

Education & Training Community of Practice

A BI-ANNUAL INSIGHT ON REPOSITORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Issue 3

Upcoming Webinars

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**Webinar: ISBER 2025 Best
Poster Award: Visualizing Ice
Crystal Dynamics During Oocyte
Cryopreservation and Thawing**

*Presented by Xinli Zhou, PhD, University
of Shanghai for Science and Technology
July 16, 9:00am EDT*

- Ethical, Legal & Social Implications |
November 13, 11:00am EDT
- Quality Management | TBD

**Webinar: Writing a Successful, High
Quality Biobanking Manuscript for
Journal Publication**

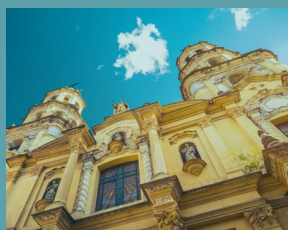
*Presented by Marianne Henderson,
Marianna Bledsoe, and Amanda Rush
September 25, 2:30pm EDT*

**Webinar: ISBER Best Practices 5
Webinar Series**

- Operations | August 27, 12:00pm EDT
- Leveraging Your Collection - Sharing,
Distribution & Collaboration |
September 18, 12:00pm EDT
- Governance and Planning | TBD

**Webinar: Biobanking 101
Coming in Q3 of 2025**

Upcoming Events

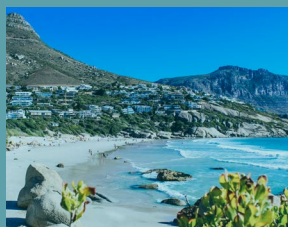


ISBER 2025 Argentina Regional Meeting

Sept. 12 – 13, 2025

Buenos Aires, Argentina

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Joint Biobanking Meeting

Sept. 29 – Oct. 3, 2025

Cape Town, South Africa

[LEARN MORE](#)

- 1 Upcoming Webinars
& Events
- 2 Member Spotlight:
Stella Somiari
- 4 Q&A with
Marta Castelhana
- 5 Educational
Opportunities in
your Region
- 7 Travel Grant
Award Winner

**Active call for papers
in Biopreservation and
Biobanking (BIO) for a
special issue on:**

Modern Approaches to
Cancer Biobanking

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Due date: August 31, 2025

*Do you feel the newsletter
provides you with useful
information in regard to your
ongoing education and
training goals? What can we
add or remove to make this
newsletter more informative?*

Email us at info@isber.org

Member Spotlight: Stella Somiari, PhD, MBA

Senior Director, Biobank and Biospecimen Science Research

Chan Soon-Shiong Institute of Molecular Medicine at Windber, PA, USA

Interviewed by: Marianne K Henderson, M.S., CPC PMP, Senior Advisor for Division Resources and Biobanking, OD, DCEG, National Cancer Institute, NIH, MD, USA

Hello Stella,

Thank you for taking the time to let us get to know you better. You have now been named as the ISBER President-Elect since early 2025 and will take your role at the ISBER Annual Meeting in May 2025 in Montreal, Canada.

As an ice breaker, what is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

Thank you for the opportunity to connect with the ISBER Community. I really enjoy a good ice cream treat, and my favorite flavor is vanilla.

How long have you been working in biobanking?

About 20 years!

As Senior Director at Windber Research Institute, can you tell us what drew you to biobanking and your current position?

I got into Biobanking because I was made the Biobanking lead by management in my current organization where I was a pioneer staff of the institute in 2000. My task was to help conceptualize the biobank program. At that time, it was recognized that good quality, properly consented and well annotated biospecimen would be required if we were to realize the integrated high throughput research paradigm of the institute. Before this time, I knew nothing and had never been involved in biobanking of any kind.

I started researching and learning about biobanking as fast as I could, and overcame many challenges. I have been the Biobank Director since then.

You have been a long-time member of ISBER. How has ISBER impacted on your day-to-day activities and your career?

