

## RNA Salon Initiative 2018/19

Report to the **RNA SOCIETY** Board of Directors

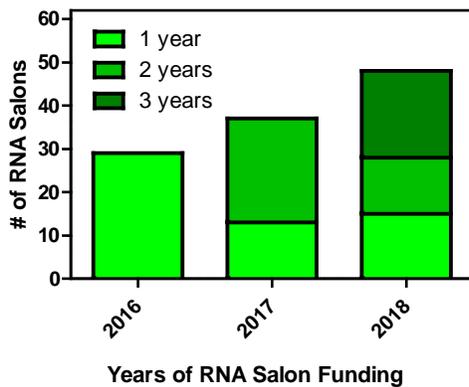
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Membership Committee

*RNA Salons aim at enhancing interaction between RNA researchers with diverse expertise/interests so as to facilitate communication and training opportunities in RNA research and promote professional development for RNA scientists.*

### Quick Facts:

- 48 RNA Salons sponsored in 2018/19
- 15 RNA Salons are new
- 20 RNA Salons have been sponsored for 3 years
- Salons receive \$1,000 USD + \$ 500 USD from Lexogen
- in total, >5,000 RNA researchers are involved

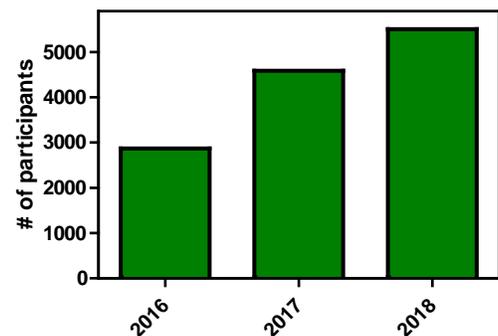
### 1. Continuous Growth



**Fig. 1: Growth in numbers of RNA Salons since inception in 2016.** Of the 28 RNA Salons in 2016, 20 RNA Salons continue to be active.

Notably, not only the number of RNA Salons has increased every year, but through these RNA Salons a steadily growing and impressive number of RNA researchers is engaged. In 2018/19, the RNA Salons reached more than 5000 researchers around the world, which is more researchers than the RNA Society has members (Fig. 2). Every year in December, we collect all email contact information of RNA Salon members and all of them are invited to join the RNA Society at a discounted rate. As reported on the mandatory surveys in May, the RNA Salons engage a similar number of male and female researchers and a diverse range of trainees including 43% graduate students (Fig. 3).

Since its inception in 2016, the RNA Salon program by the RNA Society has experienced a strong growth each year from 29 funded RNA Salons in 2016/17 to now 48 RNA Salons in 2018/19 (Fig. 1). Importantly, of the current 48 RNA Salons, 20 RNA Salons have been supported for three years forming a very strong basis of ongoing engagement of the RNA researchers. At the same time, the program continues to be very attractive, and every year new RNA Salons are founded and supported by the RNA Society (15 in 2018/19). Notably, RNA Salons exist around the world with 50% in North America, 34% in Europe and others in Asia, Australia and South America. In brief, the RNA Salon program attracts all leading and active RNA research clusters around the world who consider it an honor to be named RNA Salon by the RNA Society.



**Fig. 2: Growth in numbers of RNA Salons participants since 2016.**

*During the last 3 years of continuous support, the RNA Society initiative had definitively opened a new horizon in the Hungarian RNA community. Although isolated lectures had been presented before, the RNA Salon support provided a regular platform for scientific talks and presentations. (Tamás Orbán)*

## 2. Meaningful Engagement

Besides engaging numerous RNA researchers, junior and senior alike, the feedback from the RNA Salon organizers unambiguously reveals a deep and meaningful engagement of the participants. After three years of the RNA Salon program, the impact is highly significant as evident in many quotes:

*The impact of the RNA Salon support has been dramatic. (...) Several PhD students have found their research project and/or PhD panel members (...). A less tangible metric, but none the less important, is the expansion of the student's peer groups. (...) The meRNA meetings have directly led to 4 collaborations leading to papers. (Peter Boag)*

RNA Salons must organize at least 3 events per year with many occurring on a monthly or bi-weekly basis. On average 6-9 events were held since October 2018 and more events are planned for the remainder of this RNA Salon funding cycle (Fig. 4). The RNA Salon funding is mostly used to cater events and to attract invited speakers (max. 40% of the funding), but also to sponsor presentation awards for trainees (Fig. 5).

