

RNA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Spring 2024 | February 19, 2024

RNA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER: SPRING 2024

We are happy to share the new activities and events happening in our thriving RNA Society community!

In this issue, we have some exciting updates from our President about the new RNA Society Education Committee, RNA Salons, DEI Committee, and our RNA Junior Scientists, a recap of our successful RNA 2023 in Singapore and information about our future RNA Society meeting sites, important updates on RNA 2024, our 2024 RNA Society Award winners, and an update on the great ongoing work by our Membership Committee!

See you in Edinburgh for RNA 2024!

Katarína Juríková and Gabriele Fuchs, Newsletter Editors

Daniel Kim, Media & Communications Committee Chair



UPCOMING EVENT: RNA 2024



29th Annual RNA Society Meeting, May 28th–June 2nd, 2024

Oral abstract deadline: March 4th, 2024

Poster abstract deadline: April 1st, 2024

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Sandra Wolin

Hello RNA friends,

As I begin my second year as President, I continue to marvel at the dedication of the many volunteers whose work makes the RNA Society so vibrant. Nearly everything you will read about in this newsletter, including our upcoming annual meeting, our Society awards program, our RNA Salon program, and our “Spotlight” series, is only possible because of the legions of members that volunteer on behalf of the Society. Many of our volunteers serve as chairs or members of one of our nine standing committees. To acknowledge these colleagues and increase transparency within the Society, our committees and their composition are listed on the RNA Society website (<https://www.rnasociety.org/contact-society-officers-and-committees>). Please look over these committees, and if there is one that appeals to you, reach out to the chair to let them know that you are interested in participating.

I also want to highlight our newest Society initiative. Manny Ares (University of California, Santa Cruz) has been selected as the inaugural Chair of the newly established RNA Society Education Committee. This committee is charged with identifying ways to support our members who are interested or engaged in education-related careers. We are defining education broadly to include formal classroom and laboratory instruction, mentoring and career development at all levels, as well as outreach to the public. Manny is now in the process of forming the committee and working with the new members to determine the initial priorities. The committee is in search of graduate student and postdoctoral members who can advise them; if you are

interested in joining this committee or have thoughts as to how to make it most useful to our members, please reach out to Manny.



Several existing committees also have new leaders. Our RNA Salon program was launched in 2016 under the leadership of our then Membership Chair, Kristian Baker, together with Ute Kothe. This wildly successful initiative promotes regional, local, and virtual RNA-focused activities at over 58 locations around the world. After eight years at the helm of the RNA Salon program, Ute has recently passed the baton to Minna-Liisa Änkö (Tampere University), one of the leaders of the RNA Salon of Finland. We are incredibly grateful to Ute for her work in establishing and growing this RNA Society Initiative and look forward to Minna's leadership.

I also want to thank the outgoing chair of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee, Shobha Vasudevan. We are indebted to Shobha for helping to launch this important initiative and serving as the inaugural chair. Shobha and the other committee members set up a webpage describing DEI efforts within the Society, worked to set up RNA Salons in parts of the world that had not previously been represented, and provided programming at our annual meetings. In part for her

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Sandra Wolin

work on behalf of the Society, Shobha was selected by this year's awards committee for the RNA Society Inclusive Leadership Award. Congratulations, Shobha! Going forward, the committee will be led by Kehinde Ross (Liverpool John Moores University), who has served as a member of the DEI committee from its inception and is very familiar with its ongoing initiatives.

We also have two new RNA Junior Scientists representatives and two new faculty advisors who will assist these young scientists in developing programming. The Junior Scientists representatives are tasked with promoting networking and career development of our graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, and early career scientists. They organize programs at our annual meeting and raise awareness of opportunities for young scientists throughout the year. We have four representatives, each of whom serves a two-year term. Please join me in thanking Gjenni Voss and Doreen Lugano Rogalska for their service as representatives from 2022–2023. We welcome two new representatives, Belén Moro, postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Research in Agricultural Genomics in Barcelona, and Laura Hertz, a Ph.D. student at Northwestern University in Illinois. They will join our two returning representatives, Daniel Oh, a graduate student at the Rockefeller University and Jimin Yoon, a graduate student at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. Our new faculty advisors, Carol Lutz (Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School) and Patricia Baldrich Gonzalez (Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, Missouri), are replacing outgoing advisors, Aaron Hoskins and Kelly Nguyen.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any ideas you have as to how to make our Society even better. I also hope to see many of you in Edinburgh in May.

