but wonder what Moscona and Monroy would think about the essays and the state of developmental biology presented in these 50th anniversary volumes of CTDB.

Finally, I want to thank Zoe Kruze and Sarah Lay at Elsevier, Oxford, and my wife, Eveline Litscher, for their forbearance, advice, and assistance during the course of this lengthy project.

We fondly remember four outstanding developmental biologists, Professors Eric H. Davidson (1937–2015; California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California), Walter J. Gehring (1939–2014; Biozentrum, University of Basel, Switzerland), Julian H. Lewis (1946–2014; Cancer Research, London Research Institute, England), and Yoshiki Sasai (1962–2014; RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology, Japan) who agreed to be contributors to Essays on Developmental Biology-2016, but died unexpectedly in 2014 or 2015. Our condolences to their families and friends.

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Series Editor

Current Topics in Developmental Biology