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FEATURES

NEWS

COLUMNS

CONFERENCE MONITORING: A DIARY OF SURVEILLANCE AND BROKEN PRIVACY

by Sarah Everts

Last July, amid tapas and cocktails at a Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) conference mixer in Barcelona, I was served something far less appetizing: the news that for five days, unbeknownst to me, a radio frequency identification device (RFID) hidden in my name tag had been reporting my conference attendance habits to organizers. Ditto for the rest of the conference's nearly 5,000 participants, many of whom were science journalists.

It was a radio reporter from southern Germany who showed me the RFID tag stuck between the front and back sides of my name tag; he had also just discovered the device in his own badge. Suddenly, I had an explanation for the twin pillars at the doorway of every session room and at the main building's entrance: they were the RFID readers.

Although I'm reluctantly getting used to having my buying habits monitored through frequent flyer and supermarket savings cards, at least I am knowingly giving up my private information in exchange for cheap orange juice. But unlike the voice that announces when my conversation with technical support will be recorded "for quality assurance," nobody told me my conference activity would be monitored. I wasn't the only one taken unaware. Many other people at the mixer were likewise surprised and putout by the surveillance. And so they should be: Several law experts have since said the secret surveillance was an infringement of EU privacy regulations.

The morning after discovering the RFID device in my name tag, I went to the conference headquarters and asked to see what information they had acquired about me. Within a minute or two, José Antonio Montes, the technical director of Grupo Desarrollanet, the company managing the RFID monitoring at ESOF, opened up a spreadsheet that contained a potpourri of my personal information: my name, the fact that I was a member of the press, my affiliation (*Chemical & Engineering News*), my hometown (Berlin, Germany), as well as the precise time—down to the second—that I entered and left every single session I attended. Even a short break to use the WC in the middle of a talk on regulating functional food had been time-stamped.

Flabbergasted, I headed to the press room where I asked Michael Kessler, the ESOF conference's media contact, why delegates were being monitored. He looked incredulous until I showed him the RFID tag in his own name badge. He had also been caught unaware. Kessler promised to find out what was going on.

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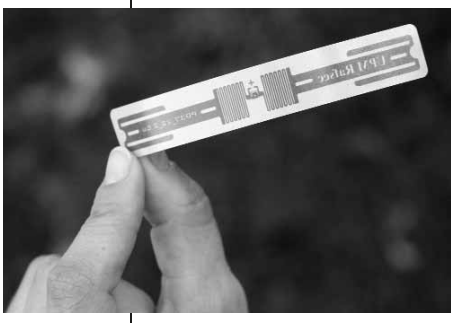
Back at home in Berlin, a Google search brought me to Tony Melis, the vice president of business development at Laser Registration, a Montreal-based company that specializes in providing RFID services to conferences across North America.

Apparently RFID monitoring is most popular at trade shows and medical conferences, but the technology is slowly starting to catch on at science conferences. As a delegate wanders in to the range of an RFID reader, often placed at the entrance of session rooms or exhibitor halls, the delegate's RFID tag picks up the antenna's signal and sends an encrypted message about their identity, Melis explained.

Conference organizers can employ RFID tags to monitor attendance at competing conference sessions or in exhibition halls, or the tags can be used by employers to track employee participation at professional development seminars.

But all this monitoring comes with a hefty price tag. The cost for an RFID tag is only about $1, but the fees to rent long-range antennas are about $750 per day, Melis said. The ESOF conference in Barcelona lasted five days, had about 5,000 delegates and 14 antennas, Montes said. So the market cost of monitoring the ESOF conference was about $52,500.

It turns out that the ESOF organizers didn't actually pay for the RFID services, but got the surveillance for free as an 'in-kind contribution" from one of its sponsors, ESOF's Kessler later wrote me in an e-mail. He added that ESOF just wanted to know the total number of people attending concurrent sections.



(top) RFID tags stuck to conference badges monitor attendance. (bottom) These twin pillars are RFID readers.

Interest in the relative popularity of different sessions sounded reasonable—the overkill of using an expensive network of RFID antennas to determine head counts notwithstanding—but the personal data I had seen in the spreadsheet still felt invasive. In fact it was.

Calls to six privacy law experts in Spain, Germany, and the U.K. resulted in a unanimous response: collecting my conference behavior data in Barcelona and storing it with my personal information without my permission contravened a European Union privacy directive.

In the EU, all countries must follow a privacy directive that dates back to 1995. In 1999, the Spanish government applied the EU directive, and based on that law, "consent of the person is necessary before collecting personal information, using that information and especially transferring the information to third parties," said Celia Fernández Aller, a law professor at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. "People from the congress should have asked you for consent."

Furthermore, "not only should your consent have been acquired but they should have informed you about any future use of the information they were going to obtain and the name and address of the controller of the data," said Julián Valero Torrijos, an administrative law lecturer at the Universidad de Murcia. He pointed out that the highest penalty for breaking this law was a fine of several hundred thousand euros.

The conference organizers could have used RFID technology to obtain a basic headcount legally, Torrijos continued. If I had been assigned a random number, say Delegate 51, so that my conference behavior data was acquired in an anonymous way, it would have been legal to follow the action of Delegate 51 without consent. But the glitch was that personal information (name and address) was collected along with my conference attendance behavior without first getting my permission.

It was time to contact ESOF and Grupo Desarrollanet again.

In an e-mail exchange, Montes, the technical director at Grupo Desarrollanet the RFID monitoring company, referred me back to ESOF, regarding "the data and its treatment, because the organization [ESOF] is the owners of such data."

He also added, "Grupo Desarrollanet is not the owner of the database, nor responsible for their [sic] treatment. As the event ended Grupo Desarrollanet never keep [sic] such information and therefore does not have access to it."

Laura Marin, ESOF's Director of Operations gave me a fuller account of what had happened. She wrote me to say that she found out a few weeks before the conference began that the technical sponsor planned to do head counts using RFID. "In the rush of the conference organization we did not think about consulting a lawyer on this issue as we were not aware that it had any legal

implications," Marin noted. "Most participants were already registered when it was decided to use RFID so we could not have included this information on the registration form."

"We are extremely sorry and we would like to apologize for not have included this information [on the registration form]," Marin continued. She says that ESOF has only received lists with the number of daily attendees at the conference and a breakdown of session attendance. She also noted that ESOF follows the Spanish data protection law with its own databases.

At the time *ScienceWriters* went to press, Marin had not said whether ESOF would follow up with Grupo Desarrollanet about their collection of private data along with the behavioral data.

Several law experts have since said the secret surveillance was an infringement of EU privacy regulations.

The Barcelona experience aside, if secret RFID tagging also makes you feel a bit nervous, the lack of American privacy law governing conference surveillance could make you downright neurotic at your next U.S. symposium. Although EU and Canada regulations require attendee consent for RFID surveillance at conferences, the U.S. is comparatively a free-for-all. This is because American privacy law is "sectoral," explained Chris Hoofnagle, a privacy law professor at the University of California, Berkeley. "Thus, in most situations in the U.S., in order for one to have rights in collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, there must be a specific law regulating the sector at issue—here, conferences, or perhaps the use of RFID." But, there aren't actually any laws regulating conference organizers or RFID use in the U.S.

So in the absence of a specific privacy law, it is "generally legal for a company to collect data on its customers (including their travels), enhance it with information from other sources, and even sell it to third parties," notes Hoofnagle. "In most cases, no privacy notice must be given, nor must the company offer a right to opt out or the like."

Regardless of where I attend my next conference, one thing is certain: When I get my bag of conference goodies at the registration desk, I won't immediately dig into the abstracts. The first thing I'll do is check whether Big Brother is stuck to the underside of my conference badge. And if he is, I hereby give conference organizers permission to track my nametag on its path to the nearest garbage can. ■

This article expanded from "Conference Surveillance," Chemical & Engineering News, *Aug. 4, 2008.*

HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTION FINDS A NEW HOME

by Lynne Friedmann

A treasure trove on the history of science and technology has a new, permanent home on the west coast. The Burndy Library, composed of some 67,000 rare books and reference volumes, as well as a collection of scientific instruments, is now part of The Huntington Library (**www.huntington.org**), in San Marino, Calif.

The collection was assembled by the late Bern Dibner, a Connecticut inventor and industrialist. Materials range from antiquity to the 20th century, with a particular emphasis on 18th-century physics, including collections by and about Isaac Newton, as well as major collections in 18th- and 19th-century mathematics, the history of electricity, civil and structural engineering, optics, and color theory, among others. Rare treasures include a first edition of Robert Boyle's *Experiments and Notes About the Mechanical Origin or Production of Electricity* and the scientific library of Louis Pasteur.

From 1992 to 2006 the holdings and a scholarship program resided at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When the Burndy Library's agreement with MIT expired the Dibner family sought a permanent home for the collected works. The Huntington was selected over 16 other institutions.

The addition of the Burndy Library further enhances The Huntington Library's reputation as one of the leading centers for scientific historical research.

The Huntington is one of the most heavily used rare books libraries in the nation outside of the Library of Congress. Among its strong collecting areas is the history of science and technology, documenting the growth of fundamental areas of scientific inquiry from the 12th century up to the dawn of the 21st. The addition of the Burndy Library further enhances The Huntington Library's reputation as one of the leading centers for scientific historical research.

The Huntington's collection on the history of astronomy is particularly strong with nearly a century's worth of director's papers from nearby Mt. Wilson Observatory, including correspondence between George

Lynne Friedmann is editor of ScienceWriters.

THE DIBNER HALL OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, in San Marino, Calif., opened a new permanent exhibition on Nov. 1, showcasing some of science's greatest achievements, from Ptolemy to Copernicus, Newton to Einstein. The 2,800-square-foot Dibner Hall of the History of Science comes as a result of the marriage of The Huntington's history of science materials with the recently acquired 67,000-volume Burndy Library of rare books and manuscripts.

Called "Beautiful Science: Ideas that Changed the World," the exhibition highlights four areas of exploration: astronomy, natural history, medicine, and light. A gallery on each focuses on the changing role of science over time, and the importance of written works in communicating those ideas.

