What a year for WinRS! Women were extremely successful within the Society in 2017, with four women elected to the Board of Directors: Dr. Andrea Cupp is our new Vice-President Elect, Drs. Joan Jorgensen and Monika Ward are now Directors, and Dr. Erica Schoeller is our new Trainee Representative. We also rejoice at the election of Professor Lois Salamonsen to the Australian Academy of Science. Both Erica and Monika agreed to contribute to the Bulletin by reflecting on their careers. Don’t miss their articles below and join us in congratulating these amazing women scientists!

We are also very excited for the second edition of the WinRS Breakfast, which will take place on Friday, 14th July at 7 AM in the Delaware Suite of the Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC! This year, Dr. Sarah Kimmins will give a short presentation on biases working against women in science, followed by an open discussion led by Dr. Deborah Sloboda. So mark your calendars and share the news with both your male and female colleagues! Everyone is welcome to attend. We cannot wait to see you there!

*Dr. Océane Albert. 2017 SSR WinRS Chair*
Dr. Erica Schoeller is a postdoctoral fellow in UC San Diego. With a candidacy that combined both a great sense of humour and vision for the Society, she was elected Trainee Representative to the SSR Board of Directors this past May. She reflects on the impact of female mentors on her academic path. Congratulations, Erica!

I want to take some time to thank all the incredible female mentors that I’ve had throughout my scientific career. I have been fortunate to land in several excellent laboratories throughout my undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral studies. As everyone knows, the research environment in which you study and guidance from mentors and peers have a profound impact on your enthusiasm for science and for your success as a trainee, and so I am most grateful for these passionate and supportive mentors.

As an undergraduate, I was keen on getting some hands-on laboratory experience and I emailed several professors, only a few of whom responded, and none who said they would take an inexperienced undergraduate student. One kind-hearted professor forwarded my email to Dr. Susan Golden, one of the leading experts in circadian biology, and she offered me a summer position in her lab in College Station, TX. Susan’s mentoring abilities have extended from my undergraduate to my postdoctoral career. She now heads the circadian department at UC San Diego (where I am currently doing my postdoc in a different lab), where she continues to provide valuable career advice. She has encouraged me to take leadership roles, including as the Trainee Representative for the Center for Circadian Biology at UC San Diego, and as a co-instructor in one of her courses. Leadership is not something that comes naturally to me; my instinct is to sit in the back of the room and take notes quietly. Instead, she encouraged me to sit at the "big kids'" table and speak up, and because of her I have since gained confidence in my voice as a scientist and have taken on several leadership roles I previously would have considered impossible.

As I entered graduate school (still as the greenest of green scientists), I joined Dr. Kelle Moley’s lab at Wash U in Saint Louis. I remember proudly displaying my very first Western blot in lab meeting, explaining that it looked a little funny because I had accidentally loaded ten times the amount of protein I had intended, and that it was squiggly because I had accidentally run the gel too hot and it melted a bit. I told her that if you held it up and squinted just right, you could see an important scientific finding. It turned out there was nothing important on that blot, but instead of criticizing, she encouraged me to not give up and to try again. While I never did get that particular experiment to work, I gained amazing experience in one of the leading reproductive biology labs in the world. Dr. Moley is excels at mentoring her students all while managing a large lab, a clinical practice, and three children, whose calls sometimes interrupt her busy day. She taught me a great deal about how to manage my time, and I admire her ability to keep her priorities in line while balancing work, clinic, home, and (sometimes needy) graduate students. [continued page 3]
Following my graduate work, I took a postdoctoral position in Dr. Pamela Mellon’s lab at UC San Diego. I joined Dr. Mellon’s lab because of her renowned research in the fertility field, and because as I interviewed, her postdocs and grad students spoke so highly of her mentoring abilities. Over the past 4 years, I have found that to be absolutely true. Dr. Mellon enthusiastically supports the careers of her mentees regardless of career choice. Her graduates have become professors, teachers, lawyers, and successful biotech entrepreneurs. She answers every email or phone call, reads every grant draft, and provides help when we need it and independence when we need it. Throughout my career, I have been so fortunate to have had an incredible set of mentors that have guided me from a wide-eyed, shaky-handed student, to someone who will hopefully someday be a strong, thoughtful mentor to young scientists.

