

RNA Society

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<http://www.rnajournal.org/>
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From the Desk of the President, Maria Carmo-Fonseca

Greetings to RNA scientists all over the world!

What a thrill to receive the President's torch from



Anna Marie Pyle and serve our Society at this extraordinary time for RNA science. Indeed, 2020 has been a memorable year for us in many ways. I am overjoyed to congratulate **Emmanuelle Charpentier** and **Jennifer Doudna** for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and **Charles M.**

Rice for the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

(cont p.2)

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Just eight years after Emmanuelle and Jennifer published their groundbreaking discovery, CRISPR has already transformed the way we design experiments in molecular biology labs and holds tremendous potential for clinical use. The first CRISPR clinical trials were conducted in 2020 and caused a lot of excitement as the dream of curing hereditary diseases becomes closer to reality.

Charles Rice, who shared the prize with **Harvey J. Alter** and **Michael Houghton**, completed the characterization of the hepatitis C virus genome, and demonstrated in 1997 that the full-length viral RNA was sufficient to infect cells and produce hepatitis in animals. Charles went on to develop technology that made it possible to design assays to test for drugs capable of directly inhibiting viral replication. By 2013 the first molecules received approval for use in patients, and subsequently developed drugs can now cure nearly all people with hepatitis C with virtually no toxicity. I further extend my heartfelt congratulations to **Melissa Moore**, Moderna's chief scientific officer, and **Ugur Sahin** and **Özlem Türeci**, founders of BioNTech, for the triumph of Covid-19 mRNA vaccines. More than a landmark in the fight against the pandemic, these vaccines are likely the stepping stone for a new age of mRNA therapeutics in medicine.

I would like to focus now on some of the lessons that we can learn from these stunning and inspirational achievements. First, the value of unrestricted basic research. Before the CRISPR system could be adapted to act as a gene-editing tool, a series of fundamental discoveries that initially attracted little attention were reported beginning in 1987, by scientists working in different locations, from Japan to Europe and the USA. Likewise, the current success of mRNA vaccines culminates a long history of not so well-known studies that started back in the 1970s, when it was first shown that nucleic acids could be encapsulated in tiny particles and delivered into the body. We all know that many of our presumably very exciting experiments often come to

a dead end. Sometimes, our research drives us into unexpected directions and in a few cases, this leads to a spectacular unanticipated discovery. Working outside the mainstream can be risky in terms of grant support and requires courage, persistence and resilience. At times of funding uncertainty, empowering research on "outside the box" ideas becomes even more crucial since nobody can tell where real future progress will come from. That is why it is so important to have RNA Society meetings and the *RNA Journal* – under the guidance of Editor-in-Chief **Tim Nilsen** and Deputy Editor-in-Chief **Eric Phizicky** – agnostic to fashion or trends, providing a forum where all interested in any aspect of RNA research are welcome.

Second, the value of scientific collaboration.

Second, the value of scientific collaboration. **Jennifer Doudna** met **Emmanuelle Charpentier** at the 2011 American Society for Microbiology meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico. While walking around the old town of San Juan, Emmanuelle told Jennifer about her ideas on the role of Cas9. The two agreed to collaborate, and Emmanuelle sent to Jennifer the DNA encoding the CRISPR-Cas9 from *Streptococcus pyogenes*. Together they figured out how to co-opt this bacterial system to edit DNA. Along the same lines, **Charles Rice** acknowledged the social, collaborative nature of the decades long scientific effort that led to a cure for Hepatitis C. In this regard, the Annual Meetings of the RNA Society represent a phenomenal opportunity to interact with colleagues of complementary expertise and establish new collaborations.

Third, the value of diversity and inclusiveness.

Third, the value of diversity and inclusiveness. **Jennifer Doudna**, **Emmanuelle Charpentier**, **Melissa Moore** and **Özlem Türeci** are groundbreaking female scientists. Moreover, **Ugur Sahin** was born in Turkey and moved to Germany at the age of 4 when his family immigrated, and **Özlem Türeci** is the daughter of a Turkish physician who immigrated to Germany. Throughout Europe, where

immigration is at the core of fractious political debate, the success of two scientists of Turkish descent was amply celebrated as a shining example of integration. In the US, many research communities (the RNA Society included) publicly pledged their commitment to inclusion after the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. However, there

...these vaccines are likely the stepping stone for a new age of mRNA therapeutics in medicine.

is a long way ahead to make research environments more diverse and inclusive.

I truly believe that the vision of the RNA Society founders and subsequent leaders has contributed over the years to inspire and encourage many women to pursue science careers. I emphasize the need to maintain ongoing attention to issues related to gender, ethnical and geographical diversity in all activities of the RNA Society, from the selection of meeting venues and organizers, to session chairs, keynote speakers and members of governing boards.

The hype surrounding Covid-19 vaccines has put RNA under the spotlight. There will be increased investment and increased resources for RNA research. A new generation of scientists will become interested in working on RNA. The RNA Society should reflect on how to make best use of this momentum. Increasing the visibility and attractiveness of our Annual meeting is a good starting point. RNA2020, our first ever virtual meeting, was a surprising success that resulted in a doubling of the RNA society membership. More scientists attended the meeting, mainly because travel restrictions were no longer a limitation. RNA2021 will be held again on online format. Expectations are high, but we have a fantastic team of organizers - **Gene Yeo, Katrin Karbstein, V.**

Narry Kim, Anna Marie Pyle, Xavier Roca, and Jörg Vogel - that will surprise us with imaginative models to communicate and discuss science remotely.

On behalf of all RNA Society members, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to our CEO **Kristian Baker** and CFO **Evelyn Jabri** for managing the Society business so smoothly and effectively. I also thank **Anna Marie Pyle**, who served as President, and the Board members who completed their terms, **Greg Matera, Jörg Vogel, and Mihaela Zavolan**, for their dedication and great contributions. A special thank you to **Brenda Peculis** who will step down as Secretary in 2021. In 2012, Brenda received the RNA Society Service award for her long-standing role as Editor of the newsletter. More recently, Brenda's commitment and dedication to the Society has been huge, while she acted as Secretary and continued producing the newsletter. As Boards and Committees turned around,

Brenda was always there, making sure

The RNA Society should reflect on how to make best use of this momentum.

everything happened on time and transmitting to the newcomers the cultural memories of the Society. Brenda's immense contribution to the Society will be a hard act to follow.

To conclude, I congratulate **Melissa Moore** and **Juan Valcárcel**, recipients of the Society's Lifetime Achievement Awards in Science and in Service, respectively (see p 6).

I look forward to seeing you all again soon

Carmo

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RNA Newsletter to get a Makeover!

Welcome **Charles Hoogstraten**, the next RNA Newsletter Editor! As 2021 is turning out to be a year with many new fresh starts, we welcome Charles, Associate Professor in Biochem and Mol Biology at Michigan State as Editor of the RNA Newsletter. Under the guidance of CEO, Kristian Baker, your biannual Newsletter will get a new makeover with a fresh new vibe!

RNA 2021
The 26th Annual Meeting of the RNA Society
May 25 to June 5, 2021

Registration now open at : <https://www2.rnasociety.org/conferences/rna-2021/>

The RNA 2021 organizers are thrilled to welcome everyone to an exciting virtual bonanza featuring the longest running meeting of the RNA society with 22 scientific sessions, the most diverse and representative field of RNA researchers leading the sessions, 2 RNA Society Lifetime Award in Science presentations and 4 keynote speakers. This year's conference agenda also features 6 electrifying non-science sessions and panels in the areas of Bioinformatics/Computational Biology, Entrepreneurship, Diversity and Inclusion, Careers in Biotech, Mentee/Mentor networking, and a Job Jamboree hosted by the Junior Scientists. The RNA 2021 Meeting will take place online using the Event Pilot platform.