Sandy
President of the RNA Society
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RECAP OF RNA 2023 & FUTURE RNA SOCIETY MEETINGS

Benoît Chabot

Our 2023 Annual Meeting in Singapore was a huge success thanks to Ling-Ling Chen, Fátima Gebauer and their team (David Bartel, Douglas Black, Thomas Preiss and Yue Wan). The Singapore meeting also offered an on-line digital content library that provided original content and access to all in-person presentations for a period of four weeks after the conclusion of the live meeting. The RNA Society Research Fellowship Program awarded registration waivers to 4 PIs and 77 trainees, whereas 6 participants received a Childcare, Dependent Care & Disability Allowance.



The 2025 annual meeting will be in San Diego, California, USA at the Town and Country Hotel from May 27th to June 1st, 2025. The organizers are Katrin Karbstein (UF Scripps Florida, USA, lead); Atlanta Cook (Edinburgh University, Scotland), Anita Corbett (Emory University, Atlanta, USA), Jørgen Kjems (Aarhus University, Denmark) and Zefeng Wang (Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai, China).

The RNA Society Board of Directors also has recently approved the location of the 2026 annual meeting: mark your calendars and plan to attend RNA 2026—May 26th–31st, 2026—in beautiful Montreal, Canada!

The Society will continue to offer Research Presentation Fellowships to offset registration costs to

many meeting attendees. We are grateful to Maayan Salton who will continue to administer the Childcare, Dependent-Care and Disability Program.



I am very grateful to members of the Meetings Committee for their contribution and wisdom in helping select venues, organizers and Research Presentation Fellowships for our meetings. Members of the Meetings committee now include Andrea Berman, Malik Chaker-Margot, Edouard Bertrand, Jerney Ule, Chonghui Cheng, Yoseph Barash, Gracjan Michlewski, Toshie Kai and Woan-Yuh Tarn.

Benoît Chabot
Chair of the Meetings Committee
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RNA 2024

29TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RNA SOCIETY



Preparations are now well underway for RNA 2024, the 29th annual meeting of the RNA Society. This year's meeting will be held in the beautiful surroundings of Edinburgh, Scotland, from May 28th to June 2nd, 2024. The organizers are David Tollervey (University of Edinburgh, Scotland; lead organizer), Ben Blencowe (University of Toronto, Canada), Markus Bohnsack (University of Göttingen, Germany), Atlanta Cook (University of Edinburgh, Scotland) and Yue Wan (Agency for Science, Technology and Research, Singapore).

The meeting will be held in the splendid Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC), located close to Edinburgh city center, Edinburgh Castle and the UNESCO world heritage sites of the historic Old and "New" Town areas. The gala banquet on the closing evening is scheduled for the magnificent Scottish National Museum and will include a Scottish ceilidh with traditional music and dancing.

The scientific program will include three outstanding Keynote speakers: Reinhard Lührmann (Max-Planck-Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, Göttingen, Germany), Narry Kim (RNA Research Center, Institute for Basic Science, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea) and Jernej Ule (King's College London and The Francis Crick Institute, London, UK).

Limited numbers of Research Presentation Fellowships will be available to increase inclusion and participation, as will allowances to support attendees with childcare, dependent-care or disability needs.

Please, visit the RNA 2024 website <https://www2.rnasociety.org/> for more information.

David Tollervey
On behalf of the Organizers of RNA 2024

2024 AWARDS OF THE RNA SOCIETY

2024 RNA Society Early-Career Research Award

Chun Kit Kwok



Chun Kit Kwok is an Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry and State Key Laboratory of Marine Pollution at City University of Hong Kong. In his postdoc with Sir Shankar Balasubramanian, he made remarkable contributions in profiling of RNA G-quadruplexes (rG4) in the human transcriptome. As an independent scientist, he applies novel probing approaches to profile rG4s in vivo and has developed screening to identify RNA aptamers and peptides which selectively recognize rG4 motifs for downstream use in regulating rG4-mediated gene activity.

2024 RNA Society Mid-Career Research Award

Chase Beisel

Chase Beisel is a professor in the Helmholtz Institute for RNA-based Infection Research and the Julius Maximilians University of Würzburg, Germany. As an independent investigator, he has applied his combined training in RNA biology and engineering to CRISPR-Cas bacterial immune systems. His group has worked to elucidate the functional diversity of these systems while translating insights into new technologies: from genome editing and molecular recording to antimicrobials. He has co-founded the start-ups Locus Biosciences and Leopard Biosciences.