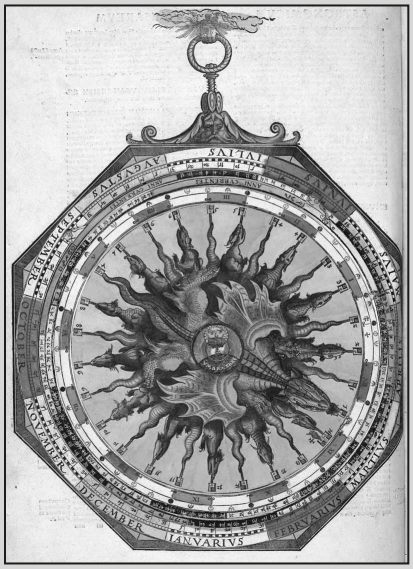
For example, the gallery devoted to astronomy shows how mankind's perception of an Earth-centered universe shifted over time—beginning with a 13th-century copy of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, a classic Greek text from the second century. The version on display is a Latin manuscript transcribed in monks in southern France in 1279. The work was heralded as a remarkable mathematical achievement and did a sophisticated job of predicting the position of the planets. But it wasn't until sometime later that scientists determined that the planets revolved around the Sun, points made in various degrees by Copernicus and Kepler. Also in the exhibition: a 1913 letter from Einstein to the great astronomer George Ellery Hale and a 1923 log-book from astronomer Edwin Hubble, writing about the observations he made using the 100-inch Hooker telescope atop Mt. Wilson near Pasadena, Calif.

An important goal of the Dibner Gallery is to allow visitors to get as close to original works as possible. For example, in an adjacent reading area, visitors can curl up in oversized chairs with a copy of *The Origin of Species* or leaf through other centuries-old books.

The Dibner Hall of the History Science is named after Bern Dibner (1897-1988), a scientist in his own right who designed and patented the first solderless electrical connector and founded the Burndy Engineering Co. in 1924. As a young man, Dibner enrolled at the University of Zurich in 1936 to study the history of science. It was during this period that he began his life-long avocation in the history of science and technology as a book collector, patron, and prolific author. Dibner established the Burndy Library in 1941 to house his growing collection of rare books and manuscripts.

The Burndy appellation was invented by Dibner and is a portmanteau derived from a blend of his first and last names.

[Galleries focus] on the changing role of science over time, and the importance of written works in communicating those ideas.



A rotating astronomical calculator. From Petrus Apianus, Astronomicum caesareum (Caesar's Astronomy), Ingolstadt, 1540.

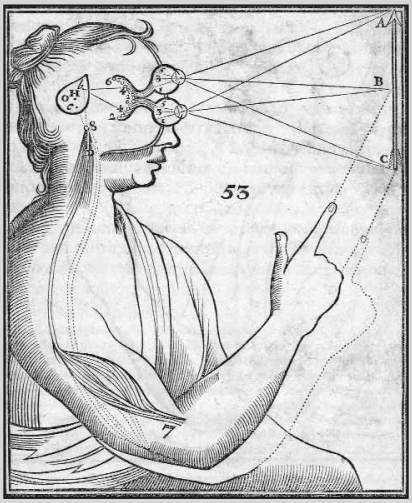
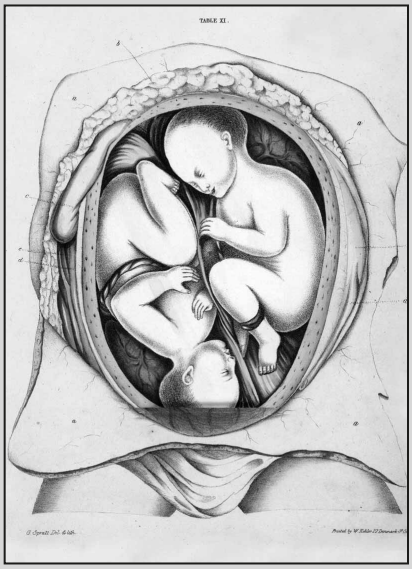


Diagram of vision and the effect of parallax. From Rene Descartes, Tractatus de homine et de formatione foetus (On Man and the Formation of the Fetus), Amsterdam, 1677.



Twins. From George Spratt, Obstetric Tables, London, 1841.

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Ellery Hale and Albert Einstein, and the papers of Edwin Hubble.

Transporting the Burndy Library to southern California cost half a million dollars, took the coordinated efforts of 60 people working on both coasts, and involved a fleet of seven semi-trailer trucks.

"Artifacts alone took up one trailer," said Dan Lewis, Ph.D., the Dibner Senior Curator of the History of Science and Technology. "They ranged from old electric generating machines to 400 light bulbs."

Due to the collection's value, The Huntington ruled out a highly visible motorcade and instead employed stealth measures of staggered schedules, varied routes, and night driving. Onboard GPS monitored the trucks' whereabouts at all time.

For anybody doing historical research related to technology and science this collection is remarkable.

The relocation took nearly a month. Making the journey in series, a truck arrived at The Huntington every three or four days. Unloading was expedited by extensive preparation by an outside service that specializes in library relocations. Every item had a pre-assigned location on basement shelves.

"They had it down to the inch," said Lewis of the prep work.

Transport was just the first step. It would take two years of cataloging and processing before the collection was made available for scholars, starting the summer of 2008, through the Dibner History of Science Program at The Huntington which funds long- and short-term fellowships, an annual conference, a lecture series, and ongoing seminars.

In addition to scholars, journalists and authors have also mined the collection. Among them is Seth Shulman, a Dibner science-writer-in-residence at MIT in 2004.

"For anybody doing historical research related to technology and science this collection is remarkable," Shulman said.

Shulman started his academic year intent on producing a work examining the relationship between Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell.

"But shortly after arriving, I stumbled on information that shows that Bell had plagiarized key parts of the telephone from a rival named Elisha Gray," he said.

This set Shulman off in a new and unexpected direction. Using a combination of digital and paper archives together with visits to the U.S. Patent Office and historic locations associated with Bell, Shulman researched and published *The Telephone Gambit: Chasing Alexander Graham Bell's Secret* (W.W. Norton, 2008).

Written partly in the first person, the book is valuable to other writers as a primer on how to work with historians and rare-book librarians to cull material from primary sources.

For example, the Burndy collection contains a printed program from a banquet honoring Elisha Gray at which he is lauded as the inventor of the telephone. It included transcript of speeches and even the dinner menu.

"This is an exceedingly rare thing for a writer," said Shulman, "And incredibly helpful in setting a scene."

Rarer still for future historians and journalists may be digital repositories of collected works and correspondence.

"No electronic medium yet has survived 25 years," said Robert C. Ritchie, W.M. Keck Foundation Director of Research, at The Huntington. "You have to renew digital files every five years or they begin to fragment."

The rapid adoption of electronic communications technology in the last decade has created a major crisis not only for collectors but for the National Archives and the Library of Congress, both of which have embarked on programs to develop digitization guidelines.

Until agreed upon standards are in place, the best thing scientists, engineers, and writers can do to safeguard their work for posterity is to print it out.

"The Huntington has seven drafts of Thoreau's *Walden*, but who's saving the drafts of Pulitzer Prize winning novels today?" asked Susan Turner-Lowe, The Huntington's vice president of communications. "No one's saving their (digital) drafts, they're writing over them." ■

Annual Dibner Conference

The first conference sponsored by the Dibner History of Science Program at The Huntington is titled ***Making Science: Inspiration and Reputation, 1400-1800***.

It will be divided into two parts at two locations:
Feb. 6-7, 2009, Clark Library at UCLA
May 8-9, 2009, Huntington Library

Twenty historians will take part in the proceedings. Journalists interested in attending, please contact Susan Turner-Lowe, vice president for communications at The Huntington (sturner@huntington.org).

ATOM COLLIDER RAP IS A YOUTUBE SMASH

[Editor's Note: Republished by permission in the print edition of *ScienceWriters*. This permission does not extend to Web posting. "This Ain't No Jive, Particle Physics Rap is a Hit," *The Associated Press*, Sept. 1, 2008. © *The Associated Press*, 2008.]

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Science writer/rapper AlpineKat in her YouTube sensation.

SCIENTISTS CONSIDER WEIGHTY MATTERS AND COMIC RELIEF

by Alexandra Alter

Meyrin, Switzerland—One recent Saturday morning, physicists here shot the first beam of subatomic matter into the most powerful particle accelerator ever built. The machine—a 17-mile circular tunnel that sits 330 feet underground along the Franco-Swiss border—is designed to smash protons together at nearly the speed of light. It will allow physicists to search for undiscovered particles, extra dimensions of space, dark matter, and perhaps even microscopic black holes.

In a nearby auditorium, another groundbreaking experiment was under way: improvisational-comedy boot camp. Twenty-five researchers stood in a circle and awkwardly eyed one another. One of them told a physics joke—which was funnier if you're familiar with bosons and hadrons, types of subatomic particles. On cue, they tossed an imaginary red ball around the room. That led to chaos as they contorted their bodies to form letters of the alphabet and collapsed onto the floor giggling.

Physics concerns itself with the universe's big questions. Why is there more matter than antimatter? And what's causing the universe to expand? Now there is this: Can physicists be funny?

For scientists at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or CERN, the question is no joke. CERN will launch the most ambitious particle-physics experiment in history. Its physicists will switch on the Large Hadron Collider, or LHC, a project that's been 14 years and $9 billion in the making. Physicists hope the LHC—so-named because it smashes hadrons, which are protons and other particles composed of quarks—will help them find new particles and undiscovered physical forces. It's a project that may offer new insight into what happened milliseconds after the Big Bang, when the cosmos was a fiery soup of elementary particles.

It has also incited controversy. Critics—who grew increasingly alarmed when a pair of physicists casually noted that the collider could act as "a black-hole factory"

Alexandra Alter is a reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

—have lobbied against the experiment, arguing that it could spawn a black hole that devours the Earth. Other scientists worry that if the project fails, it will doom future funding for large-scale physics experiments.

Quick response

Now, the physicists are seeking new ways to tackle obstacles and to explain the project to the public. To hone their communications and trouble-shooting skills, some took the unusual step of hiring an improvisational-comedy coach.

Maybe, they say, learning to improvise will help them think creatively about some of the toughest questions of physics, such as why gravity is so much weaker than the other fundamental forces, and why 95 percent of the universe seems to be missing.

To hone their communications and trouble-shooting skills, [physicists] took the unusual step of hiring an improvisational-comedy coach.

"Improv has got to be more difficult than doing physics. You have to think in milliseconds," said Bob Stanek, a particle physicist who is leading CERN's improv-comedy experiment. A short, wiry 59-year-old Chicago native with a white beard and round, gold-rimmed glasses, Stanek said he figured improv would help the physicists react quickly if something goes wrong. "When you're discussing things that go on here on a daily basis—why your detector doesn't work, why your machine isn't collecting data—you have to know how to respond in a quick manner," he said.