Four Keynote Lectures:

Jennifer Doudna (HHMI, University of California Berkeley, USA); **Xiang-dong Fu** (University of California San Diego, USA); **Sarah Woodson** (Johns Hopkins University, USA); **Irene Bozzoni** (Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Italy)

Planned Scientific Sessions:

Alternative Splicing and Regulation
Non-coding RNA Biogenesis & Modifications
RNA Structure, Folding and Regulation
Ribozymes and Riboswitches
CRISPR-Cas Biology and Applications
Long Non-coding RNA Biology
High Throughput Discovery
RNA Topics in Non-traditional Model Organisms
RNP Assembly
Subcellular RNA Localization & Spatial Transcriptomics
Bioinformatics and Genomics

Origins of Life
Interconnected Processes
Viral RNA and Innate Immune Response
RNA Modifications
RNP Granules and Phase Transitions
Synthesis and Processing of RNA
RNA in Disease
RNA-based Therapeutics & Small-Molecule Interactions
RNA Turnover
Mechanisms and Regulation of Translation
Small RNAs

Scientific Topics

Bioinformatics & Genomics
Chromatin & Epigenetics
Chemical Biology of RNA
New Technologies
Extracellular RNA
Granules & Condensates
High through-put discovery
Interconnected RNA Processes
Long Non-coding RNAs & Circular RNAs
Origins of Life and evolution
Regulatory RNAs in Bacteria & Archaea
Ribosome Biogenesis & Modification
Ribozymes & Riboswitches
RNA & Cellular Immunity
RNA & Disease
RNA Modification & Editing

RNA Nanotechnology
RNA Structure, Folding & Modeling
RNA Synthetic Biology & Systems Biology
RNA Transport & Localization
RNA Turnover
RNPs: Biogenesis, Structure & Function
Polyadenylation & 3' end formation
Small Non-coding RNAs in Eukaryotes
Splicing Mechanism
Splicing Regulation & Alternative Splicing
Targeting RNA for Therapy & Diagnostics
Transcription: Mechanism & Biology
Translation Mechanism
Translation Regulation
tRNA: Processing and Function
Viral RNAs

The majority of the RNA 2021 program will include sessions featuring talks selected from submitted abstracts. In the spirit of RNA society conferences, preference will be given to abstracts to be presented by graduate students, postdoctoral scientists, and junior PIs and that feature recent or unpublished work. We encourage young scientists to submit their work for oral presentation!

Non-scientific Events

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lecture and Panel Discussion

Entrepreneurship Panel

Biotechnology Career Panel

Job and Collaboration Jamboree in Academia

Jr Scientists Social Event

Mentor/Mentee Networking

Bioinformatics Grand Challenges

2021 Organizers

Gene Yeo – University of California San Diego, USA

Jörg Vogel – University of Würzburg, Germany

Katrin Karbstein – Scripps Research Institute, Florida, USA

Xavier Roca – Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

V. Narry Kim – Seoul National University, South Korea

Anna Marie Pyle – Yale University, USA

Registration now open – <https://www2.rnasociety.org/conferences/rna-2021/>

Panel on Diversity Equity and Inclusion at RNA 2021

Working with the RNA society, the Junior RNA Scientists will be presenting a panel to discuss **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** at the RNA 2021 On-line meeting. The Junior RNA Scientists and the RNA Society at large is committed to creating a safe space for discussions to help advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our community. To facilitate this goal, a panel of experienced speakers from academia and biotech will share their perspectives on DEI within the scientific community/RNA Society and answer questions from the audience in this live format panel discussion.

Speakers include **Tracy Johnson** (HHMI Professor and Professor of Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology, UCLA); **Mo Motamedi**, (Assistant Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School); **Holly Winter**, (Vice President of Human Resources at Locanabio) and **Mike Summers**, (HHMI investigator, Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at University of Maryland, Baltimore County). This panel will function as an open discussion to inform on concrete actions that we can take to promote diversity, inclusion and equity within the RNA Society. See the Junior RNA Scientist Corner for more info (p. 9).



RNA Society Awards to be presented/acknowledged at RNA 2021

The 2021 Lifetime Achievement award to Melissa Moore

Melissa J. Moore is well known for her mechanistic and structural analyses of spliceosomes and mRNPs, co-discovery of the exon junction complex (EJC), and studies of intracellular RNA transport and quality control pathways. She was also instrumental in developing multiple enabling technologies for the field, including methods for introducing site-specific modifications into long RNA molecules and single molecule methods for observing the dynamics of RNP complex assembly and disassembly. Following a nineteen-year run as an HHMI Investigator (1997-2016), Melissa resigned from HHMI to become the Chief Scientific Officer of Platform Research at Moderna Therapeutics, where she leads the translation of RNA biology to drug development. By designing new strategies to increase the functional output and longevity of therapeutic mRNAs, Melissa's insights were key for the success of the Covid-19 vaccine. One overarching piece of advice Melissa offers women looking to advance their career: No fear. "Fear holds you back and prevents you from taking the types of risks that can pay off with huge rewards," she said.



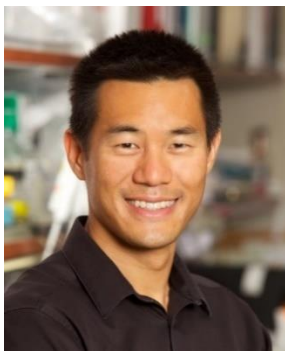
The 2021 Outstanding Service Award to Juan Valcárcel

Juan Valcárcel has served the RNA Society on many levels. He has acted as a session chair at the annual RNA meetings in 2006, 2008 and 2020, in addition to being a meeting organizer in 2003 and again in 2008. However, his most visible and arguably most broadly felt contributions to the Society have been through his efforts from being elected by the Society as President for 2017-2018. Juan had a transformative effect with his initiatives that engaged our younger RNA scientists worldwide. Under Juan's term as president, financial support for RNA Clubs and salon encouraging interactions between scientists was expanded and he supported efforts to establish new awards acknowledging the contributions of our early and mid-career scientists in the RNA field. Finally, but by no means least of these, Juan initiated the RNA Society Mentoring program, now being sustained by **Nancy Greenbaum**. This one-on-one, year-long mentoring of our Junior members by a senior member in the RNA field is a program that continues to expand in number and breadth, to support our younger scientists world-wide.



The 2021 Eliza Izaurrealde Award to Gene Yeo

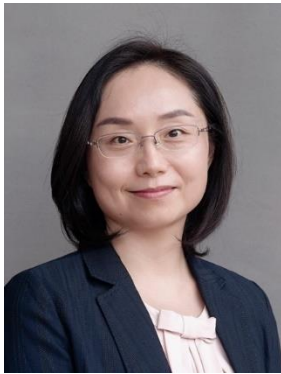
Gene Yeo, from the University of California San Diego, is this year's recipient of the **Elisa Izaurrealde Award**. Gene is recognized for his contributions as an outstanding innovator, mentor and community-oriented science leader. After a PhD at MIT with **Chris Burge** and **Tomaso Poggio**, and holding the first Crick-Jacobs Fellow position at the Salk Institute, Gene moved to UCSD where he is Professor of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and founding member of the Institute for Genomic Medicine. His laboratory has made pioneering contributions to our understanding of the architecture of cellular programs of post-transcriptional gene regulation in multiple systems, including stem cells and neural differentiation and degeneration. Gene's legendary energy and contagious enthusiasm have spearheaded the development of computational and



experimental methods (including eCLIP) and databases that are widely used by the RNA community, leading also to proof-of-concept therapeutic applications (e.g. in repeat expansion and neurodegenerative disorders, using RNA targeting by CRISPR/Cas9). He is a founder of four Biotech companies and two alliances for Covid-19 research coordination and community outreach in San Diego. He is also a committed member of the **RNA Society**, having been one of the organizers of the Annual Meeting in Krakow and serving as the lead organizer of the 2021 Annual Meeting. His nomination was endorsed by **Kristen Lynch**.

The 2021 Mid-Career Award to Ling-Ling Chen

Ling-Ling Chen from the Shanghai Institute of Biochemistry and Cell Biology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, is the recipient of this year's Mid-Career Research Award. After studies of Biology and Pharmacology in Lanzhou and Shanghai, Ling-Ling did her PhD with **Gordon Carmichael** at the University of Connecticut Health Center, where she became interested in the function of non-coding RNAs. She returned to Shanghai in 2011 as Principal Investigator and is currently Associate Director of the State Key Laboratory of Molecular Biology at SIBCB. Her lab has made important contributions to our understanding of the biogenesis of circular RNAs and their impact on innate immunity and autoimmune disease, the discovery of snoRNA-related lncRNAs and the function and assembly of RNA-related nuclear bodies. She is a generous contributor to the scientific community, serving as organizer of Keystone Symposia, Cold Spring Harbor Meetings and of the 2020 RNA Society Annual Meeting, and as Board Member of the



Chinese Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology as well as of the Chinese Biological Investigations Society. She also served in the RNA Society Nominations Committee and currently serves in the Meetings Committee. Ling-Ling is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute International Research Scholar. She was nominated by **Lynne Maquat**.

