

# Annual Report



August 1, 2022 – July 31, 2023

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# 1. Introduction: The OAMN and its board

This Annual Report has been prepared by the Operator Algebras Mentor Network (OAMN) Board of Directors which concluded the 2022–23 year. At the time of writing this report, it is comprised of Senior Mentors Sarah Reznikoff (Kansas State University) and Karen Strung (Institute of Mathematics, Czech Academy of Sciences), Junior Mentors Anna Duwenig (KU Leuven) and Kari Eifler (Microsoft Corporation), and Mentees Emilie Elkiær (University of Oslo) and Jennifer Zhu (University of Waterloo).

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It is with great pleasure that we compile the 2022–23 Annual Report of the OAMN. The Network was envisioned in 2018 by a number of early-career women participating in the Young Mathematicians in  $C^*$ -Algebras meeting (YMC $^*$ A; formerly decoupled as YMC $^*$ A and YWC $^*$ A: Young Women in  $C^*$ -Algebras) in Leuven, Belgium. At the time, the women present discussed the lack of support they or other women they knew faced within academia. The idea has since broadened to include retention and promotion of operator algebraists who are underrepresented or in minority within mathematics due to gender.

The Board of Directors who are concluding the 2022–23 year started their terms on the following days:

1. Sarah Reznikoff on August 1, 2022
2. Karen Strung on August 1, 2020
3. Anna Duwenig on August 1, 2020
4. Kari Eifler on August 1, 2020
5. Emilie Elkiær on August 1, 2021
6. Jennifer Zhu on January 18, 2022 as an interim Board member and on August 1, 2022 as a mentee Board member

The vision of the OAMN is to have an inclusive and representative operator algebras community. Our mission includes the following goals:

- retain operator algebraists who are underrepresented or in minority within mathematics due to gender,
- provide early-career operator algebraists with a trusted ally in the event of abuse/harassment,



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- provide a source of career advice and support outside of one's home institutions,
  - provide nonjudgmental, confidential, solicited advice on work-life balance and career,
  - forge connections between mathematicians and increase the visibility of underrepresented or minority operator algebraists,
  - cooperate with organizations with similar goals,
  - provide a network for people supporting this mission, and
  - improve mentorship skills of mathematicians.

We strive to carry out this mission through activities and ongoing projects outlined in Sections 2 and 4. These activities could not have been a success without the help of our Junior and Senior Mentors, who not only provide mentoring to our mentees, but also volunteer additional time in order to assist in carrying out these activities.

More information can be found on our website at <https://oamentornetwork.wordpress.com/>.

## 2. Public Activities

### 2.1 Rebranding

In September 2022, the Board asked the members to design a logo for the Network and offered a US\$50 reward for the winning logo. In January 2023, the Board chose mentee Adina Goldberg's hand-drawn design. Board member Emilie Elkiær turned it into a vector graphic and added colors. The final logo, in its various forms, is the following:



Figure 2.1: Small logo with acronym spelled out



Figure 2.2: Large logo with acronym spelled out



Figure 2.3: Large logo

### 2.2 Mentor Group Matching

The Board conducts a yearly rematching each January, encouraging networking and further mentorship opportunities. This yearly rematching of all Network members is based primarily on the answers to the survey conducted, which includes factors like future career goals, personal life experiences, and logistical concerns like timezones. Additionally, we try to avoid matching members who have previously been



matched or who have the same university affiliation. It is possible for a group to opt out of the rematching process if all its members agree on this. This year, each of the groups were rematched.

New members may sign up at any point during the year, but due to the size of the Network (and the operator algebra community in general), mid-year matching often prioritizes logistical concerns such as timezones and matches new mentees with mentors who have been nominated and accepted into the Network but who have not yet been assigned a group. In the past year, we have had two new groups formed mid-year, and multiple additions to already formed groups as new members joined the OAMN.

## 2.3 Result of Elsevier Award

In March 2022, the Board applied for a grant from Elsevier<sup>1</sup>. This one-time grant is awarded to individuals and groups promoting diversity and inclusion in mathematics.

In November 2022, the Board was awarded the grant worth US\$4,000. A portion of this award was put towards travel funding for YMC\*A; see the next subsection for more information.

## 2.4 YMC\*A Travel Funding

The Board offered \$3,800 towards travel support to people of the MTG (not necessarily members of the Network) to attend the conference *Young Mathematicians in C\*-Algebras* (YMC\*A) at KU Leuven in Belgium in August 2023<sup>2</sup>. The YMC\*A is dedicated to the promotion of junior researchers and graduate students in operator algebras. The conference is organized for and by Ph.D. students and postdocs in operator algebras and related areas, with the goal of fostering scientific and social interaction.