I think there are a specific set of challenges involved in being a woman in science, and yet these three inspirational mentors have set an outstanding example of how to not only meet these challenges but to exceed all expectations. Science is not easy sometimes (read: lots of times), and that’s why having an amazing network of support, such as WinRS, is critical for generating the next round of extraordinary female role models in this scientific community.

Monika Ward elected to the SSR Board of Directors

Monika Ward is a Professor in the Institute for Biogenesis Research, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii. Dr. Ward has been working in the field of reproductive and developmental biology and genetics of male infertility for over 20 years. Her research focus is on spermatogenesis and male fertility/infertility. She has been interested in the origin of sperm DNA damage and its consequences for fertilization, and the effects of assisted reproduction technologies (ART) on embryonic and fetal development. Currently the primary interest of her lab is on the genetic aspects of spermatogenesis, and particularly on the role on Y chromosome encoded genes in spermatogenesis and sperm function. The findings from her laboratory highlighted the functions of mouse Y genes in meiotic progression, sperm formation, and postmeiotic chromatin remodeling. Her group also identified the minimum Y chromosome complement necessary for successful assisted reproduction and has shown that the function of these 'minimal' genes can be replaced by genetic manipulation of genes encoded on other chromosomes.

During her post-doctoral work Monika was involved in the development of methods for non-conventional preservation of mouse spermatozoa. She and other members of Yana’s team have shown that sperm freeze-drying and freezing without cryoprotection are effective methods for long-term mouse storage that allow maintaining sperm DNA integrity and enable easy and cost effective shipping. Monika continued interest in sperm preservation while leading an independent laboratory and established methods for preservation of mouse uterine sperm and freezing-free method for human sperm preservation. Monika has been interested in sperm chromatin structure, its relationship to sperm DNA damage, and the effects of the latter on sperm function. [continued page 4]
Thanks to her expertise in assisted reproduction technologies she was able to investigate these topics from the unique angle and study the consequences of injecting of infertile sperm with chromatin condensation defects and DNA breaks on fertilization efficiency and embryo development and test for the effects of sperm DNA breaks on sperm ability to fertilize oocytes and on early post-fertilization events. She also investigated the effects of ART on different aspects of reproduction.

The SSR is a special society for Dr. Ward, one that she considers her 'home society' and one that played a vital role in her career development. She is a regular attendee at the SSR annual meetings and has served multiple times as an abstract reviewer, session chair, and session organizer. She was a member of a local arrangement committee for the SSR 2008 annual meeting and served as a Program Committee member (2010-2013). Dr. Ward has just been elected to the SSR Board of Directors.

Lois Salamonsen elected to the Australian Academy of Science

Professor Lois Salamonsen was inducted into the Australian Academy of Science on May 22, 2017.

Most of you will be aware that Lois has been a leader in the field of uterine biology, in addition to her recent service as the SSR Program co-Chair in 2014 and as Head of the Centre for Reproductive Health at the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, Australia.

Election by Academy peers follows a rigorous evaluation process, with Lois being one of only 21 individuals elected in 2017. Please congratulate Lois on this great recognition of her career of contributions, and enjoy this short YouTube video in which she explains the motivation and excitement that has fueled her success!

WinRS need YOU!

We are looking for motivated SSR members to be part of the 2018 WinRS Subcommittee! Join us in fostering mentoring, international collaboration and awareness among the female membership of the Society! Keep the WinRS spirit moving and growing by acting as a Chair, editor of the Bulletin, community manager or advisor to the group. Contact us at ssrwinrs@gmail.com for more information!

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