The RNA Society: after 20 years clearly a big success

JOHN ABELSON

Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, University of California - San Francisco, San Francisco, California 94143-2200, USA

This 20th anniversary of the *RNA* journal is a time to look back on what we have accomplished and perhaps more important to decide what is important for the future.

I won't reiterate Olke Uhlenbeck's "Imperfect Account of the Founding of the RNA Society." You can find that account on our website. I am glad Olke wrote it down when he did because you wouldn't want the aging founders to write it now. But I do remember quite well the elements I thought we needed.

1. I thought it important that we have a society journal and that the journal should be rigorous in its review of the science but should not be a magazine. We even knew then that the criteria for a *Science*, *Nature* or *Cell* paper were not solely that the science be rigorous but that the material be "trendy." Of course that is much worse now than it was then (or maybe we are no longer trendy). Serious peer reviewed publication of scientific results is important for getting a job, for academic advancement and for grant renewals. It is clear that we have accomplished what we set out to do in this regard.
2. I thought that we should own the journal. The model for this is the *JBC* owned by ASBMB and the *Protein Journal* owned by the Protein Society. When the society owns the journal it can determine the policies of the journal and can maintain those policies. This would not necessarily

be true if the journal is owned by a large publishing house. Furthermore I was aware that the ASBMB is wealthy because of its ownership of the *JBC*.

3. We had been having various RNA processing meetings, first at Brookhaven and then for a number of years at Cold Spring Harbor. We wanted to formalize the nature and organization of an annual meeting. Our meetings have been a huge success because from the first the policy was that short talks be given by students (perhaps the early phage meetings were a model for this). But even more important, and this was never a written policy, was that the PIs be there and that they attend the talks. When a student gives a talk and he or she knows that the likes of Joan Steitz, Tom Cech, and Olke Uhlenbeck are sitting in the front row the talk takes on much more significance. All of the labs in this field work very hard with their students in preparing these talks and the sense of accomplishment in pulling it off is a priceless reward for the effort.

For the future, I think we face a different and more difficult set of problems. We all know that the path the scientists of my era followed: Write a good thesis, do a good postdoc and get an academic job is much more difficult now. It is clear that our students understand this. I will not suggest solutions for this problem here but I have faith that our former students, now the leaders of the society, will take them on.

Corresponding author: johnabelson@gmail.com

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