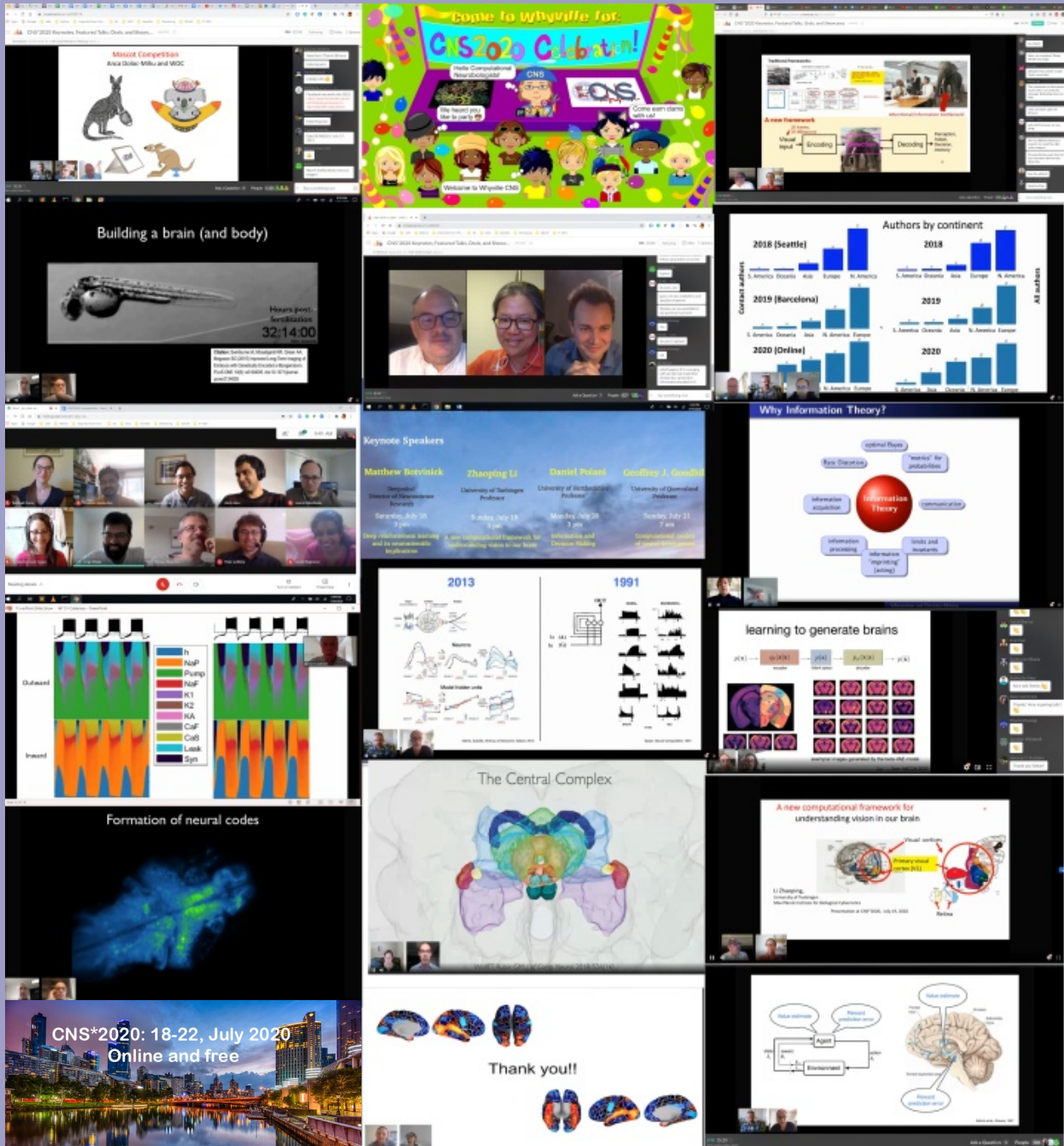




Scenes from CNS*2020 Online



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We seek sponsorship from corporate and philanthropic organizations for support of student travel and registration to the annual meeting, student awards, and hosting of topical workshops. For more information about how you can contribute, please email sponsorship@cnsorg.org

OCNS Newsletter

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Special CNS*2020 Online: Experience from your Organizing Committee Chair

Jorge Mejias, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands



About a year ago from the moment in which I am writing these lines, many of us had just returned from the very successful annual CNS 2019 meeting in Barcelona, and were daydreaming about the CNS 2020 annual meeting to be held in Melbourne. Little we knew that, a few months later, the COVID-19 global pandemic would turn our plans upside down –along with most of our professional and personal lives. With safety concerns and travel bans in place pretty much everywhere, by early April 2020 the

OCNS had to make a difficult decision: cancel the 2020 meeting entirely and hope for the best in 2021, or take the risky gamble of organizing an online meeting instead. Being the new guy in the board of directors –and probably with too much enthusiasm –I wrote to the board about online conferences gathering momentum at the moment, and how the CNS community could benefit from our own take on a virtual meeting. Shortly after, the OCNS board decided to go for our first ever online meeting, assembled a Web Organizing Committee (or WOC) constituted initially by board members, and offered me to become the chair.

