MARIE CURIE ALUMNI

September 2018 NEWSLETTER

On 4 September 2018, 11 national research funding organisation, with the support of the European Commission, including the European Research Council (ERC), announced the launch of cOAlition S, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access to research publications a reality. It is built around Plan S, which consists of one target and 10 principles.

Researchers, science editors and communicators, as well as policymakers and representatives of industry and other related interest groups, gathered in Toulouse, France, in July for this year's EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF).

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The JRC researchers Koen Jonkers, Peter Fako, Juan Carlos del Rio and Thomas Zacharewicz worked together with two renowned experts in the field of quantitative science analysis - Professors Ulf Sandstrom of KTH Royal Inst Technology in Stockholm and Peter van den Besselaar of Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam. Together they analysed the productivity and impact of two groups of MSCA fellows.

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Now that autumn is upon us, it is a great time for reflection. Over the past few months, I have been thinking a lot about what makes the MCAA such a great association. But I just couldn't wrap my head around it. Is it the resources we have at our disposal? Is it the international nature of the association? Or, perhaps, it is the wide variety of interest groups?

It was only when I sat down to write this message to all of you that I had a moment of clarity. To write this message from the board, I needed to go through the significant activities the MCAA was involved in over the summer. I also needed to check the ones scheduled to take place in the coming months. In the beginning, it seemed like a daunting task. There were several hundred emails, thousands of instant messages between board members and countless interactions on social media. To my surprise, however, it was an amazing adventure.

July was particularly exciting. We started with a successful event in Paris by the BSB working group and ended with prominent participation at ESOF in Toulouse. At the Science Forum, we were highly represented in sessions that attracted media coverage (Sara's session on the "Lost generation'). We also entertained attendees at a fantastic Science Slam – if you missed it, go and enjoy it on our YouTube Channel! The Policy WG was crucial for the success of the MCAA at ESOF, and as a board, we are delighted to facilitate all working groups to design events that resonate so much with our cause and spirit.

August followed this exciting trend. The MCAA participated at the Fringe Art festival in Edinburgh.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

We performed a science comedy show, which I discuss later in this newsletter. But let me tell you this: it was terrific! It was exciting to see how our organisation can be a bridge between creative researchers and our ever-changing society.

For those who think summer is for resting, we certainly proved them wrong! This summer represented a growing opportunity for each one of our board members and the MCAA as a whole.

Matthew (Chair) is coordinating the call for a new working group – the long-desired (drum roll, please!) "Funding WG". Chapter and WG chairs have already met with Mostafa (Vice-Chair), who is efficiently reforming the guidelines for the chapters and training them to organise better and more exciting activities (training sessions are scheduled also for the winter, in case some chair has missed them). Some new chapters might also be in the making, as we have started interest groups on the website for the Oceania and Western Balkan countries to exchange ideas. So, if you live in or have an affiliation with these areas, please check the interest group and share your thoughts. Mostafa also participated in an MSCA event in June to provide some insight on the career advancements for Marie Curie fellows – a main goal of the MCAA!

Bala, the Treasurer, is revising our budget to ensure a better share of funds between chapter/working groups and microgrants. Funding is growing, thanks to the effort in searching for new sponsorship guided by Mostafa, Zsofia, Bala, Murat & Renaud.

We have also been active and have expressed our positions on important issues, such as the European Copyright Law and the Plan S, thanks to the prompt response of Marco, Sara and Matthew. Nehama and other members from the board are collaborating more strictly with the Communication WG to shape a better newsletter and improve communication channels and activities. The first efforts by Maria with the net4mobility have been fruitful, as a survey is now available.

Last but not least, we are collectively trying to shape and organise the GA 2019 in Vienna. We are aiming high with a proposal to extend the conference by a half-day. We already have several keynotes speakers lined up (no spoiler on this yet, sorry!) and we are finalising the sessions. The call for GA micro-travel grants has already opened, and the response from you is already positively overwhelming! And, to make it even easier for everyone to join, we have secured a 15% discount with Austrian Airlines for all delegates who wish to fly with this airline to the GA. This impressive interest in the GA is hugely motivating for us. So, if you want to become more involved, just drop us an email!

As for myself, I had the chance to represent the MCAA at the European CASE conference. I was overcome with pride at every chance I had to introduce the MCAA to the talented people working in higher education. I could do this easily because I had finally understood why the MCAA is what it is: the people!

This message from the board is to thank you all, dear MCAA members, for an amazing summer. While as a board we are always trying to do our best, it is the community that makes the MCAA what it is – my moment of clarity, at last! The MCAA is a great association thanks to the people in our working groups, bringing forward so many new and exciting activities. It is also thanks to the people attending the events and growing together. It is thanks to the people finding the time to volunteer for what they believe.

VALENTINA FERRO
VICE-CHAIR

PARTNER

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF CUTTING-EDGE BIOIMAGING FACILITIES AND COMMUNITIES

GLOBAL BIOIMAGING
growing collaboration

REVOLUTIONS IN IMAGING TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL IMAGING DATA

Modern biology and medicine are undergoing a profound transformation. New, cutting-edge imaging technologies are driving this change by enabling researchers to visualize and measure – with a precision never reached before – molecular and cellular functions as well as the metabolic processes in live organisms.

Emerging from these imaging advancements comes another revolution – digital imaging data. The wealth of digital imaging is rising exponentially, opening up new areas of research and allowing diverse disciplines to interlink. Whether it is imaging technology or data advancements, new challenges and opportunities are rapidly growing.

THE GLOBAL BIOIMAGING NETWORK

Global BioImaging is built upon the recognition that scientific, technical and data challenges are universal and not restricted by geographical boundaries. Founded in 2015, supported by a European Commission international collaboration award to EMBL (European Molecular Biology Laboratory), Global BioImaging has grown to become an international network of imaging infrastructures and communities.

Global BioImaging brings together imaging facility managers and technical staff, scientists and science policy officers from around the globe, to join forces and build capacity internationally. It provides a unique opportunity for international discussion and cooperation to tackle the practical challenges as well as the strategic questions linked to operating open access infrastructures for cutting edge imaging technologies in the life sciences. Global BioImaging organises:

- Annual international workshops to learn from leaders around the globe in infrastructure operation and management, research policies and technology trends.
- Focused meetings and working groups to discuss specific subjects and build international collaborations.
- Trainings to support the professional development of managerial and technical imaging facility staff.
- Staff shadowing programmes to allow imaging facility staff to learn from leading international peers.

