

# Interview with Annie Cavanagh and Dave McCarthy

**DM:** I produce the images as a normal monochrome black and white image taken under the SEM and sometimes for more visual purposes, they need colouring, which is not my expertise and then I save the images as a fairly large TIF file, pass them up to Annie, who does wonders with Photoshop.

**AC:** Because Dave and I work as a close relationship, we tend to be able to pick views and bits of the image that I think are going to make an interest artistically, as well as scientifically and so between us we actually get a really good image as a joint effort in the team and I think that's so important. I think it's really important to express science for the public in an artistic fashion, so that they relate to something they think is beautiful as well as scientific – it makes an idea concrete and solid and so it's very – whereas interpretation of literature can go many ways, but I mean usually when you've got a graphic and you can actually see something three-dimensionally, it makes a big difference and that's why colouring and scanning EMs are fantastic because they're three-dimensional and they look wonderful.

**Q:** I'm really intrigued to know how you actually got into making these wonderful images?

**AC:** I actually started off as a plant photographer, I used to paint the plants in watercolours in our botanical gardens, I actually started off as a botanical artist and photographer – a department in the school called pharmacognacy, which is drugs from plants. So I sort of had a complete knowledge of all the drugs from plants and what they look like and we can go to all the different departments and request things, so we can actually – if we get an idea, we can go and ask, so it's not just a case of cells that are coming in for research, but sometimes actively go and sort out some other things that we think might be of interest.

**Q:** And do you think – you obviously come from a very artistic point of view, but you have some scientific background as well. Do you think that's important in what you're doing?

**AC:** Very much important, because for somebody coming in and just looking at something and they don't know what they're looking at, they don't know what a nucleus is, they don't that they would have to enhance a nucleus or a part of the cell or the membrane, whereas looking at it, yes I do know what's going to be enhanced and what's going to make the cell look scientifically good as well as beautiful.

**DM:** You probably know that all the images now are captured digitally, I think for the past three years my unit has been totally digital. I think our darkroom now will just be the museum area.

**Q:** So what do you think's the most exciting thing about what you do?

**AC:** We love it.

**DM:** I think – I've always said that before, it's a hobby we get paid for, I still enjoy it.

**AC:** And I hope that reflects in our work in that we love it so much and we actually take a great pride and interest in making things look as best as we possibly can.