An interesting fact is that my PhD supervisor from the UK who was a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of our Institute from 2001 – 2004 introduced me to ISBER. His words were, "If you want to succeed in this role, and develop a good biobank, you need to be part of ISBER". So, I researched ISBER, became a member and the rest is history!

ISBER taught me all that I needed to get my job done and in the appropriate way. The interactions I have had over the years with fellow biobankers, and the seminal publications of ISBER and its members, e.g. the best practices which I contributed, have been invaluable for my team and I. I have applied every knowledge gained from being a very active and involved member to my day-to-day duties.

What intrigued you to want to become an ISBER President?

ISBER is the greatest biobanking organization in the world, and to serve as the President of such a reputable organization is a privilege and an honor. Being a member of an organization is great, being active and stepping forward to serve in leadership positions is even greater. Colleagues who know me closely will tell you that I like to work in the background. It is one of those colleagues that graciously nominated me this time, believing that I can contribute to the future of ISBER. I am very grateful for the nomination and humbled by the trust bestowed on me by ISBER members.

What goals and/or projects do you have for the Society, especially in Education and Training?

Currently, the organization has a Strategic Plan that it is working on implementing. I will contribute to its successful implementation by providing input to areas as appropriate.

My first role in ISBER was with the Education and Training Committee (as they were called at the time). I am passionate about Education and Training because it ensures that members have what it takes to succeed. The education and training activities currently are tailored to address the needs of the members. Constant feedback is obtained through surveys to allow the development of appropriate programs to help members get their job done. Creating programs that would allow new and inexperienced members visit and intern at established

Biobanks would be looked into. We will continue to create awareness about the role of biobanking in research.

Growing the organization and increasing our visibility are of importance to ISBER's sustainability. This is an area I will be interested in focusing on. Having a central global registry of biobanks could be the starting point. The benefits of this would be substantial because ISBER would immediately position itself as the avenue to connect existing and potential biobanks and make ISBER the place to keep biobanks connected.

I plan to work with everyone to achieve these lofty goals.

Thanks again for the opportunity to connect with the community and I look forward to working with you all.

ISBER BEST PRACTICES WEBINAR SERIES

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- **Leveraging your Collection**
- **Ethical, Legal & Social Implications**
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TODAY**

Q&A with Marta Castelhana, *DVM, MVSc.*

Associate Research Professor, Director, Cornell Veterinary Biobank, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, NY, USA

Interviewed by: Tamsin Tarling, MSc, Leader, Biobanking and Biospecimen Research Services, BC Cancer, Victoria, BC, Canada

As Director of the Cornell Veterinary Biobank, can you share what a typical day is like at your biobank?

Every day is a little bit different, so the concept of “typical” doesn’t quite apply! My mornings usually begin by reviewing our priorities for the day, whether it’s supporting donors, advancing partnerships with sponsors, or facilitating researchers’ needs for their projects. I then connect with members of my team to address distribution requests or inquiries across our key areas: Communications, Operations, Quality, and Scientific Development. Writing plays a central role in our work, and it’s something I really enjoy. Some days, I get to write about our processes, documenting the details of how we do things. Others, I’m drafting and refining the SOPs that allow us to deliver consistent quality to our clients. There is also a creative element to the writing, in particular when crafting a scientific story for a manuscript or when dreaming up new grant ideas that might bring funding to help us achieve even greater impact.

What drew you to this field?

For me, it’s always been about serving others. Biobanking offers a really special way to do that by using biospecimens to enable meaningful research and discoveries that can genuinely change the lives of animals and humans alike.

What skills are vital to your role?

Strategic vision, ethical oversight, effective communication, and a commitment to understanding diverse perspectives are central to my role. By promoting collaboration and valuing input from all stakeholders, I can help ensure our biobank supports meaningful and impactful research.

What has been more valuable in your career, your education or your experience?

