NATURAL DISASTER TAX RELIEF

GARNERING FOREIGN BYLINES IN U.S. PUBLICATIONS

GATES FOUNDATION CEO NAMED 2017 PATRUSKY LECTURER

HOW NOT TO APPLY FOR A WRITING AWARD

2017 NASW AND CASW AWARD WINNERS

SCIENCE, JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY
On a recent tour of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), I came away with a new appreciation for geologic time and the beauty of inclusions often found in crystals and gemstones.

Speaking of geologic time, a never-ending book project has prompted me to step back from teaching science writing through UC San Diego Extension. From the onset of my classroom career, I began each class with a weekly science-news quiz; this as a means to habituate students to actively seek out and devour science news. (The quiz had the added benefit of getting students to class on time because there was no makeup.) At first, students groaned. Inevitably, by the end of the quarter they realized the value of the exercise.

It’s gratifying that two former students have been hired to take over the reins. I had a chance to review the revised syllabus and noted the weekly news quiz remains. I’d like to think this makes me an “inclusion” in the crystallization of the course.

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Aquamarine courtesy of Lucas Fassari, photo by Kevin Schumacher/GIA, featured in Gems & Gemology Summer 2017 issue pg. 240; “Executive Synergy” brooch courtesy of Touraine Family Trust, photo by Orasa Weldon/GIA.

Lynne Friedmann
The current media landscape is a confusing swirl of reality, misinformation, and so-called fake news. How can science communicators navigate a political climate that’s increasingly hostile to both science and journalism?

Experts from several related disciplines addressed the situation at a day-long conference hosted by The Rockefeller University. Perhaps of some comfort, many speakers reassured the audience of journalists, publishers, academics, historians, attorneys, scientists, and executives of nonprofits that this type of polarization has happened in the past and will not last forever.

The Sept. 6 event was organized by David Levine and Joe Bonner, board of directors co-chairs of Science Writers in New York (SWINY); Brooke Borel, freelance writer and NASW board member; and Franklin Hoke, executive director of communications and public affairs, The Rockefeller University. Within days of opening registration all 200 seats were reserved and the livestream fully subscribed.

Keynote speaker Carl Zimmer, New York Times columnist and adjunct professor at Yale University, provided a cautionary tale of the intersection of bad science, bad journalism, and government in the person of T.D. Lysenko, a Soviet agronomist during the Stalin era, who claimed, among other things, to be able to grow spring wheat from the seeds of winter wheat (ignoring genetics). Despite scientists’ concerns that his research could not be replicated, “Politics overtook science,” explained Zimmer.

Lysenko’s work was considered an advance, extolled by the government, and covered in Pravda with quotes from officials but not scientists. Geneticists with contrary opinions were attacked and 3,000 lost their jobs. Some scientists were imprisoned for their doubts while those “forced to be political prospered.” Meanwhile, famine and deprivation worsened in the U.S.S.R. and people starved.

“History can familiarize and warn,” said Zimmer, who explained that societal changes “do not happen overnight.” He encouraged journalists to defend their principles, report debate, and always write for the public “not Pravda.”

Mariette DiChristina, editor in chief of Scientific American and moderator of the science, journalism, and democracy panel, emphasized that science and journalism are critical supports of democracy. Not surprising, this is not the first time both have been under attack. “Science has been politicized by all modern presidents since World War II,” said Michael Halpern, deputy director of the Center for Science and Democracy.

Among strategies helpful for journalists, Dan Fagin, director of the Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program at New York University and recipient of the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction, recommends beginning with data not a narrative. “We are always told we want to build narratives,” he said. “But if we let our narrative build our stories, it can get away from facts.”

NYU Professor Charles Seife told journalists to “verify what people in power say.” Speak to them, examine their documents and when necessary, make a narrow Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request “so you won’t be stuck for years.”

Matt Schafer, counsel at BuzzFeed News and an expert on FOIA, said requests can take from three months to five years or longer. He recommends your request reference the statute requiring agency to respond with an estimated compliance date, so that personnel know you know the law. Schafer also recommends submitting small FOIA requests sequentially by topic and time rather than one large request.

As for your own information, Suzanne Schmeelk, security expert at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, discussed the importance of maintaining data integrity.


Conference agenda at bit.ly/2fnQojW
Session videos at bit.ly/2hdJ6fN

Joanne Nicholas is a New York-based health and medical writer and Public Relations strategist.
The winners of this year’s Science in Society Journalism Awards, sponsored by the National Association of Science Writers, have been announced. Each category carries a cash prize of $2,500.

- **Book** Emily Voigt for *The Dragon Behind the Glass: A True Story of Power, Obsession, and the World’s Most Coveted Fish* (Scribner)
- **Longform** David Heath and Jie Jenny Zou for “Science for Sale” (Center for Public Integrity)
- **Science Reporting** Zoë Schlanger “Choking to Death in Detroit” (*Newsweek*)
- **Science Reporting for a Local or Regional Market** Eva Hershaw for “When the Dust Settles” (*Texas Monthly*)
- **Opinion** Barbara Moran for “Not Just Death, a System Failure” (*New York Times*)

In *The Dragon Behind the Glass: A True Story of Power, Obsession, and the World’s Most Coveted Fish*, author Emily Voigt takes readers on a riveting journey into the bizarre world of the Asian arowana or “dragon fish,” the world’s most expensive aquarium fish, revealing a surprising history with profound implications for the future of wild animals and human beings alike. With a captivating blend of personal reporting, history, and science, *The Dragon Behind the Glass* traces our modern fascination with aquarium fish back to the era of exploration when intrepid naturalists stood on the cutting-edge of modern science, discovering new and wondrous species in jungles all over the world. The judges described it as a “fascinating book about an endangered fish species” that hooked them from the very beginning and kept them captivated with vivid writing and extensively researched stories. They especially appreciated Voigt’s “journey to the far corners of the earth in search of the elusive dragon fish that has become a mythical creature because it has been fished nearly to oblivion.” They noted, “In addition to being a great read, this book is a powerful commentary on the damage human beings are doing to our planet and its once plentiful cornucopia of wildlife.” *The Dragon Behind the Glass* ([bit.ly/2w1VQAD](https://bit.ly/2w1VQAD)) published by Scribner.

In the series “Science for Sale” writers David Heath and Jie Jenny Zou offered a rare glimpse into a world where corporate interests can dictate their own science, and scientists for hire willingly oblige. It tracks the rise of industry-backed research at a time when government-funded science has dwindled. The judges write: “In this timely, multi-part series, the reporters expose an insidious, widespread, and shockingly successful effort by industry-funded ‘experts’ to cast doubt on established scientific evidence of numerous health hazards—at an incalculable cost to public safety. Drawing on extensive investigative reporting, court documents, and FOIA requests, Heath and Zou provide amply documented case studies in which corporations have hired agents with plausible scientific credentials to influence legal and regulatory opinion about asbestos, vinyl chloride, arsenic, tobacco smoke, and more.” “Science for Sale” ([bit.ly/1SVfuAa](https://bit.ly/1SVfuAa)) was published from February to May online by the Center for Public Integrity in collaboration with *Vice.com*.

“Choking to Death in Detroit” takes readers on a journey to River Rouge, Mich., a pollution-choked city of 7,000 at the southern edge of Detroit, where asthma runs rampant. “To get to the bottom of this devastating health problem, Zoë Schlanger had feet on the ground in that little city, meeting with local residents, health professionals and officials, as well as casting her net wide to cover the continued rise of a toxic industry and risk to residents’ immune systems and genes,” the judges said. “Schlanger’s reporting is visceral: You can smell the acrid air and see the billowing smokestacks. But it is also pointed and precise in its documentation of environmental abuse and racism.” “Choking to Death in Detroit” ([bit.ly/2t1zBEh](https://bit.ly/2t1zBEh)) was published in the April 8, 2016, issue of *Newsweek* magazine.

In “When the Dust Settles” Eva Hershaw describes in terrifying detail...
detail how the frequent dust storms blowing through the feedlots of the Texas Panhandle might be spreading antibiotic resistance. The judges commended Hershaw’s deeply reported and narrative story for “taking us through the mounting problem of antibiotic resistance in agriculture, now spilling into the human realm and threatening our management of infectious disease.” They note that “the story is particularly important because it follows the long effort of scientists to document and expose a grave social harm in the face of industry and institutional resistance. This is a powerful inside look at courage in science as well as a work of nuanced storytelling and dogged reportage.” “When the Dust Settles” (bit.ly/2gYBZrt) was published in the September 2016 issue of Texas Monthly.

“Not Just Death, a System Failure” is a personal piece by a young woman watching her mother die in a hospital, “a powerful indictment of the way our health care system is still failing so many Americans who would prefer to die at home surrounded by loved ones, but instead end up expiring in a hospital with tubes stuck in them, unable to enjoy their last moments,” the judges said. “Barbara Moran vividly contrasts the way Ted Kennedy—who had died a few days earlier than her mother—was able to eat ice cream, enjoy an ocean view, and share dinner with friends at home in his last days to the way her mother died in the ICU, “greedily” sucking on mouth swabs with the view of a gritty rooftop. The piece is a cry from the heart for better palliative care.” “Not Just Death, a System Failure” (nyti.ms/2wW7wlG) was published in the New York Times on Feb. 6, 2016.

In addition, NASW would like to recognize these finalists in the competition:

Azeen Ghorayshi (longform), Karisa King (longform), Anna Kuchment (science reporting local or regional market), Seth Mnookin (opinion), Melinda Wenner Moyer (science reporting), Shawn Otto (books), Sam Roe (longform), Julia Rosen (science reporting local or regional market), Kelly Servick (science reporting), Sonia Shah (books), Steve Thompson (science reporting local or regional market). Links to their entries found at bit.ly/2wlsf0s

The final judging committee consisted of Pamela Weintraub (Aeon), Alison Bass (West Virginia University), and Curt Suplee (freelance). The Science in Society awards committee was co-chaired by Amber Dance (freelance) and Alla Katsnelson (freelance).

In addition to the final committee, NASW thanks the volunteers who served on the preliminary committees: Eric Bender (freelance), SCIENCE IN SOCIETY continued on page 29

### Awards Celebration

Winners of the Science in Society Award and the Victor Cohn Prize will be honored at a reception on Oct. 26 at the 10th World Conference of Science Journalists, in San Francisco. That event will also showcase overseas science journalists and authors whose work has received recognition by organizations from around the globe.

2017 Victor Cohn Prize for Medical Science Reporting

Sharon Begley, a seasoned medical reporter who is senior science writer at STAT, is the recipient of the 2017 Victor Cohn Prize for Excellence in Medical Science Reporting. Begley will receive a $3,000 cash award and a certificate. She is the 20th recipient of the prize, awarded by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) for a body of work published or broadcast within the past five years.

Judges cited Begley for the remarkable authority, authenticity, precision, and confidence of her writing and praised the exhaustive investigative work evident in each piece of reporting. Her articles are distinguished by “a propulsive force, an accuracy, and a sharpness” that are the hallmarks of a knowledgeable reporter and polished writer, they said.

Begley joined STAT, the life sciences publication of the Boston Globe, in 2015 following stints as health and science correspondent for Reuters, science editor and columnist at Newsweek magazine, and science columnist at the Wall Street Journal. In a letter nominating Begley for the Cohn Prize, Managing Editor Gideon Gil recalled that she was the first science writer hired when STAT was launched. “One person after another told us she was the best medical science reporter around. Hiring her would bring our startup instant credibility. She has.”

In selecting Begley, the judges drew attention to “Behind a Cancer-Treatment Firm’s Rosy Survival Claims,” a 2013 Reuters special investigative report on the Cancer Treatment Centers of America for which Begley did the bulk of the reporting and the writing. Seasoned with interviews and gripping stories, the article presented a thorough examination of the data behind the center’s remarkable success claims, presenting ample evidence that CTCA cherry-picks its patients and reports results selectively.

Another notable piece was Begley’s November 2016 report for STAT, “Gene Drive Gives Scientists Power to Hijack Evolution.” That story, the judges said, provided an extraordinarily clear, thorough, and dramatic explanation of the science and societal issues associated with gene drives, a genetic technology that forces introduced genes to spread through a population. Gene drives have been proposed as a way to stop the spread of disease by insects such as mosquitoes.

Begley’s nomination also included her report on the potential of personalized cancer vaccines using “neoantigens,” a story showing how a lack of resources may be holding back work on a cure for sickle cell disease, and an investigation into Myriad Genetics’ attempts to discredit rival labs’ tests for breast cancer genes.

In the nomination letter, Gil praised Begley’s “remarkable range and versatility,” noting that she “breaks news, explains cutting-edge advances, investigates corporate and government malfeasance, COHN continued on page 29
Why So Hard for Foreign Journalists To Break into U.S. and European Outlets?

BY RODRIGO PÉREZ ORTEGA

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ome of the biggest science stories, from climate change to gene editing to infectious disease, are global stories. Journalists based outside the United States and Europe are well-positioned to find and report these kinds of stories.

When the Zika outbreak swept Brazil in 2015, for example, Brazilian journalists were the first to cover the event. But it can be a challenge to place those stories in U.S. and European publications.

So why don’t foreign bylines appear more often in such publications? In a roundtable conversation conducted by email, editors and freelance writers were asked about the challenges writers face in working across international boundaries.

The Editors:

Rich Stone, who oversees Science's international news coverage.


The Writers:


Rodrigo: Why do you think it’s often difficult for foreign journalists to break into U.S. and European publications?

Rich: You might think it’s a language barrier, but the sophistication of a journalist's English is secondary to the ideas being pitched. Writers who struggle to break into Science often have a hard time weighing a story's importance. For example, a pitch about a personality conflict in the Chinese Academy of Sciences is possibly of huge interest inside China, but the story doesn’t have legs outside China.