With upcoming workshops in Singapore and Japan, this is an exciting time for the Global BioImaging. If you would like to find out more do not hesitate to get in touch:

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD

THE MARIE CURIE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES ITS SUPPORT FOR PLAN S

THE MUCH ANTICIPATED "PLAN S" WHICH OUTLINES A FUTURE STRATEGY FOR OPEN SCIENCE (OS) IN EUROPE WAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED.[1]

"On 4 September 2018, 11 national research funding organisation, with the support of the European Commission, including the European Research Council (ERC), announced the launch of cOAlition S, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access to research publications a reality. It is built around Plan S, which consists of one target and 10 principles."

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) is a strong supporter of OS and actively promotes OS among its members, researchers and the wider society. As a recently published MCAA recommendation on the future of European Research funding stresses, the MCAA considers OS as one of the most important pillars of the future framework programme Horizon Europe.[2]

The MCAA hereby announces its support for Plan S and commends it to all funders and stakeholders that are contributing to its development and implementation, and encourages all funding organizations to participate in, and facilitate the widespread and full implementation of, open access publication. We also encourage all EU countries and research funding bodies to adopt the principles of Plan S and congratulate the entities who are already part of cOAlition S.[3]

[1] http://scieur.org/plan-s
[2] https://www.mariecuriealumni.eu/future-framework-programme-horizon-europe-your-hands
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/moedas/announcements/plan-s-and-coalition-s-accelerating-transition-full-and-immediate-open-access-scientific_en

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The implementation of Plan S will require major adaptation and changes in the research community in almost all aspects of scholarly work, including scientific publication, scholarly communication, research data management, and research evaluation and funding—as discussed in our recent policy paper.[2]

Plan S acknowledges the importance to further develop the required support needed for researchers and research institutions to adopt open access policies. This includes suitable open access infrastructure, especially for less well-funded researchers and research institutions and funding to offset any publication-related costs. Challenges and open questions remain the best way to achieve this.

The MCAA is strongly committed to encourage and facilitate these advances.Therefore, the MCAA remains an active contributor to this important discussion and is open to providing input and aid in the development of good practices.

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PRESS RELEASE

This document was prepared by the MCAA Policy Working Group and approved for release by the Chair of the MCAA Board on September 5, 2018. This document is released under a CC BY 4.0 license.[4]

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARIE CURIE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) is one of the European Union's flagship initiatives to provide research grants supporting researchers at all stages of their careers, across all disciplines.[5] MSCA fellowships are among Europe's most competitive and prestigious awards, aimed at supporting the best, most promising researchers.

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) is a global network of researchers open to any past or present researchers supported by the MSCA.[6] The MCAA has over 10 000 registered members, and represents the over 100 000 researchers that have been supported by the MSCA over the last two decades.[7] The MCAA is a non-profit, politically and commercially independent organization, supported through funding from the European Union.

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[4] https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/
[6] https://www.mariecuriealumni.eu/
[7] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-426_en.htm

EVENT

MCAA AT EUROSCIENCE OPEN FORUM (ESOF 2018)

Researchers, science editors and communicators, as well as policymakers and representatives of industry and other related interest groups, gathered in Toulouse, France, in July for this year's EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF). Described as the largest interdisciplinary meeting in Europe, the eighth edition of ESOF engaged stakeholders and the public in discussions about the latest scientific research findings and innovation. The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) coorganised several sessions on a range of topics, including science communication, family-friendly research and mental health in research.

SATELLITE EVENTS

Several satellite events were held in Toulouse ahead of the ESOF 2018 official kick-off. These included the European Science Slam during which science communicators took the stage to explain their research to a lay audience. Coorganised by MCAA, the Science Slam featured two of its members: Yoran Beldengrün, who performed a science magic act, and Valerie Bentivegna, who used music to explain her research.

© Wissenschaft im Dialog

European Science Slam on Saturday 7 July

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Another satellite event was organised by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The first day featured a tour of Airbus headquarters where participants learned about the manufacturing of numerous commercial aircraft, such as the A320 and A330. On the second day, MCAA Fellows took part in open panel discussions about how to engage policymakers and to communicate research to a lay audience. This was followed by a lively round of Science Speed Dating during which early-stage researchers put their narrative skills to the test.

The ESOF 2018 wrapped up with a social networking event at the Aeroscopia Museum.

THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH IN EUROPE

The future of research in Europe was one of the hottest topics explored at the ESOF 2018. The discussion was launched on Tuesday 10 July by a special panel on Horizon Europe, the upcoming European Research and Innovation Programme for the period from 2021 to 2027. The panel included Carlos Moedas (European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation), Maria Leptin (European Molecular Biology Organisation) and MCAA's Angela Bellia (Institute for Archaeological and Monumental Heritage at the Italian National Research Council). Addressing Commissioner Moedas, Angela questioned how Horizon Europe can make the best use of human resources. She stressed that Horizon Europe's success hinges on how well it manages to overcome the geopolitical differences around the continent.

MCAA also organised sessions focussed on future perspectives for researchers, specifically related to open science, researcher organisations and career development.

For instance, the Open Science session on Thursday 12 July focussed on implementation strategies. From the discussion, it became apparent that most researchers and institutions believe science should be more open and transparent. As such, the session explored implementation strategies, noting the current tension between established infrastructures and emerging structures for open data, open access and open science in general. Participants shared experiences and examples of institutions already considering open science in their hiring and promotion decisions. The examples confirmed that open science can be implemented on an institutional level.

In a panel led by MCAA member Nina Díaz Ferández, the future of social sciences and humanities (SSH) research was discussed. The focus was on transferable skills development to increase employability of SSH researchers. With a unified SSH representation, the field is better equipped to advise and influence research policy.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Researcher career development was another topic explored at ESOF 2018. MCAA chair, Dr Matthew DiFranco, presented the findings of the 2017 MCAA survey, which has not yet been published. The survey asked 5,479 former MSCA funding recipients in 62 countries about their current career, mobility profile and barriers faced in their career.

Sara Ricardo, a board member of MCAA, organised and moderated a panel discussion on the 'lost generation' of European researchers. Speakers called for more awareness of the career development challenges facing young researchers. There was widespread agreement that early-stage researchers do not benefit from short-term contracts, especially in combination with teaching and other non-research responsibilities. As such, more flexibility at all levels and training for PIs is considered key.

Support for researchers – at all stages of their careers – through research associations was the topic of another session led by MCAA member Maria-Antonietta Buccheri. Establishing networks between different research organisations can minimise competition for funding and make a unified impression towards policymakers, while providing support and networking opportunities at all levels.

