



EM Section AGM Update 2021

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A new year and a new chair

My first report as the newly incoming Chair of the RMS Electron Microscopy (EM) Section is dominated by the impact of lockdown, which has caused considerable changes in the way the section delivered activities to support the microscopy community. However, the community has remained vibrant and stoic in the face of limitations in meeting people as well as the simple act of working on microscopy equipment.

The calendar year kicked off with the Virtual Correlative Microscopy Symposium, which morphed from the expected 5th Joint Workshop and Scientific Meeting on Correlative Microscopy. The event was great in maintaining the excellence in correlative microscopy that is such a strength of the EM section. The more materials focussed Virtual Microscopy Characterisation of organic-inorganic Interfaces 2021 brought together a range of pioneers in microscopy and included topics in both the physical and life sciences. Perhaps the most ambitious of events was to deliver the EM course, which remains a bedrock training event in the calendar, through a virtual forum. I think the event was a great success in understand what worked well in the virtual world as well as reminding us all of the value of the absent hands-on experiences that we often took for granted. I write this at the time of the 'All Things Cryo – A Virtual Course' led by Dr Chris Parmenter that also continues the traditions on the section in a commitment to training and disseminating the best technical skills to the community.

The RMS's flagship Microscience Microscopy Congress (mmc2021) incorporating the Institute of Physics's Electron Microscopy and Analysis Group (EMAG) Congress succumbed to virtuality but retained all of the essence of the physical event. Notably the support of the exhibition allowed attendees to plan for their next new equipment or consumable purchase from the comfort of their home. I found this part of mmc2021 to be engrossing and was drawn into a number of virtual workshops that were put on by numerous sponsors. The scientific conference was packed out with contributions from the EM section through the frontiers in bioimaging, life and physical science sessions. I also had the pleasure of gatecrashing Liz Duke's session on x-ray microscopy to virtually present the Alan Agar medal to Dr Alexandra Pacureanu from ESRF.

Aside from the events that the EM section led and participated in, I feel that there is a particular need to acknowledge the immense efforts the community has put in to get EM moving as we come out of this major pandemic period. Many of my colleagues on the section have toiled with maintaining their laboratories; often overcoming obstacles as mundane as working out how to get to their place of work to making sure all the additional risk assessments were in place to allow their work to continue. Many EM facilities have remained dormant and awaited the nudge of the microscopist to bring equipment back to life or, in more troubling cases, a careful reading

of the service contracts when microscopes have not appreciated their almost winter-like slumber.

In terms of the section, I have been immensely grateful to all members in actively contributing to the committee meetings. Dr Rebecca Thompson has been fantastic as an enthusiastic deputy chair to the committee and am indebted to Dr Lucy Collinson for providing such an effective handover to me. The committee meetings have been wonderful in future scoping, particularly in highlighting the importance of training, and have continued to benefit from our focussed interest groups (FIGs). We wish the fledgling Data Analysis in Imaging section that arose from the FIGs success and continued collaboration with the EM section, where data analysis remains a huge growth area in EM. The committee was also sad to say goodbye to Dr Anton Page, a mainstay of the EM section and key link to the Association of Clinical Electron Microscopists, but grateful that we have Ms Patricia Goggin stepping into the breach.

My hopes for the immediate future are the rapid acceleration of EM physical events that can move us back to a more normal business as usual situation. Often this cannot be done quickly as venues need to be booked well in advance, with the upcoming annual general meeting illustrating these types of delays as a confirmed virtual event despite relaxations in lockdown and social distancing. However, I am optimistic that the EM section remains committed to a restoration of activities in the near future.

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EM section chair