Richard: Any editor will want a science story from somewhere across the world if the research is newsworthy, exciting, and internationally cutting edge. But too often I get pitches that don’t articulate that the research has a story's importance. For example, if a pitch about a personality conflict in the Chinese Academy of Sciences is possibly of huge interest inside China, but the story doesn’t have legs outside China.

Ochieng': One of the reasons that it's difficult to break into publications is it's challenging to persuade editors that foreign journalists can write well and produce quality stories. I am aware of instances where some editors have ignored inquiries about contributions from people outside the U.S. or U.K. There is also a preference by editors to use writers from the U.S. or U.K. who are based in foreign countries, and not those who were born and brought up there, even though they may be much more conversant with these places.

Emiliano: Nature, Science, and SciDev.Net are examples of news organizations that have tried to diversify their pool of freelance writers. But it’s just as easy to find English-language publications that have not bothered to reach out to foreign journalists. English is not my first language, yet I’ve learned that as long as you can tell a good story it doesn’t matter whether you have perfect grammar. It is on us to think thoroughly about the angles that fit the needs of our editors. There are also lots of reporters who just don’t feel confident enough to send pitches to U.S./U.K. outlets. Fear of rejection can be an obstacle.

Rodrigo: Following up on Emiliano’s point about international journalists' fear of rejection, how can editors go about encouraging more foreign journalists to pitch to them?

Richard: By spoting great work, asking trusted reporters who live or travel in a region for connections to reporters there, and looking for contacts at networking events, such as the World Conference of Science Journalists. It takes effort, as it can be tricky to find good reporting in a foreign language [if you don’t speak the language]. Sometimes, traveling to a particular region is what’s needed.

Rich: Most editors are open to working with new writers from regions in which their news coverage is spotty or nonexistent. The challenge is establishing a connection. Editors are busy. Most of the time, I rely on writers coming to me with ideas. If a colleague or I spot a story that we'd like to cover, we'll invariably assign it to someone we know. If writers want to break into a publication, they should do their homework: have a sense of the kinds of stories we run and adequately research a pitch. Putting a name to a face can’t hurt, so I’ll be hoping to meet some promising writers at WCSJ.

Rodrigo: Editors, given that many international pitches come from writers you haven’t met and whose work you may not be familiar with, what can foreign journalists do to earn your trust, when pitching for the first time?

Richard: An editor wants to know about a reporter’s experience before trusting them with an assignment. The first step to familiarity and trust is as simple as a Skype conversation, with the reporter sending over a CV, some story clips, and a few ideas in advance. The editor can lay out what kind of stories the publication is interested in, the audience, and information they like to see in pitches. The reporter can bat around a few ideas and story approaches. In other words, overseas reporters approaching an editor with a pitch out of

RODRIGO PÉREZ ORTEGA, A FREELANCE SCIENCE WRITER BASED IN MEXICO CITY, WAS A 2017 TON FELLOW SPONSORED BY THE BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND. HE IS COMMITTED TO RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SCIENCE AND SCIENCE JOURNALISM IN LATIN AMERICA.
the blue needs to also pitch themselves.

**Rich:** I prefer brief initial queries. If it’s something we’ve already covered or have a writer working on, the writer can take the pitch to another publication or look for a new idea without investing too much time at the outset. If the query is promising, I’ll ask for more info and if it’s not in my area of expertise, circulate it to colleagues for feedback before making an assignment. Writers should not be dispirited by striking out on a pitch. Most of my best overseas writers struggled at the outset to identify good stories for *Science* before hitting their stride.

**Rodrigo:** Writers, how did you land your first U.S. or U.K. assignment? Did you simply send a cold pitch, or did you use other strategies, such as setting up a Skype introduction?

**Padma:** I don’t use Skype conversations or pitch myself along with a story. My pitches are in basic English; a language barrier is not really an obstacle. I believe that one should not fixate over whether they have broken into a U.K. or U.S. market or not. Enjoy your science writing first, and explore and decide what kind of science reporting is your forte.

**Emiliano:** In 2015, I attended on the AAAS meeting in San Jose, California, thanks to an NASW travel fellowship. I had almost no experience in journalism and felt out of place. Fellows are assigned an experienced mentor/editor and I was paired with Lizzie Wade, Latin America correspondent for *Science*. After the conference, Lizzie encouraged me to write for *Science*. After months of hunting down possible stories and getting a few pitches rejected, I landed my first story. With *Nature*, I used a different approach. I met Lauren Morello, *Nature*'s U.S. news editor, and pitched a story about budget cuts in Argentina, sending along my CV and clips. The story wasn’t published but that pitch helped when Lauren passed on my contact info to Richard Van Noorden who assigned me a story on Peru’s National Council of Science, Technology and Technological Innovation canceling its subscription to Elsevier/ScienceDirect.

**Fatima:** I have no background in science, having studied history and international development. Shortly after I moved from Canada to the Philippines I ran into one of SciDev.Net’s coordinators in an elevator. We talked. One thing led to another and now I write consistently for him. The SciDev.Net community is very supportive. My editor recommended me to other publications in the U.K. and the U.S. Today, I write regularly for several of them. That said I find it challenging to get ahold of editors if I don’t already have a connection. When I have met editors in person, I found that talking with them even for five or 10 minutes was infinitely more productive for both parties than sending countless emails. Email is not always the best medium of communication!

**Rodrigo:** Editors, what challenges have you had working with foreign journalists on stories and how did you address them?

**Ochieng’:** The ability to present stories to an audience, far removed from their geographic settings, in a manner that will elicit interest in them. Lack of resources for in-depth reporting can also be a challenge. Most journalists in the U.S./U.K. have the advantage of easy access to reliable internet. Journalists working in Africa find it harder because of lack of resources that would help them not only to hand in an assignment quickly but also allow for additional research to give their pieces the depth and uniqueness that U.S./U.K. publications require.

**Rich:** On rare occasions I’ve encountered writers who are ardently nationalistic, and their first drafts have boosterish comments and slogans. But we were still able to work together to get stories into shape for publication. The bottleneck for getting stories into the magazine from anywhere in the world is a dearth of enterprising and innovative story ideas. I can’t emphasize enough how important it is for writers to get out there and talk with people and turn over stones in search of good ideas. Skype chats between writers and editors at any stage of the working relationship are a very good thing.

**Richard:** It’s important to describe your country’s politics from the outside so that international readers can understand it. If I’m unfamiliar with the politics and history of a region, I’ll raise many more questions about basic points that you probably take for granted because you never have to explain them for domestic readers.

**Rodrigo:** Have you noticed differences in the way journalism is done in other countries compared to the way it’s done in the U.S. and U.K.? If so, in what ways have you had to adapt your approach to reporting, writing, or editing?

**Rich:** If the story is solid and compelling, we’ll work patiently with a foreign writer, especially those who haven’t written for us before, to reshape a story into our style. Edits are demanding, but the end result is a story we are both proud of.

**Emiliano:** Good journalism is the same, or at least very similar, in the U.S. and U.K. as it is in Mexico, the Philippines, India, or Kenya. I’ve had to adapt to the style of specific publications the same way that I adapt to the style of different Mexican outlets, for example.

**Rodrigo:** Have you ever encountered special logistical or administrative challenges, such as payment issues, when working with foreign journalists or outlets?

**Padma:** There can be some to-and-froing of payment if the bank abroad and your bank at home deal via an intermediary bank.

**Rich:** From time to time, payments wired to a foreign bank account don’t go through for trivial or unknown reasons.

**Emiliano:** The biggest challenge as a foreign contributor is that my nationality forces me to work on a freelance basis for outlets. There have been occasions when I applied for internships at U.S.-based outlets but lost the opportunities because I didn’t have a permit to work in the United States.

**Rodrigo:** Any final thoughts or advice you’d like to offer foreign writers or editors who work with them—or hope to?

**Emiliano:** Writers, if you want to break into U.S. and European publications, don’t be afraid to put yourselves out there. Yes, you will fail and your pitches will get rejected and it will take some time to figure FOREIGN JOURNALISTS continued on page 29

David Perlman discovered his interest in science by accident. An actual accident. It was 1957, and he was in the hospital recovering from a ski injury. His friend, a pediatrician at the same hospital, stopped by his room one day and dropped off a book, *The Nature of the Universe*. 

“Come on, I don’t care about that stuff. I’m not interested in astronomy or anything else like that.” Perlman was confined to his bed with not much else to do. So he read Hoyle’s book, and the wheels in his brain started turning. “Hmm, so this is what astronomers do,” he remembers thinking at the time. He wanted to know more, and as soon as he recovered, he hiked up to the summit of Mount Hamilton, just east of San Jose. There sat Lick Observatory, an astronomical observatory operated by the University of California. Perlman met with Dr. George Herbig, who later developed a reputation for pioneering work on the birth of stars. Their conversation was short, and the questions were simple. 

“Oh, sir, what do you do for a living?”

“If I study stars that are being born in the Orion nebula.”

It was an epiphany for Perlman, this idea of stars being born. “I thought it was one of the most romantic ideas I’d ever heard.” It cemented his interest in astronomy, though not enough for him to study it. Writing about it was the next best thing. At the time, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where he’s worked on and off for 77 years, didn’t have a science reporter. He talked to more scientists, not just astronomers, but physicists and chemists. “One thing led to another, and then that was all I wrote about,” Perlman says.

Fast forward 60-plus years. Perlman is retiring from journalism. He’s been a science writer through it all: the discovery of Lucy, Dolly the Sheep, the identification of exoplanets, the AIDS epidemic. He has a clip of his first story about AIDS on his office wall. It’s maybe 12 or 15 inches long and was published in June 1981, around the start of the global scourge.

“A pneumonia that strikes gay males,’ that’s the headline,” he reads. “At the time, we didn’t think it was important enough to stick a byline on it.”

Perlman was born Dec. 30, 1918. His mother’s boyfriend, who was a reporter at the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, took him to a screening of *The Front Page* when he was 12. The comedy features fast-talking, tabloid newspaper reporters on the police beat. “I wanted to be like those guys in the movie,” he says. Even today, Perlman keeps a quote from the film in his study: “Seedy, catatonic Paul Reveres, full of strange oaths and a touch of childhood.”

His career didn’t turn out exactly like that of the characters in the film. He first dabbled in journalism at his junior high school’s newspaper, then the high school’s, and eventually the *Columbia Daily Spectator* while an undergrad at Columbia College. At 18, Perlman landed his first professional gig as a journalist. It was the summer of 1938, and he was working at a newspaper in Schenectady. The New York native was recruited by a former *Spectator* managing editor, Mike Gravino, to cover local news for his Sunday paper.

“The one thing I remember about that experience is I wrote a story about an ex-con who complained about brutal treatment in Schenectady county jail,” Perlman says. “And we wrote a story based on my interview with him. The sheriff sued the paper for libel, but nothing ever came of the lawsuit.”

He’s published thousands of stories since then. If you search the *San Francisco Chronicle’s* archives, there are more than 3,000 stories with his byline. When I ask him if he’s ever missed a deadline, he laughs, “Of course, who hasn’t?” He remembers one time, back when newspapers used linotype machines, when his editor told him to dictate his story to the machine operator. “I was running into the newsroom, and I went back into the press.
knowablemagazine.org

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Perlman, knowing he'd be drafted, enlisted in the army. "I didn't do anything in the war," he says. "I was part of army air corps briefly and ended up in the infantry, but never fired a shot, or got shot at."

World War II ended in September 1945. Perlman stayed in Europe to work as a reporter for another six years. On a whim, he had called the editor of the Paris Herald, (the European edition of the New York Herald Tribune), for a job. In 1951, Perlman and his wife returned to San Francisco to raise their children. He resumed reporting at the Chronicle, where he's been ever since.

At the Chronicle, Perlman has had complete freedom to cover an unusually wide range of topics, from medicine to astronomy to climate change. He's also traveled everywhere for the paper: Germany, Ethiopia, Antarctica, and, his favorite, the Galapagos Islands. Following in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, he joined a team of 40 or so scientists studying evolution on the island in 1964, returning with other teams in subsequent years. "Stories that deal with species and evolution are my favorite to report," he says.

His interests expand beyond "the origin of species." He wasn't the first person to do it, but he remembers trying to explain "greenhouse gases" to his readers. It was during a time before the phrase "climate change" entered the zeitgeist. "It was hot stuff," he deadpans. For Perlman, like many journalists, getting people to care about climate change is a challenge. It's an abstract issue, far removed from the everyday lives of most Americans. It hasn't gotten any easier in the increasingly divisive political environment. "Our job is to write about what we know are the ominous elements of a changing climate and hope"

Knowable Magazine
Set to Launch

Adding a new voice to the growing offerings of online science journalism, Annual Reviews is launching a digital magazine. Knowable Magazine (knowablemagazine.org) uses various forms of storytelling to explore the life, physical, and social sciences. The magazine debuts at WCSJ2017.

The online-only magazine will focus on exploring the real-world significance of research, punctuated with forays into the wonder of the world around us. Knowable's standpoint is that, given the right tools and effort, the diverse phenomena that the universe presents to us can, in theory, be understood and explained.

"It's a pro-science attitude, but tempered with humility," said Eva Emerson, Knowable's editor and a longtime NASW member. "Scientists have been incredibly successful in describing much of the world, but gaps and unexplored areas will always remain. We wanted a name that applauds the rational effort to probe nature, while acknowledging science's limits."

Review articles from the 48 current Annual Reviews journals will serve as springboards for journalistic pieces in Knowable, including in-depth features, explainers, and even comics.

