

## **Proposal to NASW for funding of DCSWA Professional Development Day 2011**

**Applicants:** Elia Ben-Ari (NASW member), contact info: xxx; Andrea Widener (NASW member), contact info: xxx

Note: EB is a member of the DCSWA board and AW is DCSWA President.

**Project:** D.C. Science Writers Association (DCSWA) Professional Development Day 2011

**Amount requested:** \$6,000 (budget details below)

**Description:** Professional Development Day is an annual event that DCSWA has been organizing since 2005. This one-day event consists of plenary sessions and workshops designed to appeal to a range of science writers, including working journalists and public information officers, freelancers and staff writers. Each year, the organizers (mainly DCSWA board members) choose topics that reflect current issues of interest to the science writing community, including workshops/breakout sessions aimed at helping science writers do their jobs more effectively and providing new skills and insights for science writers seeking new job opportunities.

Highlights from recent years include sessions on

- Social media and why science writers should use it
- Hollywood and science
- The state of science journalism

We have also had workshops on

- Ethics, controversies, and other challenges for PIOs
- Freelancing 101 workshop (run by successful freelancers)
- Writing a book in collaboration with a scientist
- Writing about science for kids
- Pitch slams with editors from DC area-based print and online publications, including *Science*, *National Wildlife Magazine*, *National Geographic News*, AARP, and *Smithsonian Magazine*

This year's Professional Development Day, with the theme "Building an Engaged Audience," is planned for April 23, 2011. The event will include a plenary session on Building Online Communities and Engaging the Public with Science (speakers: Bora Zivkovic, Editor of *Scientific American's* blog network, blogger, and organizer of ScienceOnline meetings; and "science cheerleader" Darlene Cavalier) and a second plenary featuring former *Scientific American* editor John Rennie. The event will also include breakout sessions on the following topics:

- Building Your Brand
- Pitchslam
- The Press Conference: Worth the Hassle?
- Interacting with Your Online Audience
- Can (or Should) High Science Journalism Standards be Maintained on the Web?
- Building an Audience for Your Book

- Thinking Beyond Text (developing infographics)
- Search Engine Optimization and Science Writing

With more than 500 members, DCSWA is the largest regional organization of science writers in the United States. DCSWA has a track record of successfully organizing an annual professional development day. Officers and members of the DCSWA board, who work for various publications and scientific organizations, are currently finalizing plans for the 2011 event. The American Association for the Advancement of Science has generously agreed to let DCSWA use the facilities at its headquarters in downtown DC at no charge for this year's event.

**Service to NASW members and non-member science writers:** Funding of this project by NASW would pay for travel expenses for invited plenary and breakout session speakers from outside the DC area, thus helping DCSWA to provide a relevant and engaging program featuring top-notch speakers. NASW funding would also enable DCSWA to lower the cost for this event by \$10 per person (to \$40 for members, \$50 for nonmembers, and \$15 for students) and provide free registration for those in need, making it possible for more DCSWA members, other DC-area science writers, and students of science writing to attend Professional Development Day. Approximately 105 people attended this event in 2010, and we expect similar or slightly higher attendance this year.

**Proposed budget: \$6, 000**

- The amount requested would pay for the following:
  - \$3,500 for travel expenses for three plenary speakers and four additional speakers (estimated for travel, one night's lodging, and one dinner)
  - \$800 for audiovisual support at the American Association for the Advancement of Science headquarters building
  - \$1,700 that would (1) allow DCSWA to reduce the registration fee for DCSWA members, nonmembers, and students by \$10 per person compared to 2010 registration fees, and (2) provide free registration for up to 12 unemployed or financially strapped members

**Team members and affiliations:**