The Board received a total of 24 applications and offered travel funds to 4 junior researchers.

## 2.5 Newsletter (September 2022)

The Board sent its first newsletter in September 2022. It contained updates about the Network, new members of the Network, upcoming events that may be of interest to members, and discussion topic suggestions for Mentor Group meetings.

## 2.6 Mentor-Focused Workshop (March 2023)

To ensure that mentors are well supported themselves, the Board hosted a workshop aimed to create a space for mentors in the Network to exchange ideas, share experiences, and discuss difficult dilemmas outside of their Mentor Groups. Discussion points included the responsibilities mentors have to act on partial information about a member of the OA community, best practices for conference organizing, diversity quotas, and how to engage in meaningful conversations within their Mentor Groups.

In order to accommodate timezones, this workshop was held twice on 29 March, each session lasting around 90 minutes. The North American/Oceania workshop had an attendance of eleven members and the European workshop had an attendance of seven members.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.elsevier.com/awards/mathematical-sciences-sponsorship-fund>

<sup>2</sup>See <https://ymcstara.org/> and <https://wis.kuleuven.be/events/YMCstarA>



## 2.7 Mid-year check in (April 2023)

A mid-year check in email was sent to each Mentor Group in April 2023. The Board had previously seen that some groups did not work well; difficulties included scheduling conflicts, members not attending meetings, and language barriers. This email was sent to ensure each group was functioning. Reply rate was very low, which the Board understood as a sign that Mentor Groups were running smoothly.

## 2.8 Career Panels (May 2023)

In early May 2023, the Board ran two online career panels, to accommodate the different timezones of the Network's members. We thank the panelists (listed below) for taking the time to share their views and experiences.

The panels focused on issues that disproportionately affect members in the MTG. Panelists compared and contrasted their varied career paths with topics focusing on both personal life (work-life-family balance, solving the 2-body problem) and workplace (mentorship, career strategies).

The European career panel had very low attendance despite a sufficient number of sign-ups, and the Board is debating whether it should continue hosting such events.

### 2.8.1 North American timezone

The North American Panel was held on Tuesday, 9 May, and the panelists were:

- Kari Eifler - Data Scientist at Microsoft
- Mitch Hamidi - Assistant Professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Arundhathi Krishnan - Postdoctoral Fellow at Munster Technological University
- Shen Lu - Finance Manager at American Express
- Rachael Norton - Visiting Assistant Professor at Macalester College
- Sarah Reznikoff - Professor at Kansas State University

### 2.8.2 European timezone

The European Panel was held Tuesday, 16 May, and the panelists were:

- Are Austad - Postdoc at SDU Odense
- Arundhathi Krishnan - Postdoctoral Fellow at M $\tilde{A}$ nster Technological University
- Jacqui Ramage - Executive Dean at Durham University
- Karen Strung - Researcher at the Institute of Mathematics of the Czech Academy of Sciences
- Angela Tabiri - Research Associate and Academic Manager at AIMS Ghana
- Stefaan Vaes - Professor at KU Leuven

## 3. Behind the scenes

Board members were involved in numerous day-to-day activities, including updating the OAMN website, replying to emails, sending emails with important information to members, compiling and reflecting on notes from the activities, and holding Board meetings at least every two weeks.

### 3.1 Code Of Conduct Review

In October 2022, the Board conducted its first Code of Conduct review, following the procedures in the Bylaws. Member X of the OAMN raised a Concern (as defined in the Bylaws) about Member Y. The Board interviewed both parties individually, clarified and corroborated their timelines, and collected relevant documents and names of others involved. The Board unanimously endorsed Member Y's continued membership as a mentor in the OAMN and encouraged them to engage in difficult conversations surrounding the issue with Senior Mentors at events such as the Mentor-Focused Workshop outlined in Section 2.6.

### 3.2 Problematic Members of the Community

In the past year, the OAMN Board has received multiple reports accusing two operator algebraists of serious sexual misconduct. In both cases, the accused party moved to a new institution after the (police or university) investigation was closed but remained an active member of the OA community.

The Board, individually and as a group, has poured an enormous amount of time and thought into balancing the ethics of not disclosing information that might prevent future harm versus irresponsibly spreading the same information. Individual Board members have reached out to others, both colleagues and professionals, to seek advice on the ethics and legalities of possible actions. Two OAMN mentors have been meeting with a former student of one of these accused persons bringing forth new allegations. In searching for advice and suggestions on how to proceed, the Board encountered many obstacles that prevented the truth from being known or any possibility of accountability. These obstacles often contributed to the risks faced by and burdens placed on the reporters of sexual harassment and abuse. As the Board continued to receive more information, competing pressures to move forward and uncertainty on how to do so began to mount. Realizing it could not run the OAMN while simultaneously exploring what can and should be done about these cases, the Board called for the formation of an Advisory Committee whose sole purpose would be addressing this issue (see Section 4.2).