"Content in the Annual Reviews journals will provide the seeds of ideas, but we will make editorial decisions based on our own independent judgments on how to best inform and intrigue readers," said Emerson. The magazine is supported by grants from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

"Annual Reviews articles synthesize findings from individual studies into something larger, articulating where a field stands, what is controversial and what the future may hold," said Richard Gallagher, president of Annual Reviews. "Knowable will help share these insights with a wider audience in more approachable ways, and we'll open up the full review article to readers who want a deep dive into the topic."

As a journalistic endeavor, Knowable will look beyond the rapid-fire pace of reporting on single scientific studies, adding analysis, context, and perspective to news from all areas of science.

"What makes Knowable different in concept is that we are following scientific developments, but our reporting is based on reviews that integrate years of study. We will be writing about areas that have matured, or failed to mature, providing panoramic views of science and its impacts," said Emerson. "Many new results are intriguing, and worth covering, but seeing results in a deeper context can better reveal what actually makes a difference in peoples' lives. That's what we aim to do."

Knowable's rich blend of content will appear on its own website and also be freely available under a Creative Commons license. Knowable will actively seek partners interested in republishing the magazine's offerings.

Emerson came to Knowable from Science News, where she was editor in chief from 2012 to 2017. Deputy editor is Rosie Mestel, previously chief magazine editor at Nature and a former health and science editor at the Los Angeles Times. Reporter/Producer Lindzi Wessel came aboard after internships at Science magazine and STAT. The five-person Knowable Magazine continued on page 29
Talking Science: $225,000 Grant Supports Communications Training of Scientists

By Kim McDonald

Academics across the nation, many of whom were previously reluctant to become public advocates for research, voiced their collective support for science at the March for Science on Earth Day and the People’s Climate March, also in April.

Now, many are asking, what’s next? How can they continue to advocate for and communicate the relevance of their work to the public, political representatives and the news media?

UC San Diego’s Divisions of Biological and Physical Sciences have launched a Research Communications Program (bit.ly/2xLBegs) designed to address that need. Funded by a two-year, $225,000 grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the new effort seeks to improve the ability of faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, and other researchers on campus to communicate their work to the public.

“Scientists are great at making discoveries, but less great at explaining in plain language how their discoveries can benefit current and future generations,” said Bill McGinnis, dean of the Division of Biological Sciences. “There’s a serious and increasing gap in understanding the value that basic science brings to solving the great challenges facing Earth and humanity.”

“In an age in which there are significant doubts among certain portions of society about the value of science and scientific discovery, it’s vitally important that today’s research scientists find better ways to communicate to the public the value of our new discoveries in science,” said Jeffrey Remmel, a professor of mathematics and the program’s principal investigator.

Drawing on expertise across many disciplines, the first year of the program will teach researchers how to more productively work with the news media.

The first event for the Research Communications program was a May 17 seminar by Dennis Meredith, a science communications expert and author of Explaining Research: How to Reach Key Audiences to Advance Your Work.

His talk provided researchers with an overview of the tools and techniques for giving effective presentations. He also showed faculty members and others how they can more productively work with the news media.

That seminar was followed by two in-depth workshops in June. One on how researchers can tell their stories of discovery by working closely with their designated campus communication directors. The other, a three-day hands-on Talking Research workshop taught by Rubinstein that combined techniques from theatre improvisation, journalism, and brain science to help faculty find the spark or root of their work, distill their message, develop their own voice, and engage listeners by speaking with authenticity. The workshop culminated in a media day in which faculty were interviewed on camera and critiqued by Rubinstein.

“Communication workshops rarely tap into the scholarship on perception, learning, and reasoning,” said Sherry Seethaler, director of education initiatives for the Division of Physical Sciences, who is organizing much of the two-year program. “With the expertise available at our university, we can offer a program that applies this rich knowledge base to helping faculty reach a wide range of audiences.”

The second year of the program will feature workshops designed by science communication experts on campus as well as nationally recognized experts from outside the university to help researchers improve their ability to connect with political representatives and federal and state science agencies. Other workshops will help faculty by developing research-based strategies for effective dialogue with the public about politicized or contentious scientific issues.

“Given the current threats to core science funding, this new Moore Foundation-supported program will allow our scholars and other experts to teach scientists how to explain the beauty and significance of their discoveries to anyone, not just other scientists,” said McGinnis.

“Talking Science: New research communications program to train scientists to explain to the public the value of their work, UC San Diego News Center, May 4, 2017.”

Kim McDonald is director of science communications at the University of California San Diego.
Inaugural
SciCommSouth Conference

* Austin, Texas ★ Jan. 13, 2018
* Save the Date Y’all

by Juli Berwald

Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana are where scientific innovation, fragile biomes, and the dynamic energy, biotech, and biomedical industries all meet political conservatism. The issues facing science writers and communicators in the region couldn’t be more diverse or important.

Yet, we hardly know each other. Despite our unique geographic and political position, the science communicators in our part of the country are only loosely connected, if at all.

Our solution: SciCommSouth, the first South-Central states science communicators’ conference.

The half-day conference on Saturday, Jan. 13, 2018, will feature talks, a town hall, and breakout sessions. Some sessions will be aimed at more traditional science communication challenges, like reporting on energy and environment from within a conservative stronghold; the eternal question of how freelancers should best pitch editors; and the particularities of book publishing from the South. Other sessions will be a little more unorthodox, such as harnessing the creativity of STEMprov to shake loose new ways to tell stories, unconventional science communication like bar nights and digital media, and ideas that take PIOs outside the box.

We are thrilled our keynote speaker is David Biello, the author of *The Unnatural World: The Race to Remake Civilization in Earth’s Newest Age*, science curator for TED, and a contributing editor at *Scientific American*. He often writes about energy and the environment, two topics critical to all of us in the South.

SciCommSouth will be held at Huston-Tillotson University, a private historically black university and the oldest institution of higher learning in Austin. It is located in the center of a very happening part of town, loaded with restaurants and bars for pre- and post-meeting revelry.

The event concludes with a reception at Art.Science.Gallery. ([artsciencegallery.com](http://artsciencegallery.com)), the world’s only art gallery dedicated to science-based exhibits. The gallery’s owner has offered to curate a slideshow featuring images we’ve gathered in the course of our work as science communicators—photos, illustrations, data plots, infographics, posters, you name it—specifically for the evening reception. We’d love for you to be a part of it. Please check scicommsouth.org for more details.

One overarching goal of SciCommSouth is to create a sustained regional group that will enhance the efforts of science communication in the South. There’s power in strong connections. Not just for professional development, but for moral support in what may be a more challenging era for science than in the past.

**The issues facing science writers and communicators in the region couldn’t be more diverse or important.**

None of this would be possible without the supported of a $2,400 Peggy Girshman Idea Grant from NASW. We are also grateful for additional sponsorship from Art.Science.Gallery, Texas A&M University Press, Skout Energy Bars, Reds Porch, Serendipity Wines, and Warren Dunn/Debbie Mansfield Design.

We really hope to see y’all there!
WCSJ2017 Update

As this issue of ScienceWriters was hot off the press, more than 1,200 registrants for the 10th World Conference of Science Writers were packing their bags and heading to San Francisco. A full conference recap will appear in the SW winter issue.

University Day at UCSF and UC Berkeley

To offer WCSJ2017 attendees compelling story ideas and provide an inside look at current research and innovation, as well as a delightful change of scenery, on Sunday, Oct. 29, all conference sessions will be held on the campuses of WCSJ2017 host institutions UC San Francisco and UC Berkeley. Attendees will board buses for campus after the topical plenary The Hazard Zone: Science Journalists Tackle Natural Disasters.

In addition to regular program sessions, journalists will hear CASW New Horizons in Science briefings by eminent scientists, including Nobel laureates, and will participate in small-group lunch discussions with some of the world’s leading researchers. Other buses will continue up the hill from the UC Berkeley campus to spend half a day exploring the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory’s facilities for synchrotron research, nanoscience, and computational modeling.

At UCSF, talks and panels will be interleaved with a science expo and tours of labs pioneering molecular imaging, high-throughput gene sequencing, drug design, and virtual-reality video games for preserving cognitive function. At UC Berkeley, attendees will explore the science of evolution, black holes, new materials, climate change, genomics, global health, biodiversity, astronomy, and green chemistry.

AMONG UCSF SESSION OFFERINGS:

- **Industry Documents: Gold Mines for High-Impact Stories.** A hands-on session on how to explore a freely accessible treasure trove of documents related to the scientific research and business activities of the tobacco, pharmaceutical, chemical, and food industries.

- **When Will Healthcare Reach Digital Nirvana?** As healthcare information has gone from paper to digital, the experience has been rife with unanticipated consequences and new kinds of errors. This talk explores what went wrong and what can be done to make it right.

- **Leveling the Playing Fields: Science Journalism and Big Food.** This session will examine ways to fund and support fair but fearless journalism that promotes better consumer choices and investigates Big Food and beverage company practices and claims.

- **AMONG UC BERKELEY SESSION OFFERINGS:**
  - **Climate Change Primer: Responding to Global Impacts of Human Activity.** Verification of climate treaties, the future of carbon sequestration, superdikes to deal with rising sea levels, revising the power grid to accommodate intermittent renewable energy sources, and the future of water reuse in urban areas will be highlighted.

  - **Cutting-Edge Nuclear Technology: Which Questions Matter?** How should science reporters write about nuclear technology—both fission and fusion? Experts share their vision on the coverage of nuclear-related topics in the general and specialized press. Do journalists ask the right questions? What should they focus on? And what’s less important?

  - **“Contact” Plus 20: Where We Are in the Search for Aliens.** Twenty years since the movie “Contact” on the search for extraterrestrial intelligent (SETI), a look at how efforts have shifted thanks to projects such as the Allen Telescope Array, Breakthrough Listen, Breakthrough Starshot, and Pale Red Dot.

  - **Exploring and Managing Earth’s Microbiome.** Leading experts in the field of microbiome studies will discuss today’s revolutionary new view of the microbial community, how these communities collaborate in the Amazon rain forest, and how we can monitor and manipulate the microbiome to improve the environment.

LUNCH WITH A SCIENTIST

Lunch with a Scientist @ UC Berkeley topics will include: The Universe’s Dark Age and Cosmic Dawn; Prions, Protein Folding and Neurodegenerative Disease; The Science of Happiness; When Itch Becomes a Pain; Gene Therapy for Blindness; Neural Dust and Brain-Machine Interfaces; and 3D Printing Your House Using Agricultural Waste.

Lunch with a Scientist @ UC San Francisco topics will include: Leveraging AI Techniques in Medicine; Cryo-EM Comes of Age; Fighting Disease with CRISPR; Predicting Disease Outbreaks With Google Earth; The Brain’s Own GPS; Laser Dentistry: The End of “Drill and Fill?”; The Rodent Tooth as a Stem-Cell Niche; and The Self-Sculpting Brain.

TOURS

Lab and research tours include the Robotic Lab (UC Berkeley) where research is conducted on the design and control of a class of robotic systems worn or operated by humans to increase human mechanical strength. The Richmond Field Station (UC Berkeley) is an off-site facility that has been used...
for large-scale engineering, seismology, and environmental research since 1950. The Campus Squirrel Tour (UC Berkeley) features research exploring how scatter-hoarding fox squirrels assess the food items they bury and use this information to make decisions about where to bury each nut. The Memory and Aging Center (UCSF) brings together faculty members from the fields of neurology, geriatrics, psychiatry, cognitive psychology, neuroscience and nursing, and cares for more than 10,000 patients in its clinical and research programs. State-of-the-art Gladstone Institutes (UCSF) is an academically affiliated research enterprise next to the university’s Mission Bay Campus. The Human Performance Center (UCSF) specializes in understanding athletic performance through advanced technologies such as motion-capture systems.

The Hazard Zone: Science Journalists Tackle Natural Disasters

A timely addition to the WCSJ2017 program is The Hazard Zone: Science Journalists Tackle Natural Disasters, which will take place on Sunday, Oct. 29.

The recent spate of natural disasters—four hurricanes, two earthquakes—prompted the addition of this plenary session to address the challenges of covering such events with insight and understanding, and also with awareness the risks involved in reporting during the midst of catastrophe.

This late-breaking plenary organized by Deborah Blum, WCSJ2017 program chair and director of the Knight Science Journalism Program at MIT. Panelists: Brian Resnick, science writer, Vox, who covered both the hurricanes and earthquakes; Eva Ruth Moravec, freelance reporter based in Austin, Texas, who covered Hurricane Harvey for the Washington Post; Guillermo Lopez Portillo, investigative reporter, Televisa News, and Erik Vance, freelance science writer and reporter based in Mexico City, both of whom covered the earthquakes in that country. The moderator is Pallab Ghosh, senior science correspondent for the BBC.

2017 Patrusky Lecturer: Susan Desmond-Hellmann

Susan Desmond-Hellmann, a physician and scientist who serves as chief executive officer of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has been selected by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) to present the fifth Patrusky Lecture Oct. 27, at WCSJ2017.

Desmond-Hellmann, a pioneer in health care who has devoted her career to the eradication of disease, poverty, and inequity, will speak “In Defense of Science.” At a time when facts-based, data-driven approaches to problems are being rejected as elitist, she will make the case for science and data, drawing on personal testimony and powerful examples from the Gates Foundation’s work around the world.

“The Gates Foundation is one of the world’s biggest players in the field of global health, so it’s particularly fitting that Dr. Desmond-Hellmann will be giving the Patrusky Lecture at this year’s world conference,” said CASW President Alan Boyle, aerospace and science editor at GeekWire in Seattle. “Her perspective is also a great fit for the annual Patrusky Lecture, which focuses on big-picture views of scientific and social frontiers.”

Desmond-Hellmann became CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2014, after serving as the first female chancellor of UC San Francisco for five years. She leads the Gates Foundation’s vision for a world where every person has the opportunity to live a healthy, productive life. Drawing on diverse experience in both the public and private sectors, she creates an environment for talented and committed individuals to help more children and young people survive and thrive, combat infectious diseases that hit the poorest hardest, and empower people—particularly women and girls—to transform their lives.