During a session about family-friendly research and work-life conflicts (led by MCCA member Giovanna Avellis) one member of the audience noted these are issues concerning both women and men. A gender-mixed panel explored work-life balance issues and how these vary by country, employment sector and university.

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The panel for How best to integrate academics and student refugees into higher education: Andreina Laera (MCAA), Fernanda Bajanca (MCAA), Matthew DiFranco (MCAA), Rebecca Murray (Helena Kennedy foundation), Miguel Antonio Lim (MCAA), Jaclyn Rosebrook-Collignon (CoMUE Migrant Work Group), Eleni Adrianopulu (Welcome Centre, EURAXESS), Veronica Cesco (European Commission), Amir Al Oustah (Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse) and Maria Blöcher (Kiron Open Higher Education)

As regards university, participants noted that some universities have already undertaken exemplary initiatives offering parental leave and support systems for young families. For many MCAA members, who face extra difficulties due to their highly mobile profile, it was reassuring to note the situation is gradually improving.

There is also another group of researchers who require extra support and assistance to integrate. These are refugees – both academics and students. Their integration was the topic of a session moderated by MCAA member Andreina Laera on Wednesday 11 July. According to the findings of a survey of over 2,000 respondents, there is a lack of knowledge and resources, as well as a lack of awareness about initiatives that already exist. However, time is of the essence as lives and careers can be lost through years spent in migrant camps and out of education and work. There is also evidence that rapid integration yields economic benefits for the host country. In conclusion, the panel called on institutions to hire more refugees.

There was so much interest on this topic that the MCAA organised a special session on the last day of ESOF 2018 to screen the documentary "Science in Exile". The film's director Nicole Leguhissa led a lively discussion following the screening.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Organised by MCAA member Pavlo Bazilinskyy, this session focussed on the environmental impact of transportation. The panel was asked whether technology is the solution for lower contamination or if people's behaviours play a bigger role? The views were mixed. Some speakers argued technology should and will play the most important role in the change, while others stressed the need for social change – to convince people to opt for more eco-friendly modes of transportation and to change the social attitudes about the need to own a car. The panel agreed on the importance of accessibility of sustainable travel to make any real change.

A short session by Dr Nehama Lewis, also an MCAA member, raised issues related to the use of social media to communicate research. She explained there are two main questions to ask about the target audience: Are they able to understand the topic and are they motivated to learn about these topics? Most often, the answer to both questions is "no". In these cases, it is best to focus on a message that is eye-catching and concise. Dr Lewis also urged researchers to ensure they have first established themselves as a credible source.

MENTAL HEALTH

Last, but definitely not least, MCAA member Brian Cahill chaired a popular session about researcher mental health. The panel highlighted the factors that make research such a high-risk profession for mental health. A long list of underlying factors contributing to this include long working-hours, the highly competitive nature of research, lack of support structures, a tendency for harassment and bullying, and the lack of clarity in academic roles. The audience worked in

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groups to discuss solutions. The session ended with a clear message to become more aware of this problem and learn to talk about it, whether PhD students, researchers, supervisors, institutions or policymakers.

CONCLUSION

ESOF 2018 provided a comprehensive overview of the most current topics concerning researchers from all fields of study. The meeting looked to the future of scientific research and innovation in Europe. Some of the key messages of this discussion-intense week were the need for Principal investigators, who are well-trained in transferable skills, to support their team members during early-stage career development, and to help them maintain a healthy work-life balance. Related to this, participants agreed on the need to raise awareness about how work-related pressures can have a negative impact on researcher's mental health. Specifically, speakers agreed that all related taboos should be eliminated, and researchers should be encouraged to talk about these issues.

Two important factors for European scientists were also highlighted. These are Open Science and science communication for broader audiences. Despite the important role these two factors already play, more needs to be done, particularly at the level of recognising those who apply them within the scientific community. The aim is to enhance implementation levels.

VALERIE BENTIVEGNA
IVANA KRAISELBURD

EVENT

MCAA WORKSHOP: DRIVING SOLUTIONS FOR SCIENCE IN BUSINESS

Murat Gunes and Marco Masia organised the MCAA Workshop: Driving Solutions for Science in Business, which took place in Paris, 5-6 July. Here's why the event was so successful.

Organised by Bridging Science and the Business Working Group of Marie Curie Alumni Association, in partnership with the Université Paris-Saclay, the workshop proved to be highly valuable for researchers thinking about launching their own start-up.

MCAA opened the workshop by explaining how challenging industry-academic collaborations can be. The issue was further addressed by high-calibre speakers who shared their own experience and offered their best advice.

Guillaume Garret, the International Development Director at Université Paris-Saclay, highlighted the work of the European Department in promoting Marie Curie projects.

In turn, Professor Martin Rottman drew on his own experience in creating a business. He presented "Nasoflore" his technology transfer project and how he drove this nasal microflora project from inception to commercialisation. He highlighted the support received from the Paris-Saclay SATT.

The morning session ended with a round table facilitated by Philippe Masson, President of the Paris-Saclay Ile-de-France association. Academics and industry leaders

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(CEA, Fablabs, Université Paris-Sud, Nokia, TE-OX, Thalès) discussed issues inherent to the relationship between business and research.

The afternoon's parallel sessions allowed participants to receive practical and comprehensive information on the various business creation pathways. These sessions focussed on marketing, investment and funding, as well as start-up experiences, entrepreneurship, ethics and communications. MCAA members Marco Masia and Mariya S.E-Gardair took the floor to speak about innovation and android programming, respectively.

In the evening, the audience learned about business creation opportunities in Turkey and Israel.

The following morning, Tania Di Gioia, Université Paris-Saclay's Innovation Director, outlined the University's innovation potential.

Guillaume Garreta, International Development Director at Université Paris-Saclay

Intellectual property issues, presented jointly by Karim Tadrist, Director of Legal Affairs at Université Paris-Saclay, and Inna Dimova, a consultant, were also highly valued by attendees.

About 80 people participated in the event and showed a great deal of interest in the programme. Almost half of the participants were members of MCAA and came from different European countries. As a result, exchanges were fruitful and particularly multicultural and several partnership projects are now being discussed. For instance, a young researcher intends to apply for a Marie Curie grant to set up a research project at the Université Paris-Saclay.

In fact, this partnership with the Université Paris-Saclay has proven to be so successful that the MCAA European Department will extend it. The aim is to promote meetings among European researchers and the development of new transnational projects.