Stanek brought in Charna Halpern, an improv-comedy guru from Chicago whose roster of star students includes comedians Tina Fey, Mike Myers, and Stephen Colbert. Since launching her Chicago theater in 1981, Halpern has trained executives and managers at companies such as BP and Abbott Laboratories. Halpern, 56, plans to return to CERN in October, when the physicists are scheduled to put on their first public performance. "The smarter you are, the better you are at this. That's why physicists will be funny," said Halpern, director of the iO theaters, in Chicago and Los Angeles.

On their first day of improv class, the physicists sat in a cavernous auditorium where CERN's scientists normally gather for theory seminars. Equations from the previous day's lecture covered the 36-foot-wide blackboard.

As a warm-up exercise, Halpern and two actors from her theater had the physicists invent an imaginary product. In short order, they came up with something called "Wi and Dry"—satin adult diapers equipped with a wireless Internet signal—and composed a jingle that, unfortunately, is unprintable.

Later, Halpern said the real objective was to "brainwash students into agreeing with one another." Improvising requires seizing on other actors' ideas, even bad ones, she said.

Improv has got to be more difficult than doing physics.

Some physicists balked at this rule. "It's so much the antithesis of what goes on at CERN," said Steven Goldfarb, 45, a particle physicist from Michigan who has been at CERN for 20 years.

"You don't just go to the Higgs physics meeting and ask a stupid question. We're trained to be critical," he added, referring to theory sessions devoted to the Higgs boson, an elusive particle that CERN's physicists hope to discover.

Looking ridiculous soon became unavoidable. During a memory and listening drill on the second day of comedy school, the physicists formed a circle and tossed around an imaginary ball. A few got carried away. "Panda bear!" one participant yelled, flinging his arms out. Seth Weitberg, one of the improv coaches, gently reminded him that he was supposed to say "red ball." He asked what the group had learned from the exercise. "Listening," one physicist said. "Eye contact," someone else added. "Saying yes," said another.

Worth its weight in iPhones?

Science writers are always looking for familiar units to make distances, speeds, weights, and other measurements in arbitrary units seem easier to understand. Some of the standards are the length of a football field, the width of a human hair, and sometimes even a speeding bullet. The newest that has come to the Tracker's attention is the weight of an iPhone. Are the gadgets really that familiar to ordinary readers?

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, in a brief item about the local zoo's newborn panda, says it weighs slightly more than three iPhones. To be sure, the story also puts the weight at 426.1 grams and "about 15 ounces," but still…

(Source: Boyce Rensberger, Knight Science Journalism Tracker, ***ksjtracker.mit.edu****, Sept. 16, 2008.)*

"It's great that you just jumped into it without thinking," Halpern said.

Particle detector rivalry

Within a few hours, the physicists were improvising monologues and scenes. Common themes included complaints about the CERN cafeteria, awkwardness in social situations, difficulty meeting women, and rivalry between the LHC's two large particle detectors, Atlas and the Compact Muon Solenoid, or CMS. One newly minted comedian riffed on physicists' habit of sitting around drinking coffee all day.

"I'm thinking about building the LCC—the large coffee collider," he said.

Another made a joke about subatomic particles that made her stage partner blush. "Do my bosons give you a hadron?"

When class ended, 17 CERN researchers signed up for the new improv-comedy troupe, which is scheduled to perform before several thousand people at a launch party for Atlas next month.

Tom Whyntie, 24, who works on one of the LHC detector's silicon-tracking devices, said improvising could teach physicists how to build on one another's ideas. "This idea that every idea is respected does not happen enough," said Whyntie, of Portsmouth, England. "People are afraid of being shut down."

A lot is at stake as the physicists prepare to switch on the collider. CERN's scientists face pressure to find the mysterious Higgs boson, an undiscovered particle that the collider should detect, if it in fact exists. Failure to find the hypothetical Higgs could unravel more than three decades of progress in physics.

Then there's the little matter of black holes and other cataclysmic events—freak outcomes that CERN officials have dismissed as virtually impossible, but which one prominent physicist noted have a one in 50 million chance of occurring. "Perhaps it was not so smart to call it a black hole," said Peter Jenni, a spokesman for the Atlas experiment.

It remains to be seen whether comedy classes will help CERN scientists explain their work to the public. CERN's in-house science writer has already made a rap video about the LHC and posted it on YouTube.

Other stabs at humor are less likely to go viral. Particle-physics jokes can be rather opaque. A classic example: "A neutron walks into a bar and asks how much the drinks cost. The bartender replies, 'For you, no charge.'"

And consider the following one-liner, delivered in the CERN cafeteria by Goldfarb: "Two protons walk into a black hole." That's the joke. ■

"Two Protons Walk Into a Black Hole, and Other Jokes Physicists Tell," Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 4, 2008. Reprinted with permission.*

THE LINDAU MEETINGS: A GLOBAL FORUM FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

by Christina Reed

My favorite part of the Lindau Nobel Laureate meeting was sharing a banana split with physicist George Smoot, who discovered the thermal fluctuations in the cosmic microwave background and helped transform our view of noisy space into a map of the early universe. With the start of the Large Hadron Collider about to take place, Smoot is looking forward to splitting more than just that banana. The excitement and heated opinions on what to expect that came out of the LHC press conference at Lindau sent me reeling into a new dimension—perhaps it was the 10th dimension?

Overall the meeting was a place where approximately 550 young researchers in physics compete for face time against journalists and each other for individual attention from one of the 25 laureates over six days on the island of Lindau, Germany, on Lake Constance. If each young researcher picked just one laureate to try and track down, that would give the laureates each a posse of 22 young researchers, which they could easily handle if they talked to at least three or four a day. But since we are talking about young researchers, some still in high school, and rock-star laureates, some of whom are more favored as heroes in their field than others, the math just doesn't work out that neatly.

…sharing a banana split with physicist George Smoot.

This is what I learned particle physics is all about: beautiful, yet theoretical, math for complicated situations hung on the hope that the experiments will result in something new and profound. So far Lindau has produced exactly one young researcher who has attended one of these meetings and gone on to win a Nobel Prize. And that person, coincidently, was from Lindau. What are the odds of that? Pretty high, actually, considering the meetings started years ago as a means for isolated cold-war German medical doctors and later German scientists to interact with the leading heads of the science community from all over the world. The international

Christina Reed is freelance science writer who writes for Scientific American*, New Scientist, and other magazines. She is the author of* History of Marine Science *and* History of Earth Science*, which form part of the 20th Century History of Science series, published by Facts on File.*

flavor of the meeting from the young researchers perspective is new—and it's growing. That means that the next young researcher to have attended this meeting and win the Nobel Prize could come from almost anywhere.

Lindau was a place out of time and space, where a journalist could suggest to a physicist the idea for a new paper about black holes. I'm expecting credit in an acknowledgment section somewhere… And if that's not strange, than no quark is. ■

NASW member participation

Earlier this year, NASW was approached by the Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting to invite its members to apply for travel funding to the 59th meeting held in Germany. The meeting brings together Nobel laureate scientists with hundreds of young researchers and journalists for a week of panels, seminars, and social events designed to encourage interaction.

Four NASW members received travel funding for the June 29-July 4, 2008 meeting: **Vicki Brower**, freelance; **Chelsea Martinez**, freelance and graduate student; **Michael Moyer**, articles editor, *Popular Science* magazine; and **Christina Reed**, freelance.

The Lindau meetings have been held annually since 1951. This year's program was dedicated to physics. Lindau Council officials are eager to explore a collaboration with NASW for next summer, too. To learn more about the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting, visit **www.lindau-nobel.de**.

INTRODUCING THE NASW MARKETING & PUBLISHING RESOURCE

by Dennis Meredith

Now online at **www.nasw.org/resource/publishing** is the new NASW Marketing & Publishing Resource, a collection of articles that aims to help NASW members take advantage of the new opportunities for marketing and publishing their articles and books, whether they are self-publishing or working with a commercial publisher.

Writers working with commercial publishers well know that publishing houses provide little marketing support for their authors' books. Publishers usually launch a book into the marketplace with little marketing planning and give it only months to stand or fall before essentially abandoning it to the backlist.

However, the web gives authors many powerful tools and outlets for marketing their work themselves, and almost all are free. This resource aims to offer a concise guide to such marketing, as well as extensive reference websites and books.

Also, writers have the ability to self-publish their own books and articles, using the extensive network of consultants and other professionals, as well as technologies such as print-on-demand. What's more, self-publishing can also offer an author a route to a contract with a traditional publisher, by initially self-publishing their book and demonstrating its market potential. The NASW Marketing & Publishing Resource offers a guide to self-publishing, along with a range of useful references.

Although I've done considerable research to gather information for this resource, I am admittedly a novice as well. My wife and I have founded a small publishing company, Glyphus L.L.C., to produce my book *Explaining Research* (**www.explainingresearch.com**). I hope the lessons I am learning during this process can help inform these articles.

Importantly, I hope my fellow NASW members will give me feedback—both insights into marketing and publishing from their own experiences, and guidance about what additional topics they'd like to see covered. Below is a list of articles in the Marketing & Publishing Resource. Best of luck with your publishing! ■

Dennis Meredith is a freelance writer and consultant who began his career in the era of carbon paper and mimeograph machines.

Article list:

- Definitions: POD, subsidy publishing, self-publishing and more
- Selling e-books and e-articles
- Marketing on Amazon
- Promotion using Google Book Search
- Marketing your book
- Deciding to become a self-publisher
- Building a compelling writer/author website
- How to print on demand and make money
- Using a subsidy publisher
- Publishing organizations, discussion and support groups
- Working with book packagers and consultants
- Picking an offset printer
- Blogging to promote your book
- Basics of book design
- Using a publicity/marketing company
- Nuts and bolts of book distribution

PAYING THE IRS: HANDLE CHECKS WITH CARE

by Julian Block

Stop before you drop a check to the Internal Revenue Service into the mail. Follow these tips to protect your bank account and save yourself the aggravation of trying to track down a misplaced payment.

Before you mail any check to the Internal Revenue, always provide the reason for the payment, the form number, and tax year on the front of the check—for instance, "balance due on 2007 Form 1040" or "2008 estimated payment." Also include your daytime telephone number and Social Security number (joint filers should enter the number shown first on their return) or, if you operate a business, your employer identification number.

Before mailing any check to the Internal Revenue, always provide the reason for the payment… form number…tax year…

The Revenue Service has an optional procedure for submitting a payment when there is a balance due with your Form 1040. The agency asks—but does not require—that the payment be accompanied by Form 1040-V (Payment Voucher), which is easy to complete.