The 2021 Early Career Award to Shraga Schwartz

Shraga Schwartz, from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, is the recipient of this year's Early-Career Research Award. Shraga obtained a B.Sc. in Medicine from Tel-Aviv University, where he also carried out PhD work with **Gil Ast** on the role of chromatin organization on splicing via exon/intron architecture. For his postdoctoral studies, first with **Rotem Sorek** at the Weizmann and then with **Aviv Regev** and **Eric Lander** at the Broad Institute, where he worked on transcriptome-wide maps of RNA modifications. After returning to Israel in 2015, supported by European Research Council and EMBO Young Investigator Awards, his group has developed accurate, high-resolution methods for antibody-independent detection of post-transcriptional RNA modifications. His group's investigations in the biological functions of RNA modifications in bacteria, yeast and mammals have substantially changed our understanding of the importance of epitranscriptomics on RNA metabolism, revealing compelling and elegant examples.



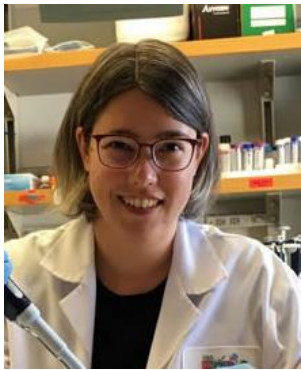
He was nominated by **Ramesh Pillai**.

The 2021 Scaringe awards for Postdoctoral Fellows shared by Anna Loveland and Kathrin Leppke

Dr. Anna Loveland's postdoctoral research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School under the guidance of Professor **Andrei Korostelev** has applied Cryo-EM to understand ribosome function, particularly during stress, tRNA decoding and in disease. She has focused on identifying how RelA-bound ribosomes detect the accumulation of deacyl-tRNA during amino acid depletion, and the structural basis by which the ribosome performs proofreading - a process ensuring that correct tRNAs are selected during translation that relies on switching of ribosome conformational states. Her approaches have provided the field “molecular movies” illuminating how RNA decoding occurs, including during initial tRNA selection. Dr. Loveland has recently begun to also study translation in the context of disease and has provided insight into the mechanism whereby di-peptide repeat proteins inhibit translation – a finding relevant to fully understanding the etiology behind ALS and frontal temporal dementia.



Dr. Kathrin Leppke's research at Stanford University in the lab of Professor **Maria Barna** has focused on how the ribosome itself functions to regulate translation of specific mRNAs; a process which expands the diversity of gene expression. In particular, she has studied “specialized ribosomes” and how highly flexible rRNA extensions exposed on the outer shell of the ribosome bind to transcripts to control mRNA-specific translation. She has harnessed the evolutionary changes in these *expansion sequences* to study their importance in translation and has engineered chimeric ribosomes by “humanizing” yeast rRNA to reconstitute mRNA-specific translation regulation. Recent work involves Further, Dr. Leppke has applied genetic and genomic approaches developing a novel ribosome purification/mRNA-interaction strategy to untangle the regulatory role of special ribosomes and applying genetic and genomic methods to identify ~30 proteins in yeast potentially involved in regulating translation start site selection within mRNA 5' UTRs.



The 2021 Scaringe Awards for Graduate Students shared by Januka Athukoralage and Jonathan Bohlen.



Januka Athukoralage is a graduate student in the laboratory of Professor **Malcolm White** at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Januka performs research on the prokaryotic immune signaling pathways used to evade viral infection. He studies cyclic nucleotide signaling by type III CRISPR-Cas systems in response to viral infection. He discovered cellular enzymes that degrade cyclic nucleotides in order to regulate the immune response and then viral enzymes that degrade cyclic nucleotides to circumvent CRISPR immunity. His work is paving the way to improve bacteriophage therapies targeting human pathogens. He's been a member of the RNA Society since 2019

Jonathan Bohlen is a graduate student in the laboratory of Professor **Aurelio Teleman** at the German Cancer Research Center (DFKZ) in Heidelberg. Jonathan investigates regulation of protein synthesis using high-throughput methods that reveal the mechanistic steps of translation initiation. He has gained insights into translation reinitiation and how this relates to cancer cell adaptation in the tumor. Jonathan discovered that translation initiation factors still reside on the ribosome after translation of short upstream open-reading frames, allowing it to return to scanning mode. He has been a member of the RNA Society since 2020.



Jr Scientist Corner

Happy New Year! As we turn the page of 2020, we can look forward to some exciting things planned for all the Jr RNA Scientists out there. The 2021 virtual RNA meeting will feature more events targeted toward junior scientists. Especially events that are live and focus on interaction between members.

At the 2021 RNA meeting we will be hosting a **Jobs and Collaborations in Academia** event. Are you actively looking for collaborations or a new position in academia? Do you have an open position waiting to be filled? If so, please participate in our Jobs and Collaborations in Academia Event. We as Jr RNA Scientists aim to facilitate career advancement and collaborations during these “no-travel allowed” times. During registration you will be asked whether you are looking for a job/have an open position in academia and if you are open for collaborations and which techniques you may offer or require. We will then organize a virtual event space including local chats and breakout rooms for people to connect. PIs will have the possibility of posting job positions and researchers will be able to indicate that they are looking for a position by text or short video presentation. Additionally, attendees will be able to post collaboration requests and offerings. Through hosting this event as well as the job- collaboration-postings, we will counteract the divisive forces of the pandemic by mimicking in-person interactions and establishing a platform for career development.

If you're not looking for a job but you are interested in creating more bonds within the RNA society, then the **Jr Scientists Social** is for you! We will recreate a classical conference style situation where researchers talk to each other during a coffee break or between talks. The regular RNA in-person

scientific meetings combine the presentation of cutting-edge research with the casual and professional interactions among scientists from different backgrounds. These brief interactions can be eye-opening and are crucial for generating a peer base for future endeavours. By providing a virtual event space at multiple points during the conference, it will be possible to connect at different virtual tables depending on your interests and also switch between tables. During registration you will be asked to indicate whether or not you're interested. Join us for a recap after some exciting talks and have a drink with us, we look forward to seeing you!

Finally, we are working with the rest of the RNA Society to present a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Panel**. The Junior RNA scientists and the RNA Society at large is committed to creating a safe space for discussions to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our community. To facilitate this goal, a panel of experienced speakers from academia and biotech will share their perspectives on DEI within the scientific community/RNA Society and answer questions from the audience in this live format panel discussion. Speakers include **Tracy Johnson**, Professor of Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology, HHMI Professor and Dean, Division of Life Sciences, UCLA College, **Mo Motamedi**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, **Holly Winter**, Vice President of Human Resources at Locanabio, and **Mike Summers**, HHMI investigator and Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This panel will function as an open discussion to inform on concrete actions that we can take to promote DEI within the RNA Society.

You can keep in touch with us throughout the year via email and social media channels:

junior_scientists@rnasociety.org or

Liana Boraas – liana.boraas@yale.edu

Luc Roberts – luc.roberts@uleth.ca

Simon Hoser – Simon.Hoser@i-med.ac.at

Malgorzata Rogalska – Malgorzata.Rogalska@crg.eu

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Update on the Society's Mentoring Program

Nancy L. Greenbaum

Individual Mentoring Program: We are now entering the fourth cycle of the **RNA Society's Mentoring Program**, a program that arranges pairings for a one-year period of individual mentoring for junior scientists at critical points in their careers by senior Society members with helpful expertise. This goal of this program is to enhance or complement the traditional intra-institutional guidance typically offered to PhD students, postdocs, or starting faculty members, in some cases filling gaps in research field- or career path-specific mentoring that research advisors and faculty colleagues may not be able to offer. This program is open to RNA Society members from around the world.



As in the previous cycle, we anticipate that we will be able to accommodate at least 30 mentor-mentee pairs. Participants will be provided with information about mentoring goals/tools, but (unless they specifically request it) with no imposed structure about mode or frequency of communication.

An email was recently sent out to all RNA Society members to seek participants for this fourth cycle. A [mentoring application form](#) was included for all mentee candidates. Potential mentors were asked only to provide any information that would be helpful in matching them with mentees. Scientists with private sector positions have not been as active in responding as those in the academic sector – but an increasing number of junior scientists are seeking mentoring in this field, so I strongly encourage those with expertise in biotech, industry, or other non-academic areas to volunteer. As needed, senior members who may be particularly good matches for individual mentees will be contacted and invited directly. Please Email your mentee applications and mentor emails to nancy.greenbaum@hunter.cuny.edu by **Jan 30th, 2021** to be considered. The [application form](#) can also be accessed on the RNA Society website with more information [here](#). And again, potential mentors (especially those in biotech fields!) are very much encouraged to contact me. Once the pairing process is complete, all mentors and mentees will be notified of their partners.

Career Mentoring Lunch: A valuable and well-attended event at each annual RNA Society Meeting has traditionally been the Career Mentoring Lunch. Since we cannot meet in person this year, the annual meeting will include an on-line Mentoring event that (as with in-person events) will feature a range of discussion topics. Details are still being worked out – watch the [meeting web site](#) (and your Email box!) for more specifics as plans are finalized.



