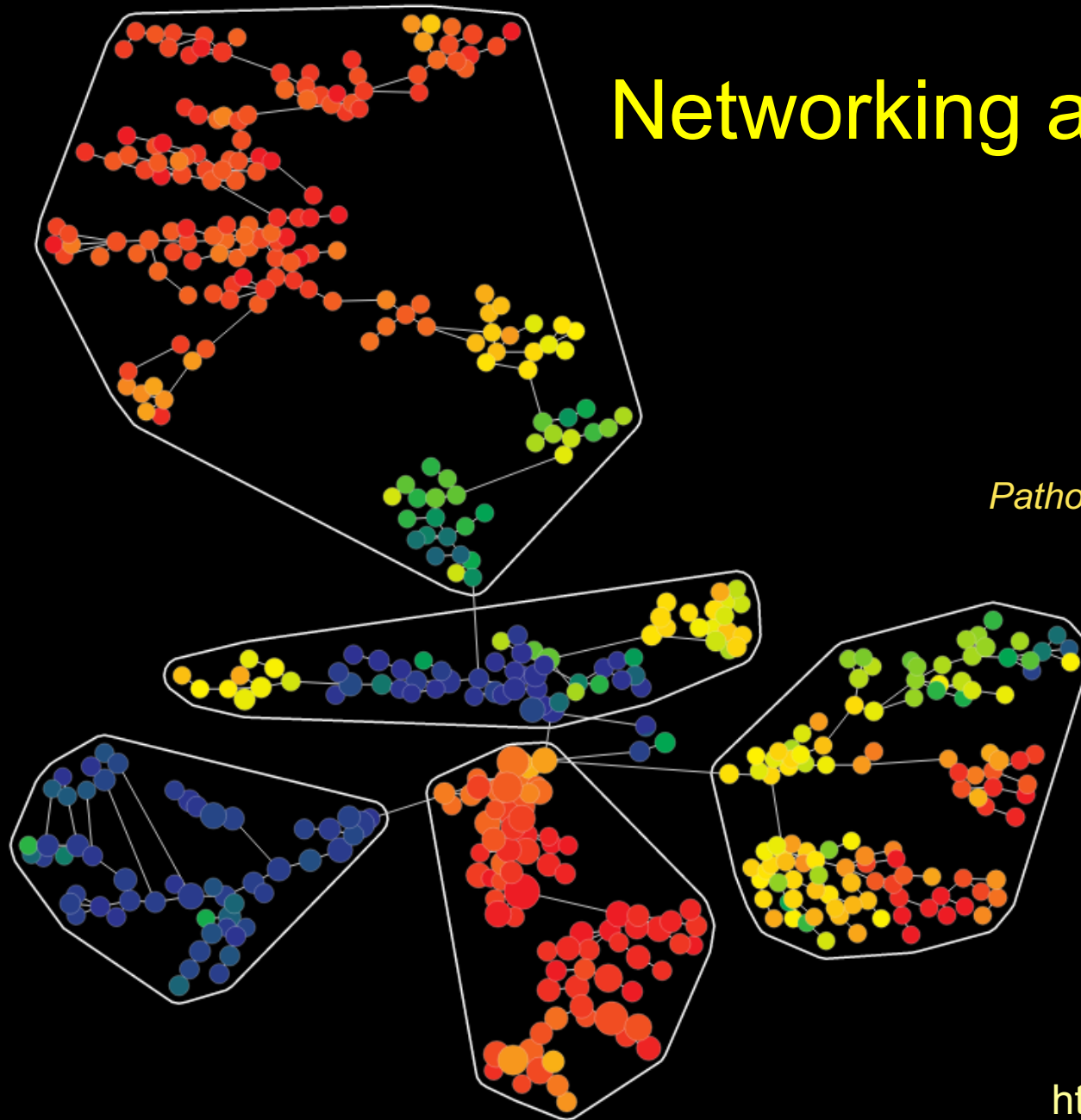


# Networking at Conferences

*Jonathan Irish, Ph.D.*

*Assistant Professor  
Cell & Developmental Biology  
Pathology, Microbiology & Immunology  
Vanderbilt University*



# Science Is Highly Collaborative

- Build a network (within & outside), join federations
  - your network is likely to create job opportunities
  - meet organizers & other presenters, leave your hotel room
  - join interdisciplinary teams where you bring something special
  - avoid silos, feudal kingdoms
  - long term: be recognized as an expert in a field

