

Universal Scientific Education and Research Network (USERN): Step Strong in Scientific Networking

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USERN: a star is born

January 1st 2019 marked the 3rd Universal Scientific Education and Research Network (USERN) anniversary, a non-profit scientific network to mean "science without borders" (1-4). Three years ago on January 1st 2016, USERN held the 1st meeting of USERN Advisory Board members, looking up to the group of about 30 of world's top 1% scientists to build the scientific network envisioned as the main goal in its statute (5,6). Never did we think that in three years the USERN Advisory Board would reach the number 370 among them 13 Nobel Prize and 2 Abel Prize laureates (7). The annual USERN Congress and Prize Festival is a known identity among international scientific community and has been held since 2016 each year,

hosted with various universities/countries, with more integrity and impact (8).

USERN: making an impact

USERN is a growing family of >370 members of the advisory board, >8200 members, >40 offices, and >70 active interest groups and the number are still counting (7) (Figure 1). In an attempt to realize scientific collaboration, USERN validates proposals for research interest group establishment through advisory board members with the same scientific interest (9). This is not always easy, as junior researchers often face difficulty to write practical research and educational goals.

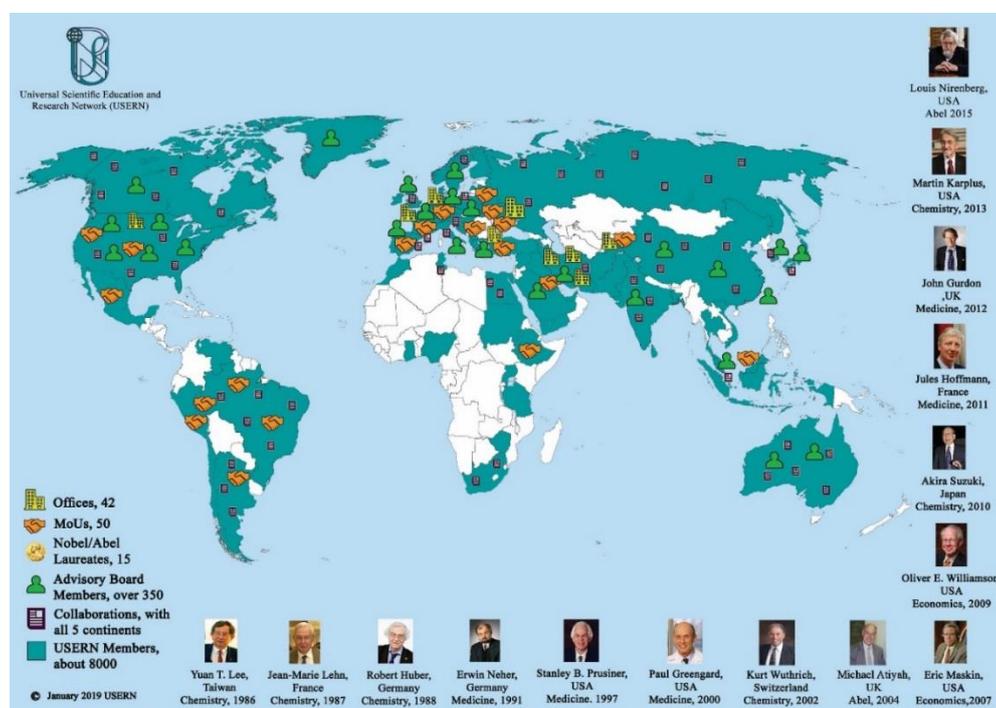


Figure 1. USERN map, Jan 1st 2019

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USERN's policy in cross-validating interest group proposals, and monthly evaluation of interest group performance, has more or less paid off. More than 440 research papers with USERN affiliation and an H-index of 21 for USERN in only three years, talk

themselves as a proof of this success (Figure 2). The fact that USERN is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, makes this scientific achievement even more impressive (10).