Trained as an oncologist, Desmond-Hellmann spent 14 years at the biotech firm Genentech developing a number of breakthrough medicines, including two of the first gene-targeted therapies for cancer, Avastin and Herceptin. In November 2009, Forbes named her one of the world’s seven most “powerful innovators,” calling her “a hero to legions of cancer patients.” Her time at Genentech put her at the forefront of the precision medicine revolution, and in her current role she champions a similar approach to global development: precision public health—getting the right interventions, to the right populations, in the right places, to save lives.

She credits a move to Uganda in 1989—to work on HIV/AIDS and cancer alongside her husband, Nick—as a turning point in her career.

“It was so profound to recognize... that all the learning I had done to become a doctor didn’t matter at all if I didn’t make a contribution,” she says.

Desmond-Hellmann is the recipient of numerous honors and awards. She was listed among *Fortune* magazine’s “top 50 most powerful women in business” for seven years and, in 2010, was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and elected to the Institute of Medicine. In addition to an M.D. from the University of Reno, Nevada, she holds a master’s degree in public health from UC Berkeley. She serves on the board of directors at Facebook Inc.

The Patrusky Lectures were launched by CASW in 2013 to honor Ben Patrusky, executive director of CASW for 25 years and director of the New Horizons in Science program for 30 years. Previous Patrusky Lectures were given by chemist George M. Whitesides of Harvard University; paleontologist Donald Johanson of the Institute of Human Origins; Yale microbiologist Jo Handelsman, associate director for science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and pioneering particle physicist Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg of the University of Texas at Austin.
Tax Relief for Victims of Natural Disasters

by Julian Block

Natural disasters such as winter ice storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires have struck repeatedly in 2017, affecting millions of Americans. The tax code authorizes immediate relief for individuals—whose homes, household goods, and other properties suffer damage or are destroyed by such disasters—in the form of deductions and other tax breaks for casualty losses caused by events IRS describes as “sudden, unexpected, or unusual.”

Unfortunately, in many cases allowable write-offs turn out to be smaller than anticipated. Furthermore, individuals with high incomes and low losses will find they cannot claim any disaster-related deductions.

Q: What are the restrictions on disaster-related losses?
A: Losses (after they are reduced for insurance reimbursements and $100 for each casualty) are deductible only to the extent that the total amount in any one year surpasses 10 percent of a filer’s adjusted gross income (AGI); the number found on the last line of the first page of Form 1040.

Let’s say Tess Tracey anticipates a 2017 AGI of $100,000. After subtracting for $100 and insurance recoveries from damage to her Texas dwelling, she estimates a deduction of $11,000. But recall she can’t claim any deduction for the first $10,000 (10 percent of $100,000), therefore shrinking her allowable deduction to just $1,000. If her AGI surpasses $110,000, none of the $11,000 is deductible.

Q: In which tax year are casualty losses claimed?
A: The IRS usually allows loss deductions only for the year in which the losses occur. There is an often overlooked option that comes into play when the president of the United States declares disaster areas eligible for federal assistance. When this occurs, taxpayers can choose to apply the disaster deduction to either 2017, the current tax year, or 2016, the previous tax year, whichever is more advantageous. There is a benefit to reporting disaster-related losses in the previous year: a quicker refund, providing needed cash for repairs or replacements.

An example: Clarice Lecter resides in a Florida county that’s declared a disaster area. Clarice’s condo suffers $25,000 in non-insured damage. Her AGI is $30,000 for 2016 and is likely to be $60,000 for 2017. The 2016 allowable disaster-related deduction is $21,900 ($25,000 reduced by $100 to $24,900, then reduced by $3,000 or 10 percent of AGI). On the return for 2017, she can only claim $18,900 ($25,000 reduced by the $100-per-occurrence rule to $24,900, then reduced by $6,000 or 10 percent of AGI).

NOTE: You cannot split a loss deduction between two tax years.

Q: Are reportable losses reduced if help is received from others?
A: Deductible losses are reduced by cash or property received from an employer or from disaster relief agencies if the assistance is specifically for the purpose of restoring properties. Not so cash gifts that aren’t specifically designated for property restoration. This holds true even if the money is used to pay for the rehabilitation of property. Furthermore, any food, medical supplies, and other forms of subsistence received that isn’t for replacing property does not reduce deductible losses and does not count as taxable income.

Q: How is previous-year reporting handled if Form 1040 has already been filed?
A: Use Form 1040X to amend returns for 2016 without complicated red tape. Write something like “hurricane disaster area claim” at the top of the form in order to explain losses and speed up processing of a refund.

Q: Is there a tax break when disaster-related losses exceed income?
A: Yes. Filers need to familiarize themselves with the complex, often-overlooked rules for personal net operating losses (NOLs). These rules allow the application of unused excess deductions to recover or reduce taxes paid in other years.

This means it’s okay to take unused write-offs as additional deductions for the three prior years and for the following 20 taxable years (so-called “carryback” and “carryforward” in IRS speak). Alternatively, there’s the option to forego the entire carryback and just carryforward the excess amounts for up to 20 years, unless the amount is used up sooner.

An example: Affluent Alice Adams lives in a pricey place that’s completely destroyed by Hurricane Irma. Like her neighbors in their exclusive enclave, Alice has an insurance policy that specifically omits coverage for hurricanes. Accordingly, Alice’s six-figure loss exceeds her five-figure income.

Alice has IRS’s blessing to apply 2017’s unused excess deduction to reduce taxes for the years 2014 to 2016 or apply them to trim taxes for the next 20 years, a decision she ought not to undertake without the help of a qualified tax professional.

NOTE: Don’t assume paid tax preparers are aware of the many wrinkles in the rules for casualty losses, particularly the ones for carrybacks and carryforwards.
Advance Copy

Backstories on books by NASW members  by Lynne Lamberg

For this column, we ask NASW authors to tell how they came up with the idea for their book, developed a proposal, found an agent and publisher, funded and conducted research, and put the book together. We also ask what they wish they had known before they began working on their book, or had done differently. • Your purchase of NASW members’ books via the ScienceWriters bookstore, nasw.org/bookstore, helps support NASW programs and services.

**Dirt Is Good: The Advantage of Germs for Your Child’s Developing Immune System**, by Jack Gilbert, Ph.D., and Rob Knight, Ph.D., with Sandra Blakeslee (NASW member), St. Martin’s Press

The idea for this book stemmed from a phone interview with scientist Jack Gilbert. I was writing a piece for the New York Times on the role of vaginal seeding and C-section births (e.g. smearing vaginal fluids on the newborn to mimic what is missed in a surgical birth.)

As Jack and I talked, he said that he and his colleague, Rob Knight—both superstars in microbiome research—are constantly bombarded with questions from parents after giving talks. Both have young children and can relate. So we contacted my agent, Jim Levine, and floated the idea of a book in a Q&A format for busy parents. Readers can look up specific topics covering pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and child rearing for quick, evidence-based answers.

Most people do not know that the human microbiome, the trillions of microbes that live in and on your body, assumes an adult pattern by age three. Thus zero to three is a critical period for the gut as well as the brain. Moreover, these early interactions fundamentally tutor the developing immune system. Perturbances such as over use of antibiotics can set up a lifetime of chronic health problems.

The Q&A format made for a quick writing schedule—about five months total. It’s not an elegant format but we wanted to get the information to the parents of babies and toddlers who have no time to read a whole book. This sets our work apart from other books covering similar ground. We do not waste time getting to useful advice.

—Sandra Blakeslee


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Looking back, I realize that Teeth got its start with a story I covered when I was a metro reporter for the Washington Post. It was a 2007 article about Deamonte Driver, a 12-year-old child covered by Medicaid, who died of complications from a dental abscess. His mother had been trying to get dental care for Deamonte’s younger brother when Deamonte got sick. But then, as now, Medicaid dentists could be very hard to find.

The nation’s more than 70 million Medicaid patients are not alone in their struggles to find dental care. For reasons including poverty, provider shortages, and inadequate dental benefits, an estimated one-third of Americans face barriers getting access to the nation’s separate, carefully-guarded, largely private-practice dental system.

In 2008, when my Post job disappeared in a newsroom downsizing, I found freelance work writing about dental care. My understanding of the subject was immeasurably deepened when I was chosen as a Knight Science Journalism Fellow. Thanks to the fellowship, I spent the 2009-10 academic year at Harvard studying dentistry and public health.

I also attended a three-day continuing education course, Achieving Healthcare Leadership and Outcomes through Writing and Publishing, led by Harvard physician and author Julie Silver. It was there that I met Boston literary agent Albert LaFarge, who encouraged me to move forward with my book idea. Still, it took more than three additional years of reporting and writing before I managed to develop what I considered a viable proposal.

When I finally connected with Marc Favreau,
editorial director of The New Press, Marc helped me refine and improve my proposal. Marc and his team saw Teeth as fitting into The New Press mission: to publish books on important social issues that may be overlooked by larger publishers. They used their gifts to help bring this book to life.

—Mary Otto

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The Happy Chip, by Dennis Meredith, Glyphus LLC

The idea for The Happy Chip sneaked up on me. I realized that companies were becoming ever more sophisticated—and intrusive—at monitoring my every decision, my every whim. Google knew my web searches; Amazon knew my shopping interests; Facebook knew who my friends were.

So, I wondered, what if a company, NeoHappy, Inc., took such data-grabbing to an extreme? What if it created a nanochip that people could have implanted in their body that would tell them—by measuring their hormones and physiological responses—exactly how much they were enjoying a particular product, experience, or person?

The Happy Chip would guide them to the best products, the best life choices, even the best significant others. And the chip would feed that data to a Happy Ratings database—a sort of super-Yelp—that would offer subscribers ratings of every product and service.

From that initial idea, The Happy Chip evolved into a high-tech thriller, in which a nefarious company executive and his engineer henchman develop a chip that not only monitors people, but controls them. The new chips can produce absolute elation, but also suicidal depression, uncontrollable lust, murderous rage, and remote-controlled death.

Battling the rogue executive is the intrepid science-writer hero (an NASW member, of course!), his indomitable wife, and a slightly disreputable Russian white-hat hacker and his gang. Their quest takes them from Boston to Beijing, as they try to stop the villains and the Chinese government from developing and spreading the chip technology to subjugate whole populations. How does it end? I’ll just say that the climax is a grabber!

I’m self-publishing and marketing my novels. So far a labor of love, not money. The typical road to critical and financial success in the crowded fiction publishing market is to keep producing good books, promote like crazy, and build a fan base. The process can take many years and many books, and is basically a crap shoot. Fortunately, my wife Joni has become a social-media-marketing maven: joining Goodreads book clubs, compiling blog contacts, soliciting reviews, and tweeting as @scifinov.

—Dennis Meredith

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The Brightest Rock, by Kelly Lenox, Word Tech Editions

The Brightest Rock is the realization of a 20-year dream. I’ve always written poetry and while I studied it in college, I never took it seriously. Rather, it was icing on the cake as I studied environmental science, which I loved. After college, I worked in the field for the Environmental Protection Agency. Currently, I edit the Environmental Factor, the monthly newsletter of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

At age 40, I began graduate school in creative writing. All along, my poems have been influenced by geology, drawing on images of tunnels, mines, mountain ranges, caves, and, of course, rocks. Trees, plants, and water in all its forms also provide touchstones for the journeys of the poems.

Debut collections of poetry are typically published by university or small literary presses. First book contests fund publication through contest fees. I spent five years submitting to contests; each rejection led to more revision of the manuscript. I finally received an offer from Word Tech Communications, a small commercial publisher of poetry that relies on authors to sell books. That makes sense from a business standpoint, because nobody makes money from poetry. And yet, in this genre, self-publishing is the kiss of death. Bookstores, reading series, reviewers all want the imprimatur of an editor’s having selected the manuscript.

I owned an encaustic painting by an artist friend, Susan Skrzycki of Raleigh, N.C., and thought something of hers might work for the cover. When I asked to see more of her work, she asked for the manuscript instead. Susan completed three paintings on paper in response to the poems. The book designer and I chose the one you see.

For my second book, now in process, I hope to find a different publisher. I’m a passionate supporter of bookstores, and Word Tech’s distribution through Ingram was an important factor. Yet, my author discount and bookstore commissions mean that I break even on bookstore sales when I give readings. Don’t let that stop you.
Much of my work as a writer involves work for hire projects where I am tasked with bringing the ideas of others to fruition. My almost three decades of high school and college chemistry teaching experience helps me pitch complex ideas at an appropriate level to a general audience. My latest book, *The Elements: A Tour of The Periodic Table*, is one example.

I worked with Quad Books in the UK for the production of the text, editing, technical review, and image checks. In the U.S. the publisher is Metro Books, an imprint of Sterling Publishing, which in turn is a subsidiary of Barnes & Noble. It took me approximately 11 months from being asked to write the book (thanks to a couple of Twitter connections), to its publication. As is usual with a WFH project, I received a flat fee without royalties.

Since research for the majority of the elements already has been done, the bulk of my work involved collating and re-engineering from many well-established sources. However, the slightly less well-known elements often offer opportunities for digging a little deeper. I was particularly interested in recent news and scientific articles about elements that have very few established applications and uses. A number of the lanthanoids and actinoids fall into this category. Since the chemistry of those elements is constantly evolving, I hoped they would offer some of the most fertile ground for writing about less extensively reported chemistry.

I’ve worked on a number of projects about the periodic table over the years. One of the recurring (and frustrating) themes of such projects is that restrictions regarding word or page count prevent discussion of each of the current elements. That was true with this book, too. Luckily, my next WFH project—a children’s book about the periodic table with an emphasis on illustrations and design—will allow me to include all 118 elements.