Early on, we found challenges which made our situation unique with respect to other newly created online conferences: by the time the WOC was formed, more than 200 researchers had already submitted their abstracts to participate in CNS 2020 in July, so we made our priority to keep the classical format of the contributions (feature talks, orals and posters) and the original dates of the Melbourne event. But this had serious implications: we had to organize the meeting from scratch in barely three months, and OCNS had historically very little experience in online meetings. Luckily, OCNS has also an invaluable resource: an engaged and reliable community which has participated and shaped the CNS meeting for almost 30 years. We decided to reach out for volunteers to enlarge the WOC and bring the much needed talent and experience from our community.

The response was overwhelming, and in a week we had a pool of new WOC members with experience with online conferences, social media communication, and other organizational aspects to complement our own. The WOC self-organized into work groups and the whole team held weekly meetings to coordinate the progress: preparing the meeting program, deciding on the format for posters and other contributions, choosing and testing the right online platforms (such as Crowdcast, which was chosen for the main track), and coordinating with the organizers of tutorials and workshops. Continuing the cherished tradition of the CNS party, we also put together an online party where all participants could interact in a relaxed environment and play some neuroscience games together.

We learned a lot during the organizational process and during the meeting itself. Some potential problems like internet trolling, which created little mayhems in other online meetings, ended up not being an issue for us. We alleviated the challenge of multiple time

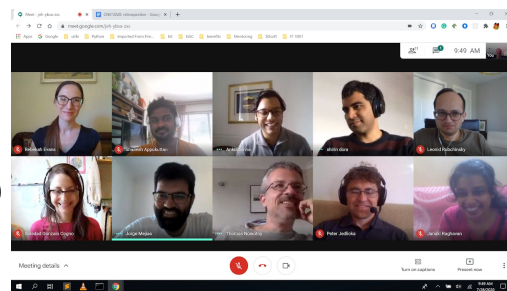
zones by spreading the talks across many hours, recording and uploading the sessions on Crowdcast and allowing for Q&A sessions with speakers at different hours. We benefited enormously from the community feedback before, during and after the meeting, and we marked down things which needed improvement. But overall, we all enjoyed getting together with our colleagues for stimulating discussions and our yearly exchange of ideas, even if it was in an unexpected way this time.

If anything, we have learned that online meetings are the future of scientific conferences –but it is not an exclusive future: there are many important things that online meetings can't provide, and therefore on-site conferences will still be happening. The OCNS board is now discussing about the different paths that have opened in front of us as a community, and how to bring together traditional and online meetings. We hope that these new views will start crystallizing in the following years, and also with the help again of our community, which is now engaging in special interest groups (SIGs) created at the end of the CNS 2020 meeting.

At the personal level, leading the organization of CNS 2020 has left me with a nice feeling of accomplishment from seeing my colleagues able to meet and talk about science once more. But it has also left me with a bit of impostor syndrome, because of the immense work done by all the WOC members. The Program Committee led by Thomas Nowotny, the web team led by Ankur Sinha, the social media team led by Anca Doloc-Mihu, and especially all our volunteers, dedicated an enormous effort to make things happen. If people like them keep pushing to improve things in OCNS, I can't wait to attend the future CNS meetings.

Thank-you to the CNS*2020 WOC:

Shailesh Appukuttan	Anca Doloc-Mihu (OCNS Tutorials Chair)
Tom Burns	Peter Jedlicka (OCNS Workshops Chair)
Soledad Gonzalo Cogno	Ankur Sinha (OCNS Webmaster)
Shirin Dora	Leonid Rubchinsky (OCNS Treasurer)
Rebekah Evans	Jorge Mejias (CNS*2020 Organizing Committee Chair)
Raman Janaki	Thomas Nowotny (OCNS Program Chair)
Anand Pathak	
Ilenia Salaris	
Wei Qin	
Katharina Zuehlsdorff	



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Member Type	One year	Two years	Three years
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Student: Anybody studying toward an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Postdoc/not-for-profit employee: Anybody who is employed as a postdoctoral scholar or postdoctoral fellow, and anybody who is employed in a university lab or non-industry research institute as a technician or research assistant not seeking a degree.

Faculty/for-profit employee: Anybody who is employed as faculty, laboratory head, independent researcher, or in an equivalent position, and anybody who is employed in industry or for-profit institutions.

Retired persons should apply for or remain in their pre-retirement category.

Reflections from your outgoing Program Chair

Thomas Nowotny, University of Sussex, UK

A new Program Chair (PC), Christiane Linster, was elected to succeed Thomas Nowotny. They both give us their view of the PC work.



After three stimulating years as the Program Chair of OCNS I am stepping down this year to make way for Prof Christiane Linster to take the lead as our new Program Chair.

Looking back, I am very happy of what we have accomplished over the last three years. We had some memorable meetings; in Antwerp, when I first took up the role in a hurry because my predecessor, Prof Anthony Burkitt had to leave the meeting for a family emergency.

Then came Seattle with a fantastic close coordination with the Allan Institute and one of the most successful meetings in America so far. Barcelona was a great success and will always stay in my memory for its impressive historical buildings as a backdrop for leading edge computational neuroscience research presented at the conference.