The 5-6 July workshop was hosted by the Université Paris-Saclay and sponsored by MCAA, Université Paris-Saclay, Université Paris Sud, Turkish Invest, SRM and Anovra. Associations such as Science Accueil and IledeScience Paris-Saclay also backed the event.

MURAT GUNES

EVENT

CAREER DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

TITLE: Opportunities beyond Individual Fellowships

ORGANISER: MSCA National Contact Point Team Austria (Austrian Research Promotion Agency): Therese Lindahl, Lil Reif and Yasmin Dolak-Struß

MARIE CURIE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION: Mostafa Moonir Shawrav

LOCATION: Vienna

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) organised a career development session for MSCA Individual Fellows in Vienna on June 26. Hosted in collaboration with Austria's MSCA National Contact Point Team, more than 20 people attended the event.

Participants included delegates from the Research Executive Agency, Frank Max (Deputy Head of Unit), Nikolay Kutsev (Project Adviser) and Alberto Huidobro (Project Adviser).

Addressing potential MCAA members at the event, Mostafa explained how membership can help them advance their career. He presented an overview of the services and support offered to members, including micro grant opportunities, training and mentoring. A key part of the presentation focussed on providing academic and entrepreneurship funding opportunities in Austria, as well as a glimpse of the 2017 MCAA survey.

Participants expressed interest in the survey and shared their ideas about how to improve the academic environment. At the end of the talk, participants engaged in an informal and lively discussion. They shared their experiences with delegates. Following the event, several participants joined the MCAA, as well as the Austrian Chapter.

Organisers and delegates appreciated the efforts of MCAA on various issues including career development training and science policy. They believe the MCAA can play a pivotal role organising such workshops and informing fellows about their future opportunities.

RESEARCH

AN ANALYSIS OF MSCA FELLOWS' PUBLICATION BEHAVIOUR

"Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas" (Marie Skłodowska Curie)

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre's recent assessment of Marie Sklodowska Curie Action (MSCA) fellows' publication behaviour may appear to contradict Professor Skłodowska Curie's wish since it focuses on individual MSCA fellows. But it doesn't. It analyses the fellows' publications. Even if it does not analyse the content, by engaging in citation analysis it proxies the recognition of the value of this content by peers. The limitations of publication and citation analysis for assessing individual researcher performance are well known. However, these limitations may be overcome by analysing the performance of a large number of fellows.

The JRC researchers Koen Jonkers, Peter Fako, Juan Carlos del Rio and Thomas Zacharewicz worked together with two renowned experts in the field of quantitative science analysis - Professors Ulf Sandstrom of KTH Royal Inst Technology in Stockholm and Peter van den Besselaar of Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam. Together they analysed the productivity and impact of two groups of MSCA fellows.

The first group originated from countries in Northern Western Europe with relatively advanced research systems as proxied by the average citation impact of their publications.

The second group of MSCA fellows originated from countries in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe where research systems and field-weighted citation impact scores tend to be lower.

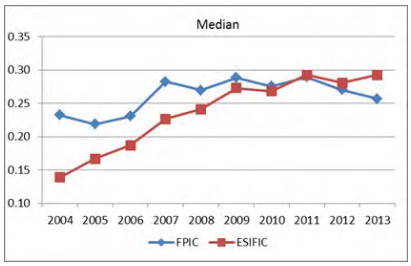
A second motivation for focussing on these two groups of countries is that the first grouping tends to include countries that host MSCA fellows, whereas the second group of countries send out more fellows than they receive. Therefore, most fellows appear to use the MSCA grant to move to a country with a more developed research system – though pockets of excellence exist also in the second group of countries. Spain, for instance, hosts a considerable number of fellows.

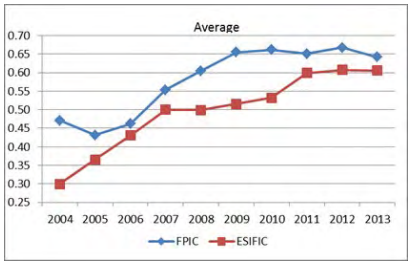
Jonkers et al (2018) observe that there is a consistent increase in the impact of articles published by MSCA fellows before and after the grant. This holds true for all fields and for researchers from both groups of countries. However, it is impossible to conclude whether this

RESEARCH

is due to the MSCA grant or other factors, such as seniority.

At the time that fellows obtain the grant, there is a significant difference between the scientific impact of the two groups of MSCA fellows. Researchers from Northwest Europe have a significantly stronger pre-grant performance than researchers from South-eastern Europe. Over time however, this difference starts to fade. Whereas the median performance difference disappears there is no longer a difference in the mean performance. The reason for this is that there are more "top" performers in North-western Europe after the grant, raising the mean value. These outliers do not influence the median scores to the same extent.





(Jonkers et al, forthcoming)

A potential explanation for the initial performance gap may be that researcher performance is influenced by the research environment. A researcher who is trained in a system with a lower average impact may have the same level of potential as researchers from more developed system in terms of creativity and scientific skills. However, this may not be reflected yet in terms of the researcher's publications attracting as much citations as those of a slightly better performing researcher from a more developed system.

Differences in past performance scores of successful applicants from North-western Europe and from South, Central and Eastern European countries respectively, do not necessarily imply sub-optimal selection of one group over the other. The findings also suggest that both groups attain equal median performance after the grant. If panels look mainly at the creativity and talent of the applicants, a lower past publication performance can be compatible with the application of equal criteria for the applicants. Evaluators are instructed to base their assessments on applicant potential and, among others, the quality of the host organisation. For instance, they are not asked to review potential based on bibliometric assessments of past performance alone. They may take into account other considerations for assessing scientific potential.

International collaboration is one of the channels through which applicants from the second group of countries may achieve their relative performance improvements. This collaboration occurs among others with experts from North-western Europe and is believed to persist after the end of the grant. This is in line with MSCA programme goals for strengthening the capabilities of individual European researchers and contributing to a more integrated European Research Area.

The JRC report also compares performance development of MSCA fellows and successful applicants of other grant schemes such as the European Research Council and a national grant schemes. Expanding this analysis with pooled micro-data could be a potential follow up to this study. The JRC report has formed the basis for an article that is currently under review and which includes further quantitative analysis of the data.

The full report can be found at Jonkers, K., Fako, P., Isella, L., Zacharewicz, T., Del Rio, JC, Sandstrom, U., Van den Besselaar, P., 2018, A comparative analysis of the publication behaviour of MSCA fellows, Brussels: European Commission
https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/library/comparative-analysis-publication-behaviour-msca-fellows

KOEN JONKERS

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

BRAZIL CHAPTER: NEW WORKSHOP ON THE WAY

Elizabeth Schmidt has served as Chair of the Brazil Chapter since February 2018. She is currently preparing the II Brazil-Europe Workshop in Botucatu at São Paulo State University (UNESP) – Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, to be held from 12 to 14 September. Don't hesitate to contact her if you want to attend!

