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## **Preface: A New Universe of RNA Interactions**

We now talk offhandedly of a prebiotic RNA World, a notion that was dismissed as idle and untestable speculation when proposed in the 1960s. Since then, RNA has been shown to catalyze chemical reactions, including the synthesis of the peptide bond. Small RNAs can be selected to recognize compounds with exquisite sensitivity. Even more surprising, some of these recognition events are recapitulated in bacterial cells for regulatory purposes. Small inhibitory RNAs are at the forefront of the research on the control of gene expression in complex eukaryotes. The RNA World model may still be speculative, but it certainly isn't idle!

The study of RNA–RNA interactions is essential to all this activity. RNA scientists now routinely take apart catalytic species and put them back together, or look to see which residues in a complex molecular assembly form the basis of a specific interaction. Others isolate new regulatory RNAs and investigate how they control gene expression. This volume aims to provide a guidebook both to scientists who are experienced with RNA research and want to brush up on a new technique. Even more, we hope it will be a guide to scientists who start to investigate a biological system and are surprised to find themselves studying RNA. The RNA World has a new insight lying around every corner.

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