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#MCA3CNews

NEWS FROM THE MCAA

I hope you are all safe and doing well.

Over the years, one aspect that has always fascinated me in the MCAA community is our members' passion and resiliency. We are living in a challenging time and for MCAA it is no different. Here a short update of how MCAA and the Chapters are trying to tackle the current time of crisis.

In times of physical distancing, several MCAA Chapters and Working Groups have quickly adapted to the virtual environment. In 2020, MCAA has organized over 160 events worldwide about relevant topics in academia, such as proposal writing, mental health of researchers, and science communication among others.

In March 2021, our flagship event the "Annual Conference" and the General Assembly were held virtually for the first time. The experience was a success. The three-day conference had 15 parallel sessions and many interesting keynotes about "Research in time of crisis". Among our invited speakers were the European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, the Science Europe General Secretary Lidia Borrel-Damien, the Chair of the European Commission's Chief Scientific Advisor Group Prof. Nicole Grobert, the CEO of American Association of Advanced of Science Dr. Sudip Parikh, and the President Elect of International Science Council Sir Peter Gluckman.

Offering career development opportunities to our member has always been a priority for MCAA. During the pandemic, the need for such training increased. As a reaction to the increasing demand, in 2020 MCAA started the initiative "MCAA Learning". If you are interested in growing your career with online trainings, exclusive events and networking opportunities, we invite you to check out this opportunity.

„Nothing in life is to be feared,
it is only to be understood.
Now it is time to understand more,
so that we can fear less."

Marie Curie

I also would like to welcome the new Austrian Chapter Board. I am pleased to know that the new Board is motivated and active. Despite the crisis, the Board has been organizing social events focusing on networking and career development workshops. Support from local members is always needed. If you are interested in contributing or connecting, please contact the local Board.

As some of you may already know, an update of the Austrian University Policies are going to be discussed and voted by the Austrian parliament in the coming months. As part of the consultation process, Prof. Stefan (Technical University of Graz) and I have submitted recommendations on behalf of the Austrian Chapter in the hope to best represent our research community members in this geographic area.

As you can see, the MCAA community has been proving its resiliency and passion once more. We are positive that we will thrive despite the adversities. Join us in this journey for better research opportunities and careers for us and the future generation of researchers.

All the best and I hope to meet with you in person in one of our events soon.

Mostafa Moonir Shawrav
Chair, MCAA Executive Committee

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER

„The way of progress is neither swift nor easy.“
Marie Curie

COVID-19 has caused enormous discomfort in all spheres of our lives; financially, career-wise, socially and politically. Due to the related restrictions, several researchers had to cancel or postpone their research activities, such as scientific conferences, seminars, workshops, practical experiments, to mention a few. Others are risking not to complete their projects as scheduled, yet the funding deadlines cannot be extended. Vaccines are not readily available for all of us. Nevertheless, in all this we need to be patient. “Patience is not how long you wait but how you behave while waiting” said Joyce Meyer. While we face these challenges with patience, we must at the same time stay positive.

I will note especially researchers’ wellbeing. When gyms and sports clubs for group activities, are forbidden, tourism being not possible due to hotels closure and institutional travel restrictions amidst several online meetings, how can we handle stress, especially techno-stress? The good news is that Austria is gifted by nature. There are many safe places in any part of Austria where one can explore nature, catch a fresh breath while hiking, jogging or just walking. I recommend taking advantage of such abundance as well as good nutrition for our mental and physical health. As a Chapter, we are trying to keep our members engaged by offering interactive online activities, for example the Online Christmas party in 2020, which was fun-packed. I encourage researchers to take care of their personal health first, at all times.

Finally, I would like to thank all researchers who have taken a proactive role in any scientific field to respond to COVID-19. Many of our members have been involved in finding for example mass testing solutions. Personally within my research consortium [PERFORM](#), we dispensed several articles related to Digital Retail Technologies and Management Information Systems to respond to the ‘new normal’ as even companies which had not actively pursued digitalization, were doing so as means of business continuity. In this context, we proposed „Corona Guides“ to retail managers.

I call upon all stakeholders not to give up and to continue with the fight against COVID-19. MCA³C will continue to engage with researchers and the local community in various ways. Hopefully, in person events will soon be possible.