Then the coronavirus struck, and instead of enjoying Melbourne this year, we had to move the meeting online. But the OCNS community responded strongly on our call for volunteers and between the newly formed WOC (web organising committee) and the PC (program committee) we pulled together what I think was a fantastic online meeting experience. It was heartening to see how everyone came together in the face of new challenges: Keynote speakers did not fuss about speaking online and were more than happy to subscribe to an additional discussion hour, even at the unsocial hours that worldwide engagement brings. The program committee turned around review and oral selections in record time. Even the reviewers responded faster than ever – many thanks to everyone. The WOC did an amazing job in getting the online infrastructure ready and in running the show in the background while our PC members did a stellar job hosting the main track sessions. I also enjoyed the tutorials, posters and workshops tremendously and special thanks goes to all our Australian and far East colleagues who stayed up to the middle of the night to participate. I think OCNS has shown that while it is coming of age (30 years) it is still full of energy and is very much alive. And this is something I have always enjoyed about OCNS, as a PC chair and in the many years before during which I have been involved in different roles: OCNS is a welcoming community where everyone can participate and contribute, and together, we generate something good for the community.

So, is there something I would have done differently, if I was starting again? We have had some issues with technical platforms for abstract submission and publishing and there is always something we can do better in the details, but in the substance, no, I would do it all the same again.

Last but not least I would like to say something about equality, diversity and inclusion. At OCNS we have always taken this very seriously and it is always on the top of the agenda when we discuss keynote speakers to invite, the composition of the PC and the selection of oral presentations. We are monitoring and actively strive to improve the gender balance of our speakers and PC members and have done reasonably well on this account. However, there is always more that we can do, especially, I feel, in terms of other characteristics, such as ethnic background and geographical diversity. I hope – no – I am certain that the PC and Board of OCNS will continue to improve equality, diversity and inclusion as we have always strived to do.

In conclusion, thank you, OCNS community, for the honour of letting me serve you as your PC chair. It was hard work but I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to do it.

Your new Program Chair

Christiane Linster, Cornell University, USA



I am honored to serve as Program Chair for the next three years. The Computational Neuroscience meeting was very important for my professional development when I was a student and postdoc and helped me create a network of friends and colleagues.

I have been involved with the Computational Neuroscience meeting since attending my first meeting in San Francisco in 1992. A year later, I was still a graduate student, Jim Bower appointed me to the program committee for the meeting. As a postdoc I served as co-local organizer with Michael Hasselmo for the Boston MA meeting. In 2002, when Jim Bower stepped down as meeting chair and organizer, Todd Troyer, Phil Ulinski, Erik deSchutter, Linda Larson-Prior and I created the Organization for Computational Neuroscience and I served as the first President. These were exiting times and it was very important to me and my friends that this meeting continue.

How did I become a Computational Neuroscientist? I was born and raised in Luxembourg; after graduating high school I attended the Technical University in Graz, Austria with the goal to achieve a Masters in Electrical Engineering. For my masters thesis I discovered Neural Networks; my thesis consisted of teaching neural networks to play in different musical styles. After dwelling in Computer Music for a few years and working as a programmer, I decided to start a PhD in Neural Networks at the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris, France. Here I quickly discovered a passion for biology and eventually wrote a thesis doing computational modeling of the insect olfactory system. I presented the first chapter of my thesis at the CNS meeting and was delighted to discover a community with such overlapping interests to mine.

After my PhD, I took a teaching position for two years and then moved onto to a postdoctoral position at Harvard University with Michael Hasselmo, a pioneer of Computational Neuroscience. I stayed with the olfactory system and also discovered a passion for experimental work in his lab.

In 2000, I started my faculty position at Cornell, where I am now a full professor. My lab works on understanding computation in the olfactory system using computational and experimental tools.

As Program chair, it is important to me to continue OCNS' tradition to hear from students and postdocs and to create an open minded and inclusive environment. We want to continue to encourage diversity in science and in our membership and work towards that goal.

Do you have a favorite software tool or online resource?

Users and developers are welcome to contribute short articles of broad interest to OCNS members.

Contact us at newsletter@cnsorg.org

CNS*2020 online: work and fun

Experience from our young members

Soledad Gonzalo Cogno, postdoc member, Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience, Norway



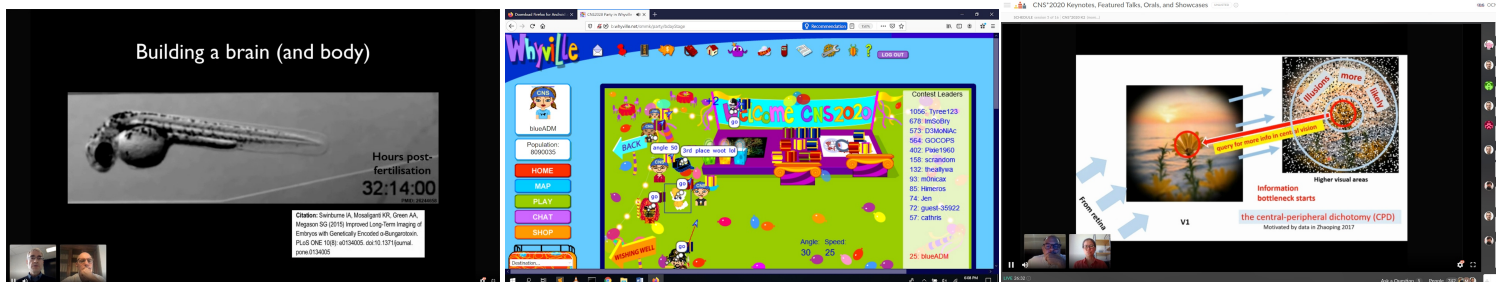
Last April, when I found out that the CNS annual meeting was going to be held online due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, I immediately decided to submit an abstract for a poster. But what I did not know at that time is that I was also going to participate in the conference as a member of the WOC. And the truth is that participating both as an attendee and as a WOC member went beyond all my expectations and ended up being a fantastic experience.