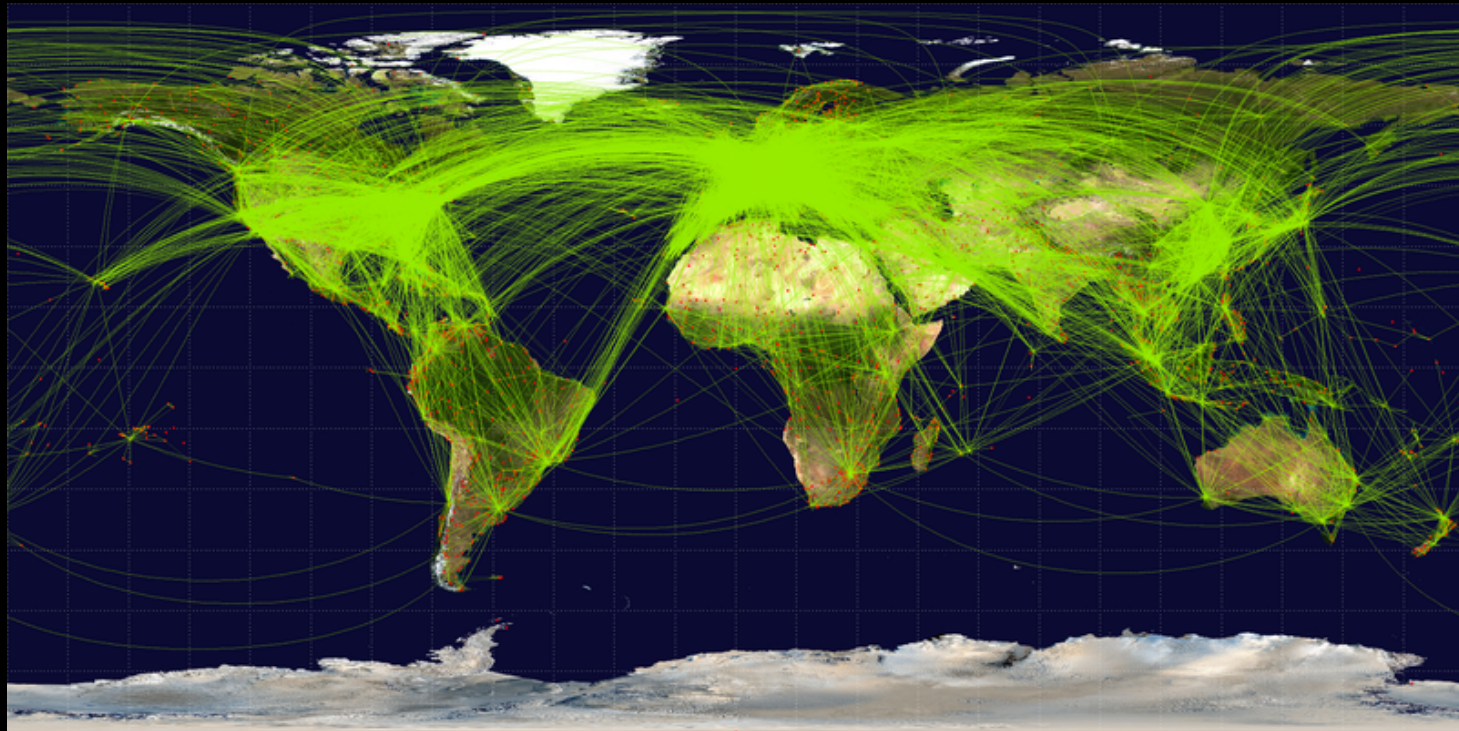


UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS



# Make the Most of Your Career Stage

- Your environment & stage have special opportunities
  - learn while protected by your mentor
  - write grants & papers, 'experience' reviews, get key resources
  - career development awards are good for everyone
  - marshal resources your mentor & institution provide
  - be open to 'science adventure'
  - find appropriate meetings, 'tell your story', develop future prospects



# Do Your Homework & Have A Plan

- Prepare before you go to the meeting
  - look up every 'big name', every lab whose title sounds interesting
  - what made someone famous? what are they working on now?
  - plan out simultaneous sessions & posters in advance
  - communicate in advance with colleagues to plan
  - reserve most meals and evenings for networking, stay flexible
  - if your mentor is going, discuss networking opportunities early (their time will fill up; you will need to be proactive)



PHASE1: Network

PHASE2: ?