And note all necessary information (reason for the payment, form number, etc.) on each one when you pay two different taxes at once, such as past-due income taxes and interest for an earlier year, along with an estimated tax payment for this year. Writing separate checks will make it much easier for the IRS to identify and credit you with the payment if the checks inadvertently become prematurely separated from the accompanying correspondence or return.

Overlooking this simple step may confuse the computers and, at a minimum, direct attention to your return and require otherwise avoidable correspondence. Even worse, it may cause those relentless computers to erroneously charge you with a penalty for failing to make a timely payment.

Do not staple a check to your return or to a Form 1040-V. Instead, says the IRS, "just put it loose in the envelope."

Make checks payable to the "United States Treasury," not "Internal Revenue Service." However, the feds still accept checks payable to the IRS. Whichever payee designation you use, don't be casual about what you write on the pay-to-the-order line of a check going to the IRS. And never send a check without filling in the payee line, as some obliging taxpayers do.

The same "write-in-full" advice applies to names specified by state or local tax agencies. An example: Write "New York State Income Tax," instead of "NYS."

Make sure that mailings to the IRS bear the proper amount of postage and show a full return address. Mail without stamps—even tax returns—goes undelivered and is returned to the sender by the Postal Service. And mail *without* stamps and *without* a return address goes to the dead letter office. Don't run the risk of being hit with a nondeductible penalty for a tardy filing. ■

*Julian Block, an attorney in Larchmont, N.Y., has been cited as "an accomplished writer on taxes" (*Wall Street Journal*). His books include "Tax Tips For Writers, Photographers, Artists," available at* ***www.julianblocktaxexpert.com****.*

IRS increases standard mileage rates

In response to skyrocketing fuel prices, 2008's rate is 50.5 cents per mile for January through June and 58.5 cents for July through December, up from 2007's 48.5 cents.

Do you qualify to claim both actual expenses and the mileage rate? There is just one way to know which option provides a larger write-off: figure your deduction both ways. Usually, actual expense is more advantageous than the per-mile rate, especially when there is a surge in price at the pump or your vehicle is a gas-guzzler. But the reverse can be true for those who have extremely low outlays or scant business mileage.

Employees and self-employed persons who move for business-related reasons and use their cars to transport themselves, members of their households, or their belongings are able to deduct actual costs of gas and oil or a standard rate for 2008 of 19 cents per mile for the first six months and 27 cents for the final six months.

If the IRS examines your returns and scrutinizes car write-offs, it will not dispute standard-rate deductions, as long as you are able to verify the miles driven; the agency disregards actual expenses. So it is prudent to keep glove-compartment diaries or other records in which you list the details of when, how far, and why you went, along with charges for parking and tolls.

NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM THE IVORY TOWER

by Rick Borchelt

With fellow NASW members Earle Holland and Dennis Meredith, I once did part of a workshop on "Communicating University Research" sponsored by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, for college and university PIOs and media relations people. These were 60 or so early-career (twenty- and thirty-somethings) young professionals, many more women than men (typical in the profession), and mostly trained in liberal arts or communications but now covering the science or medicine beat at their respective institutions.

As befit the collegiate environment, the first thing I did was give a pop quiz. I asked three basic questions: (1) name a peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes articles about science communication, (2) name a researcher who writes about communication issues in science and technology, and (3) describe a recent article you read about research in science communication or science journalism.

The class failed—miserably. Fewer than five people could answer ANY of the questions correctly, and none could answer all.

Part of the reason this academic research gets ignored is because it doesn't generally come across our desks.

I was expecting to make the point that there is a very robust—but routinely ignored—literature about the jobs we do as science journalists, PIOs, freelancers, and other science communicators that could offer useful insights into how our organizations behave, how and why people seek out science information, how policy about science gets shaped by media messages and public input, and what people know, think, and believe about science, technology, and medicine. I didn't expect to make the point so eloquently.

Part of the reason this academic research gets ignored is because it doesn't generally come across our desks. There aren't many journals that focus exclusively on research in science communication (*Science Communication* and *Public Understanding of Science*, both published by Sage, are the two best known), and they tend to be expensive. More broadly focused journals like *Communications Quarterly* or *British Review of Journalism* only occasionally focus on science and technology issues, so keeping up with the tables of contents sometimes seems juice not worth the squeeze. And at the end of a long day of reading academic journals about physics or medicine or astronomy, who really wants to read another technical article?

But I spend quite a bit of time perusing this literature, and I figured if I did the hard work some of you might spend a few minutes glancing over a *Reader's Digest* version of a few recent pieces of academic research, translated for NASW members into highlights that might inform your next press release, or website, or article. Or maybe even your entire career.

With that goal in mind, in this and future issues of *ScienceWriters* I'm going to pick three or four journal articles from within the past year that I think deserve to be read and discussed by NASW members, in these pages or on the NASW listserves. And if you read something in the communications literature you think would make a good candidate for this column, send it along to me at rickb@nasw.org.

Renita Coleman, Paul Lieber, Andrew L. Mendelson, and David D. Kurpius. 2008. Public life and the Internet: if you build a better website, will citizens become engaged? *New Media and Society* 10 (2): 179.

Common wisdom has it that Internet use will be the death of civic engagement, as more and more people pursue their lives online rather than in public. Renita Coleman and colleagues wanted to figure out if you could increase public engagement about civic issues (in this case, state government) by doing a better job of communicating about those issues online. They created control and experimental websites dedicated to discussions about the state budget, and varied web design elements to enhance or diminish ease of navigation, accessibility of story content, and visual appeal. After factoring out the role of the web environmental generally in contributing to the likelihood of civic engagement, the team found strong correlations between how good the content was, and how visually appealing it was. "The site designed to conform to users' wants and needs in content, navigation and appearance did indeed foster positive attitudes toward civic engagement," they write. "Participants who saw the usable site were significantly more likely to have positive attitudes toward civic engagement than those who saw a site not designed for usability."

Rick Borchelt is director of communications of the Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University.

Story content mattered most, they found; two-thirds of all the variance in attitudes toward public engagement was explained by content alone. "The students who wrote the stories on this site had to put aside their training in writing ledes, nut grafs, and the inverted pyramid to concentrate on developing stand-alone 'chunks' so that website users could pick and choose which to read and in what order, rather than follow the cues of writers and editors," they explained. "Similarly, the site creators had to relearn the principles of design as they apply to the web medium, rather than print. Gone were the large, beautiful photos designed to attract attention; in their place were substituted informative but smaller photos, charts, and graphics."

C. R. Critchley (2008). Public opinion and trust in scientists: The role of the research context and the perceived motivation of stem-cell researchers. *Public Understanding of Science, 17*(3), 309-327.

Christine Critchley at the Australian Centre for Emerging Technologies at Swinburne University of Technology publishes widely about public perceptions of hospitals, health care, and medical technologies. In this article, she takes a look at why Australians trust stem-cell researchers who work for private industry considerably less than those funded by universities. Working from a series of about 1,200 computer-assisted telephone interviews, Critchley and her colleagues provided research scenarios depicting stem-cell research performed either by academics in a university setting who received their funding from public sources, research performed in a privately owned Australian company, and research where the research support was not identified. Participants then were asked detailed questions about their level of trust in the research that had been described to them. These questions included whether they felt the researchers were competent, benevolent, or would share their research findings for the public good.

Critchley's work confirmed the working hypothesis that people trust publicly funded stem-cell research more than they do the same work if it were privately funded . The key, she says, is that participants rate publicly funded scientists as more benevolent, and as more likely to produce publicly accessible research. "This research suggests that if trust in science is to be maintained and/or restored, efforts need to be made to distance economic incentives both from the regulation of science *as well as* from the scientists themselves," especially for areas of controversial science, she says. Good ammunition to resist the insistence by private companies that they be credited for research support in the lede of your next news release, I'd say.

Pew Project on Internet and American Life (2008). Technology and media use: podcast downloading 2008 (www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/261/report_display.asp).

Thinking about investing in that new suite of podcasting software and the high-end recording equipment to generate stories with it? You might think twice after reading Pew's most recent survey of podcast usage. Even among Internet users, only 19 percent say they have downloaded a podcast to view or listen to later, and that's up only 7 percent from the number who had downloaded podcasts in 2006. Moreover, of those who have downloaded podcasts, fewer than 20 percent do so on a daily basis.

Mary Madden, the senior research specialist who conducted the survey of about 1,500 Internet users in April and May 2008, says that men continue to be more likely than women to download podcasts; 22 percent of online men compared with just 16 percent of online women report ever having downloaded a podcast. However, men and women are equally likely (3 percent) to download podcasts on a typical day. The dividing line on age of podcast users seems to be around 50; with younger users significantly more likely to download podcasts.

In sum, Madden writes, "podcasting has yet to become a fixture in the everyday lives of Internet users, as very few Internet users download podcasts on a typical day." ■

DESK-TOP EATING ERUPTS INTO FOOD FIGHT FOR COMPUTERS

A message from your company's computer help desk: Go out for lunch, people. A recent survey of 150 IT managers conducted by Sunrise Software, a British maker of programs that track help-desk activities, identified printer issues as the most common reason for a help-desk call. But it also revealed that in a typical one-month period, 56 percent of tech workers had to troubleshoot at least one food-related computer mishap. The things they encountered: everything from potato chips in a CD drive to desktops stubbornly stuck to a desk by unknown substances. In the U.S., keyboards are regularly rendered unusable by crumb buildup, spill-related stickiness, and foul odors from decaying food, says Jon Aumann, a field-agent manager for Best Buy's Geek Squad, which serves small businesses and home offices. Aumann's scariest memory: "I once found a sandwich inside a computer tower," he says. "With a bite out of it." ■

(Source: Business Week*, July 14 and 21, 2008)*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Robert Lee Hotz

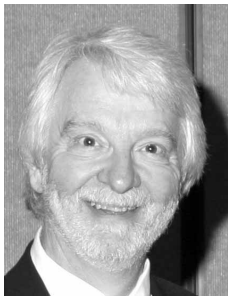


PHOTO COURTESY OF SIGMA XI

Scientists often feel at loggerheads with the writers, broadcasters, and bloggers who cover their research. I was pleasantly surprised, then by a recent five-country study that examined the interplay between researchers and the media: When it comes to communicating science to the general public, scientists think that we're doing a better job than many scholars of communications had long assumed.