—Adrian Dingle

*The Elements: A Tour of the Periodic Table (US); The Elements: An Encyclopedic Tour of the Periodic Table (UK)*, by Adrian Dingle, Metro Books (US), Quad Books (UK)

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Much of my work as a writer involves work for hire projects where I am tasked with bringing the ideas of others to fruition. My almost three decades of high school and college chemistry teaching experience helps me pitch complex ideas at an appropriate level to a general audience. My latest book, *The Elements: A Tour of The Periodic Table*, is one example.

I worked with Quad Books in the UK for the production of the text, editing, technical review, and image checks. In the U.S. the publisher is Metro Books, an imprint of Sterling Publishing, which in turn is a subsidiary of Barnes & Noble.

It took me approximately 11 months from being asked to write the book (thanks to a couple of Twitter connections), to its publication. As is usual with a WFH project, I received a flat fee without royalties.

Since research for the majority of the elements already has been done, the bulk of my work involved collating and re-engineering from many well-established sources. However, the slightly less well-known elements often offer opportunities for digging a little deeper. I was particularly interested in recent news and scientific articles about elements that have very few established applications and uses. A number of the lanthanoids and actinoids fall into this category. Since the chemistry of those elements is constantly evolving, I hoped they would offer some of the most fertile ground for writing about less extensively reported chemistry.

I’ve worked on a number of projects about the periodic table over the years. One of the recurring (and frustrating) themes of such projects is that restrictions regarding word or page count prevent discussion of each of the current elements. That was true with this book, too. Luckily, my next WFH project—a children’s book about the periodic table with an emphasis on illustrations and design—will allow me to include all 118 elements.

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—Adrian Dingle
The impetus for this book was my realization, while researching my last book, Superbug, that we use many times more antibiotics in agriculture than in medicine, something that didn’t make sense to me given how zealously medicine pushes conservation of antibiotics.

The proposal went out in the summer of 2013, which turned out to be fortunate timing, as the FDA decided in December 2013 to act against farm antibiotic use with a set of rules that became effective in January 2017. Editor Hilary Black of National Geographic Books saw the idea’s promise and outbid several other houses to buy it.

I began the book’s research with a project fellowship at the Knight Science Journalism program at MIT, which helped me travel to the Netherlands, France, and around the U.S. I also benefit from being a senior fellow at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University, which uses its endowment to support student researchers for its fellows.

What I wish I’d known: That the story would change as I was reporting it, as U.S. consumers turned against farm antibiotic use. What I thought would be an exposé also became an account of cultural change. And also, that my thought would be an exposé also became an exposé—my culture turned to the routine use of antibiotics as growth promoters and disease preventatives in the 1950s, and how it clung to those practices despite decades of evidence the drugs were contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistance around the world. That story is told through the parallel story of the rise of modern poultry production, because chickens were the first animals to get growth promoters experimentally, and—at least in the United States—chicken may be the first protein to voluntarily exit routine antibiotic use.

Maryn McKenna

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This is the 12th edition of my textbook. I’m sole author of all 12 editions. My Ph.D. is in genetics, and I came to this project, in 1991, with a decade of freelance science writing experience.

The “proposal” was a chapter outline scribbled on a napkin at a dinner with the publisher of my intro biology textbook, Life. Human genetics was the book I’d wanted to write in 1981 when five publishers asked me to do an intro book. Genetics wasn’t yet a big deal.

My science writing skills infuse this textbook, in the boxed readings, chapter intros, and pedagogical elements about families I’ve interviewed. I once overheard a male professor seemingly insulting me by saying, “She writes like a woman.” I took it as a compliment.

McGraw-Hill has been great about letting me lead, such as going from a three-year cycle to a two-year cycle as human genome sequencing revved up. I decide which topics to cover and how and in what sequence, based on instructor reviews. I’ve had tremendous freedom.

I didn’t need an agent because publishers found me, and I’ve only taken advances on two of the 33 textbook editions I’ve done (I have written two other books with co-authors.) What I’m working on today won’t generate royalties for two years, given publishing cycles and semester timing.

The editorial situation is very different from that of magazines and other types of books. Editors mostly “manage products,” and now developmental editors are actually called Brand Managers. McGraw-Hill isn’t even a publisher, it’s an educational company. The one constant and the professional I’ve learned the most from over the years is the copyeditor. Copyeditors rock!

I’m not sure how much longer textbooks will exist. Many are being chopped up, reconfigured, and spat back out as “content,” to compete with other streams of content. I am not a content provider and never will be. I am an author.

—Ricki Lewis

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Dr. Eleanor’s Book of Common Ants, by Eleanor Spicer Rice (NASW member) and Rob Dunn; photos by Alex Wild, University of Chicago Press

Whether they’re snuggled in your acorns or sleeping under your doormat, ants surround
you, quietly running the world as you go about your life.

This book explores the lifestyles and curious habits of the ants you’re most likely to encounter, from the kitchen-crusading odorous house ant (which smells just like blue cheese!) to the seed-planting winnow ant.

About seven years ago, two North Carolina State University biologists, Rob Dunn and Andrea Lucky, wondered which ants people were most likely to encounter in the United States. Acknowledging that we’ve catalogued remote tropical forests and global biological hotspots, they wanted to discover what’s actually living around us. To find out, Dunn and Lucky asked citizens across the country to collect and mail ants to NC State’s School of Ants project.

What they found shocked us myrmecologists. Not only were children mailing specimens from unlikely places, but some of our most common ants were so poorly understood they didn’t even have common names. We decided to write a book to introduce people to their often-overlooked neighbors and sometimes housemates.

Ants are ubiquitous. By watching them, we can learn a lot about our world. This book is a primer, guiding children and beyond through their world underfoot, and hopefully helping them form connections with some of the most abundant animals on earth.

We started the book as a free e-book. It later was picked up by the University of Chicago Press. The e-book was funded in part by grants from the NSF and Burroughs Wellcome fund. The University of Chicago Press later provided an advance to fund the series’ three location-specific books, Dr. Eleanor’s Book of Common Ants of California, Chicago, and New York City.

I had the pleasure of scouring peer-reviewed journals for tidbits on each species, and translating those tidbits into digestible stories for the general public. About halfway through the process, I began to interview researchers who’d devoted their careers to studying specific species. In hindsight, I would have contacted them earlier, as anybody who knows these ants understands their endearing characteristics—delightful mannerisms that come to life with the help of photos by the world-renowned myrmecologist and ant photographer Alex Wild.

Through the Shadowlands: A Science Writer’s Odyssey into an Illness Science Doesn’t Understand, by Julie Rehmeyer, Rodale Books

When chronic fatigue syndrome first flattened me, I was shocked to find that doctors were useless. Authoritative websites, including those of the CDC and Mayo Clinic, offered not just scanty but false information. The research literature was thin as tissue paper. And most journalism about chronic fatigue syndrome was sneering, trivializing, or just plain wrong.

Soon, I knew I’d have to write about the disease in some form. The need was so obvious!

I first imagined a book that would offer a broad perspective on the illness as a whole, grounded in my personal experience, as Andrew Solomon’s Noonday Demon did for depression. But as the years went on, my own experiences with the illness grew wilder and more amazing, like a fantastically flowered vine bursting beyond the boundaries I’d imagined for the personal aspects of the book.

Also, I began feeling a gulf between my perspective and those of my science-minded friends. Science pretty much abandoned me and my fellow patients, for decades. Having this illness feels like falling off the edge of the earth and nothing looks the same afterward. To convey the experience of this illness, useful information wasn’t enough: I needed to create an emotional shift in my readers. And nothing beats a story for that.

So the book became a full-on memoir, bringing readers inside my heart and mind as I lay in bed for month after month, literally paralyzed, with no idea what to do. They feel the desperation that drove me to try a treatment that many scientists sneered at—taking extreme measures to avoid mold—and the shock and joy when it worked. And, hopefully, they emerge with a taste of the profound shift in perspective that has made me a better science journalist and a happier person, whether sick or well.

In 2014, I began working on a book proposal, and in February 2015, I wrote an op-ed for the New York Times about the disease. An agent, David Doerrer, asked if I’d like to write a book. We sold it to Rodale five months later, and I completed the manuscript 10 months after that.

— Julie Rehmeyer

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President’s Letter

It’s been a big year for NASW, culminating in the World Conference of Science Journalists around the time this issue of ScienceWriters hits mailboxes and inboxes. If you can’t make it to the meeting, or if you’re pulled between too many great sessions and miss some, you can still read all about it. Travel fellows from around the world—sponsored by generous donations from many NASW members to the David Perlman Fellowship Fund—will be writing dispatches from the conference, and many of us will be tweeting the highlights. Follow along at #sciwri17 or #wcsj2017. (Even though we’re all professional communicators, we can never seem to agree on just one conference hashtag.)

Other projects are making great progress, including our website redesign, revised Science in Society Awards categories, a proposal from the PIO Committee for awards that recognize institutional communication, diversity committee fellowships, new rounds of Peggy Girshman Idea Grants, and many other committee-led initiatives. We put out a call recently for volunteers for the governance committee and information access committee, but please contact any of the committee chairs if there is a group you’d like to join—or let me know if there is a new committee you’d like to propose. That’s where a lot of NASW’s best projects begin.

The new governance committee, co-chaired by Alex Witze and Nsikan Akpan, helped craft a harassment policy that will be implemented for the WCSJ conference and our future ScienceWriters conferences. Thanks very much to the members of that committee for a tremendous amount of thought and research into how we can ensure a safe and respectful environment at our events.

Another thanks to Alex Witze for taking on the responsibility of becoming our new NASW treasurer. She will head the finance committee, which was established in 2010 and has taken on some of the hardest and most important work at NASW.

Committee members, who meet once a month, propose the budget, weigh in the costs and benefits of new proposals, check the math, make strategic financial decisions, and are diligent and frugal stewards of our Authors Coalition disbursements and your dues. Read more about the importance of the AC in Tinsley Davis’s Dispatches from the Director (page 19).

NASW’s finances undergo an annual audit by independent accountants. This isn’t required by law, but, under Tinsley’s guidance, we require it of ourselves. The audits regularly come back with a ruling that our financial statements are “fairly stated,” which sounds like just a passing grade but is auditor-speak for a standing ovation.

As treasurer, Alex replaces Rob Frederick, who has stepped off the board in order to run for mayor of his town. Rob has been a member of the finance committee, board member, and AC representative. A lot of people have asked him about his decision to run for political office and have expressed interest in trying it themselves. He says that a lot of what writers do is “carefully state problems” and he saw that his elected representatives “have a poor record for addressing the problems identified by our community and carefully stated by my colleagues in the press.”

The NASW constitution calls for vacancies on the board to be filled by a vote of the members. Several highly qualified candidates expressed interest in filling the position. Thank you for voting in this special election, which is a difficult exercise because the candidates you must choose among are all terrific.

One of the weird legacies of being an organization founded more than 80 years ago (in 1934) is the first word of our name, “National,” which sounds presumptuous now, as if there are no other nations in the world who might have associations of science writers. NASW has grown tremendously since then and has many members who are not based in the United States. We invite science writers from around the world to join our organization. We hope the WCSJ will help people forge new collaborations, find stories that deserve wider audiences, learn skills for reporting in different regions, and build friendships and wide-ranging support systems. We’re looking for new ways for NASW to serve our international members, especially those who address Spanish-speaking audiences, and to team up with other science writing groups around the world.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from the WCSJ meeting, either in person or virtually. And it’s not too early to be thinking about events for our next meeting, which will be held in October 2018 in Washington, D.C. The call for proposals will go out in winter.

NASW Treasurer Change

A seamless transition as Alex Witze assumes the duties of NASW treasurer. She replaces Rob Frederick, who is stepping off the board to run for political office in his community.
FORWARDED EMAIL, LIKE THAT
PRODUCED BY AN NASW.ORG MEMBER ALIAS,
CONTINUES TO RUN AFoul OF THE LATEST
antispam measures, and in most cases
there’s not much that can be done about it.

Here’s the latest wrinkle. Several
months ago, Gmail changed how it routes
autoresponses, such as vacation out-of-office
responders. Instead of sending them to
the “from” field address, Gmail now sends
them to something called the “envelope
sender,” which is among the message
headers that most users never see.

The problem arises when the “envelope
sender” doesn’t match the “from” address,
which is often the case when a message is
automatically forwarded, as is mail to
nasw.org aliases. When that happens,
the autoreply messages get either blackholed
or bounced back to the Gmail user.

My research suggests that Gmail isn’t
really at fault here. Rather, our mail server
software (cPanel) is not implementing the
“envelope sender” rewriting correctly. I’ve
filed a bug report and perhaps the issue
will be fixed at some point.

But for now, don’t count on your auto-
replies working if you have an nasw.org
member alias that forwards to a Gmail
account.

A PERSONAL ASIDE
Thank you from me and my family for
the many cards and emails about my
recent hospitalization for a kidney trans-
plant necessitated by polycystic kidney
disease. After two years on a transplant
waiting list, I was able to get a living donor
kidney from my wife, Betsy, and we are
both recovering well.

But almost 100,000 people in the U.S.
are still waiting for a donor kidney. Every
day, an average of 22 people are removed
from the list because they died before
getting a transplant. So if you haven’t done
so already, please go to organdonor.gov

In September, I attended the biennial meeting of the
Authors Coalition (AC) with newly designated NASW representative Kendall Powell, who picked up the reins from outgoing AC rep Rob Frederick. AC representatives meet several times a year via conference calls. The opportunity to gather in person allows for deeper discussions about common issues facing creators’ organizations and the state of copyright in the U.S. and abroad.