PHASE3: Career!!!

# Represent & Promote Your Self, Lab, Institution, & City

Know the History (Track Record), Know What is Outstanding, Be Upbeat

VU Medical Center

Irish Lab

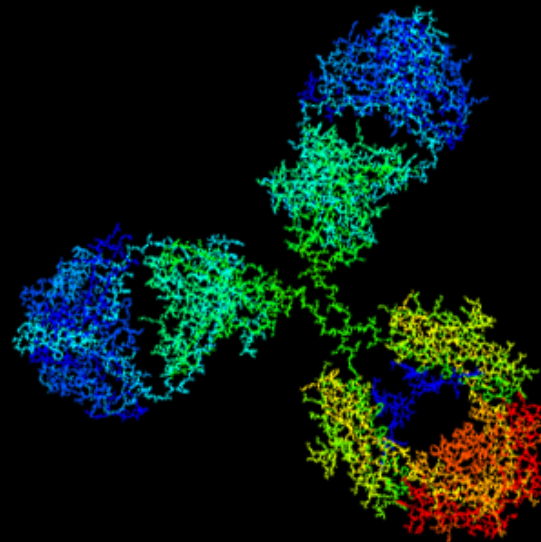
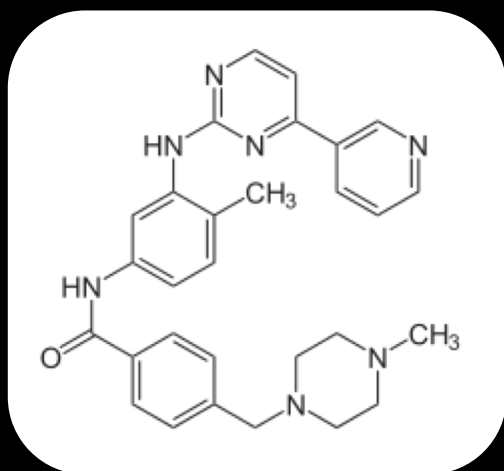
VU Campus



Nashville, Music City

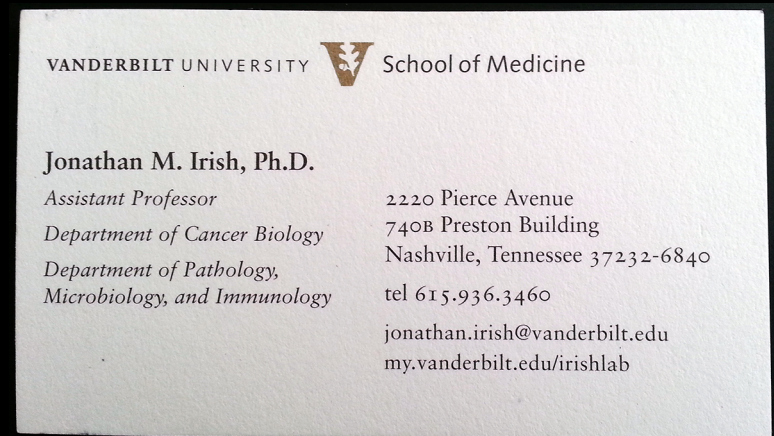
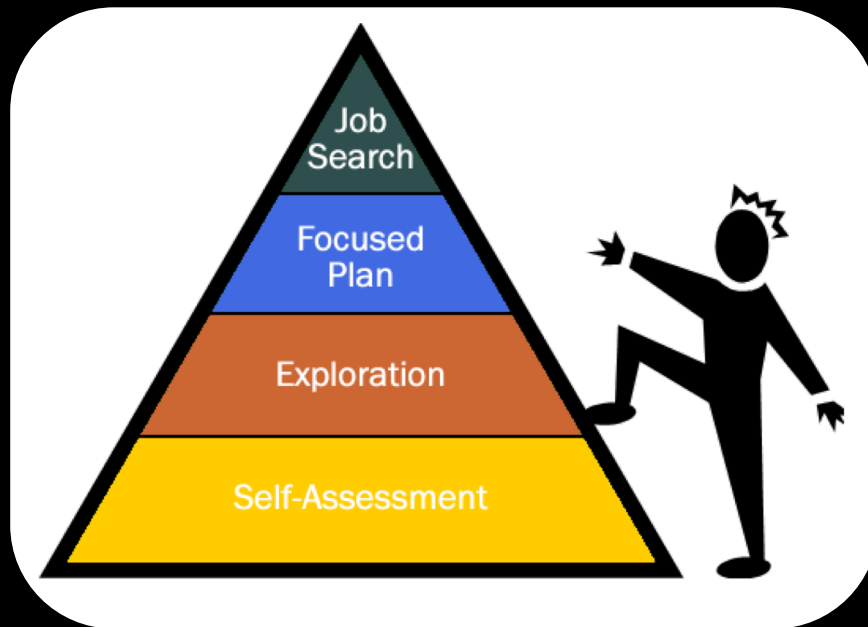
# Have Something to Say – What Is Your Story?

