Growing our community

BY **GREG BOUSTEAD**

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Four years after the launch of SFARI.org, we've grown tremendously, and are proud to have become a news staple for many in the autism field. We are excited to embark on our next goal: to build a robust online community for autism researchers.

We often hear, and only half jokingly, that the most worthwhile conversations at scientific conferences happen outside formal sessions and presentations: in the hallways, over coffee, at the bar. We aim to extend those conversations by creating a place where both experts in the field and newcomers from other areas can mingle to advance the understanding of this baffling disorder.

In that spirit, we invite you to **join the community at SFARI.org**.

We envision a forum that welcomes both high-level, technical discussion and provocative debate, while still recognizing the value of casual repartee and the sharing of half-baked ideas; a platform that is trusted and secure, but not unwieldy. We seek to create a community in which ideas, opinions and papers can be shared responsibly and respectfully, and as privately or openly as desired.

As the new community manager at SFARI.org, I'm thrilled to help this burgeoning space grow.

By listening to the needs of the research community, SFARI has already debuted resources such as **SFARI Gene**, which rates the strength of evidence for genes implicated in autism susceptibility. By opening up this annotation to the community, we expect that an even more robust and useful database of candidate genes will emerge.

Heeding the calls for increased access to reliable mouse lines helped guide SFARI's efforts to encourage the **responsible distribution of autism mouse models**. Look out for other upcoming

developments, such as the relaunched **SFARI Base** query tool.

We hope to keep these resources growing and evolving with your input, while listening for emerging needs to develop new resources.

But for all of this, we need your help. Tell us how we can better serve and engage the autism research community.

What's important to you? For instance, would you like to see negative results with implications for autism research, organized and indexed in a format that's easy to navigate? More resources for sharing data? More details about mouse models, such as background strains?

What sorts of online tools would you find helpful for connecting with other researchers? How do you prefer to share ideas and receive updates on research? Do you use Twitter or Facebook for sharing articles or keeping up with news? How important is closed or registration-only discussion to you on a forum: Are you open to a combination of both open and closed discussions, depending on topic? How much of a priority is mobile access?

Anything else? Please pass it along. You can make suggestions in the comments section below, or email us directly at community@simonsfoundation.org. We really want to hear from you.

Over the coming months, I plan to attend many autism conferences and SFARI-sponsored events. Feel free to pull me aside on any of these occasions to ask a question or make a suggestion. I'm here to help you.