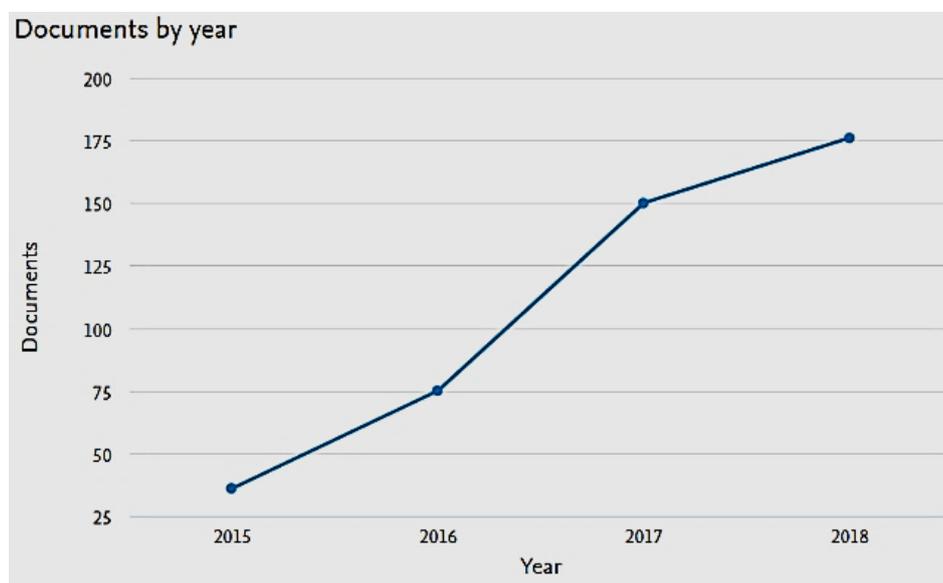


Figure 2. USERN scientific output

USERN: plus education?

USERN is by definition, an educational network. Education, as USERN defines it, is the process of receiving or giving systematic instructions to prepare individuals to be functional in learning and generating knowledge and spreading wisdom. In less than 3 years, USERN has proudly designed, organized, and conducted more than 500 scientific events in the form of USERN workshops, focused group discussions (FGD), meeting with experts (USERN Expert Express Event: UEEE), and USERN talks.

USERN Talks are inspiring presentations intended to convey critical information and cutting edge knowledge from the world's most renowned scientists, activists and leaders. USERN talks are perhaps to the oldest format of USERN scientific events, before USERN iTalks and USERN miniature talks (mTalks)

were introduced. USERN mTalks are sessions of consecutive, thematic, short lectures of 12 and 6 minutes delivered by senior scientists and juniors/students, respectively, which are accompanied by art performances. Conceived by USERN scientific education department in 2018, USERN mTalks offer junior scientists a free podium to represent topics from their life passion in science, and improve their presentation skills in the most innovative and engaging way they can. Speakers at USERN mTalks enter an annual selection process, rated by audience and experts of the topic. The finalists of USERN mTalk contest in 2018, recently held a joint performance with selected junior artists, as the opening event in USERN 3rd Anniversary celebration at the Avicenna hall of the Tehran University of Medical Sciences on January 1st 2019 (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The group photo of 3rd USERN Anniversary, Jan 1st 2019, Avicenna Hall, Tehran University of Medical Sciences

USERN: social responsibility

The Health and Art (HEART) group is undisputably the oldest USERN interest groups and perhaps the most exotic one. With the 1st International Festival of Painting for Pediatric Patients (IFPPP) held in Tehran in 2015, the HEART held its first successful international event a year before the 1st USERN Congress and Prize Festival. Continued by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th IFPPP festivals in Budapest, Kharkov, and Reggio Calabria, the IFPPP festivals have returned each year stronger than ever.

IFPPP is not what HEART does all through the year, the toy-sharing and book-sharing campaigns, the international village of games and art and recently the HEART band, a music group of pediatric patients, are among other significant activities of HEART (11).

USERN is dedicated to make science borderless for all and USERN Advisory Board members have been the walking-talk of this goal. The 2018 USERN Congress and Prize Festival was unique in its own way as USERN Prize Laureates each received part of their travel expenses, from USERN Advisory Board Travel Grants. Top 1% scientists, members of USERN Advisory Board delivered in a significant way to make it possible for 5 USERN Prize Laureates and 4 delegates to attend USERN Congress 2018 and post scientific Course, on November 10-14th in Reggio Calabria, Italy (12).

USERN: struggling to build a network

Entering the 4th year of our activity in USERN we look back into our strengths and weaknesses. A remaining concern in USERN is to strengthen the networking element and build a self-growing platform of scientific collaborations. USERN envisions part of this goal in the hands of USERN Junior Ambassadors

(UJAs). UJAs are official members of USERN Organizing Committee and are selected from potential applicants from different countries for a 1-year term. UJAs' primary mission is to realize USERN networking goals, introduce USERN platform, and propagate USERN goals within the scientific community of their home countries (13). UJAs are USERN representatives to extend USERN publicity and goals all over the world.

Final word

USERN believes in excellence and teamwork, and continues to make a living example of scientific excellence and world-scale collaborations. Several talented, young students have joined USERN organizing committee during these years, many of whom have shown tremendous qualifications and evolved into becoming USERN Deputies, Managers, and Consultants. We look forward to the challenges that 2019 is bringing us, and to the 2019 USERN Congress in Budapest.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all USERN Organizing Committee, former or current, for their dedication to science without borders and their magnificent job in promoting USERN over these years.

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