

OCNS Board of Directors 2021 Meeting Notes

8 July 2021 9:00 - 13:00 EDT/NY time

9 July 2021 9:00 -13:00 EDT/NY time

Online on zoom

Approval of the agenda and addition of points

Approval of 2020 Board Meeting minutes

Legal matters

Election or Confirmation of Vice President for the next 2-year term

Martin is unable to serve another term. Need to elect a new VP. VS has posted on slack and emailed the board to solicit self-nominations / suggestions.

Board membership after 2021

Refer to DirectorDuties2021.docx. Rotating off end of 2021: Ankur, Boris, Cecilia, Renaud, Martin. Needed in 2022: workshop assistant, member approval assistant, tutorials assistant, newsletter assistant, sponsorship assistant.

Nomination committee membership

Membership in 2020: Sharmila, Renaud, and Ankur (as webmaster). New members: Renaud, Eirini and Shailesh (as webmaster).

OCNS Membership

Report on membership

- 217 faculty members (2020 189, 2019 235, 2018 202, 2017 185)
- 141 postdoc members (2020 155, 2019 209, 2018 145, 2017 120)
- 212 student members (2020 266, 2019 317, 2018 265, 2017 195)
- 2323 inactive members (2020 2081, 2019 1778, 2018 1617, 2017 1420)

Emeritus/retired membership

Last year we said this would be decided by the Membership chair / assistant - we agreed to do this on a case-by-case basis.

CNS Meetings

Report on CNS*2021 (Anca)

CNS*2022 (Tony - LOC Chair)

CNS*2023 planning and potential integration with ICMNS, CNS*2024

CNS*2023 to be held in Leipzig, Germany (jointly with ICMNS, postponed from 2021), CNS*2024 to be held in Brazil (postponed from 2022).

Call for Expressions of Interest for CNS*2025

We have received an expression of interest to hold CNS*2025 in Florence, Italy (led by Michele Migliore). For the sake of transparency we should issue an open call for Eols - Michele is aware of this. Call for short Eols to be issued early in 2022. Will then warn interested LOs that Florence will also submit a proposal.

Use of Sched and Discord platform in future meetings

Do we need to continue having a program book if we have Sched and all the information is online anyway?

Do we want to continue with Discord in case of another online (or physical / hybrid) meeting?

Program Committee Report (Christiane)

Tutorial Planning (Anca)

Tutorial report – 12 tutorials total

3 Software Tutorials, 5 Satellite Tutorials (1 full-day), and 4 Main Tutorials (1 full-day)

•Authors 5 USA, 5 Europe (3 Germany and 2 UK), 1 Argentina, 1 Japan

•Numbers on Sched on Day of:

SO1	SO2	SO3	SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	T1	T2	T3	T4
29	37	33	31	54	41	49	61	66	86	48	47

•Participants at each session: above 1/2 (some at 2/3) of the number on Sched at any time, which is a significant number compared to onsite;

•All tutorials had more than 15 people attending the live session on Zoom/Google Meet, with some being more popular;

•Attendance increased as we approached the day of tutorials; with maximum attendees on July 3rd although tutorials were overlapping

Positives:

•Quality of materials was high so people stayed and attended; in fact, people are still coming in to pick up the materials for these sessions (numbers increase on Sched every day) -> total of more than 600 participants on the 12 tutorials (in 2020 were 1800 participants on Sched)

•Subjects were very different so people had many choices

•Online implementation worked well, each tutorial speaker set up a Google Meet or Zoom link and managed the session

•Being spread over the week gave the authors the choice of time, and except July 3rd there were no overlaps

•no zombies/ trolls

Negatives:

- 3 tutorials overlapped in the day of tutorials
- USA authors requested a time not on July 3rd or 4th which were US holidays. We were able to accommodate this tutorial during the week as satellites.

Showcases report - 6 showcases total

6 non-overlapping sessions of 30 min each (double than last year); recorded on Crowdcast; everything went well

- Authors: 3 from Australia, 3 from UK
- Session had 320 in total attendees on Sched (539 last year); and live around 55-65 people, with fewer at the end (43, past midnight)

Well, this new type of event worked well again; each session received lots of Q&A from attendees.

=> I suggest keeping the Showcases.

- Might be difficult to schedule as non-overlapping sessions.

