Present at the creation

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The spliceosome was in its heyday … the ribosome not yet proven to be a ribozyme … microRNAs, lncRNAs, etc. lurking out of sight.

The survivors of previous RNA processing get-togethers (starting in 1974 at Brookhaven), gathering in Keystone in 1994, speculated that since there was a (financially successful and media-savvy) Protein Society, why not RNA? And if an RNA Society, why not an RNA journal? Key to the journal’s success was getting buy-in from the RNA community at large to serve on its Editorial Board and agreeing to a high set of standards for manuscript acceptance. We prided ourselves on being a cooperative and collaborative group (in contrast to others that we could—and frequently did—name) and especially encouraged the participation of our young colleagues.

In the ensuing years, the Society and the journal have flourished. With the discovery of vast new repertoires of non-coding RNAs, even folks who previously lived their lives outside of the RNA World suddenly wanted in. The crystal structure of the ribosome galvanized a brand new era of hypothesis-driven experiments to interrogate function. The spliceosome, whose dynamic construction has long thwarted traditional structural approaches, is proving to be amenable to sophisticated single-molecule techniques; these promise to illuminate new principles of RNP design, especially as new technical advances allow us to look inside single cells in real time. While much excitement inevitably awaits us, these past 20 years have witnessed a spectacular proliferation of RNA-centric themes in biology. May the journey continue!
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