At a time when fundamental precepts of science are under sustained political attack and media credibility is itself at an election-year low, scientists and journalists are talking more with each other than previously believed and, overall, the media itself is doing a better job of telling the story of science accurately. By and large, the conversations across the gulf of our two cultures—science and journalism—are smoother and more productive all around, according to an extensive survey, published in *Science* last July, which encompassed 1,354 researchers in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

Most scientists approach any interview with a reporter with trepidation. They hold deep-seated reservations about being misquoted and find the "the unpredictability of journalists" unnerving, the survey reported. Even so, more than half of those scientists surveyed said they were "mostly pleased" about "their latest appearance in the media." Only six percent were "mostly dissatisfied." More than two-thirds of them had been interviewed at least once in the past three years and almost a third said they had been interviewed five or more times in that period. Nearly one in five surveyed felt that the positive and negative impacts of science coverage balanced each other.

This is perhaps faint praise. In an era of constant change, however, when so much about the business of our craft seems up for grabs, it is reassuring to know that we still share common ground with the scientists whose findings we cover as a life's work. When asked why they did take the trouble to talk to the media, the scientists replied that they were spurred to talk to us because they sought to increase the public's understanding of science.

Indeed, 92 percent of those surveyed said they took the time to deal with us and our questions because they wanted a better educated public.

So do we all. That's why the National Association of Science Writers was organized in 1934. As our constitution states: "This organization shall foster the dissemination of accurate information regarding science and technology through all media normally devoted to informing the public; and shall foster the interpretation of science and its meaning to society, in keeping with the highest standards of journalism."

In critical ways, our task is harder than ever.

For a decade, the audiences for most traditional news sources have steadily declined as the number of people getting their news online has mushroomed. Since 2006, the Pew Research Center for People and The Press reported recently, the proportion of Americans who say they get news online has increased to more than a third, while the percentage saying they had read a newspaper yesterday has fallen from 40 percent to 34 percent. Many people get their news delivered via their smart phone instead. In spite of the increasing variety of ways to get the news of science, though, the proportion of young people getting no news at all on a typical day has grown to about a third of those younger than 25 years old, the Pew researchers found.

…I have seen you all rise to the many challenges of our craft with creativity and courage.

Credibility and trust, moreover, have not kept pace with changing technology. Believability ratings for national news organizations remain very low, but the believability ratings for major online news outlets, including Google News, Yahoo News, and AOL News—are even lower, according to the Pew Center.

I am reassured, however, by findings of a study published in September in the *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences*. In the dynamic competition among the billions of web pages on the Internet, researchers discovered, it is quality that makes the difference between those that thrive and those that fall by the wayside. Researchers at UCLA tracked monthly usage data and links for nearly 22 million web pages over the course of a year. They found that despite the head start enjoyed by major established websites, new websites regularly ousted them. Talent overcame the inertia of experience, the researchers reported. Among our many student members, I believe, are the talented upstarts of our craft.

In my three years as president of NASW, I have seen you all rise to the many challenges of our craft with creativity and courage. You have my confidence, as does our craft. We cover change, and the future is our business. My term is ending now, and with it more than a decade as an officer and a board member of this special organization. Go well. ■

Robert Lee Hotz can be reached at leehotz@earthlink.net.

DISPATCHES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Tinsley Davis

In August, I attended my first meeting of the Council of National Journalism Organizations. The council consists of leaders from many journalism organizations who share information on how to best serve members and promote good journalism practices. At this most recent biannual meeting, the group unveiled a new beta website (**www.cnjo.org**), discussed how each organization was feeling the impact of the shifting economy, and learned about new trends in member communication. Information sharing is one of the biggest benefits of council membership. Members of the council are an excellent resource for each other on matters that directly affect the organizations, such as trends in member employment, dues structures, and other administrative functions.

Going partially paperless

This year, two significant NASW functions are going paperless. Both the board election ballots and renewal notices will arrive in your inbox, not your mailbox. Keep an eye out and don't hit delete. E-ballots will arrive the week of October 20; dues invoices will arrive the week of December 1. In addition to reducing costs and paper use, the new processes should also make it easier for you to participate.

Because renewals and ballots are going out electronically, this make it even more critical that members update e-mail and other contact information in the online database.

Changing coasts

On January 1, reflecting one of the final steps in leadership transition, NASW's office will move westward to my new home in northern *continued on page 16*

Tinsley Davis can be reached at director@nasw.org.

BUDGET SUMMARY

2007 Total Income	**$ 416,340**
2007 Total Expenses	**$ 372,988**
2007 Net (Gain)	**$ 43,352**
2008 Proposed Income	**$ 413,900**
2008 Proposed Expenses	**$ 430,050**
2008 Net (Loss)	**$ [16,150]**

2008 NASW BUDGET REPORT

Income	2007 Proposed	2007 Actual	2008 Proposed
Dues	$ 177,000	$ 173,895	$ 175,000
Labels	16,000	18,237	18,000
Ads/Online & Newsletter	20,000	23,407	23,000
Unrealized Gain	1,200	(7,271)	1,000
Misc. Income	2,500	3,403	2,500
Subtotal	$ 216,700	$ 211,671	$ 219,500
Special Sources			
Dividends /Investments	$ 11,000	$ 17,807	$ 12,000
CASW Grant	1,500	1,500	1,500
Awards Dinner	9,500	7,289	7,000
SW Field Guide	1,200	4,992	2,500
Workshops	45,000	48,555	49,400
Authors Coalition	60,000	124,526	122,000
Subtotal	$ 128,200	$ 204,669	$ 194,400
TOTAL INCOME	**$ 344,900**	**$ 416,340**	**$ 413,900**
Expenses			
Salaries	$ 93,000	$ 76,075	$ 93,000
Payroll Taxes & Benefits	22,000	30,426	35,600
Newsletter Production	45,000	44,005	45,000
Editor	22,000	22,000	23,000
Awards	16,000	12,413	14,000
Roster	13,500	12,647	13,500
Postage	4,400	4,613	4,700
Printing	3,000	6,481	4,000
Supplies	1,000	3,422	2,500
Telephone	2,600	2,600	2,600
Accountants' Fee	6,000	7,000	7,000
Corporate Taxes	250	250	250
Authors Coalition/ Fellowships	40,000	48,372	75,000
Bank Charges	2,900	2,512	2,600
Check and Payroll services	900	1,175	1,200
Computers	500	3,165	500
Subtotal	$ 273,050	$ 277,156	$ 324,450
Special Projects			
Local Groups	$ 1,000	$ 350	$ 1,000
Cybrarian	20,000	20,000	21,000
Web Hosting	1,500	2,434	2,500
Board Travel	10,000	7,273	10,000
SW Field Guide	500	0	0
Workshop	60,000	54,717	60,000
Awards Dinner	2,000	7,289	7,000
Diane McGurgan Award	845	800	800
Ins. (Bd. Liability /Work. Comp.)	3,185	2,669	3,000
Dues / WFSJ	300	300	300
Subtotal	$ 99,330	$ 95,832	$ 105,600
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 372,380**	**$ 372,988**	**$ 430,050**
Bank Report		**12/31/07**	**12/31/06**
CDs		$ 221,127	$ 202,451
Mutual Funds		49,138	49,345
Cash and Equivalents		63,751	42,925
TOTAL ASSETS		**$ 334,016**	**$ 294,721**

DIRECTOR *continued from page 4*

California. Be on the lookout for the updated mailing address and contact numbers this winter. Having just moved from Boston, I look forward to joining our Bay Area members at NCSWA events and hope to connect with other local science writers. If you live in, or are visiting San Francisco, do get in touch. ■

CYBERBEAT

by Russell Clemings

It's been a busy summer and looks to be a busy fall at NASW.org, and with any luck at all, few people will notice all of the activity.

Step by step, we've been moving the NASW.org website from its longtime host, NICAR.org, to our own managed server at a northern Virginia hosting company. Our e-mail services have been running on the new server since last Thanksgiving. The databases that lie behind much of our content, including the member directory, moved in September.

By the time this is published, we hope to have completed the transition and have all NASW.org services running on our own server. At the same time, we're doing some upgrades to the membership database—you'll be able to list a middle name, for example, instead of just an initial.

Members who have their own websites at NASW.org will be among the few who have to make some adjustments. The FTP clients they've used in the past may not work because our new server will have tighter security restrictions. On the bright side, we're developing a list of free substitute clients. And we will be increasing the amount of space available for each member's web page from the current two megabytes to at least five megabytes.

This summer on NASW-Freelance:

Freelancers live and die by the rates they can charge, so Arizona freelance Star Lawrence got a lot of replies when she posted this on the busy NASW-freelance list in early August:

"I know a lot of people like to say the trashy rates on [Craigslist] jobs are not affecting the rates we more experienced types can get, but today, I turned down an assignment from *Medical Economics* because their rate had been cut in half. The editor was new, very pleasant, apologized—said they had been paying New York City rates and now got writers from across the country and did not need to pay so much.

West Virginia freelancer John Gever proposed that the real cause wasn't Craigslist but increased competition made possible by the Internet as a whole. "People who live where a decent house costs $50,000 can now bid for jobs that used to require being in New York."

In between questions about where exactly those $50,000 houses could be found (try small towns in the Midwest and South), freelancer Dawn Stover chimed in from White Salmon, Wash.:

"I lived in New York City for many years, and I don't remember the rates ever going UP to match the rising cost of living there. It costs $250,000 to buy a decent house in my town, but I don't expect to be paid five times more than someone who lives in a place where you can buy a house for $50,000. Pay should be based on the product delivered, not on where it comes from."

The thread continued for several days, branching into a discussion of why oil prices were skyrocketing at the time, even though demand had been rising only gradually. Your humble cybrarian got completely lost only when someone invoked Lotka-Volterra equations as an explanation.

NASW members can read the entire thread, if they dare, by searching the NASW-Freelance archives for the string "Rate lowering trend" (**www.nasw.org/members/archives/html/**).

And on NASW-PR:

The usually quiet NASW-PR list stirred on June 20 with a question from Melissa Hamilton at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio: "I'm aware of plenty of science journalism award competitions, but most do not allow submissions by PIOs. Does anyone know of reputable science writing contests for PIOs?"

Several respondents quickly pointed out contests from organizations such as the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, the National Public Health Information Coalition, and the National Association of Government Communicators. The conversation soon turned to NASW's own venerable Science in Society Awards.

"I've come to agree that the SIS is not the best place to honor PIO work. But that doesn't mean that NASW can't establish a separate award for PIOs," wrote NASW board member (and humble cybrarian emeritus) Bob Finn. "Should it be an award for the best press release? The best institutional research magazine article? The best crisis management? Or should it honor an individual for an entire body of work?"