Workshops and Symposia Planning (Martin, Jorge)

Workshop report (Jorge)

A total of 10 workshops: 4 short ones (0.5 days), 5 medium (1 day), 1 long (1.5 days)

- Organizers from Europe (25), USA (6), Japan (3), India (1), Colombia (1), Australia (1)
- Speakers widely distributed across countries and career stages. Regarding gender balance, the % of female speakers goes from 16% in a couple workshops to 58% in others, with the majority scoring around 35-45%.
- Time slots: morning CEST (3 sessions on July 7), afternoon CEST/morning EST (10 sessions across both days) and evening CEST/afternoon EST (4 sessions across both days).
- Number of speakers and approximate number of participants for each workshop ((-)-short workshop, (+)long workshop):

	W1	W2	W3(+)	W4	W5(-)	W6(-)	W7	W8(-)	W9	W10(-)
Number of speakers	12	15	11	8	6	4	12	5	13	6
Min. audience	26	18	14	15	25	28	28	14	20	25

Max. audience	39	39	33	31	32	42	54	43	52	39
----------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

- Number of registered attendees for the talks at Sched was similar or slightly lower than the ones above.

- All workshops had a minimum of ~15 people attending at any moment (except in some slots for panel discussions, breakout sessions or similar, when numbers could fall down to 10 in some cases), with significant differences in popularity. Short workshops seem to attract and retain more audience, maybe a combination of their brevity, focus, and having more consolidated speakers.

- The number of fee waivers offered to the workshop increased from 16 to 34 (2 for short, 4 for medium, and 6 for long workshops) after petitions from several workshop organizers. Of those, only a total of 26 waivers were actually used.

Positives:

- The quality of the presentations was very good, and the vast majority of speakers contacted by the organizers in early stages were able to participate at the workshops.

- A wide range of topics was present, going from classic CNS workshop topics (information theory, multi-scale networks, inhibitory circuits) to some more ‘novel’ (neuron-glia modeling, clinical computational neuroscience).

- All workshops used Zoom (all organizers had access to an unlimited Zoom account). Besides small talks delays and minor problems with passwords (solved on the spot with the hugely useful support from volunteers Nikola Jajcay and Shirin Dora), there were no incidents during the workshops. No Zoombombing reported.

- About 7 out of 10 workshops recorded all or part of their sessions, with the idea that their talks could be later uploaded to the OCNS Youtube channel.

Negatives:

- A couple of workshops had difficulties confirming their speakers, partly due to the fact that (i) the time between the acceptance and the meeting itself was short, and especially (ii) several speakers found it troublesome having to pay just to deliver their own invited talk (i.e. they were not interested in attending the rest of the conference). The increase in the number of fee waivers partially alleviated that.

- Some workshop organizers were worried about the payments decreasing the impact and reach of their workshops. It should be noted here that we had of course less participants than last year, but this year’s participants were quite engaged in the workshops.

- Workshops were a bit Europe-centric, especially taking into account the online format and the flexibility regarding the time zones offered to the organizers.

Planning for Symposia (Martin):

I am mostly repeating here my report on symposia planning from last year. Since we are now returning to Melbourne, our original ideas from 2020 become relevant again.

At the 2019 Board meeting, we had proposed a new category of workshops, to be called “symposia”. These would be invited workshops (organizer/topic chosen by OCNS). The idea was to use these symposia to attract new segments of the neuroscience community, or to introduce attractive topics that are currently not well represented at the CNS meetings. We discussed having 1 or 2 symposia every year, with stronger financial support as compared to regular workshops.

The symposia subcommittee (Martin, Sharmila, Tony, Thomas, plus Volker, Leonid, and Peter) then came up with the following ideas for symposia at the Melbourne meeting:

- 1 or 2 symposia: reinforcement learning, deep learning, or AI more generally. Strong Asian community is an advantage here. Possible organizers: Kenji Doya (who is CNS regular), Yi Zeng: <https://bii.ia.ac.cn/~yizeng/> (who is very well connected in China, and was Erik de Schutter’s suggestion on how to involve the Chinese community).
- 1 symposium focusing on the interplay of experiment and modelling/theory, best if organized or co-organized by an experimentalist. Could involve the Australian experimentalist community. Possible names: Pulin Gong (theory, <https://sydney.edu.au/science/about/our-people/academic-staff/pulin-gong.html>), Greg Stuart (experiment, <https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/stuart-gj>).

Due to the evolving Covid situation, we did not go ahead with the planning, and no formal invitations were made for Melbourne. In 2021, we discussed that the experiment/theory symposium would work well for Leipzig, but again it did not reach formal planning stages.