- Be enthusiastic about the science & new opportunities
  - develop & pitch your project vision
  - have big ideas – what are the chances of a major finding?
  - have a plan – chunk out a stepwise plan, then stick to the plan
  - use skeptics to anticipate challenges in audiences, peer review
  - read, read, read & be aware of major stories, plenary sessions.
  - know how your ideas and achievements fit into the big picture
  - you can be enthusiastic about potential without committing



# Communicate Your Skills & Contributions

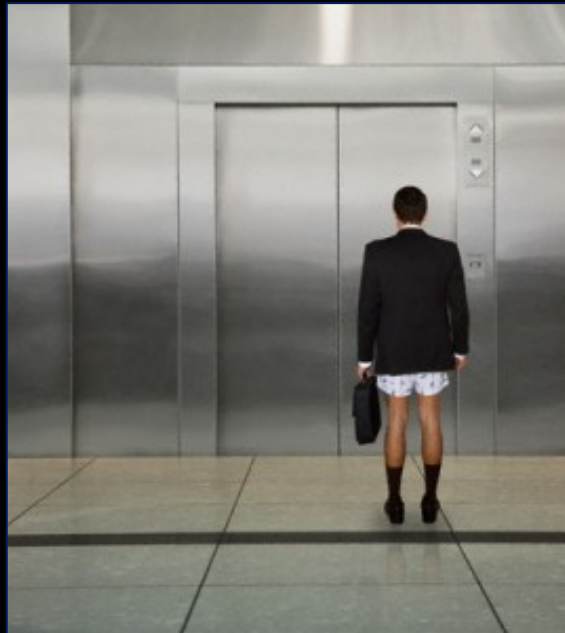
- Build a track record – this matters for hiring
  - why are you the best person to do the project?
  - self-assess, develop timelines
  - make an NIH Biosketch and a CV, review them impartially
  - highlight events demonstrating team interactions
  - think about examples – what experiment conveys your approach?
  - decision makers typically focus on track record, not ‘interests’
  - use social media professionally (LinkedIn) & get business cards



<http://www.linkedin.com/in/jonathanirish>

# Make A Targeted Positive Impression

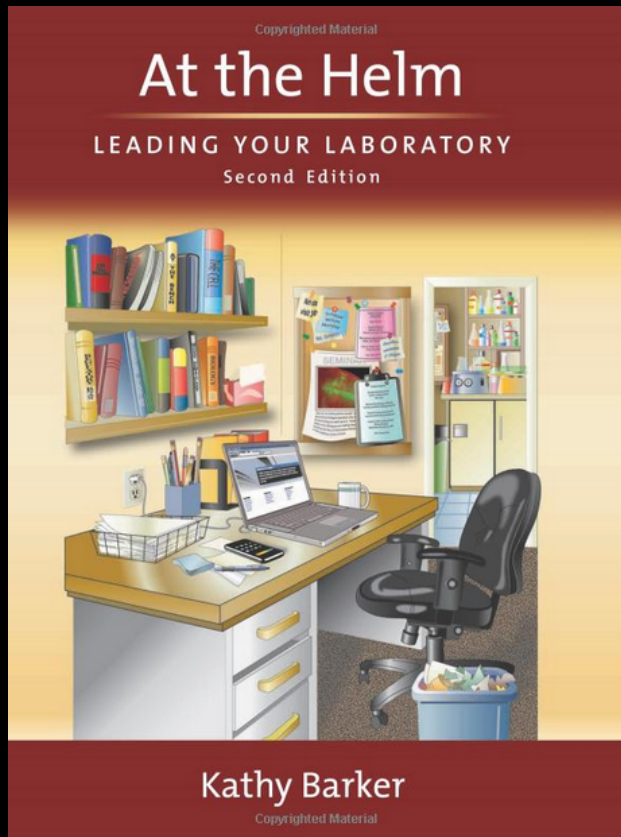
- Communicate the value of your research
  - practice chalk talks and getting grilled without getting defensive
  - develop your 'elevator pitch' – both lay and scientific
  - avoid jargon, explain when you do; why is it worth the time/costs?
  - be organized & receptive to input (listen before responding)
  - clearly define your area of expertise (vs. interests or current focus)
  - work the meals, parties, & 'fun' events; be professional at all times
  - take notes (e-mail, Evernote), bring back ideas for your project & lab
  - tell your mentor what you got out of the meeting & who you met





