

RNA Salon Initiative 2017/18

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.

1. Overview

The RNA Salon initiative has rapidly become a well-received and highly impactful program benefiting a vast number of RNA researchers worldwide. Following the successful launch in the summer of 2016, the number of RNA Salons supported by the RNA Society increased from 29 in 2016/2017 to 37 this year. Successful applications received \$1,000 USD in financial sponsorship to support their Salon events. Of the 37 Salon events supported this year, 24 received funding in the 2016/17 academic year, indicating that this initiative provides much needed resources and structure to foster continued engagement between local and regional RNA researchers. Notably, 13 RNA Salons received funding for the first time in 2017/18, demonstrating strong growth for this highly valued program.

The involvement of ~4,000 RNA researchers in the 37 RNA Salons clearly meet the objective of fostering interaction between RNA researchers and facilitating communication and training opportunities for RNA

It is rewarding to see the enthusiasm that the Buenos Aires RNA Club generates among young scientists. They get trained as speakers and also as organizers, helping to identify potential speakers.

Graciela Boccaccio, Club de RNA de Buenos Aires

scientists. In 2017/18, the geographical distribution of the RNA Salons mirrored again the membership composition of the RNA Society, and included new Salons in Australia, US and Europe (see graphic). Importantly, RNA Salons included diverse membership with roughly a 1:1 ratio between female and male researchers, and a focus on training young scientists from undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows.

2. Impact

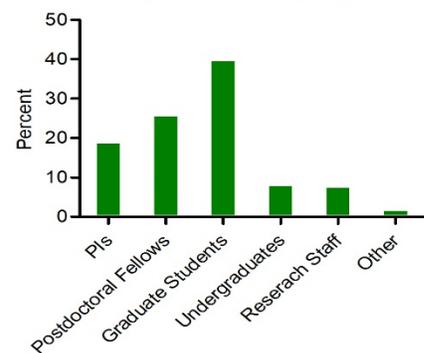
RNA Salon events reach a vast number of RNA researchers - far exceeding the actual membership of the RNA Society. In December 2017, ~4,000 e-mail addresses of RNA Salon participants were collected and these, researchers were invited to join the RNA Society as members at a reduced rate (10% discount).

RNA Salons offer a large variety of different regular activities ranging from lab meetings, journal clubs, symposia, and training workshops, as well as combinations thereof. RNA Salon organizers were surveyed and uniformly reported the importance of these events for the training of young scientist, for the formation of powerful networks among RNA researchers, and for the development of high-quality collaborations, grant applications, and research publications. Notably, Salon organizers reported that this initiative fostered inter-institutional collaborations and helped to increase participation and attendance at their events. Many organizers stated that by being

Quick Facts:

- 37 RNA Salons sponsored in 2017/18
- Salons receive \$1,000 USD
- in total, 4,000 RNA researchers involved in RNA Salons worldwide
- select RNA Salons are featured on the RNA Society website
- Lexogen supported 16 RNA Salons in 2017/2018 with additional \$500 USD

What was the estimated level of scientific training of your RNA Salon participants?

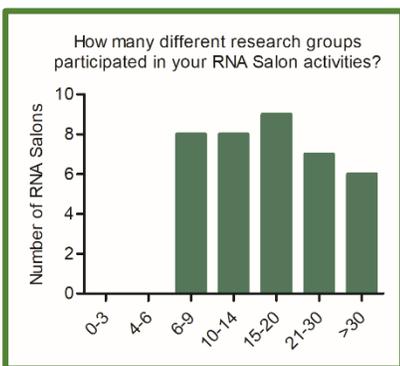


selected as a RNA Society RNA Salon, the visibility and impact of their RNA-related activities were enhanced, and that they could leverage this designation to garner additional financial support beyond the funds provided by the RNA Society (and Lexogen). As evident from the RNA Salon organizers' feedback, the RNA Salons play an important part in fostering a vibrant and enthusiastic RNA community around the world!

3. Changes in 2017/18

Building on the successful initial round of RNA Salons in 2016/17, some changes to the administration and organization of the RNA Salons were made to further improve the quality and efficiency of this program. Specifically, a new application form was generated and the application deadline was moved to September 1st to allow funding decisions to be made by late September and the disbursement of funds by mid October. In addition, to ensure that RNA Society fund are predominantly used to benefit of all RNA Salon participants, expenses for invited speakers were capped at \$400 USD. Based on survey results, the majority of RNA Salon funds are used for catering at Salon events and for presentation awards.

To streamline the reporting of RNA Salon activities, a survey was



sent to Salon organizers the

first half of May 2018 that substitutes for a final report, thereby minimizing the administrative burden for both RNA Salon organizers and Salon Program administrators.

Finally, RNA Salon organizers were invited to submit a one-page description of their activities (with photos) for posting on the RNA Society website. As of May 2018, three RNA Salon features have been highlighted on the RNA Society homepage as a means to recognize our RNA Salon colleagues, promote the program, and provide inspiration for future RNA Salons. Features remain on the website for 2-3 months and are then archived (but still accessible).

4. Plans and Suggestions for next year

- RNA Salon features will be posted every second month on the RNA Society website, and we will enhance the visibility of RNA Salon features through e-mails to the RNA Salon organizers.
- In addition to publishing a list of RNA Salons on the RNA Society page, we will also share weblinks to RNA Salons to promote their events.
- A final report form will be generated and will replace the year-end survey hosted by Survey Monkey.
- Upon the request of many RNA Salons, we will consider supporting collaboration between RNA Salons with additional funding (if available) to further strengthen the regional and global network of RNA researchers in accordance with the main objective of the RNA Salon initiative.
- We suggest discussing a two-year funding system to streamline administration for both RNA Salon organizers and the RNA Society Membership Committee.



Recognition as an RNA salon has given our VBC RNA club the feeling of belonging to a bigger, world-wide community of scientists that share a common interest in RNA biology. This 'feeling of belonging to something bigger' helps to maintain the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit amongst individual members.

Andrea Pauli, Julius Brennecke, Stefan Ameres, VBC RNA Club

The RNA Salon funds really helped us to generate excitement about nucleic acids and RNA research at UConn. It helped bring members of our university together from different locations (health center and main campus) who worked in a common research area which prior to the Salon didn't have a venue for discussion. That was the best part of the meeting, creating that kind of atmosphere.

Jessica Rouge, UConn RNA Salon