AC currently has 22 member organizations ranging from Romance Writers of America to The Dramatists Guild. Together, the partners collectively receive and distribute non-title royalties collected by reprographic rights organizations (RROs) in overseas countries on behalf of U.S. creators. Distributions to each partner organization are made according to a formula that aligns the types of works produced by an organization’s members with the areas in which monies are collected (e.g., textbooks or music). This is why NASW members are reminded to fill out the annual AC survey because survey data forms the basis of distribution decisions.

Funds collected by RROs vary from year to year with no set amount ever guaranteed to an organization. In recent years, income from RROs has been reduced due to the strong U.S. dollar relative to other currencies as well as changing economies and laws in many of the European countries that participate. Therefore, to budget effectively, NASW holds on to all of its AC distributions received in a 12-month period for use in the next fiscal year.

Attention! The Authors Coalition has created an Individual Author Distributions (IAD) program through which it now distributes title-specific royalties to individual creators. To date this has amounted to $1.7 million distributed to 1,000 creators, with the largest payout to an individual in the neighborhood of $221,000. With $1.8 million currently unclaimed in the IAD fund, it is worth your time to visit bit.ly/2vJSDkT and search the database to see if title-specific royalties are yours for the claiming.
for instructions on how to register as an organ donor upon death. And if you’re really a saint (like my bride), consider being a living donor if and when someone close to you needs one.

NASW-FREELANCE

It’s not unusual to hear freelance writers complain that an editor “stole” an idea they pitched. In mid-August, Randi Hernandez, a New York science editor, alleged that a writer did the same to her.

“Just asked for a freelancer to share availability to write a story. He said to pass on the embargoed piece and he would let me know—then informed me he was already covering it for his day job…I’m quite appalled, as I am almost positive he just ‘stole’ a lead. What are the ethics concerning an issue like this?”

Some list members questioned whether Hernandez was right to be offended, but even those who agreed with her said she didn’t have much recourse.

“I doubt you could prove (without a court order) that he stole an idea from you,” wrote University of Chicago Communications, Outreach, and Project Manager Benjamin Recchie. “My feeling would be that it’s up to you to make an example. Stop working with him and make sure to tell him why.”

That advice drew a sharp reaction from Sherborn, Mass., freelancer Richard Robinson.

“Yikes!” Robinson wrote. “This is the sentiment freelance writers want to convey, with no evidence the writer did anything wrong, on a list for freelance writers? So much for solidarity forever…”

Other commenters questioned whether Hernandez had any right to claim exclusivity on news that was widely circulated, even if under embargo.

“It’s hard to see how you can have a scoop on embargoed journal news, given that we all get alerts and tables of contents online at roughly the same time,” wrote Science contributing correspondent Ann Gibbons of Pittsburgh, Pa.

Boulder Creek, Calif., freelance Leslie Willoughby suggested that better communication might shed light on what really happened.

“Perhaps the writer did not steal, but rather did not realize he would be assigned the story at work when he agreed to look at it for you. Perhaps he prefers to not reveal his freelance work to his boss.”

For more, search the NASW-Freelance archive for the thread “Stories” or go to bit.ly/2vkwLMX.

OTHER LIST DISCUSSIONS

NASW-PIO: Jim Barlow, director of science and research communications at the University of Oregon, asked list members what they knew about JoVE, a “video journal” that produces videos from traditional text manuscripts submitted by researchers. “The journal has ‘invited’ my researcher to submit a paper based on a previous paper, which strikes me as odd,” wrote Barlow. See the NASW-PIO thread “Any intel on JoVE” or go to bit.ly/2xx0xig.

NASW-Talk: Also in mid-June, Rick Borchelt, director for communications and public affairs for the Office of Science in the U.S. Department of Energy, summarized the latest data (2015) on enrollment in college journalism and mass communications programs. “Now granted this is two years old, but it’s still a pretty good snapshot of what’s going on in J-schools today.” See the NASW-Talk thread “Survey of Journalism & Mass Comm Enrollments” or go to bit.ly/2wpjG05.

NASW-Freelance: Finally, in late August, Brooklyn freelancer Maria Ter-Mikaelian asked for advice on collecting an overdue payment from an editor who bought one of her articles. “I’m hoping it’s possible to sort this out without souring the relationship, as I enjoyed working with him and he’s told me he’ll look kindly on future pitches from me, which for a newbie like myself seems like a big deal. See the NASW-Freelance thread “following up with an editor about payment” or go to bit.ly/2vbdm4R.

T

he latest edition of this yearly anthology once again features the work of NASW members.


The following also cited as notable science and nature writers of the year: Christine Ashwanden, Michael Balter, Marcia Bartusiak, David Biello, Warren Cornwall, Liza Gross, Erik Vance, Lizzie Wade, Jessica Wapner, Christie Wilcox, and Lina Zeldovich.

Submit your or a colleague’s work for consideration in the next The Best American Science and Nature Writing by emailing materials to series editor Tim Folger at tffolger.net. More information at bit.ly/2xZd6Wu. Deadline is Jan. 5, 2018.
Eric Boodman Wins Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award

The winner of the 2017 Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award, an annual prize for young science journalists, is Eric Boodman, a reporter at STAT. Boodman receives the award and its $1,000 prize for four stories in STAT:

- Accidental Therapists: For Insect Detectives, the Trickiest Cases Involve the Bugs That Aren’t Really There (bit.ly/2ndbRNZ)
- In the Dark of Night, A Hunt for a Deadly Bug in the Name of Science (bit.ly/2aMbm7v)
- Kratom Ban Will Hinder Studies of the Plant for Treating Pain or Addiction, Researchers Say (bit.ly/2w3qPl)

The panel of judges cited Boodman for his highly original topics, his meticulous and deep reporting, his ability to use vivid characters to tell memorable stories, his “lovely” writing and “fun” details, and his knack for slipping complicated science and medical ideas into compelling narratives that painlessly educate readers while captivating and entertaining them. “A writer like Boodman can potentially broaden the audience for, and the appeal of, science writing,” said one judge.

Originally from Montreal, Boodman graduated from Yale in 2015, where he focused on narrative journalism and the history of science. While still a student, Boodman wrote for the Montreal Gazette, Montreal Review of Books, and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. He joined STAT in August 2015.

Boodman will be honored by the Evert Clark Fund and the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASY) during the 10th World Conference of Science Journalists.

Judges for the 2017 award were:
- Warren Leary, retired science correspondent for the New York Times, former science writer for the Associated Press, and former CASW board member
- Laura Helmuth, health, science, and environment editor at the Washington Post
- Susan Milius, life sciences writer at Science News
- Richard Harris, science correspondent at National Public Radio and CASW board member
- Dr. Gary B. Ellis, research review specialist at the Congressional Research Service, former director of the Office for Protection from Research Risks at the National Institutes of Health, and a former AAAS Mass Media Fellow

The Clark/Payne Award was created to encourage young science writers by recognizing outstanding reporting in all fields of science. It is given each year in honor of journalist Ev Clark, who offered friendship and advice to a generation of young reporters. The annual judging is organized by John Carey, former long-time senior correspondent for Business Week and colleague of Seth Payne, who raised money for the award in memory of Ev Clark. CASW now administers the fund and manages the submission process and presentation of the award. This is the 29th year of the award.

Entrants must be age 30 or younger. Deadline for submissions is the end of June each year. For more information, visit bit.ly/2ykqDpl.

(source: news release)
How NOT to Apply For a Writing Award

BY ALLA KATSNELSON AND AMBER DANCE

We encourage you to submit your work to the Science in Society Journalism Awards competition. As co-chairs of the 2017 NASW awards committee, we are delighted by the opportunity to read so many people’s best work. But every year, as we sort through a few hundred submissions, we inevitably encounter some common mistakes that land stories in the dreaded “disqualify” heap.

To make sure that when putting your best foot forward for the NASW Science in Society Awards you don’t inadvertently trip over your own feet, here’s an FAQ on frequent errors related to content or technicalities. Although this advice is specific to the NASW awards, be sure to pay attention to the details of other awards program, too.

CONTENT ISSUES:

Q: Anything goes, right? It’s a science-writing award, so maybe I’ll submit the story I wrote about the inner workings of the atom...or the one on DNA.
A: “Science” is a key word describing the topic of the entries we seek but “society” is equally important. For example, on their own, amazing computing advances that are changing the face of robotics don’t interest us when we have our judging hats on. However, if your story describes how these advances are creating robots that help caregivers take care of the elderly, now we’re reading!

Q: It shouldn’t matter who reads my work. How about this great piece I wrote for kids or my fantastic scientific publications?
A: Um, no. We’re looking for stories intended for adult, lay English speakers. There is certainly some great writing in magazines for kids and teens, but it’s outside our purview simply because it’s hard to compare to the adult stuff. And while it’s fine if scientists are a big part of your audience, leave the technical papers aside.

Q: One time this interesting thing happened to me and I wrote about it. Doesn’t that qualify as an Opinion piece?
A: The Opinion category is so named because we’re looking for you to express just that, an opinion. “Scientists are doing cancer research all wrong” is an opinion. “This is what happened to me when I received an experimental cancer treatment” is not. Unless, you use the latter to clearly illustrate the former. But as a general rule, use of the pronoun “I” or telling a personal story doesn’t make an opinion piece. So make sure to pick a piece that says or conveys: “I think...”

Q: I wrote a ton of stories on kinda the same thing. Wahoo, I’ve got a series to enter, right?
A: When we say series, we mean a multi-part investigation of some sort. What we don’t accept is a collection of multiple loosely related stories touching on a specific topic. That’s considered having a beat.

TECHNICAL ISSUES:

Q: Making PDFs is so time-consuming. OK, if I just give you a link to my work?
A: You can enter a story by submitting a link. But beware! Each year, a number of entries are disqualified simply because a link led to an error page. Judges are not required to hunt down your work. So, double- or triple-check links before hitting “submit.” And remember, judges need to access your story up until winners are announced. If you have any doubts that the link will remain accessible for a few months, find a way to download it and send us a PDF instead.

Q: I write internationally, that counts, eh? Or what about a class assignment I wrote?
A: The rules require stories be first published or broadcast in North America, so welcome, U.S., Canadian, and Mexican publications! And our take on that is fairly broad: We are happy to accept submissions published in outlets such as Aeon, Nature, and New Scientist, for example, because they have a large distribution here. But if your piece first ran in the New Zealand Herald or the Moscow Times, it’s probably a no-go, no matter how well-written and deeply reported it is. Similarly, if your piece is an unpublished journalism class assignment it is ineligible for submission. Self-published books, or blog entries, are eligible; they just have to be available to readers somewhere, somehow.

Q: If I enter my article in the wrong category, you’ll move it to the correct category, right?
A: No, we won’t. For example, if shorter pieces are submitted in the Longform pile those entries get tossed.

Q: Contests are like the lottery, right? So my odds improve if I enter early and often.
A: You might be tempted to enter all 15 of your favorite longform features, but please don’t! It’s not fair to other entrants, who make the effort to pick their single best story. Choose a single submission for any given category. BTW—if a publication also submits your work on your behalf, we’ll ditch the duplicate submission and consider only yours.

That said: Do enter contests! Every year, when we call the winners to give them the good news, they are delighted if not downright shocked to learn they won.

Alla Katsnelson is a freelance science writer in Northampton, Mass. Amber Dance is a freelance science writer in Los Angeles.
The Purpose

NASW established the Science in Society awards to provide recognition, without subsidy from any professional or commercial interest, for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on modern society. NASW especially encourages entries of critical, probing pieces that would not receive an award from a special interest group. Beginning with the first award in 1972, winners have demonstrated innovative reporting that goes well beyond the science itself and into ethical problems and social implications.

The Awards

NASW recognizes science reporting at the local, national, and international levels, as well as books and opinion pieces. Categories for 2018 will be announced later this year.

Each award includes a cash prize. Award presentation will take place in October 2018 in Washington, D.C., during the ScienceWriters2018 meeting.

Submissions

- Any writer (or team) is eligible to submit one entry in each category. Publications/media outlets may enter, or be represented by, multiple entries in any category.
- Written, audio, and video pieces are eligible.
- Entries should exhibit clear relevance to society as a whole. Pure science articles, without that reference, will not be considered.
- Work must be written or spoken in English, intended for a lay adult audience. Publications based outside North America are eligible if their readership is international.

Entries Open: December 2017
Entries Close: February 1, 2018 11:59 PM EST

Complete rules and submission requirements at nasw.org/scienceinsociety

2018 Science in Society Journalism Awards

Honoring and encouraging outstanding investigative and interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society.

Request for Submissions
Our Gang

Two notable staff changes at UC San Diego: After nearly 20 years with Scripps Institution of Oceanography’s communication team, Mario Aguilera has moved to the main campus as director of communications for the university’s division of biological sciences (encompassing cellular, molecular, evolutionary, ecological, and neurological biology). Also, Kim McDonald, longtime science communications director for biological and physical sciences, has taken a new position. He is now communications director for the university’s research affairs and chancellor’s units. Request advice about how to switch jobs within the same institution from maguilera@ucsd.edu or kmcdonald@ucsd.edu.

Freelancer Vijay Shankar Balakrishnan, based in Germany, won the Novozymes Crystal Ball Challenge at the European Conference of Science Journalists held in June in Copenhagen, Denmark. He won 3,000 euros for “A Zymic World,” an epistolary story that predicts the state of the world in the year 2148. In this tale, a teenage girl writes a thank you letter on her 19th birthday to people who have influenced her life. Balakrishnan now works toward publication of the story. For a link to an advance copy, ask vijay.b.shanka@gmail.com.

The North Carolina Press Association in June awarded first place honors to Catherine Clabby for beat reporting in the online news division for her article “New Drinking Water Threat Concerns Scientists and Officials,” published by North Carolina Health News. Clabby, an independent journalist based in Durham, N.C., files environmental health stories regularly for that nonprofit publication. In her winning story, she told how a North Carolina State scientist pinpointed municipal wastewater as likely sources of an industrial chemical found in drinking water from the Cape Fear River. To learn how Clabby used public information requests to identify polluters, follow up with catherine.clabby@gmail.com.