2024 Elisa Izaurralde Award for Innovation in Research, Teaching, and Service

Stefanie Jonas

Stefanie Jonas is an Assistant Professor in the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biophysics at ETH Zurich, Switzerland. She investigates RNA cleaving and degrading machineries, and her work has provided mechanistic insight into the regulation of RNA synthesis by the Integrator Complex and in RNA maturation by DEAH RNA helicases. She is active as a co-organizer of the Swiss RNA Workshop, as an Equal Opportunities delegate of the Swiss research network "RNA & Disease", and as a mentor in the Swiss program *Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes*.



2024 AWARDS OF THE RNA SOCIETY

2024 RNA Society Moderna Award for Biomedical Innovation in RNA



Raman Bahal

The 2024 and inaugural recipient of this award is Raman Bahal, Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Connecticut, USA. As an independent researcher, he continues to develop next-generation synthetic nucleic acids and delivery methods to target DNA and RNA for genomic engineering and to modulate RNA expression and/or function in cancer cells and for the treatment of metabolic disorders. His independent research has resulted in several patents and ~50 publication.

2024 RNA Society/Scaringe Young Scientist Award

Graduate winner: Jennifer Porat

Jennifer Porat conducted her thesis research in the laboratory of Mark Bayfield at York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She showed that the eukaryotic RNA modification enzymes Trm1 and Bmc1 possess catalytic-independent activities that promote RNA stability and ribonucleoprotein (RNP) assembly of a variety of ncRNAs, including telomerase RNA, U6 snRNA and tRNA. Her thesis research resulted in five first-author publications—including in the flagship journal of the RNA Society, *RNA*.



Post-doctoral winner: Arnaud Vanden Broeck

Arnaud Vanden Broeck is a post-doctoral researcher with Sebastian Klinge (The Rockefeller University in New York, USA). He has combined biochemistry and cryogenic electron microscopy to made impressive progress in understanding how both subunits of the human ribosome get assembled and how these are coordinated with maturation of the ribosomal RNA. His seminal work on pre-60S ribosome assembly included the reporting of 24 high-resolution structures of assembly intermediates, providing exceptional insights into the mechanism of human pre-60S biogenesis.



2024 AWARDS OF THE RNA SOCIETY

2024 Eclipse Award for Innovation in High Throughput Biology Winners

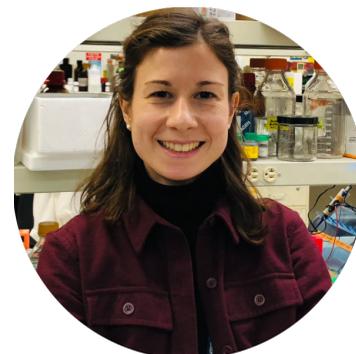
Graduate winner: Morghan Lucas



Morghan Lucas is a graduate student with Eva Maria Novoa at the Centre for Genomic Regulation in Barcelona, Spain. She was an early adopter of direct RNA nanopore sequencing (DRS) for the simultaneous determination of RNA base identity and the presence of base modifications to help uncover the diversity of the RNA epitranscriptome. Her work led to improved methods for applying DRS to small RNAs, including tRNAs, and the important finding that the nature and abundance of tRNA modifications are regulated in response to changes in the cellular environment.

Post-doctoral winner: Giulia Biancon

Giulia Biancon is currently a post-doctoral fellow in the laboratory of Stephanie Halene (Yale University, New Haven, USA). In her work, she has used eCLIP to study the binding of mutant RNA splicing factor U2AF identified in a number of blood cancers, and with additional high-throughput analysis such as TimeLapse-seq and single-cell RNA-seq, she has unraveled the consequence of the altered U2AF binding on pre-mRNA splicing, linking U2AF1 mutations to enhanced stress granule response. She serves as a Coordinator of the Yale Center for RNA Science and Medicine.



2024 RNA Society/CSHL Press Distinguished Research Mentor Award

Phillip D. Zamore

Phillip D. Zamore is a chair of the RNA Therapeutics Institute at University of Massachusetts, Chan Medical School, Worcester, USA and an HHMI Investigator. His research focuses on small RNA silencing and yielded more than 170 publications and fundamental insights into the biology of small RNAs. He has mentored over 50 post-docs and PhD students, many of whom have continued on to their own successful careers running their academic labs as well as at biotech companies. He notes that “a successful mentor’s greatest joy is their trainee’s success”.