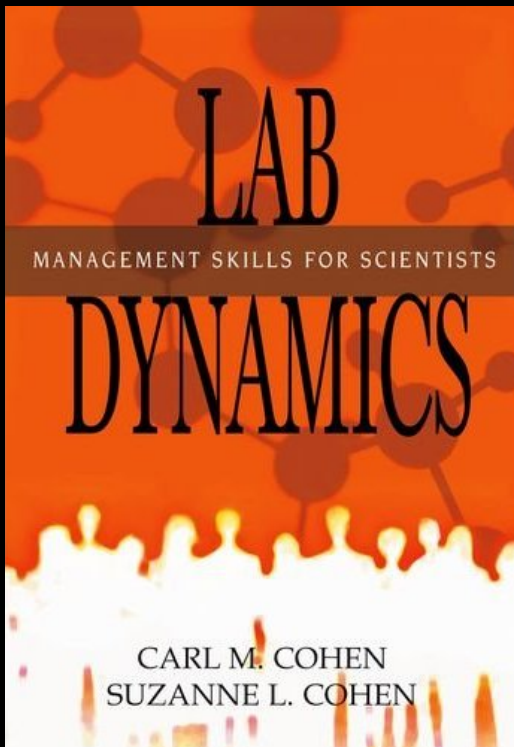
# Seek Out Career Events for Learning & Networking

- Develop non-bench skills
  - managing people, mentoring, hiring & interviewing
  - negotiating in good faith
  - attend workshops on these topics (NIH often organizes)
  - write, write, write, then write some more (read a lot, too)



# Personal Relationships Matter – Build a Track Record

- Develop effective collaborations & working relationships
  - talk up front about 'win win' scenarios, creating value for all
  - identify underlying interests
  - be useful without getting used
  - don't work in isolation, meet regularly; seek ideas & feedback
  - hone skills 'at home', this will make them natural later



- About the challenges of doing science and dealing with the individuals involved, including oneself
- Offers in-depth, practical advice, real-life examples, and exercises tailored to scientific and technical workplaces
- Topics as diverse as conflict resolution, negotiation, dealing with supervision, working with competing peers, and making transitions between academia and industry

Lab Dynamics: Management Skills for Scientists  
Carl Cohen & Suzanne Cohen

# Don't Forget to Have Some Fun!

Cell  
PRESS

Molecular Cell  
Forum

## Stress in Biomedical Research: Six Impossible Things

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Biomedical research may not be *more* stressful than other disciplines, but our stress is compounded by some of the inherent features of biology. We consider six impossible things and what we might be able to do about them, provided they are believed by lunchtime or, with practice, before breakfast.

*"I wish I could manage to be glad!"  
the Queen said. "Only I never can  
remember the rule."*

Science, this very creative human endeavor to understand the nature of the reality that exists independently of ourselves, is impossible. By "impossible," I am not saying "very, very difficult," although it is that, as well. We use our

be reading *Molecular Cell*). But given the level of stress I seem to experience every day, I suppose I am something of an expert. That said, I urge you to ignore everything I say (and to *not* ignore it is at the reader's risk). I can only tell you what seems to work for me, and I have no idea if it can work for you.

Here are some of the sources of stress, several of which are unique to our profes-

There is an important reason for this failure of perfectly logical ideas to translate into results, and it will be helpful to get this out of the way first. Life is not logical, because living things are not designed. Any biological system is a cobbled-together, makeshift affair that once upon a time happened to work better than some other contraption, so that it was reproduced and subsequently

Green DR,  
*Molecular Cell*  
2010

"And while it may not be true, it *seems* to be true that happiness (whatever we wish to call it) is a decision, not a condition... So in between all the stress, frustration, and challenge, don't forget to have some fun."