MCAA BRAZIL-EUROPE WORKSHOP

CHAPTER'S CREATION

Our Chapter was created in April 2017. In September 2017, we had the I MCAA-BREUW (Brazil-Europe Workshop) in São Luis, Maranhão State (Northeast Brazil) at the Federal University of Maranhão State. It was organised by Dr Leonardo Dall'Agnol (currently the Vice-Chair of Brazil Chapter).

The workshop proved a great opportunity to meet Chapter Members, as ten active Members attended. I was elected Chair of the Brazil Chapter in February 2018 and am currently organising the II MCAA BREUW.

MEMBERS' FEATURES

At the end of March 2018, the Brazil Chapter grew to 45 active Members. The Chapter currently boasts six nationalities; most of our Members are Brazilians (87 %). Brazil is the most frequent country of residence with 20 Members, followed by the United Kingdom with seven Members, Spain with four and Germany with three. It is difficult to say how many Members we would like to target, as we are still a new Chapter. However, we have noticed that our workshops are an opportunity for increasing membership and boosting visibility of the MCAA Brazil Chapter.

CHAPTER'S OBJECTIVES

The Brazil Chapter aims to create an open and fruitful environment for discussion with the aim of facilitating networking so we can retain our Members and encourage them to participate in Chapter activities and debates.

Our Chapter is also aiming to promote greater knowledge of the European education and research

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

system in Brazil by organising the MCAA BREUW at different universities and faculties focusing on the Marie Sklowodoska Curie Actions.

Moreover, we continue to work in a network with other associations and institutions that are beneficial to our Members, allowing them to increase their collaborations and partnerships in the country and with European counterparts. Another objective is to strengthen the relationship among the Members by prioritising the activities that are beneficial for our Members (professional training, funds for the GA, MCAA BREUW). Our aim is to increase participation in these activities and to highlight the advantages of being an active Member in the Chapter and therefore in the association.

II BRAZIL–EUROPE WORKSHOP

The MCAA Brazil Chapter is now organising the II Brazil-Europe Workshop in Botucatu at São Paulo State University (UNESP) – Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, to be held 12-14 September 2018. The organising committee is working on the new challenges of research in Brazil and networking research between Europe and Brazil. The aim is to identify common areas of research, as well as to establish and build links for the near future collaboration. EURAXESS BRAZIL is currently supporting our activities along with the MCAA. We believe that the MCAA Brazil Chapter and the Brazil-Europe Workshops offer a unique opportunity for all participants to discuss and strengthen perspectives for career, research and to facilitate partnerships between research groups and professional networks in all areas of interest. We are looking forward to seeing MCAA Members, MCAA Brazil Chapter Members, and to welcome new Members and participants.

COME AND JOIN THE BRAZIL CHAPTER!

The Brazil Chapter aims to create an open environment for discussion and networking to retain Members and encourage them to collaborate in the Chapter activities and debates.

We also hope to create new opportunities for European researchers to come to Brazil for research collaborations with our universities and research centres.

The Chapter has different strategies to attract new Members. The first one is active searching and direct contact via the MCAA website portal. We also have a strong partnership with EURAXESS BRAZIL. Another strategy is to participate or organise educational and scientific events to promote MSCA and MCAA and attract new Members.

12/09/2018

8h00 to 9h00 *Registration*

9h00 to 9h30 *Opening Ceremony*

9h30 to 10h40 Round table: ***European funding and tools for researcher mobility***
1 - Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions (MSCA)/Pesquisa e Mobilidade pelas Ações Marie Sklodowska Curie - **Elisa Natola, CONFAP**
2 - European Research Council (ERC)- **Charlotte Grawitz, EURAXESS Brazil**
3 - EURAXESS- **Charlotte Grawitz**

10h40 to 11h00 Coffee Break

11h00 to 11h50 Conference: Applying the model nematode Caenorhabditis elegans to understand anthelmintic drug uptake and mechanisms of resistance and to discover novel biological control agents. **Prof Dr Tony Page, University of Glasgow, UK**

12h00 to 14h00 Lunch

14h00 to 14h45 Conference: Population genomics of protozoan pathogens. **Dr. William Weir, University of Glasgow, UK**

14h45 to 16h00 MSCActions (MCAA Brazil Chapter members)
1- Brazilian participation in International Programs for Scientific Drilling & Discovery of the Continents and Oceans (ICDP/IODP): opportunities for BR-EU research collaboration. **Dr Daniel Craig, UFF - Brazil**
2 - Water-Energy-Food Nexus: A bridge for international research collaboration. **Dr Ana Paula Bortoleto, UNICAMP - Brazil**

16h00 to 16h20 Coffee Break

16h20 to 18h00 Round table: Internationation
1- Internationation at UNESP, Brazil. **AREX/UNESP - Brazil**
2 - Internationation at FMVZ, UNESP - campus Botucatu, Brazil. **José Roberto de Lalla Júnior & AREX/UNESP - Brazil**
3 - Internationation of the University: going beyond academic mobility. **Dr Leonardo Dall´Agnol/ Vice-Chair MCAA Brazil Chapter/UFMA, Brazil**

13/09/2018

9h00 to 09h45 Conference: The venenemia of accidents with *Apis mellifera* africanized bees: from bench to bed. **Dr Lucilene Delazari/CEVAP-UNESP, Brazil**

9h45 to 10h30 Conference: Genomics in bacterial transmission tracing and discovery.
Dr Katarina Orvacova/University of Glasgow, UK

10h30 to 10h50 Coffee break

10h50 to 11h10- Keynote presentation (MCAA member): Design and fabrication of sustainable nanocoatings for engineering application. **Sundararajan Thirumalai/University of Cambridge, UK**

11h10 to 12h10 Conference: Dyslipidemia in canine inflammatory diseases: lipoproteins as biomarkers - **Dr Milica Kovacevic Filipovic, University of Belgrade - Serbia**

12h10 to 14h15 Lunch

14h15 to 15h10 Keynote presentations

1 - **14h15 to 14h50** The impact of the social environment on youth's health - **Dr Jochen Junker, FIOCRUZ/RJ - Brazil**

2 - **14h50 to 15h15** Work and helth of university professors - **José Roberto de Lalla Júnior, UNESP, Botucatu - Brazil**

15h15 to 16h00 Conference: Animal and human virology at the Centre for Virus Research. **Dr Pablo Murcia/University of Glasgow, UK**

16h00 to 18h30 *Networking Coffee and Poster Presentation*

18h30 to 19h30 MCAA Brazil Chapter Board Meeting

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

THE TURKISH CHAPTER IS UP AND RUNNING!