2024 AWARDS OF THE RNA SOCIETY



2024 RNA Society/Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press Award for Research Excellence by an Underrepresented Scientist

Mariela Cortés López

Mariela Cortés López is a post-doc with Dan-Avi Landau (Weill Cornell Medical College, New York, USA). Her research career started at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and at the University of Nevada, Reno, USA. With Julian König (IMB Mainz, Germany), she developed high-throughput mutagenesis assays to study splicing alterations in cancer. In her current work, she applies single cell, long-read sequencing to genotype myelodysplastic syndrome cells for mutations in key splicing factors, identifying their effects on pre-mRNA splicing.

2024 RNA Society Award for Excellence in Inclusive Leadership

Shobha Vasudevan

Shobha Vasudevan is an Associate Professor at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, in Boston, USA, where she investigates post-transcriptional regulation of gene expression in quiescent cancer cells. She has been an vocal advocate for increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility at Harvard. Shobha Vasudevan has served as the inaugural chair of the RNA Society Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee since 2021 and in this role has spearheaded many impactful DEI efforts.



2024 RNA Society Outstanding Career Researcher

Jason Stagno

Jason Stagno, Senior Associate Scientist in the lab of Yun-Xing Wang since 2014 (NCI, Center for Cancer Research, Frederick, Maryland, USA), is an expert in elucidating the structure of RNA and the proteins that bind it, and an author on over 30 publications including lead author on a seminal study capturing the adenine riboswitch bound by its ligands. His long career as an RNA scientist dates back to his doctoral studies in the lab of Hartmut Luecke (University of California, Irvine), where he worked with Ruslan Aphasizhev on the role of TUTases in RNA editing.



FROM THE DESK OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

Kristin Koutmou

Supporting the Next Generation of RNA Scientists

The RNA Society has a long history of embracing its junior members, with trainees accounting for ~ 40% of our total membership. Over the past year the Membership Committee worked to amplify the efforts of the thriving Jr. Scientist group to promote the training and networking of the Society's student and post-doctoral members. Emblematic of this, the Individual Mentoring Initiative, led by Dr. Nancy Greenbaum, helped junior scientists to establish professional relationships with experienced Society members that can last a lifetime by matching 26 new trainee-mentor pairs. Trainee networking was further promoted through the Member Spotlight Series, which featured seven graduate student and post-doctoral members in 2023. Through this series we learned that members early in their careers are passionate about all flavors of post-transcriptional gene regulation (RNA binding proteins, lncRNA, RNA modification, etc.), and scientific outreach to under-represented groups. Cumulatively, these stories demonstrated that the future of RNA science is in good hands!

In addition to these programs, the RNA Society enabled junior scientists to connect with the broader RNA community through financially supporting trainees at meetings. Last year, the RNA Society supported 56 RNA Salons across North America, Europe, South America, Australia, Asia and Africa. These Salons connect scientists across disciplines, acting as gathering place to talk all things RNA and advance the

training and professional development of RNA researchers. Furthermore, the Small Meetings Sponsorship Program



distributed \$20,000 in funds and free RNA Society memberships to support 19 meetings organized by our members. These meetings were attended by thousands of RNA enthusiasts, and all funds provided by the RNA Society were earmarked to support the next generation of scientists—funding travel and registration for participants, and sponsoring awards recognizing outstanding poster and oral presentations. In 2024, we look forward to continuing to engage the RNA Society trainee members, working together to build a strong foundation for the next era of RNA science.

RNA Society members are encouraged to apply for the Individual Mentoring Initiative (www.rnasociety.org/mentoring-initiative), nominate individuals to be featured in an upcoming Member Spotlight (contact Dr. Dan Kiss at RNASpotlight@rnasociety.org) and attend their local RNA Salon (<https://www.rnasociety.org/current-rna-salons>).

Kristin Koutmou
Chair of the Membership Committee
membership@rnasociety.org

RNA SOCIETY-SPONSORED MEETINGS

Kristin Koutmou



Winners of selected RNA Society-sponsored trainee awards. Kamil Hepak and Armin Hadziahmetovic at iRNA-COSI (top left); Anne Lippegas at the Microbial RNA Meeting (top right); Oluwafolajimi Adesanya, Madison Allegretti, Diptatanu Das, Brittany Hamilton, Kira Holton, Keontre Hughes, Minli Ruan, Paolo Sinopoli, Liz Tidwell, Akila Venkataramany, Catherine Wilhelm, Kailey Worner at the 2023 Rustbelt RNA Meeting (bottom).

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