The discussion that ensued was far from conclu-

Russell Clemings is NASW's cybrarian and a reporter for the Fresno Bee. *Drop him a note at cybrarian@nasw.org or rclemings@gmail.com.*

sive. But Ohio State University's research communication nabob, Earle Holland, focused attention on (and provided links to) a series of documents from the last time NASW leaders took up the issue in 2002. The outcome: "After much thought and discussion, the officers have decided not to create an NASW award for PIOs," then-President Paul Raeburn wrote.

Holland said he still believes NASW should have such an award.

"I just want the science writing we do to be judged on an equal footing with the traditionalists," he said. "I certainly think it can stand up to the scrutiny."

NASW members can see the whole thread by searching the NASW-PR archives for the string "science writing contests for PIOs" (**www.nasw.org/members/archives/html/**). ■

NEWS FROM AFAR

by Jim Cornell

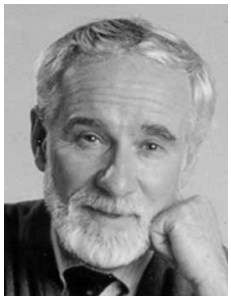


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The first two people I met in Barcelona—outside of my taxi driver—were English tourists asking for directions to the nearest police station.

Over the next five days, at least a half-dozen science writers attending ESOF2008 would also report run-ins with pickpockets, cutpurses, and petty thieves. As far as I can tell, no victims were Americans. Perhaps we are more alert to urban threats. Or maybe because the dollar was so weak against the euro, crooks simply looked for better pickings elsewhere.

High crime and low currency rates aside, the third edition of EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF2008, July 18-22, Barcelona, Spain), Europe's answer to the AAAS annual gathering, was a great success. In fact, with an estimated attendance of nearly 5,000—including some 500 journalists—the upstart biennial may be closing in on its much older model as the premier international multidisciplinary science meeting.

Certainly, program content has improved immeasurably since the first ESOF, in Stockholm in 2004. There was still a strong European bent and large doses of science policy, and working journalists still griped about the lack of "new results," but most research sessions and plenary lectures had some real heft.

Jim Cornell is president of the International Science Writers Association. Send items of interest—international programs, conferences, events, etc.—to cornelljc@earthlink.net.

Of course, in all such general meetings, as a *Nature* editorial succinctly put it, presentations tend "to communicate what is happening, but not address challenging issues." But for Americans, at least, "what is happening" may have been story enough.

ESOF2008 offered a grand overview of current European research. Few readers—or writers—on this side of the Atlantic have any appreciation of its breadth, depth, and diversity. If the European Union could get its act together, the combined S&T output might match that of our more obvious rivals in Asia.

And, with topics like prenatal sex selection, "the bar code of life," and athletic doping on the program, diligent reporters could find lots of story possibilities. Indeed, Indian writers scored a big news break when a speaker on "nuclear detectives" offered one solution to the inspection-procedure problem then causing contentious debate over the Indo-American atomic energy pact.

The fact that Indian writers were even there to cover this story underscores the growing globalization of ESOF. For example, expanding upon the fellowship program that brought German and North American journalists to previous meetings, the Bosch Foundation of Stuttgart this time also offered travel grants to writers from India, Japan, and China, supporting some 50 journalists in all.

Not surprisingly, the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) also used the venue to hold its executive board meeting, to host sessions on science writing in the developing world, and to promote next year's World Conference in London.

Despite the apparent internationalism, some critics noted a scarcity of participants from Eastern Europe —as well as an underrepresentation of women presenters and speakers. Press operations, too, provoked some negative vibes. The awkwardness of the computer room, the inadequacies of the reporters' lounge, and the sloppiness of the press briefings seemed a regression from the professional standards set in Munich two years ago.

There was some suggestion that press operations might have been affected by a mid-stream change of management. More likely, the problem stemmed from ESOF's "movable feast" nature, in which operating procedures and protocols were reinvented every two years by each new host country. To ensure future continuity and constancy, five European foundations have joined with Euroscience, a grassroots association of scientists, to establish a permanent ESOF office in Strasbourg. Its first task will be to help organize ESOF 2010 in Turin, Italy.

Anyone wanting to learn more about European Union research might do well to look at *research*eu*. Handsome, glossy, and written mainly by independent journalists, the magazine is published 10 times a year (in

English, French, German, and Spanish) and will be mailed almost anywhere. To get a free subscription, go to **http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu**.

In addition to the magazine above, Europe may soon also get one devoted solely to reporting on science reporting. A Beta version of the proposed periodical—*Science Journalism in Europe*—was distributed at the ESOF meeting in Barcelona.

Published by the German Science Journalists Association (WPK) and the Program for Science Journalism, at Dortmund University, the magazine is envisioned as a "platform for discussing general problems and standards as well as ethical, historical, and practical aspects" of the field.

Given such an all-encompassing and eclectic goal, the test model's articles explored everything from misleading scientific illustrations to attempted bribery of journalists by pharmaceutical companies to web-based training for writers to the coverage of defense-related science in former Soviet dependencies.

The first edition is planned for a formal roll-out at the World Conference in London next year. In the meantime, you can get more information from WPK Chairperson Christiane Gotz-Sobel wpk@wpk.org. And you can learn more about Germany's first—and only—undergraduate science journalism program, at Dortmund by going to **www.science-journalism.org**. ■

NASW'S CONTINUING ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE JOURNALISM

by Deborah Blum

I represented NASW at the World Federation of Science Jouralists (WFSJ) annual board meeting, held this year as part of the ESOF meeting in Barcelona. New and ongoing WFSJ activities include a competition for journalists to visit the Arctic on a Canadian icebreaker, an online science journalism course, and a fellowship competition for journalists to attend the EcoHealth Forum in Merida, Mexico. Most of WFSJ's programs currently are centered in Africa and the Middle East (partly because foundation support is strongest for those regions), but the organization is fully committed to building up its training efforts in Latin America.

The Sixth World Conference of Science Journalists will be held in London in 2009 and NASW members are already involved in conference planning. For example, CASW president Cris Russell and John Travis, who is based in England for *Science* magazine, are organizing panels. A number of NASW members are being invited as panel participants.

Meanwhile, NASW's partnership with the Arab Science Journalists Association (ASJA) continues to break new ground. ASJA has invited four NASW members (Deb Blum, Kevin Begos, Jeanne Lenzer, and Craig Duff) to participate in its first regional conference, which is both an honor and a tribute to how hard both groups have worked to build this relationship. That meeting takes place on October 25, in Fez, Morocco. The travel expenses for that conference are being jointly funded by NASW and WFSJ. The ASJA has asked that NASW members participate in panels on storytelling, ethics, evidence-based reporting, and finding science stories in the Arab World.

Other international projects still in the preliminary stages include a proposal (co-written by ASJA president Nadia El-Awady) for a science writers' workshop on fossil fuels, to be held in Qatar. Also, at the meeting in Barcelona, I started work on a project concerning international reporting of global climate change.

Finally, I want to say a few words about Phil Hilts, the new director of MIT's Knight Science Journalism Fellowship Program. This summer I learned about a journalist from Sri Lanka, who was working under very dangerous circumstances. A colleague had written to ask if there was a way to provide this women with both a brief escape and training that would enhance her ability to work elsewhere. I contacted Phil who, together with staff members Kathy Boisvert and Molly Seamans, sprang into action and arranged for the journalist to attend one of the MIT Boot Camp programs. Their efforts were nothing short of life saving. ■

Deborah Blum is a freelance writer and professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin. She is NASW liaison to the World Federation of Science Journalists.

Upcoming meetings

Nov. 21-23, 2008 • **Sixth Asia-Pacific Symposium on Press and Scientific and Social Progress (APSP-6)**, Beijing, China. **www.apsp.org.cn**

June 30-July 3, 2009 • **Sixth World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2010)**, Westminster, London, UK. **www.wcsj2009.org**

July 2-7, 2010 • **EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF2010)**, Turin, Italy. **www.esof2010.org**

Dec. 6-10, 2010 • **11th International Conference on the Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST2010)**, New Delhi, India. **www.pcst-2010.org**

OUR GANG

by Pam Frost Gorder


PHOTO BY JO MCCULTY

Coast-to-Coast in a Single Bound. Freelancer **Bryn Nelson** recently moved from New York City to Seattle—in one long car trip that took him across 4,000 miles of the American way. He shared some wisdom from the drive. "Grizzly bears in Glacier National Park are best viewed from the safety and convenience of your own car. They're big. Really, really big." Write to Bryn at bdnelson@nasw.org to find out when you can stop by to admire his view of the Space Needle and the Olympic Mountains.

Night Vision. After 22 years at *Sky & Telescope* magazine—the last eight as editor in chief—**Richard Tresch Fienberg** has taken a position as visiting scientist at Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., one of the top private secondary schools in the country. He is turning the school's observatory into an active learning center and research facility, and making sure that all of his students—in astronomy, astrobiology, and science journalism—read and think about science stories in the popular press. He becomes editor emeritus at *S&T*, and has taken up another title—deputy press officer for the American Astronomical Society. Write Rick at rfienberg@andover.edu and ask what's showing on the observatory's 16-inch telescope tonight.

Astro-Man. **Robert Naeye** takes the reins as editor in chief of *Sky & Telescope*. He first joined the magazine as an editorial intern in 1991, then returned as a senior editor from 2003 to 2007. In between, he worked as editor in chief at *Discover*, *Astronomy*, and *Mercury* magazines. But even as senior science writer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, he continued to write for *S&T*. In fact, the day that Robert's new tenure was announced, an issue with one of his cover stories was just hitting the newsstands. He can be reached at rnaeye@skyandtelescope.com.

Impervious to Cold. Fresh from a trek to the ice sheets of Greenland, the Exploratorium's **Mary K. Miller** and **Lisa Strong-Aufhauser** are headed to Antarctica in December. They're busy chronicling the impacts of climate change during the International Polar Year for their web project *Ice Stories* (**http://icestories.exploratorium.edu**). Afterward, they'll return to the Science Communication Program at UC Santa Cruz to pass along their multimedia skills to students. Write to Mary (marym@exploratorium.edu) and Lisa (lisa@strongmountain.com) to ask which is colder: Greenland when it's summer in the north, or Antarctica when it's summer in the south?

