Is This the Right Place For Me?
Choosing a new lab or workplace

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Addgene Helps Scientists Share Plasmids

Non-profit, mission driven company dedicated to facilitating collaboration and sharing in the scientific community
We fund this mission by making it easy to share plasmids!
Addgene Statistics

- >40,000 plasmids stored
- >450,000 plasmids shipped to 5,000 institutions in 78 countries
- From >2,000 contributing labs, >500 institutions worldwide
- >2,000 plasmids shipped each week
- 51% shipped to scientists outside the United States
- 4 depositors from UIowa, but over 1,000 requests

“I do science differently because I can use the Addgene library to find reagents”

Addgene’s Collection

- Plasmids and collections for experiments in many organisms: human, mouse, rat, bacteria, yeast, worms, flies, fish, plants, etc.
- Plasmids for a wide variety of applications: gene expression, gene knockdown, tagging, empty backbones, etc.
  - Genome Engineering (e.g. TALENs, CRISPRs)
  - Viral expression & packaging
  - Fluorescent tags and biosensors
  - Stem Cell Factors
  - Reporters
Plasmids 101: What is a plasmid?
The 10 Most Distributed Plasmid Technologies in Addgene's First 10 Years
Using CRISPR/Cas9 to Edit Disease Out of the Genome
Three Tips to Organize Your Lab Notebooks in the New Year
Top 10 Open Science Developments of 2013
"What Makes a Good Mentor?" and 6 More FAQs About Science Mentoring
Drew Endy Introduces the Biobrick Public Agreement Plasmid Collection
Overwhelmed? Take a Break with our 5 Favorite Science Comics
Kiran Musunuru on the Newest TALEN Genome-Editing System
From our Table to Yours: An Inside Look at Lunch at Addgene
Let There Be LITE Plasmids
Tag Your Favorite Yeast Genes with Ease
Benefits of a Central Plasmid Repository

- Save time on request mailing
- Access all plasmids in one request
- No loss due to turnover of lab members
- New labs hear about your work, more citations
- Archive historical clones and standards, rigorous QC
- Get a list of who has your plasmids any time (for grants or Tech Transfer offices)
- Collaborate! Participate in our Community!

Depositing in a Biological Resource Center Increases Citation Rates

[Graph showing average annual citations over article age]
How I Got Here

- Advisor with strong ties to industry
- Collaborations
- Harvard PhD
- BASF/Abbott ( Pharma)
- RNAi early adoptor
- Good at managing
- Incensed by lack of diversity in science
- Collaborations
- RXi (Biotech)
- Addgene (Non-profit)
- Executive Director and all that entails
- Addgene

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Joanne Kamens, Ph.D.
Addgene, Executive Director

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Addgene
A better way to share plasmids
Why is This Such a Big Deal?

- For choosing any workplace:
  - It is actually something you CAN choose!
  - Most people see the job as choosing them instead of them choosing the job
  - Most of us don’t ask the right questions of ourselves, much less of potential employers
- For choosing a “training” lab:
  - Choice of your grad or post-doc lab will directly influence your future
  - Your success in science is directly linked to these experiences

How Do We Make Decisions?

We think we make decisions based on logic and reason, but often a decision is based on emotions that we justify with logic after the fact.
Track Records

- How did you decide on your current position?
  - Be honest...
- Was “luck” a factor?
- Did you feel you had “no choice”?
- How did it work out?
- Let’s look at some ways to increase your odds for success—**Information is the key**

What Should You Be Looking For?

- **Engagement**
  - It turns out that salary and other benefits are less important to job satisfaction than how much you feel you belong, are valued and are contributing.
- **Learning**
  - Is there opportunity for growth and development? Will the work challenge you?
- **Coping and Balance**
  - Find out what coping resources you will be given. Do I have or have access to the tools, knowledge, technology and training I need to do this job? Do the demands match the time I have?
- **Atmosphere and social exposure**
  - Are you going to enjoy yourself at this organization? Will you get on with your prospective colleagues? Is this a pleasant working environment? Do the employees seem happy and friendly?
- **Congruence with your values**
Values and the Workplace

- Are there some things or jobs you would prefer NOT to do because of what you believe?
- Are there jobs you would REFUSE to do even if they were the only available option?
  - Consider a job opportunity—does it support your beliefs or is it a little against your beliefs or maybe a lot against your beliefs?
  - Do you agree with the notion that "every person has their price" and could be persuaded to do a job they wouldn't normally do?
  - Does it matter if you do a job that is strongly against your value system?