Report on developments at the *RNA Journal*

Developments at the Society Journal, *RNA*

The RNA Society journal, *RNA*, continues to thrive. Now in its 27th year, *RNA* publishes high quality papers in six categories: Reports, Articles, Bioinformatics, Hypotheses, Methods, and Letters to the Editor; as well as a number of invited Reviews, Perspectives, Mini-reviews, and Commentaries. *RNA* features a high quality cast of 16 Editors who are leaders in their respective research areas, including the newest Editors **Britt Glaunsinger** (UC Berkeley) and **Mihaela Zavolan** (Biozentrum, University of Basel), as well as an Editorial Board of 56 members whose research is at the forefront of RNA science. *RNA* continues to have a high quality reputation, with a 2019 impact factor (4.32) in the top 26% of journals in its class, and continues its rapid turnaround of submitted manuscripts, averaging 27 days from submission to first decision. *RNA* also boasts a high normalized h-index (h-index/total papers published in that year; where h-index is the number of papers *h* that are cited *h* times), which exceeds that of many of our peer journals with higher overall impact factors, implying that a large percentage of papers in *RNA* are highly cited.

In addition, for RNA Society members, publication in *RNA* provides great financial benefits to labs and to the Society. *RNA* features an exceedingly competitive and low-cost flat rate publication fee of \$1000 for manuscripts under 12 pages, with unlimited free color figures and an optional Open Access fee that is one of the most budget-friendly in scientific publishing. Most importantly, profits from *RNA* are invested back into the RNA Society to support its programs and activities, including Travel Fellowships to attend our Annual Meeting, sponsorship and support of regional

RNA conferences, and institutional support for local RNA events through the RNA Salon program.

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new social media initiative at *RNA*. All accepted papers are now accompanied by graphical abstracts to capture the excitement of the cutting-edge work published in *RNA*. These graphical abstracts will be released through the *RNA* Twitter platform (@RNAjournal) and will include links to the papers. In addition, Tweets will be tagged to authors' and institutions' Twitter handles, and we will be monitoring online activity to assess overall effectiveness of our approach. These efforts will create additional conduits to the RNA community to highlight the exceptional science published in *RNA*.

We are also pleased to announce that, beginning this year, *RNA* will offer two annual awards for **Best Papers Published in *RNA***. One award will be in the general area of Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Structure, and the other will be in the general area of Biology, Genetics, and Cell Biology. All papers published in 2021 will be eligible and judged in one of these categories. Each winning paper and authors will be announced to all RNA Society members, and will also be broadcast on the *RNA* journal and Society websites, as well as via our social media platforms (notably on Twitter at @RNASociety and @RNAjournal). In addition, a cash prize of \$1000 will be awarded to the first author(s) of each paper. We look forward to this new initiative and encourage you to submit your papers to *RNA* in consideration of these Best Paper awards.

Tim Nilsen, Editor in Chief
Eric Phizicky, Deputy Editor



RNA
A PUBLICATION OF THE RNA SOCIETY



From the Desk of the CEO Kristian Baker

Happy New Year! As we turn the page on an unprecedented year of challenge, one can't help but marvel in the role RNA research and RNA researchers – many of whom are current or past RNA Society members – have played in the past year in expanding our fundamental understanding of living things and in forging paths to a safer and healthier future ahead. The importance of RNA research is more recognized than ever and it remains the primary commitment of the RNA Society to foster your interactions, help cultivate and share your ideas, and support our junior scientists in their training and professional pursuits. In looking forward, I am excited about the opportunities in 2021 for our members and for our greater RNA research community and am eager to share here some of the activities that are planned in the up-coming year.



Leadership Changes in 2021

The new year brings changes in the leadership team of the RNA Society. We welcome **Maria Carmo-Fonseca** as President for a two-year term that commenced just last month, and recognize and offer our deepest gratitude to now Past President, **Anna Marie Pyle**, for her outstanding leadership and resolve in navigating the Society during a time of significant uncertainty and trial. We also welcome incoming Directors, **David Bartel**, **Alain Laederach** and **Kristin Patrick** (who join **Archa Fox**, **Lori Passmore** and **Yuki Tomari** on the RNA Society Board) and look forward to their insight and guidance.

We bid farewell to our Chief Financial Officer, **Evelyn Jabri**, who, after 3 years of exceptional management of our finances, has stepped aside so as to dedicate more time to her successful consulting group. Replacing Evelyn will be **Wen Ding** (see p 12) who comes to the Society with decades of experience at top US private sector financial institutions as both a consultant and data specialist. Wen holds an MBA in Finance and International Business from Syracuse University and is currently the Fiscal Officer for the Department of Biological Chemistry at the University of California, Irvine. Please join me in thanking Evelyn for her dedication and tremendous leadership as our CFO and also in welcoming Wen into this position as our newest Society Officer. In addition, after serving 6 years in the role of RNA Society Secretary, **Brenda Peculis** has decided to step down in 2021. Brenda has been steadfast in her dedication to up-hold Society procedures, coordinate critical activities for the organization, and maintain the Society's history as our archivist; the Society owes Brenda a debt of gratitude and her efforts will be greatly missed. Her pending departure leaves an opening for a new Society Secretary that we hope to fill in the immediate future. If you are interested in serving the organization in this important leadership position, please click [here](#), and in addition, see page 20 for more specifics. Feel free to contact either Brenda (secretary@rnasociety.org) or myself for more information.

RNA 2021 is Virtual

The continued uncertainty last fall around COVID-19 prompted the Society to convert our annual meeting scheduled to be held in-person in Singapore in early June to a virtual event. In response to this transition, meeting organizers **Gene Yeo**, **Katrin Karbstein**, **Narry Kim**, **Anna Pyle**, **Xavier Roca** and **Jörg Vogel** have worked tirelessly to develop an exciting meeting program that is the *longest* and features the *largest number* of scientific sessions and speakers in Society history. While full details are available on the meeting website at www2.rnasociety.org/conferences/rna-2021/ - some meeting highlights include:

- Extended meeting dates – 11 days of live Q&A events **May 25 – June 4, 2021**



- Extended content accessibility – recorded presentations will be viewable on-line for a full 30 days
- **22 scientific sessions** spanning traditional and burgeoning fields in RNA research
- The most diverse and representative field of RNA researchers leading the sessions (2 chairs/session)
- **4 Keynote talks**, including Xiang-dong Fu, Jennifer Doudna, Irene Bozzoni, and Sarah Woodson
- **2 RNA Society Lifetime Award in Science presentations** – Matthias Hentze will present in honor of his 2020 award and Melissa Moore will present as our 2021 awardee
- **6 non-science sessions/panels/events** in the areas of Bioinformatics/Computational Biology, Entrepreneurship, Diversity and Inclusion, Careers in Biotech, Mentee/Mentor networking, and a Job Jamboree
- Poster Sessions that include 3-minute audio links and portals for interacting with presenters

Registration fees for RNA 2021 On-line - \$100 for Student & Post-doctoral Fellow RNA Society members, \$125 for Full Society members, and \$250 for non-members – are budget friendly and offer exceptional value for the educational and scientific benefits of this expanded meeting program. To encourage meeting participation and the inclusion of RNA researchers who might not otherwise be able register for RNA 2021, the RNA Society is pleased to announce an **Inclusion Initiative for RNA 2021** which provides complimentary registration for RNA Society members who are first-time meeting attendees or are members of a broad group of under-represented RNA researchers. Please see the meeting website (<https://www2.rnasociety.org/conferences/rna-2021/>) for full eligibility and for more information on this exciting new initiative, and I look forward to *seeing* you all at RNA 2021 On-line.

Two new initiatives for the RNA Journal

As described by journal Editors Tim Nilsen and Eric Phizicky (page 11), *RNA* – the official journal of the RNA Society – continues to thrive and publish cutting-edge RNA research by both Society members and the greater RNA research community. In addition to continuing to offer competitive publishing rates and rapid peer review, the journal is launching two new programs aimed at increasing the exposure of our authors and the exciting work they do. The first is the announcement of prizes for the **Best Papers Published in RNA**, which will recognize annually the best original research papers published in *RNA* in two diverse categories (see p.11). The second involves broad and real-time promotion of published articles through the *RNA* journal twitter account (@RNAjournal) - including author-supplied *graphical abstracts* as a means to provide concise visual context of their published findings. Heading this new initiative and managing @RNAjournal is **Eric Wagner** (Univ. of Texas, Medical Branch at Galveston) and a team of dedicated tweeters – **Adam Cawte, Daniel Kim, Stephanie Moon, Hey Yoon Park, Raj Purusharth, Manisha Sharma, and Lauren Todd**. Please be sure to thank this great group of volunteers for their efforts in promoting your science and follow @RNAjournal to keep up-to-date of all of the exciting new findings published in *RNA*.