The WOC made a gigantic effort and managed to put together an online conference as big as CNS is in only six weeks. This was due to how hard everyone worked, and due to the premises of trying to provide a good experience to all attendees while keeping very high scientific standards. Being part of that process was truly exciting. And it was certainly a learning experience that will be of much help whenever I organize a scientific event in the future. Both the teamwork and the feedback we got from the meeting's participants were very gratifying. Moreover, I feel happy to have been part of an initiative that reached so many researchers in so many countries around the world.

As a CNS attendee I deeply enjoyed the conference content, especially the talks. The science was exciting, and the huge diversity of topics gave me the chance to learn new things beyond my comfort zone. In addition, I particularly appreciated that the talks were livestreamed, because it made the interaction with the speakers and with other participants more natural, something that is usually hard to get in virtual conferences. Moreover, because all the talks were recorded, I could watch the tutorials and workshops that I couldn't join during the conference, and thus get a more complete experience. During the poster session I got insightful feedback about my work, and I'm grateful to all the presenters who kindly walked me through their results and answered all my questions.

From a personal perspective, the last time I attended CNS (thanks to a travel award I was granted!) I was still a PhD student. It has been quite a journey since then, during which I transitioned from working only with models to start collaborating with experimentalists to analyze their data, until I became capable of collecting data myself during my postdoc, where I found my niche at the intersection between theoretical and experimental neuroscience. In that sense, attending CNS this year felt like going back to a joyful and familiar place: the computational community.

Among all the things that have happened in 2020, including a pandemic that certainly changed the world as we knew it, CNS*2020 Online was synonym of fun, excitement, and solid and ambitious neuroscience.



CNS*2020 online: work and fun

Experience from our young members

Ankur Sinha, student member, UH Biocomputation University of Hertfordshire, UK



This year was not meant to be any different from the yesteryears as far as OCNS was concerned. To understate the situation, “something came up” that made a physical CNS*2020 in Melbourne intractable. The OCNS Board, like many other organisations, did not want to cancel the annual meeting. And so, CNS*2020 Online was born. Registration fees were cancelled to make the meeting accessible to all, and a call for volunteers sent to the OCNS membership quickly resulted in a “web organising committee” (WOC) committed to delivering the on-line conference.

The foundation of a successful on-line conference is the infrastructure that supports it. The “web team” in the WOC was tasked with the rather critical project of identifying, populating, integrating, and managing various web tools that would together form the virtual conference venue. A number of components needed to be found: a scheduler, an auditorium, meeting rooms, and communication channels. Communication channels remain the hardest to replace, since no software can yet replicate the social interactions that are such an important aspect of research conferences. The platforms needed to be reliable, intuitive, available on-demand, hosted and their infrastructure managed for us, and at the same time, they needed fit our resource budget (in terms of both finances and man power).

We settled on Sched for our scheduler, Crowdcast (that Neuromatch had so successfully used) for our primary “auditorium”, and INCF’s Neurostars for asynchronous discussion. Additionally, to save attendees from installing and learning a myriad of platforms, tutorials and poster sessions that needed to be more interactive were to be hosted either on Zoom or Google Meet.

Apart from a few minor glitches the meeting went very very well. It took everyone some time to get used to the platforms perhaps, but they seemed to pick them all up quickly enough. All sessions ran smoothly, and on schedule. An unprecedented number of attendees used both Sched and Crowdcast. Many fruitful discussions occurred on Neurostars. Tutorials, workshops, and poster sessions all proceeded as planned with attendees spreading themselves over all active sessions. All software has bugs, but none of the bugs that we encountered during the meeting were major enough to disrupt any sessions.

We’ll keep hearing about research communities experimenting with various platforms, some even quite expensive custom built ones. However, even though the development of platforms for on-line communication has accelerated, the truth is that no current platform can replace all aspects of a physical meeting. The OCNS Board continues to discuss the possibility of permanently adding an on-line component to our annual meetings to make them more accessible. However, even if software does make this possible, someone somewhere will still need to keep awake all night, for the Sun will continue to rise and set at different times in our diverse, global research community.

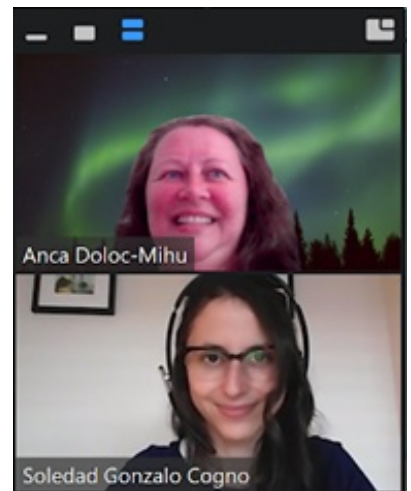
Together, we’ll see how it goes. If we do add the on-line component, OCNS is confident that the lessons learned from CNS*2020 Online will help us make it even better in the future.



