



RNA Salons 2023/2024

Report to the RNA SOCIETY Board of Directors

by Dr. Minna-Liisa Änkö

The RNA Salon program aims to foster and enhance interactions between RNA researchers within local/regional research communities. The RNA Salons bring together RNA researchers with diverse expertise and interests, and provide training and professional development opportunities for junior scientists.

RNA Salons connect researchers on all continents

The RNA Salon program has been running for eight years with a continuous growth. This year the number of RNA Salons increased to 58, and the program is now estimated to engage more than 5,000 RNA researchers across the world. Some RNA Salons already celebrate their 8th anniversary while others are just getting started.

RNA Salons 2023/2024:

- 58 RNA Salons reaching >5,000 RNA researchers globally
- 40 RNA Salons funded for two years
- >10 new Salons in 2023/2024
- Continued support by Lexogen

The past funding cycle did not introduce major changes into the RNA Salon program. More than 10 new RNA Salons were established. Similar to the last couple of years, established RNA Salons could apply for 2-year funding. Currently, 40 RNA Salons are on the first or second year of their 2-year funding cycle. In addition to providing sustained support for the local RNA-focused programs, the aim of the 2-year awards has been to reduce the administrative burden of all parties involved. For the next selection cycle, we aim to continue offering 2-year awards that will be selected based on the merit of the application. We are also grateful for the continued support by Lexogen and hope to continue this partnership.

RNA Salons run diverse programs that foster and enhance interactions between RNA researchers. Junior scientists are offered opportunities to get training in science communication and build collaborative networks. Presentations by invited speakers and trainees form a cornerstone of the RNA Salon activities. While many RNA Salons have returned to in-person meetings, some organise hybrid or virtual-only events, especially when the participants are spread across larger geographical regions. It is great to see that the RNA Salon program is now established across the world, including regions where RNA science is still emerging. We hope that the RNA Salons encourage students to undertake RNA research to expand RNA science in these regions.

The RNA Salon program has a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion and the organisers have actively developed strategies to achieve this objective. We continue monitoring the gender balance of participants and speakers as well as the presentation of minority groups to assure that RNA Salons welcome all RNA enthusiasts alike.

One of the goals of the RNA Salon program is to provide a sense of community for RNA researchers. This is important especially in regions where RNA researchers are scattered in multiple universities and different institutions. It is wonderful to see how RNA Salons bring together researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise and how this has strengthened RNA communities and helped building critical mass in RNA research. The cross-fertilisation between the RNA Salon participants has led to joint grant applications and publications, stimulated new ideas and spread technological expertise.

Due to the diversity of topics, all participants had the opportunity to gain new insights into how impactful and novel RNA research is being conducted. The response to our event has been overwhelmingly positive and have already strengthened the community. **Ina Huppertz, Rhineland RNA Club**

The interactions we have established through the RNA club have led to collaborative grants, collaborative publications, and a whole lot of scientific discussions, with more on the way. **Matthew Blango, Jena RNA Club**

People enjoy the RNA salons and that this allowed them to stay in touch and meet new colleagues that they would otherwise have not had the chance to meet. **Martin Sauvageau, Montreal RNA Salon**

We are inviting researchers outside of the traditional RNA community, but whose work has direct relevance to RNA processing and regulation, we anticipate that these interactions can lead to new insights and interdisciplinary collaborations. **Trey Westbrook, RNA Group meeting (Houston)**

In conclusion, the RNA Salon program continues to strengthen RNA research globally and is a major program of the **RNA SOCIETY**. The RNA Salons bring a sense of belonging to many RNA researchers and enhance interdisciplinary collaborations across research institutes. In the annual RNA Salon survey, many RNA Salon organisers wished to connect and collaborate with other RNA Salons. This is something we endeavour to build in the program in the future.

Dr Ute Kothe successfully established and coordinated the RNA Salon program until this year. Her shoes were big to fill but the foundations she built, and her continued support has made the transition quite easy and hopefully seamless for the RNA Salons. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be part of this program. It has been wonderful to interact with RNA enthusiasts around the world, learn about various RNA-focused programs and support RNA research communities. I look forward to the next RNA Salon season 2024/2025.

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