2021 RNA Society Elections – Call for Nominations

The RNA Society will be holding its annual election this Spring and will be looking to fill **three open positions on the Board of Directors**. As members of the Council, RNA Society Directors shape the procedures, activities and programming of the organization and ensure that the mission of the Society – *to promote RNA research and education worldwide* – is executed to the greatest benefit of our membership and the larger RNA community. The RNA Society seeks to fill these open leadership positions with members who are visionary and committed in their desire to help the Society adopt to growing opportunities (and challenges) that face our organization. The 2021 Nominating Committee has been assembled to help identify candidates for election. Please contact me



(ceo@rnasociety.org) for more information on the nomination process, to express interest in a position, or to submit your nomination – and please be sure to vote when your e-Ballot is sent in April.

Cheers to a fresh year that offers a bright outlook and days filled with new opportunities and a deeper sense of connection. Thank you all for your dedication to your work, for your collegueship, and for your commitment to the Society. Please stay safe.

Kristian Baker, CEO
ceo@rnasociety.org

From the Desk of the Chair of the Meetings Committee, Benoit Chabot

Happy New Year 2021! Because COVID-19 will likely remain a significant health threat for at least a good part of 2021, our Society has decided last fall to convert the in-person **2021 RNA Society annual meeting** planned for Singapore into a **virtual one (same dates: May 25th – June 5th)**. **Gene Yeo** and his team of co-organizers (**Xavier Roca** (Singapore), **Narry Kim** (South Korea), **Kathrin Karbstein** (USA), **Jörg Vogel** (Germany) and **Anna Marie Pyle** (USA)) are actively planning this reunion. Given the enthusiasm of the team, the huge success of the 2020 virtual meeting and the lessons learned from it, we can look forward to a wonderful meeting experience in 2021. [Registration](#) is open!



The **2022 RNA Society meeting** is scheduled to take place in-person at **University of Colorado in Boulder** from **May 31 to June 5**. **Roy Parker** is the lead organizer and he has secured the help of **Howard Chang** (USA), **Amy Buck** (UK), **Štěpánka Vaňáčová** (Czech Republic), **Kristen Lynch** (USA) and **Rui-Ming Xu** (China) as co-organizers.

As I wrote above, the 2021 meeting was initially planned to be held in Singapore. Given our past commitment to this location, the superlative venue that was considered, and our strong desire to hold a meeting in Asia, we are rescheduling the **2023 meeting** for **Singapore**.

I want to thank all the members of the Meetings committee for their availability and guidance, as well as our Simple Meeting associates, **Mary McCann** and **Kristin Scheyer**, for their expertise and dedication in helping secure venues and organize the transition from in-person to on-line meetings.

Best wishes to all!

Benoit Chabot

Benoit.Chabot@USherbrooke.ca



From the Desk of the CFO Evelyn Jabri

“*The Times They Are-a-Changin’*” (for everyone, including Bob Dylan and the Society)! Let’s dive into the numbers, review progress towards enhancing the Society’s financial processes, and welcome our new CFO, **Wen Ding** (see ‘*Did you know?*’ below)



Closing the Book on 2020

In August 2020, the Society projected a smaller than anticipated budget deficit. However, we should close 2020 with a small surplus due to reduced expenses on multiple programs. That’s great news considering the significant disruptions we experienced last year.

Budget 2021 Revised

In June, the Board approved a Budget 2021 projected to result in a \$60K deficit. However, we agreed to revisit the estimates and adjust as needed should the annual meeting shift to a virtual format or COVID affects other programs. The revised 2021 financial plan approved by the Board in January now has the Society ending the year with a projected surplus of \$30K. We were conservative on these numbers, so barring any ‘surprises’ (viral or otherwise), the Society should end the 2021 fiscal year ahead of plan.

Finance Committee Updates

In December, the Committee met to decide what to do with ~\$530K in cash we reserved to address the expected 2020 deficit and COVID-induced financial fluctuations. We agreed that the Society had weathered the worst of the emergency and did not anticipate needing the money in early 2021. The Committee decided to invest ~\$510K in the current Reserves portfolio to ensure the funds garnered a better return in 2021. As of December 31st, the Board-designated Reserves are at ~\$2.2M, within the desired limits and weathering the extreme market fluctuations. The Emergency Fund is at \$250K. The Finance Committee will meet again in mid-February to complete an investment risk assessment and, if necessary, rebalance the portfolio to meet the Society’s future strategic needs.

That's a wrap!

There wasn't a dull moment during my tenure as CFO! In 2018, it was evident the Society had outgrown established financial management practices and was ready for upgrades that positioned it for future success. The team (CFO, Finance Committee members, and external partners) reviewed, and where necessary, revamped the Society's financial practices, aligned them with industry expectations, and adopted sustainable processes that would support the organization's desire to increase its impact. We:

- Transitioned bookkeeping operations to new vendors, switched banks, and upgraded the Society's paper-heavy accounts payable (AP) process to a transparent electronic workflow with new AP and FMS platforms.

RNA Society Revised & Approved Budget 2021		
	Approved June, 2020	Approved January 2021
REVENUES		
DEPARTMENT		
Membership	\$ 68,000	\$ 220,000
Journal	\$ 467,000	\$ 269,000
Annual Meeting	\$ 1,146,000	\$ 306,000
Industry Sponsorship	\$ 80,000	\$ 50,000
	\$ 140,000	
Conference Sponsorship	\$ 35,000	\$ 25,000
Meeting Partnerships	\$ 111,000	\$ 61,000
Awards & Fellowship	\$ 221,000	\$ 21,000
Development & Fundraising	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
General & Administrative	\$ 70,000	\$ 63,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 2,348,000	\$ 1,025,000
EXPENSES		
DEPARTMENT		
Membership	\$ (5,000)	\$ (144,000)
Journal	\$ (307,000)	\$ (83,000)
Annual Meeting	\$ (1,353,000)	\$ (368,000)
Conference Sponsorship	\$ (130,000)	\$ (100,000)
Meeting Partnerships	\$ (111,000)	\$ (61,000)
Awards & Fellowship	\$ (320,000)	\$ (33,000)
Development & Fundraising	\$ (5,000)	\$ (6,000)
General & Administrative	\$ (180,000)	\$ (198,000)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ (2,411,000)	\$ (993,000)
GAIN/LOSS	\$ (63,000)	\$ 32,000



- Partnered with the CPA to adopt new and required FASB Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- Revamped the Society's financial framework to accurately represent the current functional department/program structure and enhance individual programs' financial reporting.
- Implemented a vendor invoice receipt/review/approval process to increase transparency and streamline the workflow with the external bookkeeper.
- Improved and extended the web-based member payment request system to offer electronic remittance in different currencies and speed processing.
- Updated the Investment Policy and Reserves portfolio to weather market volatility, including a significant market dip in Q4, 2018, and Q1, 2020.
- Established a Reserves Spending Policy that defines use cases, sets minimum/maximum financial targets, and outlines processes to request drawdowns per financial best practices for organizations with growing investment portfolios.
- Identified and partnered with an external vendor to meet state-level charity compliance requirements for U.S. fundraising, allowing us to expand strategic fundraising efforts.
- Celebrated financial successes!
 - 2018 – Broke-even per plan and Reserves remained at \$1.3M.
 - 2019 – Ended the year ahead of plan with a significant surplus (\$498K), and Reserves grew to the desired minimum level of \$1.6M.
 - 2020 – Projecting a surplus instead of the planned deficit with Reserves at \$2.2M, well within the working limits defined by the Spending Policy.

Thanks to past and current Finance Committee Members, Directors, Officers, Committee Chairs, External Partners, and Volunteers for making this all possible. The collective focus on continuous improvement and financial sustainability has positioned the Society to take advantage of future growth opportunities.

Questions and suggestions for the CFO? Feel free to email cfo@rnasociety.org.

P.S. I would love to stay in touch, so please reach out at my email (ejabri@gmail.com) and via LinkedIn.

Did you know?

The RNA Society has a new CFO!

I'm delighted to introduce to you **Wen Ding**, the next CFO of the RNA Society. Wen has an MBA in Finance and International Business (Syracuse University) and decades of experience at top U.S. private sector financial institutions as a consultant and data specialist. She is currently the *Fiscal Officer* for the Department of Biological Chemistry at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) - a role that includes budget development, payroll & purchasing transactions, grant management, and financial policy and procedure development within its duties. She is involved in the organization and financial management of scientific meetings hosted by UCI. She is also familiar with RNA Society programs and participated in our annual conference as an accompanying partner.