Know Yourself

- Some of the information you need is about yourself
- It is worth taking some time to consider your own style and needs before making this important decision
  - And of course these might change over time
- What do YOU care about???
Size Matters

- Is the lab/company big or small?
- Has it grown over time?
  - Get a list of alumni and present lab members/employees?
  - Use LinkedIn, Pubmed and ResearchGate
- Are there enough projects to go around?
- What will you be working on? What will your initial responsibilities be and where can you grow?
- If you are good at asking for help, size might not be a big factor
  - Do you come from a big family?
  - Does hustle and bustle make you edgy?
  - How does it feel to you?
- Do you care?

Dog Eat Dog vs. Team Attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Competitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papers have multiple authors</td>
<td>One author plus PI on most papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab has productive external collaborations</td>
<td>Lab has a reputation for “not playing nice with others”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI helps lab members determine project “ownership” and author details</td>
<td>PI lets lab members “duke it out”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI takes input from the lab</td>
<td>PI is authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI intervenes if there are conflicts</td>
<td>PI has no idea who is dating who</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Do you care? Maybe you like things a bit rough and tumble...*
**Who Will Be My Real Boss?**

- Will a post-doc really be your mentor? Do you care?
- Is there a chance the supervisor will be moving on soon?
- Is the advisor really around?
- Do the grad students and post-docs meet one on one with the Lab Head?
- Are these appointments ad hoc or regularly scheduled? How often?
- Does the lab head keep her appointments?

**Expanding Your Skill Set Every Day**

- Will you learn new things?
- Will someone train you technically?
- Will the PI/supervisor look at your data and suggest follow up?
- Can you work on some experiments of your own choosing?
- Does the PI keep up on literature and pass on relevant papers?
- Will you have access to information from other labs with skills that you could learn and use?
- Do the lab members work on more than one project at a time or over their stay in the lab?
- Do all lab members attend scientific meetings (and present)?
- **You must care about this!**
I’m Thinking About Industry...

- Does the advisor have industry connections? If you are even thinking about going into industry, this can be crucial to your future success!!
  - Do ex-lab members go into both academia an industry?
  - Does the publication record show evidence of industry collaboration?
  - Does the advisor support both paths?
  - Is the work (topic and/or technical aspects) applicable to industry (e.g. human disease or models of disease, drug properties, etc.)?
- ASK! If you know you want to consider this path, don’t go somewhere that won’t support it

Another example: If you are considering a career at a small, teaching college you might want to consider less expensive, portable areas of research (transgenic mice—out, zebra fish—in)

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Choosing a Role Model

Your bosses, and the PIs of your Graduate School and Post-Doc labs are (hopefully) going to teach you a lot….

- MAKE SURE THEY ARE TEACHING THE KIND OF STUFF YOU WANT TO KNOW
  - Management style
  - Ethical behavior
  - Encourages diversity in all its forms
  - Organizational skills
  - Involvement in the department
  - Ability to get funded, grant writing
  - How to deal with conflicts in the lab
  - How to motivate with encouragement not criticism (if you care)
- You have to observe well… and ask lab members/employees many questions to get input on this topic and listen to what they say
- Don’t brush off warning signs “that wouldn’t happen to ME…”
Beware the Bully

- Academic bullies are hard to stop—best thing to do is not go into their labs in the first place
- What is workplace bullying?
  - Threats to professional status – including belittling opinions, public professional humiliation, accusations regarding lack of effort, intimidating use of discipline or competence procedures
  - Threats to personal standing – including undermining personal integrity, destructive innuendo and sarcasm, persistent teasing, name calling, insults, intimidation
  - Isolation – including preventing access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding necessary information
  - Overwork – including undue pressure, impossible deadlines, unnecessary disruptions
  - Destabilisation – including failure to acknowledge good work, allocation of meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, setting target up to fail, shifting goal posts without telling the target

But You Haven’t Even Mentioned the Research Topic....

