

Editor's Note: NCURA members are all over the world. To ensure that our Magazine reaches out to the various members we have around the globe and addresses their interests and issues, we are creating global contributing editors; our initial group is from Canada, Europe, and Japan. Below is a profile of each of our new editors, we believe you will benefit from their contributions in 2014.

Global Contributing Editors

University Research Administration in Japan

By Keiko Okano,
Global Contributing Editor, Japan

A little about myself, mostly as a University Research Administrator (URA):

My career as a URA is short. In the fall of 2011, I started as a grant proposal editor for a particular grant program at a private university. I really liked the job, and they seemed to be happy with my performance, so I was hired for a longer term. I enjoyed interacting with faculty and researchers, and

wanted to do more for them. Then I found a posting for a "research administrator" position at Kyoto University, which became my current profession in January 2013.

My primary responsibility still is proposal editing, but I also help with organizing symposiums, do information gathering and analyses, support contract negotiations, edit journal manuscripts, and . . . pretty much anything as requested. This is because URAs are quite new in Japan and people don't know what to expect of us. Therefore, I am in the process of building experience and trust between URAs and researchers, and I believe most, if not all, of my colleagues in this country are doing the same.

In my free time, I try to take advantage of living in Kyoto, the city filled with traditional beauty of Japan. I visit temples and shrines and walk or bike around the back streets of the city. I also started to learn how to wear kimono, traditional Japanese clothing. Once I master this to some extent, I will try other traditional cultural activities, such as tea ceremony and incense burning.

Japan's research overview and its direction:

Being scarce in marketable natural resources, Japan has been geared toward establishing itself upon science and technol-

ogy. In 1996, Basic Act on Science and Technology was enacted. Its basic principle is to raise Japan's standard of science and technology, through which we promote our economic growth and welfare in addition to contributing to the global advancement of science and technology and sustainable development. Every five years since, a Science and Technology Basic Plan is formulated, based on which individual programs are proposed and implemented.

The first (1996-2000) and the second (2001-2005) Basic Plans expanded the government investment in research and development, promoting basic research and strategically prioritizing funds for R&D addressing national and social issues. They also expanded competitive funds and restructured national universities and research institutions. The third (2006-2010) Basic Plan stressed on more strategic implementation of R&D, while reserving room for research diversity and independent basic research. It set eight prioritized areas of study: Life science, information communication technology (ICT), environment, nano-tech/material, energy, manufacturing technology, social infrastructure, and frontier science.

Delivery of the fourth Science and Technology Basic Plan (2011-2015) was delayed due to the great east Japan earthquake. Recovery from the disaster is the top priority, but it also raised awareness of global issues. In addition, the word "innovation" is taking the center stage. Strategic systems are to be established, and government-industry-academia networking is strengthened, in order to spur innovation. The two fields of special emphasis are "green" (energy supply, conservation, and infrastructure) and "life" (prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment of diseases, and quality of life improvement for the sick, elderly, and disabled).

Other policies worth mentioning for the readers of this magazine are 1) The reinforcement and promotion of research universities and 2) The support for internationalization of universities.



Keiko Okano and Ducky the seagull take in some sights throughout Japan.

The former mandates active involvement of URAs, which should help establish our standing. The latter promotes international research collaborations and invites researchers, instructors, and students from overseas, as well as sending abroad Japanese researchers, instructors, and students. It means that WE, including YOU, have greater chances to work together!

With this in scope, in the future articles, I would like to introduce what Japanese URAs do and discuss how we can collaborate. In the next article, I will report on the 3rd URA Symposium and the 5th RA Study Group Meeting which will be jointly held on November 18-19 at Kyoto University. There, URAs from all over Japan will gather and discuss the formation of a national URA network.



Keiko Okano, Ph.D., *University Research Administrator at Kyoto University in Kyoto, Japan, is a graduate of The University of Tokyo and University of California, Berkeley. She can be reached at okano.keiko.3v@kyoto-u.ac.jp*

From Rock Hound to Cat Herder/Research Administrator - University Research Administration in Europe

*By Olaf Svenningsen,
Global Contributing Editor, Europe*

Originally trained as a scientist with a Ph.D. in geology from Lund University in Sweden, my knowledge of extremely slow moving and unstoppable

tectonic forces and sudden, unexpected natural disasters has turned out to be somewhat appropriate in my role as a research administrator, too. My subduction into research administration began in 2000, when I was employed by the NSF to be the office manager of the NSF-MARGINS Program, that office being located at Columbia University in New York. In 2003, I moved back to my native Sweden, to Uppsala University, and the job of setting up a grants office, a new feature for that institution. In 2009, I moved to Denmark and the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) in Odense, the birth town of the storyteller Hans Christian Andersen. Here, I am head of a small research support office, providing service primarily to SDU's Faculty of Health Sciences and the hospital-based research in the Region of Southern Denmark. In addition, I am presently interim chair of DARMA, the Danish Association of Research Managers and Administrators, and member of the board of its European sister organization, EARMA.

I still retain some geology activities, and enjoy hiking in the arctic wilderness of the Sarek Mountains in northernmost Sweden, where I also did the fieldwork for my Ph.D. thesis. Denmark, on the other side, is pleasantly flat and absolutely mountain-free (the "Funen Alps" just south of Odense are ironically named, gently rolling, low hills), so as often as we can, my wife and I get out on our custom-built touring tandem bike, enjoying the scenic and very pretty countryside. Tandem biking is also the ultimate test of trust and collaboration skills.