Wen is currently onboarding to the role, and you will soon see her name associated with the cfo@rnasociety.org emails. We'll overlap through March 31st, at which time Wen will answer all of your financial questions.

Welcome, Wen!



From the Desk of the Chair of Business Development Gianpiero Di Leva



Another lockdown, another transition to a virtual meeting, and another last minute rush for creating the new sponsorship prospectus for the Annual Meeting of the Society. No doubt, the meeting will be an engaging virtual alternative but, at the same time, it posed again many challenges to identify the right commercial opportunities for our sponsors that are feasible for the new virtual platform.

We have familiarized with the key virtual features of the conference software and we are now ready to start our 2021 sponsorship marathon! Several novelties for the sponsors have been introduced into the sponsorship prospectus this year, including:

- Virtual booths with chat area for a direct interaction with the attendees.
- Demo videos for the promotion of special products.
- An engagement tool designed to provide fast and live feedback to the vendors.
- A four tiers sponsorship package system that should facilitate sponsors to identify the right groups of activities and increase their visibility during the conference.

So far, we have sent over 100 “Save The Date” emails to our past sponsors and we have received already multiple contacts from companies that are interested to attend the virtual events. We really hope to pick the interest of many would-be-sponsors and start soon the conversation.

www.rnasociety.org



SAVE THE DATE MAY 25 – JUNE 10, 2021

The 26th Annual Meeting of the RNA Society

The RNA SOCIETY would like to invite you for the Annual Meeting of the RNA Society and have a glimpse of the future of RNA research.

**Mark Your Calendar
For This Global Online Event!**

When: May 25 – June 10, 2021

Where: online

- More than 3000 attendees are expected.
- A novel meeting platform powered by EventPilot to enhance the seminar experience with more interactive tools including chat, Zoom meetings and live Q&A sessions.
- Multiple Keynote Speakers including Jennifer Doudna, Irene Bozzoni, Xian-dong Fu and Sarah Woodson.
- You will soon receive a personal invitation with more information about the event and sponsorship opportunities.
- For more information, please contact bd@rnasociety.org

Your help identifying new sponsors and possibilities to support our annual events is welcome. If you would like to discuss sponsorships opportunities, please contact me via email at bd@rnasociety.org.



From the Desk of the Chair of the Membership Committee Olivia Rissland



What a year 2020 turned out to be—and, at least in the US, 2021 has followed in much the same vein. Like many Americans, I abhor the violence that occurred on the US Capitol, and the underlying, long-standing causes of white supremacy that fueled those events. However, the rhetoric and violence on display are not an aberration. They are a logical extension of the systems of power in our society: the path from slavery to the Jim Crow era to birtherism to Jan 6, 2021 is a straight line.

Although the life of research can feel a world away from that violence, all of us, especially white scientists, must continue to dismantle the systems of power that disenfranchise Black scientists and other scientists of color. I encourage all RNA scientists to be discontent with the status quo, to speak out for justice and inclusion, and to make “good trouble.” My sincere hope is that the next generation of scientists will inherit a scientific community that truly reflects our ideals.

In the midst of this chaos, two rays of hope shine out from our community. One has been the power of RNA to transform the world. We are seeing first-hand just how important our research is. The SARS-CoV-2 virus and the RNA vaccines highlight the power we have as RNA biologists and further underscore how essential it is to have diverse voices in the lab. The other has been the number of conferences and meetings that have shifted to our new online reality. Your efforts have strengthened the connections between us and have increased opportunities for all scientists to learn about the latest in RNA research. Looking ahead, I hope we carry these lessons with us and make the access of information truly equitable, especially for scientists from regions that have been historically under-represented. I welcome ideas about how we can continue to build our community, especially right now, and how we can include and nurture members (such as Black scientists) who continue to face systemic barriers.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who works hard and runs the initiatives of the Membership Committee, especially **Julie Aspden, Neva Caliskan, Suja Jagannathan, Ute Kothe, and Nancy Greenbaum**. Each of these scientists volunteers their time, energy, and enthusiasm, and they are key to making the RNA Society so special. If you want a more active role in the RNA Society, please email me (olivia.rissland@cuanschutz.edu) — we would be delighted to have you on the team!

RNA SALONS 2020/2021 AND BEYOND

We are now into our fifth **RNA Salon** season, and this program continues to be a roaring success. With support from our long-time sponsor Lexogen, the 2020/2021 **RNA Salon** season features 52 Salons, engaging thousands of participants. I continue to be amazed at the agility of each organizer to adapt to online formats! I owe a special thank-you to **Ute Kothe**, who continues to lead this initiative. Its success is due in no small part to her dedication.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Dr. Neva Caliskan continues her spectacular work running our very popular **Member Spotlight Series**, which highlights the outstanding lives and accomplishments of our members. We have a great team of 17 writers for our 2021 series (**Carla Oliveira, Petra Celadova, Luca Gebert, Diana Ferro, Prakash Kharel, Estefanía**



Sánchez Vásquez, Rachel Niederer, Anna Sherwood, Rui Fui, Peren Coskun, Jen Quick-Cleveland, Ahmet Bakirbas, Sara Zaccara, Aditi Kanhere, Nik Tsoakos, Eliseo Salas, and Mariela Cortés-López), and I know the new pieces will continue to be a bright spot in many of our inboxes. Thank you to all the members who have been part of the Series, and, if you're asked to be featured in the future, I hope you'll say yes!

2021 AND BEYOND

My time as Membership Chair will end in July 2021, and we are soliciting applications for a [new](#) Chair of the Membership Committee (see p20). It has been an honor to serve you, and this position is a great way to make an impact in our RNA community. I encourage you to consider applying—please keep an eye out for details! I look forward to “seeing” you at RNA 2021, and to (hopefully) welcoming you to my home state of Colorado for RNA 2022! Until then, stay safe, and my best,
Olivia

RNA Salon Report

RNA Salons 2020/2021 – stronger than ever

Despite or maybe even because of the pandemic, the RNA Salon program is a key integrator within the RNA Society! Now more than ever, it is critical for us RNA scientists to stay connected and engaged, and the RNA Salons are fulfilling exactly this role. Special Kudos to all the amazing leaders of RNA Salons who have quickly pivoted to new online formats to offer interesting events for the more than 6,000 RNA Salon participants worldwide!

Given the importance of the RNA Salons, the RNA Society is more than proud to report that this program continues to be strong with no less than 52 active RNA Salons in 2020/2021. These RNA Salons include 18 continuing RNA Salons, who are using remaining funding from the previous year, as well as 34 newly funded RNA Salons. Again, the RNA Salons represent almost all continents and the breadth of RNA research around the world. To further support the RNA Salons and in particular its participating junior RNA researchers, the RNA Society has added three free one-year student/postdoc RNA Society membership to the support packages this year. We also continue to be grateful for the exclusive sponsorship of the RNA Salon program by Lexogen. Hopefully, you will all have the opportunity to connect with an RNA Salon in your vicinity; a list of all [RNA Salons](#) is available on the RNA Society website. And if there is no RNA Salon close to you, it's time to consider starting your own RNA Salon and to apply for RNA Society Funding in September.

Ute Kothe, ute.kothe@uleth.ca
RNA Salon Program Coordinator

Our friend and colleague **Neocles B. Leontis** died on December 8, 2020 in a car crash in Bowling Green, Ohio. This is a huge loss to the RNA community. In addition to his academic pursuits, Neocles was passionate about environmental and social justice issues and was an active elected member of the Bowling Green City Council. He will be missed by his many students, colleagues, and friends. Please see [here](#) for the full remembrance by Helen Berman and Craig Zirbel



RNA Society volunteer positions available

The RNA Society Secretary position opening.

The RNA Society Board will appoint a new Society Secretary. We invite applications from RNA Society members interested in serving a leadership role and coordinating key administrative activities for the organization. Experience serving on committees or leading academic programs is preferred but not absolutely required. Applicants must be a Full member with some knowledge of RNA Society activities and programs.

This is a volunteer position requiring 5-10 hours per month and attendance at the RNA Society Annual Meeting. The term of the position is three (3) years with the possibility of extension. In recognition of his or her service, the Secretary is provided an annual honorarium and full expenses for all role-related travel (including registration/travel/accommodations to attend the Annual Meeting). For more details, see download [here](#).