Both have been essential. My education gave me the ability to approach life with curiosity while my experience taught me how to stand back up after a challenge.

As the first biobank to become accredited, what interested you in seeking out accreditation according to the ISO 20387:2018?

I believe quality is about doing things right when no one is watching. That’s really what accreditation is all about, having clear standards that push you toward excellence and sticking to them every single day.

As to why we went after this first, Dr. Kristy Richards, an oncologist and incredible mentor of mine, was the driving force behind it. She believed in accreditation as a way to bring human and animal resources together in translational research, and she wanted us to be the first biobank to reach that goal. She passed away just four days before our first accreditation audit, but her vision and belief in what we could achieve still guide us today. We have dedicated our accreditation to Kristy, to honor her legacy and what she inspired us to achieve.

What organizational challenges have you faced?

Biobanking is a growing field, and building awareness around the importance of our work can be challenging. One of my biggest obstacles has been repeatedly addressing misconceptions about biobanking as well as educating others on its critical role in driving high-quality, reproducible research and enabling breakthroughs in fields like precision medicine and rare disease discovery.

Consistently sharing this message has been crucial in gaining broader support, to maximize our resources or achieve recognition in academic careers.

What advice do you have for someone starting out at a biobank?

Connect with experienced biobankers! The ISBER community has an incredible depth of knowledge and

is ready to support those willing to learn. Be prepared to stumble, learn, and try again. Every challenge you face is one that someone else has encountered before. The lessons you'll gain are worth the journey, and the community will rally around you to help you succeed.

Educational Opportunities in your Region

Prepared by the Directors-At-Large and Regional Ambassadors

Americas

An Americas regional update will be provided in the next bi-annual E&T newsletter. For questions, please connect with the [Americas Regional Ambassadors](#)

- A newly published paper in BIO: Biobanks in Latin America: Insights from a Multinational Survey Conducted in 2021 During the COVID-19 Era
Authors: Antonio Hugo José Fróes Marques Camposand María Teresa G. de Dávila
<https://doi.org/10.1089/bio.2025.0064>

Europe, Middle-East, and Africa

A Europe, Middle-East, and Africa regional report is [available here](#).

Indo-Pacific Rim

The Indo-Pacific Rim (IPR) Pavilion—one of four Regional Pavilions—was successfully featured at the ISBER 2025 Annual Meeting in Montreal. Attracting many delegates, the pavilion showcased 29 stories from Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Pakistan, and India, highlighting initiatives like Australasian Biospecimen

Network Association, Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network, BioBank India Foundation, CIBER, BGSi Biobank, UGM Biobank, Singapore Translational Cancer Consortium and more. Visitors explored the region's diverse cultures while enjoying local snacks such as Tim Tams, murukku, lemon biscuits, peanut candy and Haigh's chocolates. Proposed by the ISBER 2025 Local Engagement Taskforce, the pavilion was led by Wayne Ng (Director-at-Large) and the IPR Regional Ambassadors.

[Explore the stories](#)



Photo of the IPR Pavillion with Wayne Ng, Jajah Fachiroh (Regional Ambassador) and other delegates.

China

- Biobank Accreditation Training Program hosted by China National Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment (CNAS) from Jul. 1-3, 2025;
- Internal Auditor Training Program on Biobank Quality and Competence Accreditation Guidelines and ISO 20387 hosted by Biobank Branch, China Medicinal Biotechnology Association from Mar. 27-28, 2025;
- “Starlight Program” – Phase II of the “Human Genetic Resources Preservation” Job Skills Training Program & Intensive Training for “Biobank Internal Auditors” hosted by China Association for the Advancement of Human Health Technology from May 1-Dec. 31, 2025.

New Regional Ambassadors

In 2025, Io Hong Cheong, Henry Hong, Xiu Qiu, Yuansheng Tan, Wayne Wang, YingYan Yu, and JunMei Zhou joined ISBER as new Regional Ambassadors of China Region. We anticipate that their expertise and influence will make meaningful contributions to ISBER and the biobanking community.