If we want to have symposia in Melbourne, we should decide as soon as possible how many (1 or 2), and how much budget we would give to the invited organizer to use for speakers.

Current Symposia Planning Committee: Thomas K, Jorge, Peter, Christiane, Martin. Replace Peter with new workshop assistant and Thomas K with Tony?

Financial Matters

Treasurer’s Report (Leonid)

2020 was finished with a loss (as expected, due to covid). Tax declaration was filed in spring. Mandatory Memberclicks upgrade led to changes in how finances are handled, this presented and presents a few small technical challenges, but we are resolving them. 2021 is projected to end with a small surplus, so OCNS can safely tap into reserves in the next year. Overall, the Organization is in a strong financial shape.

Budget approval

Publications and Communications

Special interest groups (SIGs) (Ankur)

1. There was some interest in a few SIG after last year’s meeting: Software, Clinical Computational Neuroscience, Industry SIGs.
2. Not aware of any SIGs apart from the Software WG to have taken off. VS - but see comment by Fleur about SIG on AI and Comp Neuro Education below. Also, there seems to be a nascent one on Clinical Computational Neuroscience led by Xenia Kobeleva (they also had a workshop at the meeting).
3. Software WG:

- a. Website at: https://ocns.github.io/SoftwareWG/blog_index.html
- b. Chairs: Shailesh, Ankur (who also act as liaisons with the OCNS Board)
 - i. Malin also acts as a liaison with the OCNS Board, and the INCF.
- c. Membership managed using a GitHub team under the OCNS organization: <https://github.com/orgs/OCNS/teams/software-wg/members>
 - i. Currently ~20 members, most of whom are active in discussions, meetings, and events.
 - ii. Members should be members of either OCNS or INCF (but we don't enforce this strongly currently, since we don't want it to act as a barrier for participation--there's also no automatic way of checking Memberclicks etc. either since that's not used at all for the housekeeping bits.)
- d. Single WG slide for use by members: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jKwCWsuOCMnYFYc_gnnrA8YYKxLbxbi63oN9BO5anzU/edit?usp=sharing
- e. Tasks/issue tracker on GitHub: <https://github.com/OCNS/SoftwareWG/issues>
- f. Discussions happen on GitHub: <https://github.com/OCNS/SoftwareWG/discussions>
- g. Aim: all work, discussions, to happen openly in public.
- h. Shared by INCF and OCNS:
 - i. <https://www.incf.org/blog/new-incf-working-group-incfocns-software-wg>
- i. Meetings:
 - i. First meeting in February to decide on what/how/where: <https://ocns.github.io/SoftwareWG/2021/02/07/wg-meeting-26-january-2021.html>
 - ii. Subsequent meetings to decide on Software WG tutorials etc (not published on website):
 - 1. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VY2CrI4oJJ_gmfwVmMFclazNe7EaEJrVQIhkWCCvP70/edit?usp=sharing
 - iii. Next members meeting expected after holidays (around September)
- j. Currently holding "developer sessions" where developers from different software tools used in computational neuroscience discuss how their tools are developed. The goal is to share software development knowledge between development teams, and also spread it to users. The hope is that the spread of knowledge will help more users become contributors. Dev sessions are recorded and uploaded to the INCF YouTube channel.
 - i. Dev sessions held: <https://ocns.github.io/SoftwareWG/category/events/>
 - 1. Brian:
 - 2. Neurolib
 - 3. NeuroFedora:
 - 4. GeNN
 - 5. SciUnit/NeuronUnit
 - ii. Planned: <https://github.com/OCNS/SoftwareWG/issues?q=is%3Aissue+is%3Aopen+label%3A%22C%3A+DevSessions%22>
 - 1. NetPyNE