### 3.3 Funds of the OAMN

The Network was established as a legal entity and obtained 501(c)(3) non-profit status in the United States in June 2022. As a result, any donations from US persons to the OAMN are tax-deductible. US-based members could also have chosen to have 0.5% of their Amazon purchases donated to the





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OAMN at no cost to themselves<sup>1</sup> until February 2022 when the program was shut down. In addition to the Elsevier grant, the OAMN received a total of US\$1,600 in the 2022–23 year through Dr. Kari Eifler and the Microsoft Give Match program: For every hour of time volunteered by one of their employees at eligible 501(c)(3) organizations, Microsoft donates US\$25.

### **3.4 Treasurer Position**

The Board elected Lara Ismert as Treasurer for the 2022–2023 year. The Treasurer worked with the Board to monitor funds, ensure the OAMN is complying with its legal requirements, and secure benefits to which the OAMN is entitled as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Every member of the Board, along with the Treasurer, are admins on the Network’s multi-currency Business Account.

### **3.5 Research on Efficacy of Mentoring**

The 2020–2021 Board is preparing a research project that studies the need and impact of mentorship for early-career mathematicians, specifically, the impact of the Network on junior researchers who are underrepresented or in minority within mathematics due to gender. The survey has been finalized and is in the process of obtaining Research Ethics approval.

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<sup>1</sup><https://smile.amazon.com/ch/87-4271818>

## 4. Future Plans

There are a number of projects, events, and ideas that the Board has begun to plan and take action towards completing. Details about the current progress can be found below.

### 4.1 YMC\*A (August 2023)

The board will be hosting a lunch event for all participants of YMC\*A who are in the MTG (not necessarily members of the Network). Participants will be divided in 3–4 smaller groups each with an assigned table leader. The table leaders will be given a collection of questions to be used to start a conversation on topics around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Lunch will be provided and will be paid for by the *Methusalem Project Pure Mathematics*<sup>1</sup> at KU Leuven.

### 4.2 Advisory Committee

The Board is in the process of creating an Advisory Committee, consisting of a subset of the OAMN Senior Mentors, who are willing to help when information of abuse, harassment, or discrimination within the operator algebras community is brought to the Board. The responsibilities of the Advisory Committee are to gather evidence of misconduct cases within the OA community (for example, meet with reporters who come forward to the Board, confirming reports through additional sources where possible, reading online articles) and decide among themselves the best action forward. The Board would continue to handle OAMN Code of Conduct reviews while the Advisory Committee focuses on cases of extreme misconduct which poses a severe risk to the OA community (likely regarding operator algebraists who are not part of the OAMN).

The Board has set aside some funds for the Advisory Committee to, for example, meet with a lawyer to determine the legal consequences of disseminating the information it receives.

A preliminary meeting was held at the 2023 Great Plains Operator Theory Symposium (GPOTS) to outline the mission of and tasks for such a committee. This was followed up by two meetings where all Senior Mentors were invited to discuss the need of an Advisory Committee and bring forward concerns about such a committee. The Board thanks the attendees for their generosity in time and advice.

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<sup>1</sup><https://wis.kuleuven.be/methusalem-pure-math>

## 5. List of Members for 2022–23

Since its inception in June 2020, the OAMN has grown from 37 members to 77 active members. Below is a list of members concluding the 2022–23 year, broken down into the three mentoring tiers (Senior Mentors, Junior Mentors, and Mentees) and Alums. Affiliations are for the end of the 2022–23 reporting period.

### 5.1 Senior Mentors

1. Astrid an Huef (Victoria University of Wellington)
2. Francesca Arici (Leiden University)
3. Michael Brannan (University of Waterloo)
4. Jamie Gabe (University of Southern Denmark, Odense)
5. Elizabeth Gillaspay (University of Montana)
6. Maria Paula Gomez Aparicio (Laboratoire de Mathématiques d’Orsay, Université Paris-Saclay)
7. Ben Hayes (University of Virginia)
8. Marcelo Laca (University of Victoria)
9. Nadia Larsen (University of Oslo)
10. Brent Nelson (Michigan State University)
11. Brita Nucinkis (Royal Holloway, University of London)
12. Sasmita Patnaik (Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur)
13. Dave Penneys (The Ohio State University)
14. Sarah Plosker (Brandon University)
15. Sarah Reznikoff (Kansas State University)
16. Aidan Sims (University of Wollongong)
17. Karen Strung (Institute of Mathematics, Czech Academy of Sciences)
18. Aaron Tikuisis (University of Ottawa)
19. Lyudmila Turowska (Chalmers University)
20. Stefaan Vaes (KU Leuven)



