



UMRA FORUM

FEBRUARY 2022

mRNA technology: the fundamentals and the possibilities

The word “mRNA” burst into the headlines in 2020 when it became known that messenger RNA technology was enabling the rapid development of vaccines to combat COVID-19. These vaccines have fulfilled their promise, and they are but one of many possible medical applications of this revolutionary technology.

While mRNA vaccines were demonstrating their success in fighting the coronavirus, stories spread on social media claiming all manner of bad side effects and sinister uses of mRNA technology, such as altering an individual’s DNA and genetic makeup.

UMRA’s February 2022 Forum will address the basics of mRNA technology, how it works, and what it can and cannot do. It will also address the wide range of potential medical applications of mRNA technology currently under study, including cancer treatment.

Our speaker will be Louis M. Mansky, PhD, professor in the School of Dentistry Department of Diagnostic and Biological Sciences and director of the University’s Institute for Molecular Virology. He is an expert in human virology, virus particle assembly and transmission, antiviral drug target identification, and AIDS research; and the institute he leads is doing important research in these and related areas. Mansky has also been part of the University’s “[Ask a U of M Expert](#)” series, addressing vaccine myths and hesitancy.



Louis Mansky

Please [register](#) for this Zoom webinar and join us at 12 noon on Tuesday, February 22, to learn more about the considerable potential of mRNA technology to prevent and treat disease.

—Ron Matross, UMRA president-elect and Program Committee chair

FEBRUARY 15 WORKSHOP

How to ignore your inner critic and write without fear

Several years ago, when I was working at the University and living in St. Paul, I read that a University faculty member, a woman who also lived in St. Paul, had won the Thurber Prize for American Humor. The prize in previous years had gone to David Sedaris, Calvin Trillin, Jon Stewart, and Ian Frazier, to name a few. There had been a few women finalists, but never before was a woman awarded the prize.

I bought the book, *Dear Committee Members*, and if you’d been in the room while I was reading it you’d have heard me laugh out loud and sometimes gasp, thinking, Can she say that? After I finished the book, I did something I hardly ever do. I wrote a fan letter to the author. And she graciously replied.

Julie Schumacher, the author of that book and its sequel, *The Shakespeare Requirement*, plus novels for young adults and a coloring book for academics (!), will be the featured presenter for the UMRA Living Well Workshop on Tuesday, February 15. She will discuss her own writing process and the ways in which writing—whether fiction, nonfiction, or poetry—can become more enjoyable and even, at times, less of a personal trial.

A member of the University of Minnesota faculty since 1996, Schumacher was named Regents Professor of English and Creative Writing in 2021, one of only two Regents Professors named last year.

See **WORKSHOP** on page 4 ...

From the President

Who are we?

Have you ever had a conversation with someone about to retire from the University and heard something like, “I’ve heard about UMRA, but I don’t think I want to join the organization because it’s mostly retired (insert faculty/staff/other category)”?



Jan Morlock

If we look at ourselves through the lens of the employment categories we were in while working at the University, we find that our membership is roughly balanced between non-faculty and faculty employees. In Office of Human Resources parlance, 58 percent of us were professional and administrative, civil service,

or bargaining unit employees, and 42 percent were faculty. (Thank you, Virgil Larson and Cathy Lee Gierke, for providing those numbers from the UMRA member database.)

There is a similar balance on the UMRA Board and other governance leadership positions. And when the Nominating Committee does its work every year to identify candidates for our organization’s leadership, there is attention paid to finding candidates who represent the diversity of our members, including their former work experience.

So, keep talking to your former colleagues and new retirees and encourage them to join UMRA. We need their diverse points of view.

Do the categories matter?

In our individual relationships with the University, sometimes the categories do matter. Administratively, there are University policies that affect some employment categories differently from others, and UMRA, as an organization for all retirees, needs to be aware and supportive of the interests of all our members.

But for the most part, the categories that meant so much when we were in active work mode are superseded when we retire and find ourselves anew in this stage of life. If you’re with other UMRA members learning about family history, or out on a hike, or volunteering on a project, or serving on the board, the old categories aren’t there. They dissolve in the richness of your new experiences.