Christy Gelling named communications director at the Genetics Society of America in Columbus, Miss. She moved into the position after three years as a science writer for the society’s journals. “I miss writing,” she said, “but I don’t miss that drown- ing feeling that used to mark the halfway point of a feature.” Now she enjoys designing editorial processes and strategies. Former GSA blog intern Sarah Bay completed a doctorate in genetics and joined the team as assistant editor and projects manager. A limited freelance budget exists for the blog genestogenomes.org. Send pitches about genetics research, genetics careers, policy, advice for scientists, and the intersection of genetics with art and popular culture to cristygelling@gmail.com. To find out whether there’s life on the other side of a Ph.D. contact snbay1@gmail.com.

Eric Hamilton, previously a student member of NASW, attained full membership after he earned a doctorate in plant biology from Washington University in St. Louis. “I figured out that I much preferred talking about science to doing it,” he said. His timing was perfect because the University of Wisconsin-Madison had an opening for a science writer. “The agricultural connections of the university are a great fit for my plant biology background, but of course there’s so much going on here that I get to explore new topics as well,” he said. To meet up with Hamilton at the World Conference of Science Journalists, contact him at eeshamilton@wisc.edu.

The Simons Institute for the Theory of Computing, at UC Berkeley, tapped Brian Hayes to become journalist in residence from January through May 2018. Hayes works as a freelancer and as an associate in computer science at Harvard University. One institute program he will be involved in explores real-time decision making, such as what’s the best rule for picking a restaurant when you don’t have time to read 10,000 Yelp reviews. Hayes once had a similar journalist-in-residence gig “in the hills above the UCB campus,” he said. “The Simons Institute is at the bottom of the hill. Easier bike ride.” For a bicoastal perspective, write brian@bit-player.org.

Rachael Lallensack moved to Washington, D.C., in October 2016 to start a six-month internship at Science magazine. In July, she started another six-month internship at Nature magazine. “I’m working hard and learning a lot,” she said. Send tips for rest and relaxation to rachael.lallensack@gmail.com.

Freelancer Evelyn Lamb of Salt Lake City, Utah just launched “My Favorite Theorem” with mathematician Kevin Knudson. In each podcast episode, they ask a mathematician to tell about their favorite theorem and pair it with something such as food, drink, music, etc. “Have you ever wondered what fruit goes best with the fundamental theorem of calculus?” Lamb asks. “Do you at least think that’s a fun question to ask? Then this is the podcast for you.” Find the series on iTunes and other podcast distributors. Propose your favorite theorem to evel8yn@gmail.com.

After five years with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Laxenburg, Austria, Katharine Leitzell has returned to the West Coast. Leitzell joins California Sea Grant as their communications coordinator to share stories of marine science and policy in the state. “I’m also looking forward to working with the nationwide network of SeaGrant communicators and to reconnecting with colleagues back in the U.S.,” she said. Reconnect with Leitzell at kat.leitzell@gmail.com.

Evan Lubofsky, freelance science writer in Cape Cod, Mass., broke a story for Hakai Magazine about what may have killed a crew of confederate sailors aboard the American Civil War submarine H. L. Hunley. The submarine achieved notoriety when it became the first submarine to bring down a warship. Regarding what killed the Hunley’s crew, a scale model offered clues. To finger the culprit, read the story or ask elubofsky@gmail.com.

The Washington Psychiatric Society named Whitney McKnight journalist of the year for multi-media coverage of controversies in psychiatric research, the latest in clinical developments, and developments in mental health policy and practice in primary care. The award honors McKnight’s work as senior reporter and producer of Frontline Medical News in Rockville, Md. She created a series of videos with clinicians, policy makers, and academic clinical specialists to prepare them for so-called value-based care. Within each 15-minute video, they vetted cases and came up with a diagnosis and
treatment plan. McKnight currently works as a political ghostwriter through February 2018. Ask how that’s going at whitneyemcknight@gmail.com.

Freelance writer and illustrator Bethann Garramon Merkle has taken the helm as chairperson of the science communication section of the Ecological Society of America (ESA). The section is committed to professionalize science communication within and beyond ESA. It also mentors ecologists who are interested in integrating science communication into their work or transitioning to careers in science communication. As part of this work, the #SciComm initiative provides a platform where science communicators can be candid about their work and what it takes to do it. Learn details and pitch ideas for the series at b.g.merkle@gmail.com

AGU honored Rich Monastersky and Courtney Humphries with awards presented during the 2017 AGU fall meeting in New Orleans. Monastersky, writer and editor of Nature, received the Robert C. Cowen award for sustained achievement in science journalism. When he started covering geosciences during the 1980s, Monastersky met veteran journalists at AGU conferences. These included Robert Cowen, David Perlman, and Walter Sullivan. “Each continued filing great stories more than a half-century after their first byline appeared in print,” Monastersky said. “I certainly hope that I can continue doing this for some time.” To hear the challenges and rewards of creating a comic-form tale of the climate negotiations that lead up to the Paris agreement, ask rich.monastersky@gmail.com. Boston-based freelance reporter, writer and author Courtney Humphries received the David Perlman Award for “Where Forests Work Harder,” published in CityLab. The $5,000 award recognizes work published with deadline pressure of one week or less. Humphries wrote about the effectiveness of suburban woods at pulling carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Humphries had a head start on the topic: She attended an urban ecology class at Boston University and the instructor’s lab had a paper coming out. “This helped me understand the ‘story’ in the paper in a deeper way than if had I come across it in a journal or a press release,” she said. For hints on learning about scientific research away from the news cycle, reach out to cehumphries@gmail.com.

Ben Panko, a digital science writer for Smithsonian.com, has joined the board of the D.C. Science Writers Association. He plans to help out with career development, outreach, and social activities. “Through this steamy summer here in the D.C. swamp, I’ve been quite jealous of Lindzi Wessel’s [transition to] Bay Area environs,” Panko said (see below). Propose cool social activities to btpanko@gmail.com.

In what Raphael Rosen notes is a timely development, Math Geek has been translated into Russian. Details on his book are found in Advance Copy (SW, summer 2015). “The publisher just emailed me out of the blue one day and told me a Russian translation was coming out,” he said. Ask about the mathematical possibility of this spontaneous translation at raphael.rosen@gmail.com.

Lindzi Wessel completed a newswriting internship at Science in Washington, D.C. and has returned to her native California to work as a reporter for Annual Reviews in Palo Alto. “Being part of a small staff creating something new is allowing me to be involved in a little of everything,” Wessel said. “I’m very happy to be back on the Best Coast!” But she misses the network of people back east who enriched her life professionally and personally, and aims to develop a similar community in the California area. Weave the western network now with lindziwessel@gmail.com.

Our Gang seeks career news updates whether you are a staff writer, freelance, broadcaster, blogger, editor, educator, student, or hybrid. Email Leslie Willoughby at redwoodfrobbie@gmail.com

In Memoriam

Harvey Irwin Cobert
Public Relations Professional

Harvey I. Cobert, age 88, of Knoxville, Tenn., died after a short illness on June 2, 2017. He was an NASW life member who joined in 1960.

A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., upon graduation from Syracuse University, he served two years in the U.S. Army with the 28th Infantry Division in Germany. Cobert worked as a reporter for newspapers in Albany and Amsterdam, N.Y., before being appointed chief information officer for the New York State Health Department. In 1962, he was named head of the Information Services Department for the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies (now Oak Ridge Associated Universities).

Cobert joined Union Carbide in 1968 and was the first director of public relations for Union Carbide Corporation’s Nuclear Division in Oak Ridge, Tenn. He held that position for more than 16 years, working with four government facilities operated by Carbide. He transferred to Carbide’s Corporate Headquarters in Connecticut in 1983, and following the 1984 tragedy in Bhopal, India, he helped coordinate responses to the national and international news media.

He was accredited by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and was a charter member, past president, and honorary member of the Volunteer Chapter of PRSA. In 1994, he received a PRSA Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Volunteer Chapter honored him by establishing the Harvey I. Cobert Award of Excellence in Public Relations.

Cobert retired in 1991. Active in community affairs, he and his wife, Marilyn, shared the 1996 Paul Douglas, Sr. Award, recognizing their work as volunteer ombudsmen at long-term care facilities for the aged in East Tennessee. Cobert was also a 12-gallon donor at Medich Regional Blood Center.

(source: Knoxville News Sentinel)

ScienceWriters has learned belatedly of the death of the following members:

Maurice Bleifeld, 92, a life-long educator, on May 9, 2005. He was an NASW member since 1964.

Jerome J. Harris died March 23, 2001. During his career he was medical communications director for Ciba-Geigy and Schering Plough Pharmaceutical. Harris was one of the founders of the American Medical Writers Association and an NASW member since 1948.
Regional Groups

NEW ENGLAND

In July, a group of New England Science Writers and their family members hit the beach on Plum Island, Mass., with science writer and marine biologist Bill Sargent for a first-hand look at the effects of sea-level rise and coastal erosion on the barrier beach. Sargent prefaced the beach walk with props to illustrate the long-term history of the area, including a horseshoe crab carapace as well as plaster casts of a mastodon tooth and a wooly mammoth tooth.

In August, old friends and new acquaintances got together for an evening of catching up, networking, and refreshments at the NESW annual summer social.

NEW YORK

On Aug. 23, over 30 people turned out for Cybersecurity and You: Risks, Precautions, and Responses. The timely topic explored what each of us can do to lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of cybercrime. Vivid, info-packed presentations were offered by Beverly Stacy, owner and information architect of Façade Interactive, in NYC, and Sandeep Junnarkar, director of interactive journalism and a founding faculty member at CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. The event was organized by SWINY board member Carol Milano and Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA) NYC chapter member Ruth Mullen.

NORTH CAROLINA

On Aug. 21, members of Science Communicators of North Carolina (SCONC) joined over 4,000 people at a viewing party at NC State’s iconic plaza (aka The Brickyard) to catch a glimpse (albeit partial) of the Great American Eclipse. The crowd is rumored to be the largest at this location since NC State won the 1983 NCAA basketball championship. Organized by the NC State College of Sciences and SCONC board member Holly Menninger, the Eclipse Day Celebration brought together students, faculty, staff, and community members from across the Research Triangle to safely view the eclipse and participate in eclipse-themed, citizen-science activities, such as monitoring changes in temperature, cloud cover, and animal behavior.

A few days later, SCONC hosted Lost in Translation: Challenges of Reporting on Science in a Foreign Land, a going-away dinner and conversation with Japanese science journalist Momoko (Momo) Suda. A staff writer in the science and environment news department at the Tokyo headquarters of the Mainichi Newspapers, Suda spent nine months working on a book project about synthetic biology as a visiting researcher at the NC State Genetic Engineering and Society Center. At the dinner, held at the Burroughs Wellcome Fund building in Research Triangle Park, Momo shared her experiences and talked with SCONC members about tricks of the trade that could be applied both in the U.S. and abroad.

Also in August, Fenella Saunders, editor-in-chief of American Scientist, was an invited speaker at Duke University’s Center for Science and Society.
Documentary Studies master class on narrative nonfiction. She spoke about the experience of using narrative to explain difficult concepts in science and how that could be applied more broadly to making other complicated topics more accessible.

In other SCONC news, Rob Frederick, digital managing editor at *American Scientist*, was a panelist at this year’s European Conference of Science Journalists (ECSJ2017). The topic—New Reality for Media: Challenge or Failure?—centered on how electronic media has fractured audiences and broken media’s publishing models. Rob’s blog about the session posted at bit.ly/2wSGLks.

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

In June, on the summer solstice, NCSWAers had the chance to preview this year’s Great American Eclipse. Popular astronomy educator Andy Fraknoi presented the how's and why's of a total solar eclipse, offered fascinating history of past discoveries made during eclipses, and described citizen-science projects planned for the Aug. 21 spectacle. Everyone who attended received a free pair of certified safe eclipse-viewing glasses courtesy of Google.

**NORTHWEST**

In June, members of the Northwest Science Writers’ Association met with Lynda Mapes, author of *Witness Tree*. Mapes, a *Seattle Times* environment reporter, discussed the year she spent living with a 100-year-old oak tree in Harvard Forest and how she used the experience to bring a new and deeply personal perspective to the complex story of climate change. The event was held at Canterbury Ale House.

In July, NSWA members took on a two-mile walk around downtown Seattle as geologist and writer David B. Williams told the history of the city’s massive regrade project, pointed out often overlooked but still existing evidence of the topographic changes, and explained how this reshaping of the Seattle landscape continues to shape Seattle and those who call it home.

In early August, NSWA members and guests convened at the Pacific Science Center to hear a talk by Dennis Schatz, a nationally recognized astronomy educator and an eclipse junkie. Schatz gave the audience tips on viewing totality, insights on how animals react in a total eclipse, and discussed the unique role of public libraries in the lead-up to this eclipse. Afterward, Schatz met with NSWA members at Teku Tavern to talk shop.