Veronica Lutalo Nabbosa
Chair, Austrian Chapter

MCA³C Welcomes the new Chapter Board

Chapter Chair - Veronica Nabbosa (Johannes Kepler University - Digital Retail)
Vice-Chair - Dr. Antonino Puglisi (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna - Nanobiotechnology)
Secretary - Katarzyna Slipko (Vienna University of Technology - Institute for Water Quality and Resource Management)
Public Relations - Ingrid Camargo (Vienna University of Technology - Institute of Transportation)
Newsletter Editor - Dr. Clara Gomes-Koban (University of Vienna - Educational Psychology)
Senior Advisor - Prof. Stefan Spirk (Technical University of Graz - Institute of Bioproducts and Paper Technology)

COVID-19 Psychological Support

The long period of physical distancing and minimized social contacts we are experiencing due to the pandemic can have an impact on our wellbeing. Especially, members who are away from home and deprived from the exchange and interaction with local groups, might be experiencing loneliness and low sense of belonging. If you are in need to talk, [please reach out to us](#). We are here to support you!

If you are experiencing strong distress, please contact the Austrian Psychological Association Helpline at 01/504 8000 (Mo-Thu 9-13) or helpline@psychologiehilft.at. The service is free and anonymous.

MEMBERS' CORNER

In this special COVID-19 issue, we would like to introduce a member whose work and project is contributing to a safer and healthier life for all of us. Katarzyna Slipko is a PhD candidate at the Vienna University of Technology:

„In 2020, my work took an unexpected turn: we shifted our focus from investigating antibiotic resistance in wastewater to development and implementation of wastewater monitoring for SARS-CoV-2 virus. Wastewater surveillance is a well-known tool for control of various viral diseases (e.g. polio). After the KWR Water Research Institute (the Netherlands) successful study, we decided to follow their steps. They reported that “sewage surveillance could be a sensitive tool to monitor the circulation of the virus in the population.” This fuelled our work – to find a fast and simple method to monitor SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in chosen populations by investigating wastewater.

One of the main project difficulties was developing the methodology while simultaneously implementing it to analyse samples. At first, we focused on Vienna and surroundings, however, very quickly the number of incoming samples grew until we were covering the majority of the hotspots in Austria. The project grew into “Coron-A” consortium with AGES and Innsbruck Universities sharing their forces.

We worked on developing the method by trying various procedures: different types of sample preparation, ways of virus concentration and detection. The main methodology tests were finished at the end of July and we could focus on increasing our capacity and implementing routine monitoring plans for chosen hotspots.

The data that we collected helped to monitor and predict COVID-19 outbreaks in Vienna and other chosen places in Austria. We could see how the signal in wastewater increased with the spread of the virus over time. In many instances, we were able to predict a rise in cases, up to a week before they were confirmed. During lockdowns, we could see a plateau in the curve and cases slowly going down.„



The project is still ongoing and has attracted the attention of the Austrian media. More information can be found here:

- . [Wien ORF-News](#)
- . [Promega News](#)
- . [YouTube Video - StadtWien/TU](#)
- . [TU Wien - News](#)
- . [Science-ORF Article](#)

Katarzyna Slipko,
PhD Candidate

Institute for Water Quality
and Resource Management -
Vienna University of Technology

Research interests:
Molecular biology, Biotechnology,
water treatment, antibiotic resistance



Open Call for MCA³C Newsletter Contributions

Are you interested in sharing information about you and your research project among MCAA members and other researchers outside of MCAA? Would you like to be featured in our next Newsletter?*

Contact our [Newsletter editor](#) for more detailed information on conditions and deadlines.

Do not miss this opportunity to show off your work and achievements!

*For registered MCAA members only.

MCAA/CHAPTER EVENTS IN 2020-21

Join us at the next planned Chapter events!

DECEMBER 4th 2020

Social Event

Christmas Dinner Party.
Online - meeting at 9 pm

MARCH 5-7th 2021

Meeting

7th MCAA Annual Conference / General Assembly.
Online

APRIL 10th 2021

Workshop

Career Development Series - Part 1.
Topic: „Grant Application“
Online

APRIL 24th 2021

Workshop

Career Development Series - Part 2.
Topic: „Self Branding as a Researcher“
Online, 10am to 1:30pm

[Pre-registration](#) required.

SPRING/AUTUMN 2021

Meeting

Chapter Annual Meeting.
Online

Pre-registration required. Details to be announced.

Follow us on social media!



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The MCA³C is part of the Marie Curie Alumni Association. We encourage local networking and support members' career development. If you are still not a member of MCAA or MCA³C, you can sign up now. Membership is open to all MCAA current fellows and alumni and is free of cost.

If you prefer not to receive our Newsletter by e-mail in the future, please send us an e-mail with the heading „unsubscribe to Newsletter.“



Think before printing