For me, that’s been one of the subtle pleasures of doing things with other UMRA members. The old work edges melt away and it’s just you and me and who we are as people. I think we are Driven to Discover that, too.

—Jan Morlock, UMRA President, jam@umn.edu

Welcome new members to UMRA

Please give a hearty welcome to two new members who joined UMRA in December 2021. For contact information, visit the Member Login page at umra.umn.edu (login required).

Julia Kelly, University Libraries, science librarian

Robert A. Super, Department of Pediatrics, department administrator

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA RETIREES ASSOCIATION

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Researching family history with DNA

Doing family history research with DNA will be the focus when the UMRA Family History Interest Group (FHIG) meets via Zoom from 10 to 11 a.m. on Wednesday, February 9, 2022.

UMRA member John Anderson will talk about the science behind this approach, and his own personal experience with DNA analyzed by [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). After John's presentation, there will be time for Q and A. The Zoom link will be sent to all UMRA members in early February. We hope you can join us.

Visit umra.umn.edu/content/family-history to find past FHIG presentations.

Please contact FHIG co-chairs Lynn C. Anderson at boundarywaters07@gmail.com or Craig Swan at swan@umn.edu if you have questions or suggestions for future topics.

Hike Fort Snelling February 14

Predictably, there will be days in a Minnesota winter when even the hardest of hikers might want to stay indoors. Thus, because of the below-zero temperatures and wind chill forecast for the UMRA Hiking Club's January 10 hike, Julie Sweitzer, the UMRA member leading the hike, and I decided to reschedule the hike for 9:30 a.m. on Monday, February 14.

Hopefully, it will be a bit warmer by Valentine's Day so Julie can show us the great trail at Fort Snelling State Park in St. Paul. Go to the Hiking Club page on the UMRA website for the details and to register for the February 14 hike.

This is a good opportunity to talk about the right gear for winter hiking. Layers make a huge difference between having fun and wishing the hike were over. I wear a wool base layer over my long underwear t-shirt and then my winter jacket. If you don't have ski or snow pants, long underwear under your hiking pants is essential. A neck gaiter or scarf makes cold, windy weather bearable, and a warm woolly hat, mittens, and socks complete a good winter hiking outfit.

I have heated gloves, and in extreme cold I use disposable hard warmers in my mittens. I also put one in my pocket to keep my phone from freezing.

I have hiked and snowshoed in minus-10-degree weather and totally enjoyed the trail. My attire made all the difference.

Parks in the winter are truly a thing of beauty. It is enchanting to be out in nature in the complete stillness of a winter morning, feeling gratitude for what a beautiful world we live in and lucky to have hiking friends to share it with.

To join the UMRA Hiking Club, please send your name, cell phone number, and zip code (used to locate our hikes) to bevmoe@umn.edu.

—Bev Moe, UMRA Hiking Club chair



Sunshine, fresh snow, and long shadows graced this early-morning winter hike on Bush Lake in Bloomington, Minnesota. Photo by Bev Moe.

Thank you to University Bookstores and The Pillars of Prospect Park for sponsoring UMRA's February 2022 newsletter, and to the University of Minnesota Foundation for sponsoring the newsletter and UMRA's February 2022 Forum.

HELLO, my name is Jerry Rinehart

Hometown: Davenport, Iowa

When did you join UMRA? 2013

What was your very first job? Seven years old, mowing lawn for the neighborhood barber shop (not an expansive acreage).

What was your occupation when you retired from FT work? Vice provost and dean of students, Twin Cities Campus.

What was your first car? My dad's hobby involved fixing up and trading junkers: my gift was a '52 Chevy Bel Air, with a broken front-seat latch. It was great for popping the clutch and bouncing through the drive-in with my buddies as we waved in unison to the kids in fancy cars.

If you could learn a new skill, what would you like it to be? Calligraphy. Eventually, I would be able to read my own handwriting.