Anca Doloc-Mihu, Georgia Gwinnett College, USA CNS* 2020 Social Media Chair

Hi, I am Dr. Anca Doloc-Mihu, an Assistant Professor at Georgia Gwinnett College in Atlanta, USA, and this Summer, I had the pleasure of working on the Social Media Committee task for the Online CNS*2020 meeting with Dr. Soledad Gonzalo Cogno, Postdoctoral Researcher at Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience, Centre for Neural Computation, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway, and Ilenia Salaris, Research Assistant and Lab Manager, Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford, UK.

With full support from the entire CNS*2020 Online Committee (WOC), from the CNS Social Media Chair, Dr. Renaud Jolivet, and from the CNS Vice-President, Dr. Martin Zapotocky, our little committee took on the task of spreading the word about this international event, which was offered for the first time online and completely free.



We achieved our task by advertising the event on many social media platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and also on our partners' websites: INCF, Neurostars, Allen Institute, Neuromatch, World Wide Neuro, OHBM. We built a graphical template that was adapted and used for all the media postings announcing CNS events, with a total of 32 customized postings for each keynote talk, featured talk, tutorial, showcase, and workshop, along with group postings for all the categories of the events. All these postings can be seen on Instagram. Our team followed a schedule for posting each category of events. During the week prior to the event, our team repeated the posts and announced a few fun CNS-specific events, such as the CNS Party, and the eMascot competition. Every day during CNS*2020 Online the team would tweet about all the events happening during the day (at Europe morning time), and then re-tweet them later (at America morning time) for everyone in the world to get the CNS*2020 news at their convenient time zone.

Our Social Media coverage for the event was quite successful, as we reached more than 2,500 registrants on the CNS Sched page from 74 countries (figure below shows our coverage) and we had many likes and followers of the event. Our Social Media main achievements are:

- On Facebook, 5.5k people reached, 4.1k page likes, 4.3k followers (which shows an increase of 217% for our page);
- On LinkedIn, 71 unique visitors in July, with 42 new followers (which is a 71% increase for our page);
- On Twitter, 432 people were following and 2140 followers;
- On Instagram, 33 posts, 16 followers, 43 were following.



The talks at the event were recorded and videos were tested by the Webteam committee led by Ankur Sinha, and the recordings can be seen on our YouTube channel, which at the time this article is written has more than 47 subscribers, 133 hours of recordings, and 1.6k views.

We based our Social Media work on the tremendous work done by the CNS*2020 Online (WOC) Committee that volunteered and worked past 2 months every day on organizing this event online.

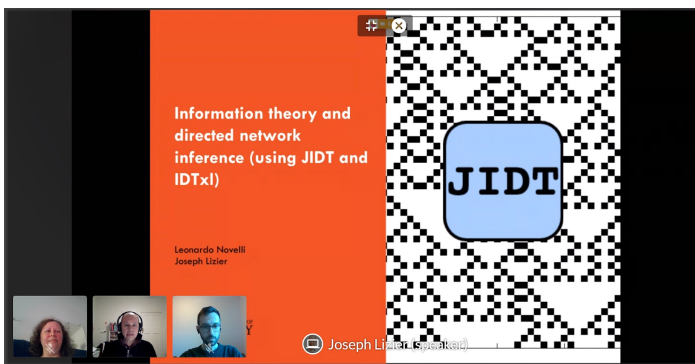
On behalf of the CNS*2020 Social Media Committee, I would like to thank everyone who helped us circulate the events at CNS*2020 Online.

Showcases

Anca Doloc-Mihu, Georgia Gwinnett College, USA
CNS*2020 tutorials Chair

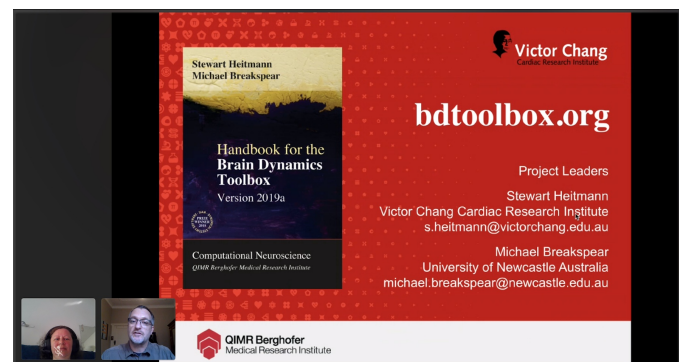
Traditionally, the CNS meeting starts in the evening after a full first day of Tutorials. This year at CNS*2020 Online, we had 7 tutorials from 3 different continents: 3 from North America, 1 from Australia, 2 from Europe (Germany and Spain), and 1 from Argentina. There were 2 full-day tutorials and 5 half-day tutorials, and all these online events were well attended (between 80-270 participants on Sched) and met on different platforms (Zoom, Google Meet).