## 3. Partnership with Lexogen

In 2018, the RNA Society has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Lexogen as the now exclusive sponsor of the RNA Salon program. Based on this arrangement, RNA Salons can automatically receive USD 500 from Lexogen administered through the RNA Society in addition to the USD 1,000 provided by the RNA Society. Most RNA Salons (42 of 48) chose this opportunity to further enhance their activities, and the feedback from the RNA Salon organizers provided in May 2019 is overwhelmingly positive.

## 4. Future Plans

Given that the RNA Salon program is now well established, attractive and successful in engaging many junior and senior RNA researchers, the main future goal is to keep this program sustainable. To minimize the workload of the RNA Salon organizers who volunteer countless hours to broad RNA community as well as to streamline this program, we plan to develop easy-to-use webforms for applications, signing of contracts, providing contact information of participants and the final survey.

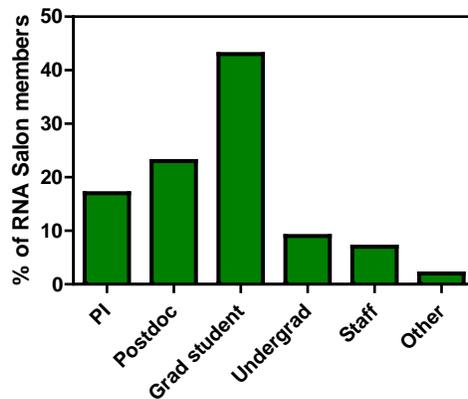


Fig. 3: 2018/19 RNA Salons engage a diverse range of trainees, PIs and other researchers.

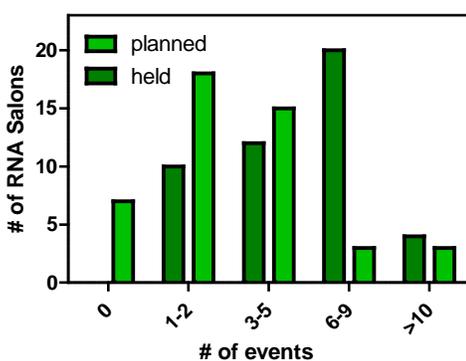


Fig. 4. Number of events held since Oct 2018 and events planned for the next months.

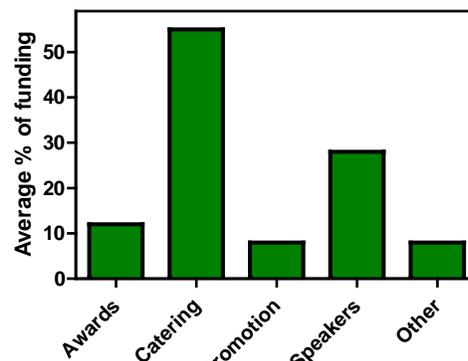


Fig. 5. Use of RNA Society funding by the RNA Salons.

*Since the start of RNA club, we are excited to see a community growing with more participants and more labs joining in. Due to the specialities of different campuses, the RNA Salon provides a unique environment for scientists from basic science, translational medicine and clinical backgrounds, from seven different departments to meet up and communicate their science, which would be challenging to fulfill otherwise. (Sarah Woodson & Yumeng Hao).*

*This opportunity to host an RNA Salon at Columbia University has been game changing, bringing together on a regular basis labs across campuses. (Laura Landweber)*