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Use code: WCSJ2017NewMember

*Membership valid through 12/31/2018*
New and Returning Members

ALABAMA: Dan Carsen, Public Radio WBHM
ARKANSAS: Kathleen Pieper, freelance, Little Rock; Camilla J. Shumaker, Univ. of Arkansas, Fayetteville.
ARIZONA: Gaisa Julia Augustus*, Univ. of Arizona; Erin Kelser, freelance, Tucson.
CALIFORNIA: Jules Bernstein, Sandia Nat’l Lab, Livermore; Jennifer Berry, freelance, Sacramento; Sarah Block*, UC Irvine; Cristina Denier, Kaiser Permanente, Pasadena; Debbie Simone Fetter*, UC Davis; Michael Fitzhugh, BioWorld, Berkeley; Alexander Fox*, UC Santa Cruz; Kristin Friedman, Nat’l History Museum of Los Angeles County; Bryan Gardiner, freelance, Oakland; Manuel Gniida, SLAC Nat’l Accelerator Lab, Daly City; Ann Guy, freelance, Oakland; Anna Katrina Hunter*, UC Santa Cruz; Ellin Kavanagh, Univ. of So. Calif., Los Angeles; Ashleen Knutsen, Univ. of So. Calif., Los Angeles; Lisa M. Krierger, Mercury News, San Jose; Taylor Kubota, Stanford Univ.; Jennifer Leman*, UC Santa Cruz; Sharon Levy, freelance, Arcata; Sara Mckinstry, UC San Diego; Katherine McKissick, Nat’l History Museum of Los Angeles County; Andrés Morris, freelance, Los Angeles; Kimber Price*, UC Santa Cruz; Lara G. Shields*, UC Santa Cruz; Daisy Simmons, freelance, Nevada City; Heather Smith, freelance, Oakland; Danna Staa, freelance, San Jose; Victoria Stein*, UC Santa Cruz; Lindzi Wessel, Annual Reviews, Sunnyvale; Elijah Wolfson, freelance, Oakland.
COLORADO: Jessica Moore, freelance, Denver; Jodi Peterson, High Country News, Paonia; Julie Poppen, Univ. of Colorado Boulder.
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Mary Otto, The New Press, Assoc. of Health Care Journalists; Traci Watson, freelance; Rick Weiss, Amer. Assoc. for the Advancement of Science; Brett Zongker, George Washington Univ.
DELAWARE: Karen B. Roberts, Univ. of Delaware, Newark.
FLORIDA: Stephanie Lynn Livingston, Univ. of Florida, Gainesville.
GEORGIA: Jennifer Rainey Marquez, Georgia State Univ., Atlanta.
ILLINOIS: Genevieve Bookwalter, Chicago Tribune, Chicago; Anika Hazra*, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago; Tessa Joosse*, Oberlin College, Batavia.
KANSAS: Anthony Williams, freelance, Murdock.
MARYLAND: Alys Acedo, Johns Hopkins Medicine, Baltimore; Elizabeth Beal*, Nat’l Science Foundation, Cheyney; Carol L. Berkower, freelance, Baltimore; Andrew Bowles*, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore; Carly Britton*, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore; Emily Edwards, Univ. of Maryland, Silver Spring; Yasmine Gonzalez*, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore; Marin A. Hedin, Johns Hopkins Medicine, Baltimore; Tara Holley*, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore; Tafadzwa S. Kasambira*, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore; Marisol Martinez, Johns Hopkins Medicine, Baltimore.
MASSACHUSETTS: Brian Hayes, freelance, Amherst; Joshua Hatch, MIT, Cambridge; Pamela Worth, Union of Concerned Scientists, Cambridge; Gina Mantica*, Tufts Univ., Medford.
MICHIGAN: Taneisha Gilyard*, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Kelley J.H. Christensen, Michigan Tech, Hancock.
MINNESOTA: Andrea Nelson*, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Jenny Portis*, Carleton College, Northfield.
MISSISSIPPI: Sarah Bay, Genetics Society of America, Columbus.
MISSOURI: Eli Chen, St. Louis Public Radio, Saint Louis.
MONTANA: Susan Ewing, freelance, Bozeman.
NEBRASKA: Charlotte Relly*, Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha.
NEW JERSEY: Dave Levin, freelance, Collingswood.
NEW YORK: Summer Ash, freelance, Long Island City; Jeanna Bryner, LiveScience.com, Tarrytown; Hannah Furfaro, Spectrum, Astoria; Matt Kelly, freelance, Rochester; Jodie Mangor, freelance, Brooktondale; Kevin Matyti*, Stony Brook Univ.; Steve D. Minsky, Scientific American, Bronx; Lynne Peeples, freelance, Port Orchard; Maria Ter-Mikaelian, freelance, Brooklyn; Nicholas St. Fleur, New York Times; Warren Tong, TheBody.com, Flushing; Michael Waldholz, freelance, Hudson.
NORTH CAROLINA: Bradley Allif, The Scientist Magazine, Raleigh; Lauren Oleniacz, UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, Chapel Hill.
OKLAHOMA: Phuong P. Tran, freelance, Mustang.
OREGON: Max Egener*, Univ. of Oregon, Eugene; Cameron Stuart Kay*, Univ. of Oregon, Eugene; Katherine Kornei, freelance, Portland.
SOUTH CAROLINA: Dawn Brazzle, Medical Journalist, Univ. of South Carolina, Charleston.
SOUTH DAKOTA: Gretchen Newberry*, Univ. of South Dakota, Vermillion.
TENNESSEE: Katie Elyce Jones, Oak Ridge Nat’l Lab/UT-Battelle, Knoxville.
TEXAS: Stephen J. Fontenot, Univ. of Texas at Dallas; Emily Moskal, freelance, Austin; Benny Tsang, Univ. of Texas at Austin; Trevor Nace, Forbes, Houston.
UTAH: Michael Mozdzi, Univ. of Utah, Salt Lake City.
WISCONSIN: William A. Cushman, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.
AUSTRALIA: Randie Duart*, Swinburne Univ. of Technology, Hawthorn, Victoria.
CANADA: Peter Fairley, freelance, Victoria, BC.

*student member

KNOWABLE MAGAZINE
continued from page 7

team will also include an art director and an audience engagement editor, and the magazine will feature the work of volunteer contributors.

Annual Reviews is a nonprofit publisher dedicated to synthesizing and integrating knowledge for the progress of science and benefit of society. Founded 85 years ago, Annual Reviews publishes volumes in a wide range of fields, from animal biosciences and fluid mechanics to economics and organizational psychology. To sign up for media-only access to journal content, email your credentials to marketing@annualreviews.org.

(source: news release)
NEW REALITY
continued from page 1

Calculate the impact if it is exposed,” she said. Among Schmeek's data safety tips: run anti-virus software frequently; know that https are encrypted but most emails are not; keep your operating system and browser up to date; have separate passwords for all sites; and as for Skype, “as soon as you trust another party, there is a risk level there.”

Regarding the new administration impact on journalists, “to say that Donald Trump's election changed everything is sort of true and sort of not true,” said Virginia Hughes, senior editor at Buzzfeed News. “It's hard to sort out what is normal.” Hughes' audience skews young, female, and social media savvy. "Our team is trying to focus on how science intersects with their life so they can hold leaders accountable," she said.

Kendra Pierre-Louis, environmental reporter at Popular Science, tries to subtly intersect politics with science. “I rarely use climate change since our readers don’t believe it,” she said. In a story about the Arctic ice breaking off, “I talked about how we could see this crazy thing because of the technology from a NASA program that is getting cut.”

The final panel questioned where the line is drawn for scientists and journalists to be activists. Moderator Michael Lemonick, opinion editor at Scientific American, said “nobody has an answer for this.” While Lemonick didn’t think twice about appearing in the Women’s March, his editor told him “no.” While Lemonick’s story didn’t receive much feedback, he realized “a lot more need to be done.”

In closing remarks, Philip Yam, editor at the Simons Foundation, summarized the conference’s three main points for science journalists:

First: We’ve been through it before and survived. Along with a new administration “we have to learn to live with,” there are also the challenges of changing news platforms and business models.

Second: Journalists should emphasize facts and do solid reporting about data. “Find facts first using tools like FOIA requests and becoming friends with officials,” he said. “We need to focus on the communication process of science.”

Third: Science journalism is a new reality. "People are used to this. When I first started, typewriters and telexes were the norm in the newsroom. Now it’s Twitter. Reluctantly, he started a Twitter account (@dave perlmans) after some persuading by his Chronicle colleagues. But it got hacked. Perlman hasn’t bothered with it since. “I don’t tweet,” he says. “I don’t care.”

What he does care about is good journalism. It’s one of the reasons he decided to retire. “I’m getting too old to do a decent day’s work,” he jokes. “It’s just time. My legs are creaky.” If he were the average American, Perlman would have retired in 1982. But he was having too much fun. “Be a reporter,” he says. “It’s the best job in the world.”

His last story, co-reported with his colleague and friend Steve Rubenstein, was about the August solar eclipse. Now that he’s finally retiring, Perlman doesn’t plan to slow down. He’s toying with the idea of writing a memoir on his life as a reporter. “I’m not planning to go away,” he jokes. “I’m going to become a freelance writer and continue writing. I have a lot to say.”

Richard: “I’d encourage writers just to pitch their story ideas to overseas publications and see what reception and feedback they get. I’m proud of the many stories Nature published last year from reporters all over the world, and we are always looking for high-quality stories from new journalists reporting from under-covered regions. I expect, also, that most science editors would say the same. Science is, after all, an international endeavor.”

PERLMAN
continued from page 7

that the readers will believe what we write,” he says. “All I can do is to write as convincingly and persuasively as possible.”

In general, Perlman believes interest in science journalism has diminished. “The media, including my own newspaper, do far less reporting about science today than in the past,” he says. “Science journalism today is not what it was when A. M. Rosenthal conceived of it years ago.” The former executive editor at the New York Times, Rosenthal led the news giant through 17 years of record growth, including the launch of the Science Times section on Tuesdays.

Though places like the Times have a robust climate team, there’s been a decline of general science coverage, with the exception of medical, health, and wellness stories. Between 1989 and 2013, the number of science sections in major newspapers dropped from 95 to 19. “Most newspapers I’m aware of don’t cover ongoing developments in physics and astronomy and all the subjects I’ve written about over the years,” Perlman says.

Perlman’s been witness to changes not only in science journalism, but also in the industry as a whole. When he started, typewriters and telexes were the norm in the newsroom. Now it’s Twitter. Reluctantly, he started a Twitter account (@dave perlmans) after some persuading by his Chronicle colleagues. But it got hacked. Perlman hasn’t bothered with it since. “I don’t tweet,” he says. “I don’t care.”

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Now that he’s finally retiring, Perlman doesn’t plan to slow down. He’s toying with the idea of writing a memoir on his life as a reporter. “I’m going to steal everything you write for this piece,” he jokes. Audrey Cooper, the Chronicle’s editor in chief, also suggested he become “Science Editor Emeritus.” He can keep his office and also still access the news organization’s computer system. He even plans to file the occasional freelance piece.

“I’m going to be around here,” Perlman says. “The only thing that’s different is I won’t get a salary.”


SCIENCE IN SOCIETY
continued from page 3

Silke Schmidt (University of Wisconsin-Madison), David Biello (TED), Lindsey Konkel (freelance), Peter Friederici (Northern Arizona University), Jude Isabella (Hokaa), M. Mitchell Waldrop (freelance), Kutta MacPherson (Rutgers University), Francie Diep (Pacific Standard), Emma Marris (freelance), Evelyn Strauss (freelance), Clara Moskowitz (Scientific American), Michael E. Newman (National Institute of Standards and Technology), Lucas Laursen (freelance), Yjoti Madhusoodanan (freelance), and William Schulz (freelance).

NASW established the Science in Society awards to provide recognition, without subsidy from any professional or commercial interest, for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society. The awards are intended to encourage critical, probing work that would not receive an award from an interest group. Beginning with the first award in 1972, NASW has highlighted innovative reporting that goes well beyond the research findings and considers the associated ethical problems and social effects.

Entries for next year’s competition, for material published or broadcast in 2017, are due Feb. 1, 2018. Entry forms will be available in December at nasw.org/sciencesociety. (source: NASW news release)

COHN
continued from page 3

profiles scientists, and bunts myths,” writing expertly about basic science one day and workplace wellness the next. Begley's regular column, Gut Check, systematically reviews the science behind popular claims and punctures hyped studies.

“What really sets Sharon apart from most other science writers,” Gil wrote, “is that she combines probing, original reporting with a crime reporter's metabolism… she craves the adrenaline rush of daily journalism and getting scoops.” And the stories that she breaks are skillfully told, packed “with context, insight, and prose that captivates readers.”

This year’s Cohn Prize entries were judged by Ben Patrusky, CASW’s executive director emeritus; Barbara J. Culliton, an investigative reporter, instructor, and consultant who served as news editor of Science and deputy editor of Nature; and Richard Harris, National Public Radio science correspondent and CASW treasurer.

The Cohn Prize honors the late Washington Post medical writer and health columnist Victor Cohn. He distinguished himself by the clarity and effectiveness of his reporting during a 50-year career that began with outstanding coverage of early “wonder” drugs and the polio vaccine, as well as the dawn of the modern space age. Late in his career, Cohn started a Post column called “The Patient's Advocate,” and wrote the highly regarded book News & Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Other Fields. Cohn was a co-founder of CASW. (source: CASW news release)

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things out. But you're going to learn a lot in the process. Editors, science stories are not only happening in your country. So reach out to foreign reporters more frequently. If you don't know any, just ask around. You might be pleasantly surprised.

Fatima: I've found it helpful to reach out not just to editors but also to other journalists for advice. Although this industry is very competitive in my experience, if people have the time, they'll try to help you out. After all, we spend most of our professional life asking experts and sources to talk to us. We can spare a few moments to send an email or grab a cup of coffee to talk journalism. I hope that editors will reach out more to journalists in other parts of the world. I'd also like to see more cross-country collaboration. There are so many important science stories that could be better reported if journalists from affected countries work together.

Richard: “I'd encourage writers just to pitch their story ideas to overseas publications and see what reception and feedback they get. I'm proud of the many stories Nature published last year from reporters all over the world, and we are always looking for high-quality stories from new journalists reporting from under-covered regions. I expect, also, that most science editors would say the same. Science is, after all, an international endeavor.”

(source: NASW news release)
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