Do you have a favorite place on the U of M campus? The Mall between Northrop and Coffman—beautiful in all seasons, but especially when it is bustling with students.

What is a fun fact about you we might not know?

I was a back-up quarterback for my freshman football team at Dartmouth. Starring moment was when I completed a pass while getting my knee blown out in the fourth quarter of the last game of the season. Freshman year went downhill from there.

What is something you currently enjoy doing with your time? Learning classical guitar. I played folk and jug band music most of my life but wanted to learn to read music and step up my game in retirement. When COVID isn't raging I play weekly as a volunteer at Regions Hospital. And, of course, travel—usually involving golf!



Jerry Rinehart started work at age 7, retired as vice provost and dean of students, and is still going strong.

... **WORKSHOP** from page 1.

She was recognized by the College of Liberal Arts as a Scholar of the College for 2016–19, and has received a Distinguished Educator Award from the College of Continuing Education plus awards for the teaching of both graduate and undergraduate students at the U. For 12 years, she directed the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English.



Julie Schumacher

Many UMRA members may remember the previous occasion when she joined us as the keynote speaker for our 2017 Annual Meeting at the Campus Club.

What questions do you have for Professor Schumacher? One of mine will be, *Do you ever have a good laugh from your characters as you write your stories, or is it only we, the readers, who get to have that?*

Please [register](#) for this workshop and join us via Zoom at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, February 15.

— Jan Morlock, UMRA president

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Photo Club to meet February 8

“Backlit or backlighting” will be the theme when the UMRA Photo Club meets by Zoom on Tuesday, February 8, starting at 12:30 p.m. The meeting will start with theme pictures followed by pictures chosen by members without regard to the theme.

All UMRA members with an interest in photography are welcome to join and participate in the lively discussion and good cheer.

Please email Sheri Goldsmith May golds009@gmail.com or Craig Swan swan@umn.edu for more information about joining the Zoom meeting.



Easter Bunny Band by Craig Swan was one of the wide variety of pictures presented when the UMRA Photo Club met in January to share and discuss photos under the theme, “What’s my number?”

Book Club I to meet February 18

Laura Ericksen will lead the discussion of *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah when the UMRA Book Club I meets via Zoom at 2 p.m. on Friday, February 18.

Contact Pat Tollefson at p-toll@umn.edu for more information, including suggestions for starting a new book club.

Fourth Friday Book Club to meet February 25

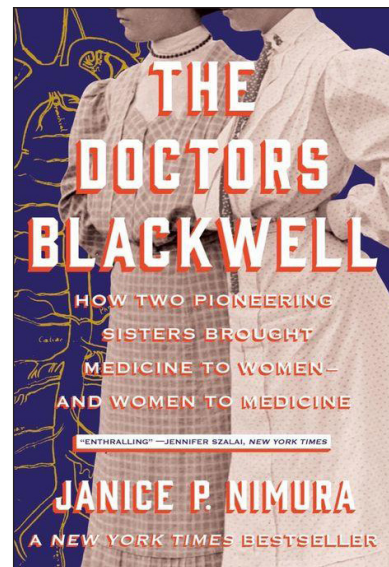
UMRA’s Fourth Friday Book Club will discuss *The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine* by Janice P. Nimura when it meets at 2 p.m. on Friday, February 25, via Zoom.

Everyone is welcome to join the discussion! Contact Dorothy Marden at marden@umn.edu for your email invitation.

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States; her younger sister, Emily Blackwell, was the third. Nimura’s broad outline of their history, a 2021 *New York Times* bestseller, is a compelling tale of the sisters’ pioneering achievements in the mid 1800s.

Of even greater interest, it is a story of the medical profession as it was then practiced, prior to the establishment of the germ theory of disease. It was a time when, for many doctors, the focus was on short-term cures—treatments that were often painful and dangerous, and of questionable efficacy.

The Doctors Blackwell is a richly researched chronicle of evolving medical practices and the broad intellectual context of their time. Both sisters died in the year 1910. By then there were more than 9,000 women doctors in the United States. Today, 35 percent of physicians in America are women, and women comprise about half the medical students.



