

Matt LaPlante Best Selling Book

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Selling Author Matthew D. LaPlante

A Utah State University professor's latest work has made the New York Times' Best Sellers list.

The book, called "[Lifespan: Why We Age – and Why We Don't Have To](#)," is the first collaboration between Harvard Medical School geneticist David Sinclair and USU journalism professor Matthew LaPlante. The book appeared for the first time on the New York Times' list the week after its Sept. 10 release in the "hardcover non-fiction" and "combined print and e-book" categories.

"I got the news a few minutes before class," LaPlante said. "It was fun to tell my students. They cheered. For a teacher, that's the best sort of praise you can get."

Lifespan presents a paradigm-shifting view of aging, called the Information Theory of Aging, which suggests that the spectrum of conditions associated with "growing old" may be a result of an accumulation of epigenetic markers on the genome that make it harder for cells to read the information needed to develop normally.

The book also offers a window into the fast-moving world of aging research, including the recent discovery of a number of genes that may be able to reset the epigenetic clock.

"At first, I didn't know what to make of this person, David Sinclair, who told me he believed that we could slow, stop and perhaps even reverse aging," LaPlante said. "But we're so alike that we became fast friends, and I became absolutely transfixed by the work he and his colleagues are doing at Harvard. Being a witness to this work, over the past two years, has been one of the highlights of my life."

The book concludes with a call for greater social and political attention to the possibility of a world in which age is no longer a strong indicator of a person's "stage" in life. **Best**

"It has challenged the way I think about the future of our species, and it has given me both hope and dread," LaPlante said. "As a global community, we really can't afford to ignore the potential that aging treatments and therapies have to disrupt our world, but our politicians are largely clueless about this potential future."

Lifespan is LaPlante's third collaboration with a scientist — he has previously worked on book about epigenetic inheritance and healthy aging. His first solo book on science, up [Superlative: The Biology of Extremes](#), was released in April and featured in [a series of videos](#) on Inside Science.

LaPlante is the host of [UnDisciplined](#), a program about building interdisciplinary connections, on Utah Public Radio. In 2014, he received the American Association for the Advancement of Science Kavli Science Journalism Award, one of the nation's highest honors for science writing, which he won in collaboration with a then-undergraduate journalism student Paul Christiansen.

A former newspaper journalist and war correspondent, LaPlante has reported from more than a dozen nations, including Iraq, El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Cuba. He recently returned from Vietnam, where he and his students hosted storytelling workshops and worked on journalistic

projects, including [the story of a lifelong farmer](#) who has skyrocketed to stardom on YouTube.

LaPlante's journey to becoming a science communicator was a circuitous one. [He wrote about the "improbable path"](#) he took to write science books and hosting a science-themed radio program for the American Association for the Advancement of Science earlier this year.

In Cambridge this week for a book release event at the Harvard and MIT bookstore, The Coop, LaPlante said he was buoyed by the large crowd that showed up to learn more about the science behind the book.

"It's gratifying to know that people are picking up the book," he said. "I've gotten to write or help write a few books now, and they've always been quite well-received, which is also very gratifying, but sometimes you wonder about whether they've reached enough people to have an impact. This book seems to have the potential to really change the conversation about our human future, and I'm so glad I got to be a part of this project."