In addition, this year CNS has decided to complement the traditional tutorials with a new session (entitled "Showcases") that is composed of 30-minute talks that showcase a software tool or package for use in computational neuroscience research and teaching. This "Showcases" event was introduced as a pilot at CNS*2020. The following 3 Showcase talks were accepted this year, from 2 continents, Australia and North America:

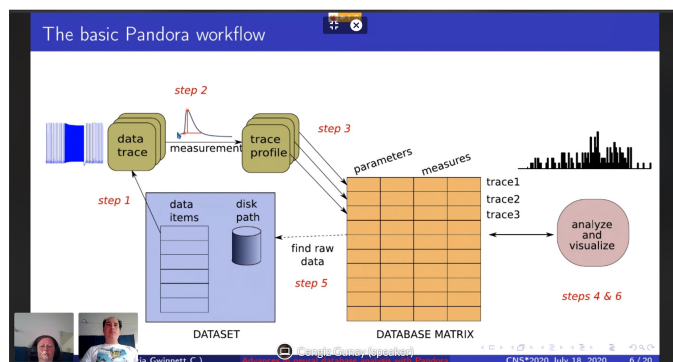


- **Information theory and directed network inference** (using JIDT and IDTxI) by Leonardo Novelli (The University of Sydney, Australia) and Dr. Joseph T. Lizier (The University of Sydney, Australia)

- **Introduction to the Brain Dynamics Toolbox** by Dr. Stewart Heitmann (Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, Australia)



- **Advances in the PANDORA Matlab Toolbox for intracellular electrophysiology data** by Dr. Cengiz Gunay (SST, Georgia Gwinnett College, USA)



The authors presented two Matlab toolboxes and one Java tool. As I was chairing all Showcase sessions, I noticed that all generated interest and received lots of comments and questions from the participants. The Showcase sessions had a total of 539 attendees on Sched, which shows that this new session format has potential. Each showcase generated enough interest from our CNS attendees and worked well. Thus, the Board has approved the Showcase event to continue as part of the Tutorials day in upcoming CNS meetings.

CNS*2020 online: work and fun

The CNS party

James Bower, OCNS board member, Southern Oregon University, USA



In early September, 1992, I received a somewhat distraught email message from John Miller at UC Berkeley, telling me that a University of California System administrator was threatening to sue him for his house. John Miller, Gwen Jacobs and Frank Eckman and I had just organized the first ever CNS meeting in San Francisco, California, July 26-31, 1992, at U.C.'s Lister Hill Conference Center. The UC System administrator was threatening legal action unless John could come up with the substantial sum of money remaining on the CNS*92 account, the majority of that money owed for the first ever CNS banquet.

In order to understand how John found himself in this predicament, it is first necessary to consider why we organized a CNS meeting to begin with. Quoting from the first grant written (in the fall of 1992) to the U.S. National Science Foundation to support travel funds for students:

“While there has been a substantial growth in interest in studying the nervous system from a computational point of view, until the organization of the CNS 1992 meeting, there was no general open scientific meeting specifically devoted to this approach. Most meetings focused on computational neurobiology were closed with participants determined by invitation only.”

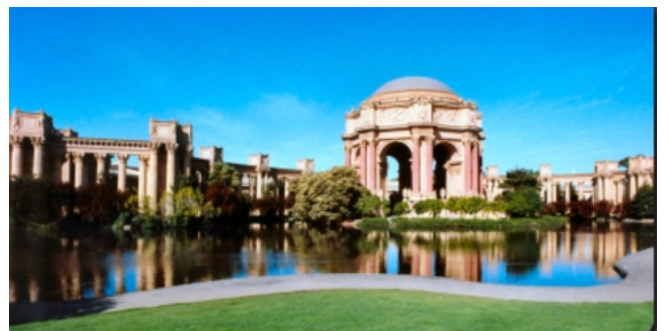
The grant further detailed the reasons we thought this meeting was important including to:

- 1) Provide an open forum for the discussion of computational issues;
- 2) Provide an opportunity for experimentalists, modelers, and theorists to interact;
- 3) Provide researchers who might be isolated in their own institutions an opportunity to interact with others interested in computational neurosciences;
- 4) Provide a forum especially for young researchers to present their research and get professional feedback.



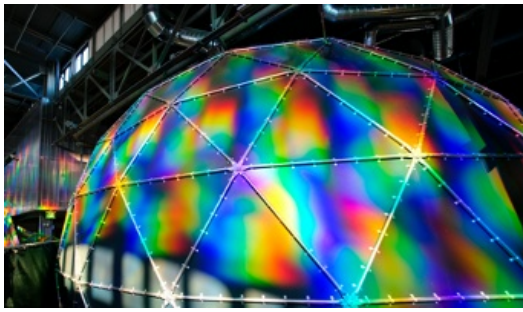
Clearly, all this “interaction” in turn required that we organize an appropriately grand party as part of the meeting, and that we did. Starting what became a long tradition of CNS parties in interesting venues, we decided to hold this first party in what was then the premier hands-on science museum in the world, the Exploratorium. I already had strong links to the museum through the Caltech Pre-College Science Initiative which I founded and co-directed to help implement hands-on science learning in public schools throughout California. We were therefore able to schedule the CNS party, reassuring the staff that we were a respectable and responsible group of scientists. (Questionable Assumption Number 1.) Having arranged the perfect venue, the meeting being in San Francisco, it logically followed that we should also have excellent food.

