Dear MGG Journal Club,

It looks like I won’t be able to present for you Oct 1st – I have another commitment and will be even a bit late to arrive, however, the newly minted Dr. Lu Yang, of the DB program, has agreed to come and share his recent publication for a journal club as well as talk to you about his experiences with peer review.

The idea here is to give you an ‘inside-baseball’ view of the process, and help prepare you both the writers of manuscripts and peer-reviewers in the future. Therefore, Lu is going to share 4 things with you from a recent paper he published on genetics of development.

1) His cover letter. The goal of this document is to convince the editor that your paper is a good fit for his journal. It should convey the importance of the findings and their context in the field. At a high profile journal, they might only even send ~30% of papers for review. Read this first, as if you were an editor, and decide if you find it convincing and why.

2) His first submission. Please read this next, and put yourselves in the shoes of a peer reviewer? Do you find the work compelling? What are your major and minor critiques (you don’t need to write up a formal review document, but please make a bulleted list). What would be your final decision? Reject/Major Revision/Minor Revision/ or Accept?

3) The editor’s response to the submission. Read the actual response he got from editors and reviewers and the concerns they raised. How many of them lined up with the ones you found? Why or why not? Do you think they missed major flaws (Lu is tough, you can tell him - he can take it). Do they see things you didn’t in the paper? After that, put yourself in Lu’s shoes. How would you respond to each of these critiques? Would you do additional experiments? Try and argue? Make bullets of how you would address each of their concerns.

4) Lu’s response to the reviewers, and his second submission. Compare this to what you would have done. And maybe this is a place where you can talk to Lu about what he decided to do and why. Or how he would have responded to your additional concerns.

Finally, think about whether you as a reviewer would have been satisfied with his response, or felt like he still needed to do more to address it.

We are going to put these materials up early so you have a little more time than normal to look at them. Because there is a bit of writing homework involved for you, I expect it might take you longer than a typical journal club to prepare for, but not excessively (i.e. the second version of his paper is only going to have moderate changes from the first).

I hope this turns out to be a helpful and interesting experience for you all. And thanks very much for Lu for coming to share his experiences.