2. Neuron
 3. PyNN
 4. ?
- k. Also working on writing up software development guidelines for reference by the community.
- i. Currently WIP: <https://github.com/OCNS/SoftwareDevelopmentGuidelines>
 - ii. Published as a Jupyter book: <https://ocns.github.io/SoftwareDevelopmentGuidelines/>
- l. Poster accepted at INCF neuroinformatics conference:
- i. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1kJk4JNwXf7M481MILLNyucnMIEL9gnGLkVm8WSeFuE/edit?usp=sharing>
- m. Beginner level tutorials at CNS*2021:
- i. <https://ocns.github.io/SoftwareWG/2021/06/09/software-wg-tutorials-at-cns-2021-online-bash-git-and-python.html>
 - ii. Good participation: 20 attendees in each session on average
 - iii. Recordings made, will be uploaded to INCF YouTube space
- n. Future plans:
- i. Continue dev sessions after holidays
 - ii. try hackathons/unconferences to encourage users to participate and contribute to the tools they use
 - iii. Continue beginner level tutorials
 1. Collaboration with Software Carpentry, BrainHack, and Turing Way organisations has been discussed.
 - iv. Host beginner level satellite tutorials as part of CNS meetings annually (perhaps a week or two before the conference once we're back to in-person conferences)
 - v. Hope activities will encourage more people to join the WG
 - vi. Immediate post CNS task: send out e-mail to membership + registration asking them to join the WG.
 - vii. Expand to general neuroscience membership (currently mostly computational neuroscience focussed).
- o. Areas of concern where we need help:
- i. Lack of diversity at the WG: in terms of groups underrepresented in STEM.
 - ii. Lack of diversity at the WG: in terms of technical knowhow. Active membership is currently dominated by developers of tools, not enough users. However, the tutorials we held did have lots of users, so it's early to say so.
 - iii. Branching out to more neuroscience domains other than comp-neuro.
 - iv. Not WG specific: general lack of development resources for software tools.
 1. Probably because tools are still not given as much importance as "scientific output".
 2. Software development positions in industry generally better paid than those in science
 3. Results in fewer grants, fewer people interested in working on tools and infrastructure.

Report on interaction with INCF and Neurospaces (Leonid, Malin, Ankur)

Use of ConfMaster management system (Christiane, Thomas N, Ingo)

What are the main issues (in order of significance, from Thomas):

- Occasional catastrophic failures (e.g. mangled emails); did not happen in 2021 as far as I can tell
- Structural/functional shortcomings:
 - o The main shortcoming is missing functionality around reviewer communications. In particular, it is impossible to send targeted reminders to reviewers who are late or unresponsive; sending unspecific reminders to all reviewers regularly causes complaints from reviewers (my workaround used to be downloading an export of all papers and using a custom-made jupyter notebook and my google account to build my own system for targeted email reminders; but it is quite technical/involved and entails use of a private email address)
 - o The abstract entry has its issues, in particular if people paste from MS Word (formatting corrupts character count) and if they want formula; however, it seems that people have accepted by now that this is what it is. I haven't seen any complaints about this aspect this year.
 - o Another weakness is that there is no checking logic for the requirement of an attached longer summary for orals and travel awards, leading regularly to authors not submitting the required material; this then needs to be sorted by the chair in painful case-by-case communication (and there is no functionality for targeted reopening of submissions, so global editing often stays enabled); in 2021, submissions with missing attachments went unnoticed (not sure how it was resolved eventually), editing of abstracts remained open long after the deadline
 - o There are some broken features like a wider variety of email templates, some of the markup around reviewer assignments (but these are pretty easy to work around/ ignore)

Publication of proceedings in BMC Neuroscience (Ingo, Thomas N)

Education and Training Update (including Neurotech EU) (Fleur)

1. This year again no trainee poster award: it was impossible to 'recognize' students, and it was not known how well posters were visited. However, it would be good to pick this up again once we start having on-site meetings again! We should think about how to 'recognize' posters from PhD students. Also, we should think about awards (previous years books from publishers were sponsored).
2. A taskforce ('SIG') Computational Neuroscience and AI aiming to develop open teaching materials for high school students (and the general public) has been formed, and is starting to develop materials for the general public and in particular the International and the Dutch BrainBee: <https://hersenympiade.nl/en/werkgroep-computational-neuroscience-en-ai/>. Anyone interested can join. This has also been shared on public channels of OCNS.

3. The newly formed European University of Brain and Technology (<https://theneurotech.eu/>) is developing open courses on all levels (from high-school level to graduate and postgraduate in their life long learning center) as well as a platform for teaching and sharing content (MOOCs for example). They are very open for different possibilities of collaboration. Would we want to collaborate with them? For instance, we could think about hosting a lecture series there: "NeurotechEU should be able to provide the infrastructure. In case there is interest, the role of OCNS would be providing a list of lectures and proposing who would be the person to teach. We can help edit and produce the videos, distribute the content under NeurotechEU and OCNS joint branding." Would we be interested in this? Anyway, many other possibilities, they're also starting up and much is still under construction.

Miscellaneous and matters arising

Discussion about OCNS' funding model (Ankur)

Honorary memberships / prizes