Faster Than a Speeding News Release. **Kitta MacPherson** has left the *Newark Star-Ledger* and will now cover breaking research news at Princeton University. She spent most of her 26 years at the *Star-Ledger* as science editor, and in 2000 won the NASW Science in Society Award for a series on the controversy over genetically engineered food. Ask her what it's like to walk in the footsteps of Einstein and von Neumann at kittamac@princeton.edu.

Using Her Super Food Sense. After more than two decades at the *Washington Post*—during which she started a multimedia franchise with her Lean Plate Club column, NASW board member **Sally Squires** has joined the strategic communications firm Powell Tate/Weber Shandwick. As a senior vice president and director of health and wellness at the agency, she will share her extensive knowledge of nutrition science with the food industry, government agencies, nonprofits, and consumers alike. She can be reached at ssquires@powelltate.com.

Aquaman. **Steve Benowitz** has left the media relations office of Thomas Jefferson University to become director of communications for the University of California, San Diego Moores Cancer Center—a move that takes him from Philadelphia, Penn. to La Jolla, Calif. "That's LA-HOY-A," he writes. "You know—hot tubs, palm trees, beaches." Ask him whether surf's up at sbenowitz@ucsd.edu.

Secret Identity? **Wallace Ravven** has retired as a public information officer at the University of California, San Francisco, and will now return to his former persona of a mild-mannered freelancer. He'll cover evolutionary biology, ecology, behavior, cognition, and some biomedical research. "I do hope to reconnect with some of my nonprofessional passions, and of course, buff up that passport," he says. Ask him about his travels at wravven@nasw.org.

Shape Shifter. Women's health advocate **Charlotte Libov** reports that she's carving out an eclectic freelance writing career in South Beach, Fla., where she covers medicine, real estate, interior design, food, arts, and anything else she comes across. Among her diverse roles, she is the new "Our Body" editor for *Coral Living Magazine*—a Miami lifestyle magazine—and writes medical articles for websites, including *WebMD the Magazine* and *Revolution Health*. To find out what she's covering today, write her at char@libov.com.

Wonder Woman. **Diana Somerville**'s first book, *Inside Out Down Under. Stories from a Spiritual Sabbatical*, scored two 2008 National Indie Excellence

Pam Frost Gorder is assistant director of research communications at Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio. Send news about your life to Pam at gorder.1@osu.edu.

Awards. Her story of journeying from a rural town to the Australian outback won in both the memoir and travel categories. The judges recognized her quirky observations and offbeat insights, spiced with humor and astonishment, that bring a new perspective to traveling on foreign soils and through one's own life. Congratulate her at writer@olypen.com.

Hearts of Steel. *Heart Insight*, a magazine edited by **Ruth Papazian**, won two major awards. a Gold Award from the American Society of Healthcare Publication Editors in the New Publication category, and a Clarion Award from the Association for Women in Communications in the category of Best Overall External Magazine Start-Up. Ruth is the founding editor of the magazine, which launched in February 2007. It focuses on cardiovascular health, and is co-published by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins/Wolters Kluwer Health and the American Heart Association. Congratulate her at Ruth.Papazian@wolterskluwer.com.

Animal Affinity. Freelancer **Terri Peterson Smith** is one of seven winners of the 2007-08 Michael E. DeBakey Journalism Award from the Foundation for Biomedical Research. The award recognizes outstanding journalism that discusses the essential role of humane animal research in medical discoveries and scientific breakthroughs. Terri was honored for her cover story, "Mouse Work," featured in the summer 2007 issue of *Invention and Technology Magazine*, an American Heritage publication. Her piece focused on the use of mice in scientific research from the Victorian era in Great Britain through the present and on advances in medical science obtained through the use of mouse models. Congratulate her at tsmith952@comcast.net.

It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's… **Frank O'Donnell**, who manages the institutional communications office at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). He recently received the federal government's Exceptional Service Medal, honoring him for his writing about JPL and the space program during his 23-year career at the laboratory. In particular, the award recognized him for 2007's *Explorer 1*, a 20,000-word small book on the history leading up to the launch of America's first satellite, in 1958. Congratulate him at fod@jpl.nasa.gov.

Bright Knight. **Sabin Russell**, medical writer at *The San Francisco Chronicle*, has been selected to receive a 2008-09 Knight Science Journalism Fellowship. He is among 11 new fellows from six countries. All are mid-career journalists who work for general-interest news media to improve the public understanding of science. During his academic year, taking courses at MIT and Harvard, Sabin plans to focus on rapid genetic-screening technologies and genome-wide association studies to identify common genetic factors that influence health. Congratulate him at srussell@sfchronicle.com. ■

EVERT CLARK/ SETH PAYNE AWARD

The winner of the 2008 Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award, an annual prize for young science journalists, is Elizabeth Svoboda, a writer based in San Jose, Calif.

Svoboda received the award and its $1,000 prize for four stories: "The Fuel Cell" (*Popular Science*), "The Asteroid Hunters" (*Discover*), "Scents & Sensibility" (*Psychology Today*), and "The sun blotted out from the sky" (*Salon*).

The panel of judges cited Svoboda for her wide-ranging topics and her ability to adapt to the needs and styles of different publications. The judges praised her for humanizing science by making "really good use of people," and for the clarity of her writing. They also liked Svoboda's "reasonably skeptical" look at the claims of researchers.

The judges also awarded an Honorable Mention to Tracy Powell for two stories in the *Berkeley Science Review*: "Robot Circus" and "The Lovely Bones." Writing for a university magazine, Powell impressed the judges with a "flair for language" and clear explanations of science.

The award will be presented by the Evert Clark Fund and the National Association of Science Writers, in conjunction with the National Press Foundation. The ceremony will take place on Oct. 26 during the annual meeting of the NASW and CASW, in Palo Alto, Calif.

Judges for the 2008 award were Rick Weiss, former *Washington Post* science writer (now senior fellow at the Center for American Progress); Laura Helmuth, senior science editor at *Smithsonian*; Richard Kerr, senior writer at *Science*; Susan Katz Miller, writer for *Newsweek* and other publications; and David Lindley, author of such books as *Uncertainty: Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, and the Struggle for the Soul of Science* and *The End of Physics: The Myth of a Unified Theory*.

The Clark/Payne Award encourages young science writers by recognizing outstanding reporting in all fields of science. It is given each year in memory of journalists Ev Clark and Seth Payne, who offered friendship and advice to a generation of young reporters. This is the 19th year of the award.

All entrants must be age 30 or younger. The deadline for submissions is now the end of June each year. For more information, contact the Evert Clark Award Fund or visit the website at: **www.mindspring.com/~us009848/**. ■

(Source: news release)

2008 RENNIE TAYLOR/ ALTON BLAKESLEE FELLOWS ANNOUNCED

The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) has announced the recipients of this year's Rennie Taylor/Alton Blakeslee Graduate Studies Fellowships. The fellowships provide up to $2,000 for the academic year to both professional journalists and students of outstanding ability who have been accepted into graduate-level programs in science writing. The recipients are:

Jennifer Lauren Lee, a UCLA graduate who will be attending the University of Southern California

Hadley Erin Leggett who will be attending UC Santa Cruz. He received an M.D. from UC San Francisco and a B.A. from Rice

Deborah Gastfreuned Schuss, a reporter, editor, and journalist for 15 years, will attend Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government

Eric Schwartz attending Boston University after completely undergraduate studies at the University of Arizona

Support for the fellowships derive largely from a special bequest made to CASW by the American Tentative Society (ATS), which, for three decades, played an important role in promoting public understanding of science and the scientific process. The fellowships honor the memory of Rennie Taylor, a science writer for *The Associated Press*, whose estate provided funds for the establishment of ATS, and Alton Blakeslee, *AP* science editor, who served as long-time president of ATS. Fellowship application and eligibility requirements can be found at **www.casw.org**. ■

CASW AWARDS FELLOWSHIPS

Fifteen CASW Traveling Fellowships, of up to $1,200 each were awarded to help science writers defray the costs of attending the 2008 New Horizons in Science briefing in Palo Alto, Calif. The fellowships assist journalists from publications and broadcast outlets that do not routinely cover major science meetings or employ a full-time science writer. CASW also assigns a veteran science writer to each fellow to serve as a mentor during the program.

The 2008 CASW Traveling Fellows are: **Genevive Bjorn**, freelance, Maui, Hawaii; **Rebecca Boyle**, reporter, *Fort Collins Now*, Ft. Collins, Colo.; **Amber Dance**, freelance and intern, *Nature*'s D.C. bureau; **Emily Gertz**, freelance environmental journalist, Brooklyn, N.Y.; **Karen Hoffmann**, freelance, Pittsburgh, Penn.; **Brandon Kiem**, Wired.com, Brooklyn, N.Y.; **Cathleen Orr**, freelance, Sheridan, Wyo; **Laura Petersen**, *La Jolla* (Calif.) *Light*; **Sue Pondrom**, Sue Pondrom Communications, San Diego, Calif. **Brandon Reynolds**, writer/editor, *Style Weekly*, Richmond Va.; **Emily Schwing**, reporter/morning edition host for KBBI-AM 890, Homer, Ala.; **Michael Wendelspecht**, Creative Ricochet Productions, Blowing Rock, N.C.; **Robin Wienke**, science communications fellow, N.C. Sea Grant, Raleigh, N.C.; **Katherine Unger**, staff writer, The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, Md.; **Brian Vastag**, freelance, Washington, D.C.

The New Horizons Traveling Fellowship Program is underwritten by a grant from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. ■

NASW TRAVEL FELLOWSHIPS

Thirteen science writers have been chosen to receive NASW Traveling Fellowships to this year's NASW Workshops, in Palo Alto.

Brendan Borrell, freelance, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Kate Gammon, freelance, Santa Monica, Calif.
Paula Haas, freelance, Overland Park, Kan.
Laura Katers, freelance, Denver, Colo.
Lucas Laursen, freelance, Riverside, Calif.
Carol Milano, freelance, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Melissa Lee Phillips, freelance, New York, N.Y.
Megan Rulison Scudellari, freelance, Philadelphia, Penn.
Emily Sohn, freelance, Minneapolis, Minn.
Wendy Lyons Sunshine, freelance, Arlington, Tex.
Sarah Webb, freelance, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Erica Westly, freelance, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Jennifer Wettlaufer, freelance, East Aurora, N.Y.

The fellowships, totaling $13,000, were made possible through Authors Coalition funds received by NASW. ■

ScienceWriters *welcomes letters to the editor*

A letter must include a daytime telephone number and e-mail address. Letters may be edited. Letters submitted may be used in print or digital form by NASW. Send to Editor, *ScienceWriters*, P.O. Box 1725 Solana Beach, CA 92075, fax 858-793-1144, or e-mail lfriedmann@nasw.org.