If you have questions, want to be on the email invitation list, or have suggestions for future books, please contact Dorothy Marden at marden@umn.edu or Maggie Catambay m-cata@umn.edu.

Protecting the popular vote

Are you disturbed by evidence coming forth from the House investigation into the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol that Donald Trump's team sought to use state legislatures to overturn the popular election of Joe Biden in 2020? Are you also concerned by reports that this strategy is being actively considered for 2024?

So is UMRA member Mark Bohnhorst, who, together with Aviam Soifer, a constitutional law scholar and retired law school dean, has put forward a novel suggestion for how Congress could take action to protect the people's right to vote for president.

In a [commentary](#) published in *The Hill*, a Washington-based daily newspaper and political news website, Bohnhorst and co-author Soifer point out that Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment—long ignored and never



enforced—enshrines the principle of the people's right to vote for president, and it requires a state's representation in the House (and thus in the Electoral College) to be reduced "proportionately" if the state violates that principle. With

state legislative usurpation of the right, the proportional reduction could be 100 percent.

According to Bohnhorst and Soifer, the House could adopt a resolution that it will not seat members from such a state, and Congress could pass a joint resolution that it will not count the state's electoral votes.

Look to the 14th Amendment

Their commentary, appearing in *The Hill* under the headline "Look to 14th Amendment to check GOP efforts to subvert popular vote," is adapted from a forthcoming law review article, co-authored by Bohnhorst and Soifer (with others), that will be published in the *Lewis & Clark Law Review* in June. The article is accessible online now through the open-access research platform [SSRN](#).

Bohnhorst retired from the Office of the General Counsel, where he provided legal advice and support to the U's scientific research mission.

"In the course of representing the University of Minnesota for 24 years, I developed tremendous respect and admiration for dedicated researchers, scholars, and academic leaders," Bohnhorst said. "It is more than great to have a co-author who has been a law school dean for 22 years and who has deep expertise in the specific field (post-civil war legal history) that we are writing about."

Bohnhorst thinks Congress should act now to put an end to the threat of legislative usurpation of the people's right to vote for president, and that principled members of all parties would agree.

He suggests you consider contacting your representatives in Congress to share your views with them. You are also welcome to email markb913@hotmail.com to contact him.

—Bill Donohue, UMRA past president 2019–20

A photograph of a modern building with a glass facade, partially obscured by a dark red diagonal shape on the right side.

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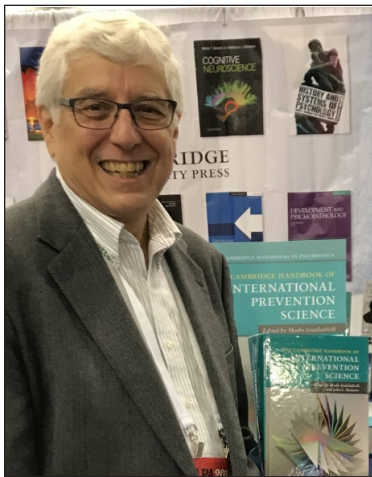
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PDGR grant recipient honored

UMRA member John L. Romano was honored at last year's American Psychological Association (APA) Convention for the best paper published in 2020 in the *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*. As of mid-January 2022, his paper, "[Politics of Prevention: Reflections From the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)," had been downloaded more than 8,400 times.



John Romano

Romano retired in 2015. His continuing professional work was supported by UMRA's [Professional Development Grants for Retirees](#) (PDGR) program. A 2018 grant allowed him to attend the APA conference where he organized an international session of scholars in prevention science which, in turn, grew into the COVID paper.

"The PDGR funds certainly helped to support my continuing professional activities," Romano said. "The funds are a valuable source of financial support, and they encourage retired faculty to maintain scholarly activities. The activities not only benefit the faculty member, but also demonstrate the University of Minnesota's commitment to retired faculty and staff."

The PDGR awards for 2022 will be announced in March.