21. Rufus Willett (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)
22. Dilian Yang (University of Windsor)

## 5.2 Junior Mentors

1. Maria Stella Adamo (The University of Tokyo)
2. Anshu (National Institute of Science Education and Research Bhubaneswar)
3. Becky Armstrong (University of Münster)
4. Christian Bönicke (Newcastle University)
5. Sarah Browne (The University of Kansas)
6. Chris Bruce (University of Glasgow)
7. Jorge Castillejos (National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM))
8. Ian Charlesworth (Cardiff University)
9. Kristin Courtney (University of Münster)
10. Adam Dor-On (Haifa)
11. Anna Duwenig (KU Leuven)
12. Kari Eifler (Microsoft Corporation)
13. Magdalena Georgescu (Unaffiliated)
14. Mitch Hamidi (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University)
15. Zahra Hassanpour-Yakhdani (Khaje Nasir Toosi University of Technology)
16. Lara Ismert (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University)
17. David Jekel (UC San Diego)
18. Arundhathi Krishnan (Munster Technological University, Cork)
19. Diego Martinez (University of Münster)
20. Kathryn McCormick (California State University, Long Beach)
21. Rachael Norton (Macalester College)
22. Sanaz Pooya (Stockholm University)
23. Lauren Ruth (Mercy College)
24. Camila Sehnem (University of Waterloo)
25. Mateusz Wasilewski (Institute of Mathematics of the Polish Academy of Sciences)
26. Safoura Zadeh (Max-Planck-Institut für Mathematik)
27. Sophie Emma Zegers (Charles University)



## 5.3 Mentees

1. Juniper Bahr (UCLA)
2. Samantha Brooker (Arizona State University)
3. Arianna Cecco (University of Houston)
4. Robynn Corveleyn (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
5. Antje Dabeler (University of Münster)
6. Emilie Elkiær (University of Oslo)
7. Adriana Fernández Quero (University of Iowa)
8. Rafaela Gesing (University of Münster)
9. Emily Korfanty (University of Alberta)
10. Larissa Kroell (University of Waterloo)
11. Francesca La Piana (University of Oslo)
12. Therese Landry (Fields Institute)
13. Yoonkyeong Lee (Michigan State University)
14. Evelyn Lira-Torres (Queen Mary University of London)
15. Meaghan Mahoney (University of New Hampshire)
16. Chaimae Mezzat (Ibn Tofail University)
17. Comfort Mintah (University of Waterloo)
18. Melody Molander (UC Santa Barbara)
19. Fatemeh Olyani Nezhad (Guilan University)
20. Monica Omar (University of Glasgow)
21. Jennifer Pi (UC Irvine)
22. Shanola Sequeira (IIT Hyderabad)
23. Hua Shanshan (University of Oxford)
24. Mansi Suryawanshi (Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore)
25. Afae Tanzite (Universite Hassan 1er)
26. Tanvi Telang (University of Houston)
27. Vincent Villalobos (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
28. Lise Wouters (KU Leuven)
29. Shonaugh Wright (Victoria University of Wellington)
30. Isnie Yusnitha (University of Wollongong)
31. Jennifer Zhu (University of Waterloo)



## 5.4 Alums

Alums are those who have completed at least a year in the Network and have now finished their degree, moved out of operator algebras, or no longer wished to remain in the Network. We wish them the best in their future endeavors, and hope they continue to strengthen their connections with members of our Network.

1. Shabna A M
2. Kate Anderson
3. Dawn Archey
4. Rachel Chaiser
5. Sarah Chehade
6. Rolando De Santiago
7. Eske Ewert
8. Marzieh Forough
9. Priyanga Ganesan
10. Kate Gibbins
11. Adina Goldberg
12. Eun Ji Kang
13. Shirin Moein
14. Oluwatobi (Ruth) Ojo
15. Judith Packer
16. Jacqui Ramagge
17. Mary Beth Ruskai
18. Marisa Schult
19. Apurva Seth
20. Piotr Sołtan
21. Dongning Song
22. Change Sun
23. Hang Wang
24. Amanda Wilkens
25. Sarah Wright
26. Catherine Zimmitti (Godfrey)