In particular, I knew from years of running the Methods in Computational Neuroscience Summer Course in Woods Hole that Europeans in particular, often arrived in the United States assuming they would have to endure bad food (and in those days they were mostly right about that). So, I tasked Frank Eckman to find a caterer for the banquet that would impress even our European colleagues. And he did, contracting with one of the top party caterers in San Francisco. Further, he didn't set limits on how much food they should provide assuming again that CNS participants would moderate their consumption. (Questionable Assumption Number 2).



Then there was the question of the libations. This being our first meeting, and assuming myself that the somewhat staid and formal character of many of our computational colleagues would translate to party behavior, we made the decision to have an open bar, with no limitations on consumption. (Questionable Assumption Number 3).

What followed was what has become a legendary party. Massive amounts of fresh oysters on the half shell, shrimp, fancy little cakes, etc were consumed along with copious amounts of alcohol. To this day I cannot shed the image of a computational neurobiologist, seated on the centripetal force exhibit flying around personally vaporizing shrimp, oysters and expensive bourbon. And then there were the group of experts in computational vision who decided that the exhibit on visual illusions could be significantly improved. Seeking refuge, I managed to open the door into the Exploratorium's famous 'tactile dome' in which one climbed around through the complete dark experiencing different tactile surfaces, including a long slide into a deep pile of ping pong balls. By contract the Tactile Dome was off limits, but it turns out, I wasn't the first person(s) to open the door. So, you get the idea. As I remember, combining the food, alcohol, and damage repair to the Exploratorium's exhibits, we ended up with a bill for on the order of \$20,000. A lot of money in those days, and a great deal of money for a meeting that already prided itself on low cost for high value. Thus the call from John in early September. Fortunately in those days accounting systems were not quite as sophisticated as they are now, and being a professor at a fairly wealthy private institution, it was possible to 'deal with' the overage without John having to re-mortgage his house. A few years later, when we were working with Mike Hasselmo organizing a CNS meeting in Boston and considering having the banquet at the Museum of Science, Mike wrote: "The Museum of Science (has) a separate room, not among the exhibits as at the exploratorium." And John Miller's instructions with respect to the bar were pretty explicit: "Over the last few years, we have done the following: a) have a cocktail bar set up for people to buy hard liquor drinks if THEY want to pay themselves. b) have US pay for the equivalent of 1 beer or 2 glasses of wine per person, c) But make sure that they charge for ALL hard liquor.... Miller." Not that we didn't also have fun at the meeting in Boston.



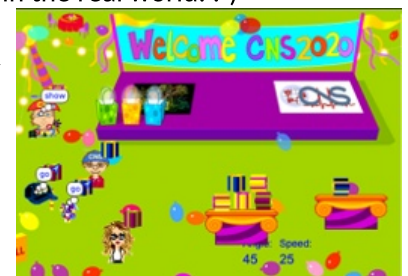
Ramon and the K-halls perform at the party in Boston

However, Pace forward now almost 30 years, with Covid-19 necessitating an entirely online CNS meeting, what should we do about the traditional CNS banquet? Well, it turns out that one of the primary motivations for the CAPSI educational project at Caltech that had gotten us in the door at the Exploratorium (and a couple of doors we were not supposed to get in as well), was to



explore how digital technology, and simulation technology in particular, might change how children learn about the world around them. Not unlike, I would note (and not coincidentally), the original motivation for the CNS meetings and computational neuroscience itself. The CAPSI effort, started in 1984 in the first year I was a Caltech Professor, resulted in 1999 in the launching of Whyville.net, the first simulation and game based virtual learning world now with more than 8 ½ million registered users. So, especially given the CNS history just recounted, why not propose to have the annual banquet for this year's on-line meeting in an online environment equivalent in many ways to the location for the first ever CNS banquet? In fact, many of the principles underlying Whyville are fundamentally similar to the principles underlying hands-on science learning at places like the Exploratorium. So that is what we did, with many CNS participants logging into Whyville, hanging out in the CNS party space, and playing on-line games like the wishing well, where CNSers (and Whyville's regular participants as well) competed against each other to be the first to unscramble CNS related words and phrases. Or trying to stack boxes by throwing them at the right angle and speed. Much more reasonable and better controlled in a virtual world than in the real world. :-)

So finally, 30 years later, and inspired by COVID-19, it is finally clear how to throw a completely safe and cost-controlled CNS banquet while also using some of the technology that underlies computational neuroscience itself. No question at all, that I think everyone very much looks forward to dealing with the challenges and unique characteristics of face-to-face parties in the real world. And also continuing the long string of unusual (and fun) CNS parties (even with rules established a long time ago). And we all hope soon.



But, at least for the CNS 2020 banquet, a circle was closed, looping back to the very origins of the CNS meeting and its first ever annual party.