Research in Europe reflects some major political trends, as well as the region's heterogeneity. While Europe has a long, proud history of scientific discovery and breakthrough, there are concerns about competitiveness. "Brain drain" to the US is a concern as well as the growing competition from the

emerging economies in for e.g. the BRIC countries. Making all the different ends meet is challenging: The European Union consists of 28 independent countries, each with its own history and traditions, not least when it comes to academic traditions and research systems. In addition there are the so-called Associated Countries – non-EU member states like Norway and Switzerland (the US is also an "AC") – shaping a complex situation. Imagine that each state in the US would have its own, completely and fiercely independent academic tradition and funding system, and you get an idea of the European research landscape. Each country has its own public funding agencies, roughly equivalent to the NIH and the NSF, but also a wildly varying plethora of private or semi-private foundations and charities, each with their own rules and expectations. Research administration is often compared to herding cats, and such complex settings make the challenge... let's call it "interesting".

The EU's Commission (EC) – the executive body or administration of the EU – is the major player in European cross-national research funding. EU's research funding does not operate through regular funding agencies à la NIH or NSF. Instead, it is organized into time-limited, so called "Framework Programs" (FP). These FP's have had a major impact, transforming European research funding – also at the national level – over the past decades. The thing of the moment is the launch in January 2014 of the 8th Framework Program for Research and Innovation, called Horizon 2020 that will run until 2020. With an estimated budget of c. €70 billion (c. \$95 billion), Horizon 2020 is one of the biggest research funding programs ever.

It is my ambition to contribute articles to NCURA Magazine that explore and explain this European situation – the EU and national perspectives – with a Trans-Atlantic or American angle.



Olaf M. Svenningsen, Ph.D., *Head of Southern Denmark Research Support at The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) and the Region of Southern Denmark. Olaf's primary responsibilities at SDU are pre-award activities, including strategy and systems development and implementation. Olaf is presently interim chair of DARMA, the Danish Association for Research Managers and Administrators, and board member at its European sister organization, EARMA. He can be reached at osvenningsen@health.sdu.dk*

Looking for new directions from the Vuoinestjääkkä Ridge while biking in the Sarek National park in Lapland, northernmost Sweden.



University Research Administration in Canada

By Martin Kirk,
Global Contributing Editor, Canada

Research and research administration in Canada is an interesting, challenging business and we have a lot in common with you, our US colleagues!

On the research front, Canada may be small in relative output but produces top quality research as part of the global innovation capacity. We have 3 universities amongst the top 40 in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings.

CAURA (The Canadian Association of University Research Administrators) is your sister association that represents the research administration profession in Canada, and we have around 830 members across the country. We have over 40 years of history as an association and provide many of the services (conferences, networking and professional development) that NCURA provides its members.

In working more closely with NCURA in the future we hope we can reach out and partner for the benefit of the profession in North America and beyond! The co-sponsoring of INORMS in Washington, DC in 2014 is a very valuable partnership and will benefit our sister organizations and their members around the globe. We have much to learn from each other!

There are a number of hot topics I'd like to explore over the coming year including:

- The evolving *global innovation strategy* and the part Canada is playing – The global innovation strategy seems to be tilting away from the focus on university spin-off towards enhanced industry partnership and knowledge mobilization. We know university based research is important but we still don't seem to know the best way to "capture or measure the return on investment".
- Important *new and evolving research policies*: open access, data management planning, etc. – We are all slaves to the ever changing compliance landscape and trying to protect researcher productivity. How to maintain compliance and provide frictionless administration

in an evolving compliance landscape is the million dollar question!

- *Research Metrics* - Research impact, research administration metrics (efficiency, capacity, etc.). We live in a world of endless assessment. We have STAR Metrics, Snowball, REF, ERA, THE, QS, SciVal, InCites and many other assessment systems and tools. What does it all mean, how do we measure success, and what key performance indicators make sense?
- *Research administration as a career*... comparing CAURA survey to global data – Simon Kerr in Melbourne, Australia carried out a neat study on the state of the profession. CAURA is now in the process of carrying out a parallel survey to look closely at the profession in Canada and compare with Australia and hopefully the US.
- *Research administration (IT) systems*... How they help us become more efficient and compliant – Deploying state-of-the-art systems to track research funding and compliance is vital to maintain efficiency, but it is a risky and expensive business. There are many products to choose from. What are the best approaches to planning a system and how do we avoid wasting time and money and even failed system implementation?
- *Indirect Cost of Research (ICR)*... How long can we continue to subsidize research that does not come with ICR funds and how the rates of ICR funding vary across the globe? How do we assess the true cost of research and what is the best practice in tracking and recovering ICR? ■



Martin Kirk, Ph.D., is currently president of the Canadian Association of University Administrators (CAURA) and director of the office of research services at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Prior to working at UBC Martin was associate VP research at the University of Calgary. He is a graduate of Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh (BSc in chemistry) and University of Calgary (PhD in applied chemistry-1989). Martin worked in research in industry before embarking on a career in research administration in 1999. Martin enjoys sailing, biking, golfing, travelling, photography and skiing, and can be reached at Martin.Kirk@ors.ubc.ca



Martin Kirk hikes up to Cheakamus Lake in Garibaldi park near Squamish in British Columbia, Canada.