The Turkish Chapter was launched on 3 August. Gozde Unal tells us about the event and gives a first glimpse of what's to come.

THE OFFICIAL KICK-OFF

The MCAA-TC kick-off meeting was hosted by Istanbul Technical University (ITU), which boasts a beautiful green campus situated in the heart of the city.

Our meeting started in the morning with a traditional Turkish breakfast. As the Chapter's founding chair, I officially opened the event by talking a little bit about my personal experience with the MCAA. After this, the EU Office of ITU presented some interesting facts and figures about ITU and Turkey in relation to the Marie Curie and EC programmes in general.

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

MCAA Chair Dr Matthew DiFranco and MCAA Secretary Dr. Murat Gunes attended the event. Matthew provided an overview of the MCAA – about its benefits and opportunities, as well as some tips. We also held a scientific Speed Dating session during which the attendees paired up to tell each other what they are working on.

Later in the day, we held a round table session during which attendees formed in small groups to discuss which objectives and activities are important for the newly-launched Turkish Chapter. We wrapped up our meeting with a social dinner overlooking the Bosporus.

I believe our kick-off turned out to be a great event that everyone enjoyed.

OUR MEMBERS

We currently have 54 Members registered through the MCAA portal. Almost 25 people attended the kick-off meeting. Our target is to double membership and boost attendance at future meetings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER

We agreed on a long list of objectives during the meeting. Below are some of the most important ones:

- Increasing the visibility of the MCAA Turkish Chapter on a local and global scale and attract researchers to Turkey through MCSA;
- Raise awareness about EU-funding opportunities for early-stage researchers;
- Reach out and communicate to society on science and research;
- Promote social science research and integrate social science and humanities research into engineering projects;
- Create multi/transdisciplinary working groups for networking and collaboration on pressing issues such as sustainable development, artificial intelligence, and global economic problems.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We plan to hold two Chapter meetings, including scientific networking sessions about the establishment of research working groups on various topics. The list of topics includes the social sciences, earth, climate and environmental sciences, AI and biomedical sciences. We also plan to organise a joint event with an Artificial Intelligence summer school in Istanbul next year. And we want to hold training seminars with the help of the National Contact Points.

JOIN THE TURKISH CHAPTER!

Feel free to contact us and join our Chapter to network with us, spread the word about Marie Sklodowska Curie and other grant opportunities, and to mentor young scientists in Turkey. Join us in our efforts to contribute to the culture of scientists and the society in Turkey in any way, either scientifically, academically or socially.

RESEARCH

DISCOVER MIGART, A PLATFORM FOR MIGRATION ACTIVISM, RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Agata Lisiak and Elena Vacchelli are behind the migART platform, which is designed to build a community of researchers around migration. Should you work on this topic, don't hesitate to get in touch with them!

ABOUT AGATA LISIAK

I grew up in Poland, but studied and conducted research internationally (Denmark, Germany, Holland, Taiwan, Austria and the UK). I am now based in Berlin where I teach migration and urban studies at Bard College Berlin where I'm also Academic Director of the Internship Program. I work at the intersection of migration studies, urban sociology, visual cultures and gender studies, and I have even written about Taiwanese cinema, Polish hip-hop, cultural memory in post-socialist cities, xenoglossophobia, austerity, emotional labour, and invisible femininities, among many other topics. I am currently working on a book based on my research project Immigrant Mothers As Agents of Change. In 2013-2014, I was a Marie Curie Actions fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna working on a project aimed to explore the gendering of contemporary revolutionary iconographies.

ABOUT MIGART

When conducting our own migration research projects my colleague Elena Vacchelli and I kept coming across inspiring research, activist, and pedagogical projects that creatively and collaboratively engage with migration. The variety of methods people invent, develop, question, revise and reinvent to research migration is quite breathtaking: participatory theatre, digital storytelling, drawing, photography, psychogeography, sonic walks, quilt-making and many more.

We thought it would be useful for research, activist and teaching communities to have a space where all these amazing projects

RESEARCH

could be found. Since no such space existed, we decided to create it ourselves.

Our immediate goal was fairly straightforward: to showcase past and ongoing activities (research projects, social initiatives, syllabi, among others) and share information about upcoming events, grant opportunities and new publications. Our bigger goal was more ambitious: to help build a community of researchers, activists and educators and to help promote a cross-fertilisation of ideas and research practices.

ELENA VACCHELLI, CO-FOUNDER OF THE PLATFORM

Elena Vacchelli is Associate Professor in Gender and Migration at the University of Greenwich. Her teaching and research interests include urban diversity and social inequality; gender, space and embodiment; and art-based and digital research methodologies. Elena has recently published a book entitled Embodied Research in Migration Studies (Policy Press 2018) that engages with some of the issues addressed in migART.

THE MIGART WEBSITE

For the sake of clarity, migART is divided into three main sections: Activism, Research and Teaching. Each section is devoted to ongoing and recent projects using creative and collaborative methods. We recognise, of course, that migration research, activism, and teaching often overlap and cannot be bound to only one of these categories. This is why you find some projects cross-referenced. We also have a section called 'People' in which we include our contributor's contact information. There is also a News page where we post information about upcoming events that could be of interest to our visitors.

MIGART'S PROMOTION

We have promoted migART at several workshops and conferences, including the recent ISA congress in Toronto, the Feminist Geographies in Montreal, and at the Right to the City event organised by the Atlas of Transitions in Bologna. If you're organising a migration-related event and would like to include us, please get in touch! Elena is based in London, I'm based in Berlin, but we can also join events remotely via a video conference or travel, if possible. One of the easiest way to find out about new developments on migART is to follow us on twitter at @mig__ART.

GET INVOLVED!

migART was created as a repository of activist, research and teaching projects that make use of creative and collaborative methods to engage migrant communities, better understand migration, and communicate research findings in accessible and, when possible, interactive ways. If you are working on or have recently completed a project that fits this general description, please get in touch with us to discuss how we can feature it on our website. Your project will be introduced to an international, interdisciplinary audience, perhaps even future collaborators!

For information about migART, please consult the website: https://migart.bard.berlin/

MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

DISCOVER SENSIFAI, ONE OF EUROPE'S TOP START-UPS!