- This can play a role if you really, really know exactly what you want to do for the whole rest of your scientific career, but otherwise you are learning how to be a scientist...
  - Not specifically about “Densovirus induces winged morphs in asexual clones of the rosy apple aphid, Dysaphis plantaginea” (actual title of a paper in PNAS)
- Important things when picking a post-doctoral position
  - Expand your skill set with every new position
  - Industry connections? If you know you plan a career in pharma, choose a lab that works on problems related to human disease
  - Job opportunities that work geographically for your life (e.g. best chance to solve the two body problem)
  - Number of new connections you will make (size of lab or department)
More Things to Ask Before Signing a Post-Doc Contract

- (How) Can I get more money?
  - Moving expenses, conference funds, day care subsidy, extra teaching stipend...
- What is your employment status?
  - Will you be an employee or a visiting scholar?
  - To get some grants (including NIH) you need to be a “trainee” and not an employee… but then you may not be eligible for employee benefits such as healthcare, insurance, retirement etc.
- Position guaranteed or dependent on a grant? For how long?
- What is the maternity and paternity leave policy? Does the advisor really honor the policy?
- Is childcare available onsite? What does it cost?
- Is there a grievance policy and procedure?
- Is there a post-doc association, office and/or union?

How Can I Find Out What the Lab is Really Like?

- Ask questions!
  - During your interview—the PI
  - In person over coffee/beer—people in the lab
  - On the phone—alumni of the lab
  - On the internet—where are alumni now, PI profile, others in the department, neighbors of the lab
- Rotate in the lab and/or spend a day
  - How do the lab members treat one another (especially those low on the totem pole)?
  - How often are lab meetings? What is the format? (Try to attend one)
- What else do I ask?
  - How long do people stay around?
  - How long do grad students take to finish? How many years do post-docs average in the lab?
  - Do post-docs and students help or at least observe grant writing? Get equipment quotes?
  - Do post-docs stay working in the same field if they stay in academia?
- [blog.addgene.org/choosing-a-good-mentor-for-scientists](https://blog.addgene.org/choosing-a-good-mentor-for-scientists)
Happy is OK

- How can you find out if people in a lab or company are happy in a science/academic “culture of suffering”
  - Talk one-on-one with people (not in the lab if possible, over coffee?)
  - Do people work on their own schedule (a culture of flexibility)?
  - Would they choose this position again? Why or why not?
  - Do lab members “complete” their stay?
  - Do new people join regularly? Are positions in demand?
- Does the supervisor/lab head have a life outside the lab?
  - Look for pictures and signs of family life, hobbies

Warning Signs

- Lab members/employees speak disrespectfully of supervisors and/or each other
- You aren’t given time to talk to the employees alone
- People seem to be hiding their work and are not upfront in discussing or publishing data and results
- You find you will have to help on someone else’s project before you will be given your own project
- Hesitation before answering your questions about lab culture
- Gut feeling that something isn’t right
In Summary….

- **Write a pros and cons list**
  - Not really to decide but to get it on paper and see what you are missing

- **Tune in to your inner voice**
  - You might not be sure if it feels right but it better not feel wrong—watch for red flags

- **Seek counsel of trusted advisors**
  - A good advisor usually will ask you powerful questions

- **Understand you always have choices**
  - Know that you are making the best possible choice in the present moment, rather than believing that this opportunity is your only option.

- **Determine what the ideal offer would look like**
  - Does your ideal offer include a higher salary? Flex time to spend with your family? Projects with more creativity? You may or may not be able to negotiate, but you can start to weigh how important they are to you or come up with potential solutions moving forward.

- **Remember you can always change your mind**
  - Sometimes we get trapped into feeling like a decision is so enormous and irrevocable that it paralyzes us from making it

How You Can Feel—The “Zone”

- You are happy at work so that you lose track of time
- Things seem to frequently “fall into place”
- You feel confident in your abilities some of the time
- You have periods of intense concentration and focus

  - “Sometimes it doesn’t even feel like work…”
    - You won’t always be in the zone, but even brief stays there can make all the difference!
QUESTIONS?