2021 RNA Society Elections – Call for Nominations for Board members

The RNA Society will be holding its annual election this Spring and will be looking to fill **three open positions** on the **Board of Directors**. As members of the Council, RNA Society Directors shape the procedures, activities and programming of the organization and ensure that the mission of the Society – *to promote RNA research and education worldwide* – is executed to the greatest benefit of our membership and the larger RNA community.

The RNA Society seeks to fill these open leadership positions with members who are visionary and committed in their desire to help the Society adopt to growing opportunities (and challenges) that face our organization.

The 2021 Nominating Committee has been assembled to help identify candidates for election. Please contact CEO, Kristian Baker (ceo@rnasociety.org) for more information on the nomination process, to express interest in a position, or to submit your nomination – and please be sure to vote when your e-Ballot for Board members is sent in April.

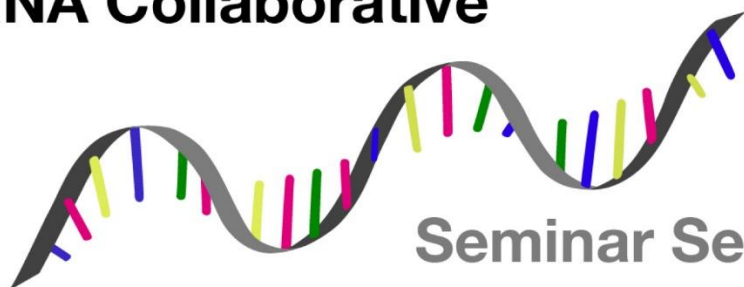
Chair of Membership Committee position opening

RNA Society will be soliciting applications from candidates for the **Membership Committee Chair** position effective July 2021. If you are interested in this position, please contact [Olivia Rissland](#) for specifics at this point, but watch your Email and the RNA Society [web site](#) for more details.



The RNA Society partners with the RNA Collaborative Seminar Series, a group of 20 RNA research institutions that hosts on-line seminars and fosters cross-institutional interaction and dissemination of emerging breakthroughs in RNA research.

RNA Collaborative



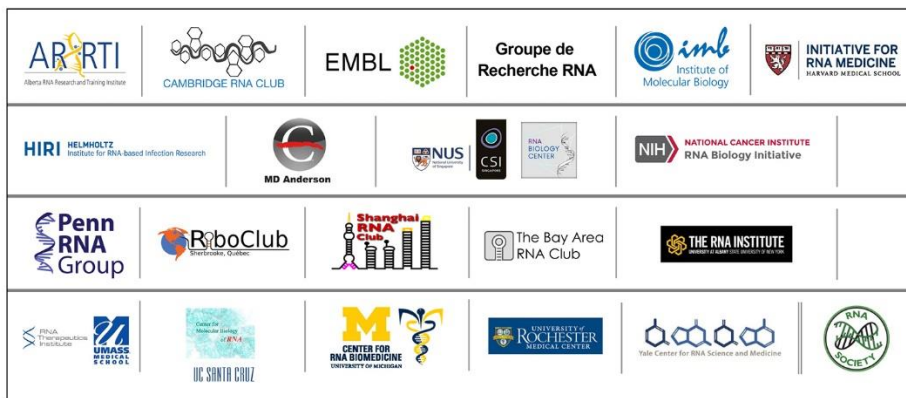
Seminar Series

Every other Wednesday

9:00 am or 4:00 pm EST (2:00 pm or 9:00 pm GMT)

More information on the [RNA Society website](http://www.rnasociety.org)

www.rnasociety.org/rna-collaborative-seminar-series



The integrative RNA research group hosts an online journal club led by first authors with live Q&As

Free to RNA Society and ISCB members, the journal club highlights:

- New technologies
- High-throughput approaches
- Computational methods

... all focused on RNA research

irnacosi.org

Watch past journal clubs and register for upcoming events at irnacosi.org/journal-club

Submit papers for consideration at oiRNA@irnacosi.org

Hosted with support from the RNA Society and the ISCB

@iRnaCosi

Past Meetings Sponsored by the Society

Rustbelt RNA Meeting October 23rd–24th 2020 Virtual

The NSF-supported 2-day Rustbelt RNA Meeting (RRM) celebrates the work of trainees, including undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral scholars. Because of the pandemic, we pivoted from our planned 300-person meeting in downtown Pittsburgh to an online meeting hosted through the Zoom webinar and Gather.town platforms. Although the pandemic has been difficult for many research programs, the science presented during the virtual RRM2020 meeting on October 23-24, 2020 was outstanding. The 350 attendees from the Rustbelt region and beyond were treated to 22 trainee talks, a keynote lecture by Rachel Green (Johns Hopkins University and HHMI), and 50 posters; gather.town facilitates interactive poster sessions that allow individuals to ‘walk up’ to each poster to engage with the poster presenter in real-time. It was as close to a ‘real’ poster session as possible with less background noise! The pandemic-inspired session entitled, “RNA Biology of SARS-CoV-2” featured Rhiju Das (Stanford), Anastasia Khvorova (UMass Medical School), and Junjie Guo (Yale). The new faculty talks were presented by Deepika Vaudevan (NYU Med, soon at U. Pittsburgh) and Huaiying Zhange (Carnegie



Mellon University). Additionally, Joel McManus (CMU and co-Chair) ran an informative introductory Bioinformatic Workshop that led 40 students through RNA-seq dataset processing using the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center and XSEDE.

One of the high points of the meeting was the workshop attended by 200 participants entitled, “Solutions for promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research,” which had six panelists. The experts were Sarah Hainer (U. Pitt and eLIFE community ambassador), Alaine Allen (U. Pitt), Diane Hightower (CMU), Jon Lorsch (NIGMS), Katie Mouzakis (Loyola Marymount U.), and André Samuel (Citizen Science Lab). While the problems underlying the issues of diversity and inclusion in STEM were discussed, panelists focused on describing actions and initiatives that they pioneered to successfully enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM. We hope that this workshop inspired attendees to find solutions at their institutions and provided them with examples of success.

Congratulations to the poster award winners and to all of the oral presentation winners, including the outstanding undergraduate student, John Vu, outstanding graduate student, Amber LaPeruta, and outstanding postdoctoral presenter, Joseph Smith. We thank the RNA Society for its support of our meeting, which has been critical for its success. We are looking forward to RRM2021 in Columbus, OH co-chaired by Laurie Read (U. Buffalo) and Kotaro Nakanishi (OSU)!

EMBO|EMBL Symposium The Complex Life of RNA

7th-9th Oct 2020

Virtual

The 5th edition of the EMBO|EMBL Symposium The Complex Life of RNA took place on 7th-9th Oct 2020 as a virtual meeting due to the COVID health crisis. The meeting was coordinated from the Advanced Training Center of the EMBL in Heidelberg, with live-streamed sessions timed to facilitate participation from around the world. Remarkably, more than 750 people from over 50 countries participated, making this the largest Complex Life of RNA symposium to date.

The meeting opened with a touching tribute from Wojtek Galej to his former mentor Kiyoshi Nagai. Kiyoshi passed away in 2019 and was one of the co-organizers. The meeting covered all aspects of RNA biology, and included a balance of both published and unpublished data. Excitingly, some of the speakers presented very recent unpublished research into the SARS-CoV-2 RNA virus. Three keynotes, given by Joan Steitz, Anna Pyle and David Tollervey, and 17 other talks by invited speakers were given live. In addition, 26 short talks were pre-recorded and available online throughout the meeting. The short talks were selected from submitted abstracts and mostly consisted of junior researchers. Moderation of the six live sessions was conducted by 12 largely junior PIs. All recorded talks were made available for continued viewing online for a period of 2 weeks.

The symposium organizers added several features to improve communication between the participants at this virtual meeting. All attendees were able to ask questions using a Q&A chat function, with the session chairs reading out the questions live. Questions that could not be answered live due to time constraints were posted in a Slack channel for each session; this feature was heavily used and appreciated by speakers and participants alike. Participants were also able to join the “Meet-the-Speaker” and “Meet the short talks presenters” rooms for further discussions after the sessions. The latter feature allowed people to participate freely and visually. The virtual poster sessions were designed to allow participants to download the posters (email IDs required), but also promoted a live and open interaction between the participants and the poster presenters. Finally, a Speed Networking and a Bar Mixer functionalities allowed the attendees to meet up after the programmed events. Although the reduced registration fees allowed such a broad participation, the organizers are grateful for the generous financial help from the RNA Society that allowed 8 students to join the meeting.



Employment Opportunities

The RNA Society is pleased to provide this job posting webpage to the RNA community. Postings are free to members of the RNA Society. All advertisements will remain posted for a three month period.

If you are a member and would like to have your employment opportunity listed on this page, please [click here](#) for instructions.