Mohamed Hasan Bahari is behind the creation of Sensifai, which was selected as one of Europe's top 50 start-ups in 2017. It uses artificial intelligence for video recognition. We met up with Mohamed to ask him about it.

MOHAMAD HASAN BAHARI

I am the CEO and co-founder of Sensifai (selected as Europe's top 50 start-ups in 2017), which develops a software that enables computers to understand video contents. I also serve as an expert at the European Commission. I was a Marie-Curie fellow and received my Ph.D in engineering from KU Leuven in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2014. I was a postdoctoral research scientist at KU Leuven between 2014 and 2016. I have also been involved in several international projects on audio and image processing, such as Handicaps and BBfor2, as well as my research on automatic speaker characterisation which was awarded by the International Speech Communication Association (ISCA) at INTERSPEECH 2012. I have also served as a technical committee member at several conferences, and as a reviewer for several top journals in the field. I was recognised as one of the top 10 Belgian innovators by MIT Technology Review in 2017.

Why is it important for AI to understand video?

The volume of videos is skyrocketing due to recent technological advances in recording. To use videos effectively and make them searchable, there is a growing demand for intelligent software that can automatically understand the content of a video. Although this is trivial for humans, empowering computers to recognise video semantic concepts is very challenging. Sensifai developed a cutting-edge audio-visual deep-learning technology trained on millions of videos to recognise audio and video content and tag them accurately.

What has been Sensifai's main achievement so far?

Sensifai has developed a disruptive technology that makes videos searchable. This technology can revolutionise assistive technologies, increase our security, and expedite surfing video archives.

For developing video recognition system, Sensifai has been recognised as one of the top 50 EU companies by the European Parliament. It was also awarded by the International Universities Innovation Alliance. Sensifai is also a proud graduate of TECHSTARS.

MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

What makes Sensifai so innovative?

Google makes texts searchable. However, 80% of total internet traffic is video and videos are not searchable unless they are tagged properly shot-by-shot. Sensifai offers a comprehensive commercial video tagging API that can be used to tag videos and pictures (i.e. for objects, scenes, action, sport, celebrity, music, mood, keyword, etc). Our technology is now live, and everyone can test its accuracy and performance.

How did you form your team?

Sensifai was co-founded by myself, Ali Diba and Prof. Van Gool. We were all working at KU Leuven centre for processing speech and images. We decided to create Sensifai in 2015 and we officially registered the company in 2016. I really feel privileged to have met and worked with Ali and Luc. They are both brilliant, experienced and inspiring.

Could you tell us about your transition from academia to self-employment?

Fortunately, I experienced a smooth transition from academia to the industry at the end of my postdoctoral programme. My Marie Curie Fellowship during my PhD programme expanded my network considerably and offered me some industrial experience. This later helped me have a smooth transition to the industry.

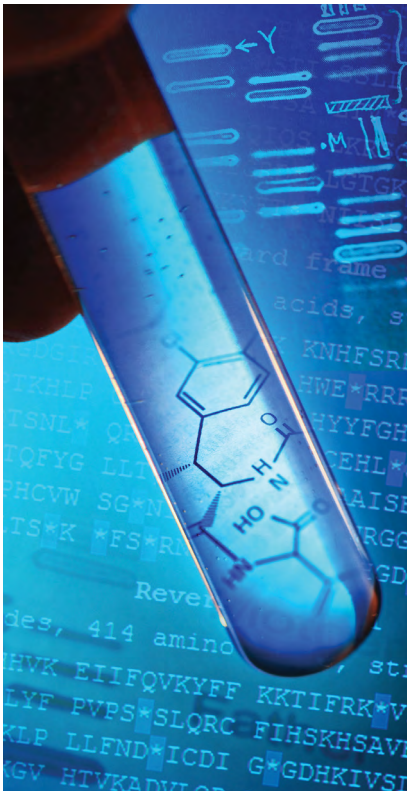
MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

SUCCESS AT SCILIFELAB: MEET ALEXEY AMUNTS

Alexey Amunts heads the Biology of Molecular Interactions programme at Science for Life Laboratory (SciLifeLab). His story is one about innovation and definitely worth sharing.

ABOUT ALEXEY AMUNTS

I was born and raised in Moscow. I completed my undergraduate studies at the Tel Aviv University in Israel. In 2005, I had the opportunity to do a PhD on the structure and function of plant photosystem at the lab of Nathan Nelson. Dealing with such a challenging research subject under the mentorship of this great scientist provided a fundament for understanding what it takes to tackle central questions in biology. Following this line in a more independent manner, I worked on my postdoc with Venki Ramakrishnan at the Medical Research Council (MRC) Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge. This was partially funded by Marie Curie. Particularly benefiting from advances in cryo-EM, we characterised the mitochondrial ribosomes that resulted in the discovery of new unexpected basic features of protein synthesis. Tackling this question also involved the development of novel technical aspects that led to solution of the structures at unprecedentedly high level of details. This experience led me to become a group leader at Stockholm University and fellow at the Science for Life Laboratory, where we established the first high-resolution cryo-EM lab in Sweden as part of the national facility.



ABOUT SCILIFELAB

The Science for Life Laboratory (SciLifeLab) is a joint enterprise of four universities. Its aim is to provide frontline technologies for Sweden's academic community and to develop cutting-edge research. It is the country's largest single investment in life sciences.

SciLifeLab is situated on the expanding Stockholm biomedical campus that includes the University Hospital and pharma companies. To support research and technology development, the institute is organised in Research Programmes. Each programme is a collaboration hub of research labs and facilities with its own strengths and strategically complementing goals.

LEADING THE PROGRAMME FOR BIOLOGY OF MOLECULAR INTERACTIONS IN SCIENCE FOR LIFE LABORATORY

Our programme combines 23 research groups focusing on imaging,

MEMBERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

proteomics and drug discovery. The common ground is the aim to understand central biological dynamic processes at the molecular level. To promote collaborative research and provide the necessary infrastructure, research groups are accompanied with the molecular biology orientated facilities including cryo-EM, protein production, mass-spec and drug development.

My vision is that, by bringing together a critical mass of an exceptional talent and providing means to investigate complex scientific questions that are out of reach for any single research group, we will not only benefit from the academic complementarity, but also further promote technological innovation.

PERSPECTIVES

Although the programme started very recently, the collaborative approach has already removed barriers between groups making the infrastructure more accessible. This allows students to gain training on sophisticated equipment, leveraging from the synergy between research groups and infrastructure.