E-mascot competition for CNS*2020 Online

As every year, the CNS meeting needed a mascot. This year, the board, at the instigation of Anca Doloc-Mihu, decided to organize a e-mascot competition. Submissions were from the following countries: US, Spain, Russia, India, Azerbaijan. WOC voted the best image to use on Social Media for the CNS*2020 online event:

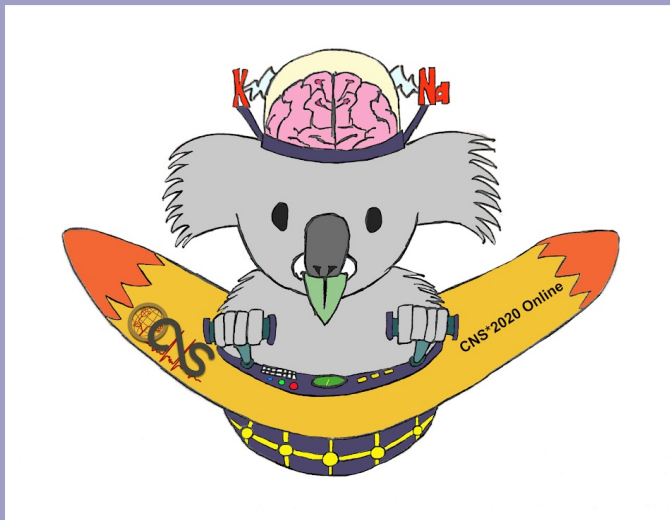
1st Jessica López-Hazas Sacristán, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

2nd Margarita Zaleshina, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Russian Federation

3rd Nilapratim Sengupta, Computational Neurophysiology Laboratory, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India

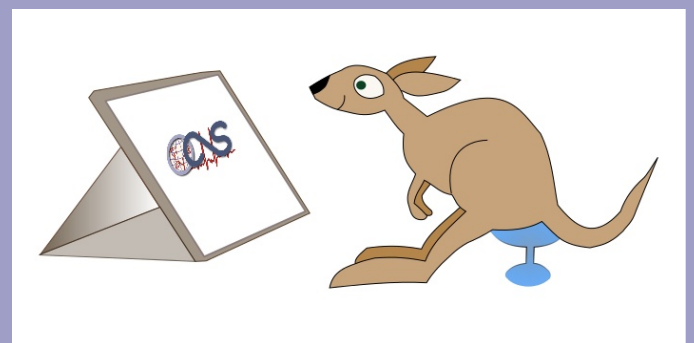
The winner was rewarded with \$100.

E-mascot competition winner



by Jessica Lopez Hazas,
Universidad Autónoma
de Madrid

Second



by Margarita Zaleshina
Moscow Institute of Physics
and Technology

Third



by Nilapratim Sengupta
Computational Neurophysiology
Laboratory, Indian Institute of
Technology Bombay

Announcement: CNS* 2021 Leipzig

Thomas Knösche, local organizer of CNS* 2021 Leipzig

We would like to cordially invite you to come to Leipzig in July 2021 to attend the 20th Annual Meeting of the OCNS. We - this is the local organizers team from the Max Planck Institutes for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences and for Mathematics in the Sciences, and the Universities of Leipzig and Chemnitz.

Leipzig is a compact medium-sized city with about 600.000 people in the heart of Germany and Europe, convenient to reach and with (almost) everything in walking distance from the conference venue.

Not everybody might know Leipzig yet, but it is definitely worth knowing, because it combines a number of highlights that are rarely found all together in a single place.



First, Leipzig is a city of culture and arts, especially renowned for its musical heritage and presence: not only famous composers left their traces here, but also today's Gewandhaus orchestra and Thomaner boys choir are world famous.

Second, Leipzig is a city of science with the renowned university and numerous research institutions from the Max Planck, Fraunhofer, Leibnitz, and Helmholtz Societies. Heisenberg and Ostwald worked here, and the Neanderthal genome was extracted from ancient fossils by Svante Pääbo's group at the MPI for Evolutionary Anthropology. Both computational and experimental neuroscience are well established.

Third, Leipzig is a beautiful city with amazing architecture. Many residential areas are made up by beautiful buildings from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Architecture from virtually all epochs can be found. An impressive example is the congress venue itself, the Kongreßhalle am Zoo, a historic building from around 1900, yet housing a modern convention center with all amenities, located right next to the lovely zoo of Leipzig and within walking distance of the city center.



Fourth, Leipzig is a green city: a broad green band of rivers, floodplain forest, parks and lakes is running right through the city, inviting for exploration by boat, bicycle, and on foot. This green lung of Leipzig is quite unique in Europe as it covers about one third of the city area.



Last but not least, Leipzig is a city of fun and excitement. The city is among the best places in Germany to experience different styles of eating, bar and pub culture, all sorts of entertainment, live music, galleries and art projects.

So, please come to Leipzig - it is worth it! We are waiting for you!

General announcements

- **New outreach partners:** INCF | Neurostars



Your OCNS representatives Leonid Rubchinsky and Sharmila Venugopal represent OCNS at INCF.



Leonid Rubchinsky was elected to represent OCNS on the INCF Governing Board



Sharmila Venugopal represents OCNS at INCF regarding Education and Training matters.

- **OCNS Melbourne postponed to 2022.**

- **Setting up Special Interest Groups (SIGs):** to enable members to work on tasks/projects of common interest together. Supported by the Board, SIGs will organise and manage themselves, and decide on what projects/tasks they want to undertake. We encourage you to join the discussion and express your interest in these on the respective Neurostars topics, or even to suggest other SIGs that you may be interested in forming and working on:

<https://neurostars.org/t/cns-2020-ocns-members-meeting/15273/12>.

- **Elections of new OCNS board will take place soon.**

Three new elected directors are needed (as travel award assistant, registration assistant, and social media assistant). We are seeking candidates. More information to come via the OCNS mailing list.



On behalf of the OCNS, the Newsletter contributors wish you much success with your research and training, and we look forward to seeing you in Leipzig at CNS*2021