—Will Craig, Communication & Outreach Committee

Food for Thought

"Whether it's the best of times or the worst of times,
it's the only time we've got."

—Art Buchwald

In remembrance

As we learn of the passing of UMRA members and University leaders, we share this news with our community. We send our condolences to the families and friends of our colleagues.

Meredith Blodgett Poppele died on December 13, 2021. She graduated in 1958 from Tufts University where she met her future husband, U of M Professor Emeritus Richard "Dick" Poppele. Both active members of UMRA, they lived for more than 50 years in the Minneapolis Prospect Park neighborhood where she was an active volunteer for the schools, community gardens, elections, Meals on Wheels, and Southeast Seniors. She also taught English in the Minneapolis Public Schools and served as executive assistant to the University Senate for more than a decade. Meredith Poppele is survived by her husband, their four children, and six grandchildren.



Meredith and Dick Poppele shared a happy moment with KaiMay Terry during an UMRA gathering at the Campus Club in 2019. Photo by Ginny Hanson.

Russell "Russ" Hobbie died on December 16, 2021. He joined the faculty in 1960, retiring from the School of Physics and Astronomy as professor emeritus in 1998. A respected educator and advocate for students, he served as associate dean of student affairs in the Institute of Technology for 12 years. After auditing two years of medical school, he developed a new medical physics course that led to the first edition of his textbook, *Intermediate Physics for Medicine and Biology*. After retirement, he completed the fourth and fifth editions of the book. Russ Hobbie is survived by his wife of 64 years, Cynthia, their four children and six grandchildren.

—Kathleen O'Brien, UMRA Cares Committee

UMRA Cares supports members

For assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please email umracares@umn.edu or call 612-626-4403 and leave a message for UMRA Cares.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA RETIREES ASSOCIATION

McNamara Alumni Center
200 Oak Street S.E., Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002

February events via Zoom

- 8 Photo Club
- 9 Family History Interest Group
- 14 Executive Committee
- 15 Living Well Workshop
- 18 Book Club I
- 21 Board of Directors
- 22 UMRA Forum
- 25 Fourth Friday Book Club

Share upcoming events anytime by emailing the UMRA webmaster at leegi001@umn.edu. Include event title, date, time, a brief description, and contact information.

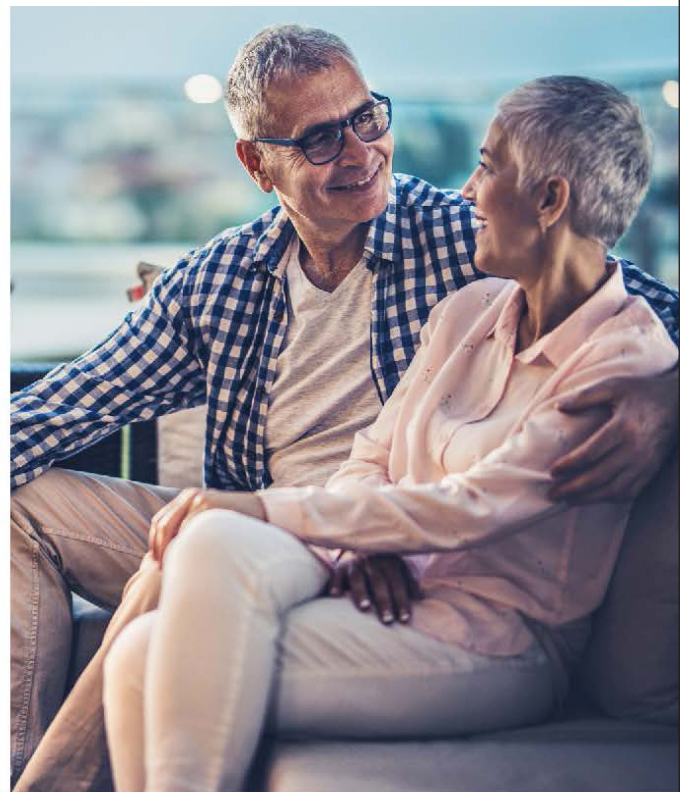
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