In addition to the strong academic environment, I have forged a partnership with the next generation synchrotron MAX IV Laboratory and a pharma company AstraZeneca. Together, we have launched particularly challenging initiatives that would benefit from a multi-disciplinary approach, for example development of cross-infrastructure instrumentation with a potential of providing a national resource and expanding into new sectors in the future. From the perspective of students and postdocs, the added value is that such a working atmosphere offers attractive opportunities to develop in both academy and industry.

GET INSPIRED!

Embarking on a career in science is all about heading into uncharted territory, which frequently involves taking risks in a rapidly evolving environment.

Therefore, the most useful advice would probably be not to try following someone else's path, but to find your own way. For me, personally, mentorship and scientific friendships have been meaningful in carving out my own path. Now I am in a position of handing it over to younger researchers by providing them with a supportive environment, freedom to create and opportunities to develop themselves. From there on, it really is up to each individual.

EVENT

THE DARK SIDE OF RESEARCH
MCAA'S COMEDY 'EXPERIMENT' ON HOW TO ENGAGE SOCIETY AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE

Every August for three weeks, Scotland's capital city of Edinburgh welcomes an explosion of creative energy from around the globe. MCAA Vice-Chair Valentina Ferro attended the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and reports on the amazing performance of MCAA members.

© Davide Ferro

In the Greek language, "logos" means "word". But in the limited ancient Greek dictionary, it is also the word for "reason" or "logic". I remember vividly when my high school teacher pointed this out: "There would be no logical thinking if we could not express a thought in words". More than 10 years have passed, and her phrase still resonates with me.

I moved away from the study of lost languages and I am now on the path of the scientist, but those words remain true: what would be the point of research if we were not able to communicate it to others?

Science communication is a hot topic nowadays. Institutions are training staff to communicate with the public, especially in light of Open Science. Contemporaneously, researchers face the onerous task of engaging with the community in the battle against fake news and clickbait.

So, I ask, what are our "weapons" in this battle? ...Perhaps, a joke?

Too often we researchers are rep-

EVENT

resented as snobbish geniuses, disconnected from the world and possibly suffering from social anxiety. When we speak, we talk gibberish and become tangled in the details. While this representation provides a perfect recipe for a successful comic book series, it does not represent us. And yet comedy is a powerful medium to connect people from different backgrounds. You don't need to be a genius to laugh with Sheldon Cooper. You don't need to know everything about computers to enjoy the IT crowd. You don't need to be a geek to have fun with Scrubs. The characters of these series and the people watching them are both human, with the same everyday problems, the same anxieties, the same small glorious moments. This is the beauty of comedy: it brings people closer.

Can we use comedy to talk about science and research? There are countless examples of this. We, as MCAA researchers, tried to answer this question with our own personal experiment.

This is why we participated at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this year. It is the world's largest arts festival counting thousands of performances and shows in more than 300 different venues around the city. It is international, it is colourful, and it is fun.

And so, our show was titled "The Dark Side of Research". During the past year, we selected four talented researchers to set aside fear, step on a stage and talk to strangers about their research in a fun and engaging way. The result was better than we anticipated! Let me give you a glimpse.

The stage is dark, more than 30 people quietly enter the room. They do not know what to expect. An inevitable cough breaks the silence. Quirky science music plays in the background. The lights switch on and Matthew (twitter: @MJMurtha3) jumps onto the stage. White coat, a crazy scientist hairstyle and a big smile. The public is immediately drawn into the adventure. Matthew is a cancer researcher, but he is also a fantastic creator of content, with

© Davide Ferro

EVENT

ideas for comedy science TV shows and interesting podcasts. He will accompany the audience through the show with funny jokes about real research studies.

Between the laughs from the audience, he introduces the first performer, Valerie (twitter: @VBentii). She enters the stage, but she is not alone. Her small friend, Bruno the Ukulele, is with her on stage. She sings about what it means to be a nerd and why it is so cool. But she also takes everyone on the journey of her PhD with all its ups and downs: the enthusiasm of starting, the failures along the way and the final satisfaction of the arrival, knowing that she is helping to push knowledge forward. The few academics in the audience can remember the feeling, but also the others can relate. At the end of the day, isn't that the description of everything in life?

And then we welcome Yana (twitter: @Yana_Wade) with her ode to the marvels of science, from cloning to head-body transplants. However, she reminds us that even the smallest achievements from the smallest creatures can bring humanity forward. She specialises in the disposal of waste through micro-bacteria that transform it in alcohol. Being in Scotland, you can only imagine the cheers she receives for that! Last performer and more music on the way with Coren (twitter: @CPulleyblank), an environmental scientist who talks with the soil she treats. And the soil, apparently, responds with a moving blues song. The audience is almost enchanted by her voice and the funny relief moments in the story of a soil that is contaminated but can still teach us so much. When Matthew calls back everyone on stage, those 45 minutes that looked so frightening at the first are almost over. The public joins our wonderful science communicators in the chorus of the final song. The lights switch off. The people in the audience are still smiling and chatting as they leave the room. We repeated the show for five days for a total 165 attendees. On the day of our last show, there were people queueing outside.

I won't lie to you, getting up on a stage is terrifying. Talking without PowerPoint to support your train of thought is paralysing. Hearing your own voice through the microphone is unsettling. Is it worth it? Sure, some people have learned about cancer research and microbiology and environmental science. But this is only one aspect of the story.

More importantly, we have done a small part in connecting with society. How can we expect to fight fake news if people think we are detached from reality? How do we develop communicative skills if we are scared of explaining our research to the general public? How do we transfer knowledge if we do not know how to reach people?

Every single day we ran the show, I was amazed that only few people in the audience were academics or scientists. The majority were people who had seen our flier and thought it could be fun or interesting. After all, society craves for knowledge. We should be ready to pass it on in the most creative way.

We need seminars in auditoriums and kids activities at open days. We need the peer-reviewed papers and science blogs. We need panel discussions at conferences and quirky comedy shows at arts festivals. We need to diversify and adapt to an everchanging society.

One of our goals as MCAA is to advocate for an interconnected, multicultural future where the voice of researchers is heard and valued.

I am also immensely proud that, with our participation at the Edinburgh Fringe, we stepped out of our comfort zone to achieve this. I believe that with our association, we can challenge ourselves to think outside the proverbial box and to cultivate the variegate set of talents presented in our network.

I wish to thank again Matthew, Valerie, Yana and Coreen. Thanks to their courage and enthusiasm, our little experiment was more than successful. But just like anything in science, we need reproducibility. So, stay tuned to learn about more events and opportunities coming up in the next months!

VALENTINA FERRO