Biobanking 201 Workshop Recap

The inaugural Biobanking 201 Workshop was held on February 25 and 26, 2025.

This expanded version of the Biobanking 101 series began with an overview of the newest ISBER tool, the ISBER Mentorship Program. This new program, available to all ISBER members, was presented by Marianne Henderson, MS, National Cancer Institute, (USA); Shonali Paul, CloudLIMS.com, (India) and Judith Giri, PhD, Independent Consultant (USA). The audience was informed of the scope of the project and how to request or become a mentor. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.isber.org/page/Mentoring>

The feature topic of the workshop was **Accreditation, Certification and Standardization: Demystifying the Black Box of Certification and Accreditation of Biobanks**. Presented by Shannon McCall, MD, Duke University, (USA); Sheila O'Donoghue, RN, BPHE, MA, BC Cancer, (Canada); Nilsa Ramirez, MD, Nationwide Children's Hospital, (USA); Nicholas Slawson, A2LA, (USA); Charles Wang, MD, PhD, National Engineering Center, (China). The workshop explored the various avenues of best practices and standardization by providing information and options on the variety of recommendations and standards that can be achieved. Our presenters led the audience through their experiences and lessons learned. This workshop and other past workshops can be found by visiting: <https://www.isber.org/page/webinars>

Travel Grant Winner

Kossi Kabo, PhD, Biobank Coordinator, Institut Pasteur de Dakar, Dakar, Senegal



Dr. Kossi Kabo is a specialist in biobanking, microbiology, and microbial genomics, with recognized expertise in biological resource management, laboratory quality, and biobank regulation. He holds a PhD in microbial genomics

and bioinformatics (University of Lomé) and two master's degrees in microbial and cellular biotechnology, as well as in biobank management and complex data management. With his degree in biological engineering, he combines skills and expertise in medical biology.

Currently coordinator and Quality Manager of the biobank at the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, he is responsible for supervising biobank operations, ensuring sample quality, data management and regulatory compliance with ISO 20387 and ISO 9001 standards. He has also held senior positions in several institutions, including the Institut Pasteur in Paris and VetAgro-Sup (France), where he worked respectively on the isolation, identification and characterization of microorganisms, then on the establishment of a microorganism collection and the cryopreservation of animal seeds.

His expertise spans phage isolation and amplification, microbiome studies, and the development of One Health approaches to understand pathogen dynamics in human, animal, and environmental environments. Agile and

highly resilient, he is also engaged in scientific work on *Escherichia coli* genomics and antibiotic resistance.

Committed to the development of biobanks and laboratories in Africa, Dr. Kabo is an active member of several scientific and professional organizations, including:

- Association of Medical Biologists (ABM): **President**
- West African Postgraduate College of Medical Laboratory Science (WAPCMLS): **Deputy Treasurer**
- African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM): **Facilitator**
- Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC): **Facilitator**
- International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER): **Member**
- International Federation of Biomedical Laboratory Science (IFBLS): **Active member**
- West African Federation of Medical Biologists: **Founding Member**

In addition to his scientific activities, Dr. Kabo is also an entrepreneur. He is the founder and director of several initiatives in biotechnology, biobank consulting and agri-food production in Africa. He notably heads African Biobanks Consulting, a structure specialized in the establishment and management of biobanks in Africa, as well as agricultural and agro-industrial projects.

Through his commitments and research, he contributes to the optimization of biobanks in Africa, the valorization of biological data and the strengthening of capacities in Biosafety, Biosecurity and management of biological collections.

Due to unforeseen visa delays and circumstances, our Travel Grant Awardee was regrettably unable to attend the ISBER 2025 Annual Meeting in Montreal. The ISBER E&T Community of Practice is actively working to support this awardee's participation at another upcoming ISBER conference.