Post Doctoral Research Associate (Fixed Term)

Posted on January 18, 2021

We are seeking a full time Postdoctoral Research Associate for a Leverhulme Trust funded position to study the role of RNA binding proteins in exocytosis in both insulin producing pancreatic beta cells and neuroendocrine cells...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Associate Opening at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine

Posted on January 18, 2021

The Laboratory of Dr. Shengdong Ke has one postdoctoral associate opening at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine. The Ke Lab focuses on RNA, a central node of genetic information flow from DNA to protein...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral fellowships in RNA biology and RNA virology

Posted on January 18, 2021

The Garcia-Blanco laboratory in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Texas Medical Branch is looking for outstanding postdoctoral fellows for studies at the interface of RNA biology and immunology...[read more](#)

Post-Doctoral Position

Posted on January 12, 2021

A Post-Doctoral Position is open in the Maquat Lab at the University of Rochester Medical Center in Rochester, NY. Applicants should hold a PhD or MD/PhD degree(s) and have expertise...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Researcher Position

Posted on January 12, 2021

A postdoctoral researcher position is available at the Laboratory of Medicinal Biophysics to study the structures of long-non-coding RNAs. The candidate will utilize molecular biology and structural-biophysical tools...[read more](#)



Postdoctoral Position in RNA Biology – University of California, Riverside

Posted on January 12, 2021

We are looking for a talented and motivated postdoctoral researcher to work on RNA biology in mammalian cells...[read more](#)

Scientist I/II – RNA Biochemistry

Posted on January 7, 2021

Skyhawk Therapeutics is seeking a highly motivated RNA Biochemistry Scientist I/II to join our talented, growing Molecular Biology team in Waltham, MA. The successful candidate will develop and implement new RNA biochemical tools...[read more](#)

Scientist I/II – Molecular Genomics

Posted on January 7, 2021

Skyhawk Therapeutics is seeking a highly motivated Scientist I/II in Molecular Genomics to join our talented, growing Molecular Biology team in Waltham, MA. The successful candidate will develop and build innovative next generation...[read more](#)

One-Year Post-Bac Research Position

Posted on January 6, 2021

A one-year Post-Bac research position is available in the Hoskins lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Applicants should hold a BS degree in the life or physical sciences and have undergraduate research experience...[read more](#)

Researcher with Bioinformatic Experience and Training

Posted on December 23, 2020

IMMAGINA BioTechnology S.r.l. is looking for a motivated early researcher with bioinformatic experience and training to work on an exiting 3-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action ITN project...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral position in post-transcriptional gene regulation and RNA therapeutics at the Houston Methodist Research Institute

Posted on December 21, 2020

This position is seeking a Postdoctoral Fellow (open rank) to work in an RNA molecular biology lab working on questions related to the molecular biology of cardiovascular disease and cancer...[read more](#)



University of Massachusetts Medical School Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Pharmacology

Posted on December 15, 2020

The Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Pharmacology at the University of Massachusetts Medical School seeks applicants for a tenured or tenure track faculty position in biochemistry. With research programs spanning a broad range...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Fellow Positions in Translational Control

Posted on December 15, 2020

Funded postdoctoral fellow positions are available in Dr. Colin Wu's lab within the RNA Biology Laboratory at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Frederick, MD at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The major focus of the laboratory...[read more](#)

Postdoc position for a biochemist at the Institute of Molecular Biology in Mainz, Germany

Posted on December 15, 2020

The laboratory of René Ketting at the Institute of Molecular Biology in Mainz (Mainz, Germany) is looking for a Postdoctoral Researcher to join its lab and study the Biochemistry of phase separation in germ cells...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Positions to study DNA/RNA epigenetic modifications – Niehrs Lab, Mainz (Germany)

Posted on December 15, 2020

The Niehrs laboratory at the Institute of Molecular Biology (in Mainz, Germany) is looking for two Molecular Biologists to join its ERC-funded group. The laboratory of Christof Niehrs studies regulatory DNA and RNA modifications...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Fellow Positions at NCI/NIH

Posted on December 15, 2020

Funded postdoctoral fellow positions are available in Dr. Colin Wu's lab within the RNA Biology Laboratory at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Frederick, MD at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The major focus of the laboratory is...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Fellow in RNA/Protein Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to study Genetic Compensation

Posted on December 7, 2020

A highly motivated postdoctoral candidate is invited to lead new projects to address fundamental questions in Genetic Compensation and Transcriptional Adaptation...[read more](#)



Assistant Professor Position Opening in Biology

Posted on December 7, 2020

The Department of Biology in the School of Arts and Sciences at Brandeis University invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor beginning in academic year 2021-2022...[read more](#)

Research Technician in Viral RNA Biology

Posted on December 7, 2020

The Steckelberg Lab at Columbia University Irving Medical Center is seeking a highly motivated Research Technician to help manage daily operations in the laboratory, and to participate in ongoing research...[read more](#)

PhD student

Posted on November 30, 2020

The Baumgarten Lab at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, France, is recruiting a PhD student to join our team investigating the role of the mRNA modification N6-methyladenosine (m6A) across the human malaria parasite life cycle...[read more](#)

Post-Doctoral Researcher

Posted on November 30, 2020

The Baumgarten Lab at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, France, is recruiting a Post-Doctoral Researcher to join our team investigating the role of the mRNA modification N6-methyladenosine (m6A) across the human malaria parasite life cycle...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Scientist in RNA Research

Posted on November 24, 2020

We are a lively and dynamic RNA group at the interface of basic and medical research. We have an opening for a creative post-doc to pursue a project analyzing novel mechanisms underlying RNA – protein interactions in cellular stress responses...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Fellow Research Position - Lau Lab at Boston University

Posted on November 18, 2020

The Nelson Lau lab in the Dept of Biochemistry is looking for a candidate with a PhD and prior molecular biology and biochemistry experience and a record of publications. PLEASE SPECIFY YOUR SKILLS AND INTERESTS IN MODEL ORGANISMS BIOLOGY...[read more](#)



Computational Biologist / Bioinformatics Position in RNAi Deep Sequencing

Posted on November 18, 2020

The Lau lab at BUMC is recruiting for a position in Computational Biology of RNA-centric gene regulation. Candidates should have training in bioinformatics analysis of deep-sequencing and gene expression data...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral position in cryo-EM and translation regulation – from bacteria to neurons

Posted on November 17, 2020

We study how the ribosome interacts with numerous cellular components to achieve high accuracy and efficiency of gene expression. We'd like to understand the key roles of translation and ribosomes in...[read more](#)

Community-Minded and Reliable Laboratory Manager

Posted on November 17, 2020

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) is an independent, ever-evolving philanthropy that supports basic biomedical scientists and educators with the potential for transformative impact...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Position in Germ Cell Differentiation and RNA Modifications

Posted on November 17, 2020

A postdoctoral position is available in the laboratory of Dr Marcos Morgan at NIEHS, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in the Research Triangle Park, North Carolina...[read more](#)

Postdoctoral Fellow on RNA/Protein Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Johns Hopkins University

Posted on November 2, 2020

Highly motivated postdoctoral candidates are invited to lead several new projects to address fundamental questions on RNA homeostasis (Zhang et al. Molecular Cell 2018; Haeusler et al. Nature 2014) and protein homeostasis (Lu et al. Nature Neuroscience 2019; Liu et al. Genes & Development 2018...[read more](#)

Assistant Professor, Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry

Posted on October 28, 2020

The Department of Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry (<http://mbb.yale.edu/>) at Yale University invites applications for tenure-track Assistant Professor positions. We seek new colleagues who will direct vibrant research programs in any area of molecular biosciences...[read more](#)



NIH funded Postdoctoral Fellowship at Rutgers – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Posted on October 23, 2020

The laboratory of Paul R. Copeland seeks to determine the molecular basis for the dietary requirement for the essential trace element selenium, which is a master regulator of oxidative stress that is required for cancer prevention, immune cell function and male fertility...[read more](#)

Looking for a Highly Motivated Postdoc to Join the Epigenetic and Cellular Microbiology Group

Posted on October 23, 2020

We are looking for a highly motivated postdoc to join us in a stimulating, international environment at the INRAE campus located close to Paris (University Paris-Saclay). The candidate will join the Epigenetic and Cellular Microbiology group...[read more](#)

UC San Diego: Postdoc Scholars Who Love Science and Dare to Invent

Posted on October 23, 2020

We welcome bold minds who will innovate in RNA biology and technologies, spatial transcriptomics, and single-cell technologies. Ph.D.s in RNA biology, genomics, molecular biology, or nucleic acid biochemistry are most welcome...[read more](#)