REGIONAL GROUPS

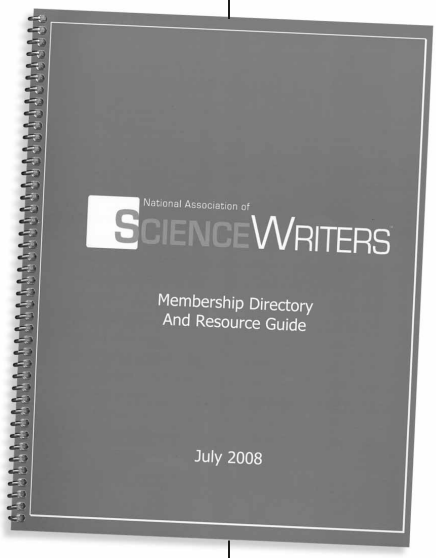
by Suzanne Clancy

New York


PHOTO BY MARC LIEBERMAN

Science Writers in New York held its summer social outdoors this year. The event took place on July 17 in the lovely (but noisy) setting of the Pier 1 Cafe on the Hudson River. Attendees included many "first timers" as well as regular members.

SWINY leadership has undergone another passing of the baton. Patrick Berzinski, who served as co-president, will be replaced by Joe Bonner. David Levine stays on for an additional year as the other co-president. In their other lives, Patrick is director of university communications, Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, N.J.; Joe is director of communications at Rockefeller University in NYC; and David is senior director of marketing and communications, New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. SWINY members send a hearty thank-you to Patrick, David, and Joe for their past, current, and future service to its organization. ■



Suzanne Clancy is editor of Clinical Lab Products. *Send information about regional meetings and events to sclancyphd@yahoo.com.*

Science writers party at AAAS

Save the date! Friday, Feb. 13 will be a lucky day to be in Chicago to party with your fellow science writers from around the world. The Chicago chapter is planning a big night in the Windy City with food, drinks, music, and spectacular views! Plan on attending the science writers party at the Mid-America Club on the 80th floor of the landmark Aon Center; one of the tallest buildings in Chicago. It's conveniently located near the AAAS meeting and hotel headquarters.

We'll be partying from 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. Musical entertainment will be provided by Colby Beserra and the Party Faithful, a seven-piece dance band, who play a variety of music.

Hope to see you there!

A LITTLE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, PLEASE...

by Larry Krumenaker

Having just spent a good part of the last year and a half conducting and analyzing surveys for a dissertation, it was impossible to resist the temptation to analyze the codes for "What I Do" as selected by the 2,209 members in the NASW roster database.

By far, NASW is an organization of writers with 849 people self-selecting the Writer appellation. But that represents less than half of our organization!

Wait! There are 402 folks who self-describe themselves as Reporters.

Just over a quarter of us (596) are people who edit our wonderful writings.

Add the writers and reporters together and you get an interesting ratio, about one editor for nearly two writers. Hmmmm.

We can add 177 Authors to the writer's side of the ledger. That doesn't help the ratio much, does it?

There are 142 people who list themselves in Public Relations and 124 who list themselves in Public Information. Another 116 consult, though for whom it is not clear.

There are 122 people who are in the ivory towers of education, 81 conducting research, 54 who have regular columnist gigs, 48 who are producers, and 41 who make some dough with photography.

Of course many do more than one of these roles, so don't take the ratios too seriously.

If we are science writers, what areas of science do we examine for our words? By far, we are in the life sciences, with more than 1,000 of our society making this claim of interest. Indeed, the top five two-letter codes are all in this general area:

Ls = Life Science 1,111
Md = General Medical 905
Ev = Environment 651
Hl = Health 610
Bt = Biotechnology 558

Physical Sciences finally breaks the skein, with 541 devotees. But the druggies, I mean, those with Pharmaceutical interests, are right behind with 539.

Science writer Larry Krumenaker recently completed his doctorate in science education. For the past decade he has been the desktop publisher of the NASW membership roster.

Earth scientists number 465 people and Engineering fans were tallied at 359. Shrinking lower in the count are mental health followers, with only 241 people.

The remaining science choices fare less well yet. We are rather social yet those with interests in the social sciences number a not quite 10 percent at 203 people. Having witnessed our eating habits at NASW Annual Meetings, it should be no surprise that our interests in Nutrition are so low, just 177 of us. Yet it is surprising in this digital age that so few (190) profess interests in technology (perhaps we're still having trouble with our VCRs?) and computing, 167!

Some folks have no real competition for covering their interests. Astronomy lovers number but 105; chemists 88. Perhaps the 24 Sociology buffs can figure this all out for us. ■

IN MEMORIAM

Arthur Fisher

Science Editor Emeritus, Popular Science

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FISHER FAMILY

Arthur Fisher, 77, science and technology editor of *Popular Science* magazine for nearly three decades, died July 22 after a long illness. He was an NASW member for 41 years and was a longtime member of the board of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW).

Fisher was born in New York City on March 10, 1931. A 1947 graduate of the Bronx High School of Science, he received a B.A. degree in 1951 from New York University and went on to earn the equivalent of an M.A. degree in French language and literature. Before accepting the post at *Popular Science*, he was managing editor at *Senior Science* and *Science World*, both published by Scholastic Magazines for high-school students.

Fisher joined *Popular Science* in 1969 and remained with the publication until his retirement as executive editor in 1996. During his career, he wrote hundreds of articles on chemistry, physics, engineering, biology, health and medicine, photography, animal behavior, music, and architecture for numerous periodicals and annuals.

In addition to his writings for the news- and adventure-driven readership of *Popular Science*, Fisher also reached science-trained opinion leaders through the National Science Foundation's publication *Mosaic* and the highly educated lay public through the *New York Times Magazine*. His work also appeared in *The Reader's Digest*, *GEO*, *Science 84*, and *Time-Life Nature/Science Annual*.

"He had an uncommon ability to fine-tune his delicious writing style to many different audiences," said Ben Patrusky, CASW executive director.

The winner of several prestigious writing awards, Fisher received the Blakeslee Award in 1981 from the American Heart Association for *The Healthy Heart*, published by Time-Life Books, in which he explained the problem of cholesterol. He has also received awards from the American Institute of Physics (1985), the AAAS-Westinghouse Science Journalism Award (1986), and the National Society for Medical Research (1978). In 1988, Fisher received the American Chemical Society's 1988 James T. Grady-James H. Stack Award for Interpreting Chemistry for the Public.

Fisher served at one time on the membership committee and the Science in Society Awards committee of the National Association of Science Writers and was the first "Our Gang" columnist for *ScienceWriters*. He was chairman of the Task Force on Research of the New York Heart Association's Communications Council.

Fisher was also a much-published photographer whose work was exhibited at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Nikon House.

"A well-traveled, multilingual bon vivant with a wide range of interests and vast stores of knowledge about literature, the arts, music—you name it—Arthur was esteemed by his colleagues as much for his editorial gifts as his deliciously witty presence," said Patrusky. "He was quite simply a joy to be around anywhere, anytime but most especially as the grand drinking and dining companion that he invariably was. Fact is, for those of us lucky enough to have Arthur turn up in a press room, he was our ultrareliable, all-knowing epicure, who, no matter city or region, always showed us the way to great culinary adventure and memorable martinis."

Fisher was preceded in death by his wife of more than 50 years, Liliane (Linette) Fisher, who died on Feb. 5, 2008. They are survived by a son, Tony.

Roland D. Paine

Science Writer and Government Information Chief

Roland D. Paine, 84, an award-winning science writer and a retired chief of public information for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), died July 25, in Alexandria, Va. He was a lifetime member of NASW.

Paine was born in Montgomery, Ala., and enlisted in the Army during his freshman year at Northwestern University. During World War II, he saw combat in numerous battles of the Roer River campaign and received the Purple Heart and two Bronze Star medals.

He returned to Northwestern after the war and received his undergraduate degree in journalism in 1948. He then returned to Europe, where he received a degree in political science, in French, from the University of Geneva,

and traveled extensively. He received a master's degree in political science from Northwestern in 1951 and moved to Washington to take a position as technical information officer for the Navy Department's Bureau of Ships.

In 1958, he joined NSF as public information officer and established a number of practices, including the foundation's first field coverage of special events that was fully coordinated with all news media. He created a major U.S. science exhibit for Brazil's first international science exposition and began science-writer visits to Antarctica. He led several of the visits and was awarded the Antarctic Service Medal. Paine Ridge in Antarctica is named in his honor.

He moved to NOAA in 1970 as public information officer for oceanic programs. As editor of *NOAA Magazine*, he won the Blue Pencil Award of the Federal Editors Association, and the magazine received a first-place designation in its category from the National Association of Government Communicators.

An avid reader of American history and politics, Paine also enjoyed poetry, humor, and satire. Mark Twain and W.H. Auden were among his favorite writers. He loved opera and classical music, hiking with friends, birding and sailing his boat on the Chesapeake. A confirmed Francophile, he also enjoyed frequent trips with his wife to France. ■

(Source: Washington Post*)*

LETTERS

Boyce Rensberger's letter (*SW*, winter 2007-08) about Jane Stevens' work tracking sea turtles studies (*SW*, fall 2007) provided food for thought.

First, objectivity and freedom from influence might have been conveyed if, instead of referring to science journalism, Stevens had called the online reporting "communication," or even "chronicling" since an unfolding event was being covered.

Second, a website that follows research with updates, and its financial underpinnings, might be broadly compared to how information is set forth by either public broadcasting or a museum—both of which may receive corporate support.

Readers may already develop a less-than pristine impression of impartiality when science journalists can be found online, blogging about their beat, sometimes under the auspices of their own news organization. Newspapers also take editorial stands, so may be seen as having a predictable stance (even if reporting is approached objectively).

Perhaps the larger issue is that gatekeeper and arbitrator roles—and muckraking to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted" —are falling by the wayside because news and mass media can be bypassed altogether.

WikiLeaks accepts anonymous government documents. PR agencies explore sending messages straight to PDAs, forgoing news releases. With mass media shrinking, fragmented audiences, attending to whatever unfiltered "facts" they view, must distill their own meaning or context.

This sea change has been coming for some time. In anticipation, in 1983 I took "Future Advances in Telecommunications" in J-school, which covered such unrealized visions as cellular phones. Shortly before, I met people who were brainstorming computer gaming and art. It seemed unentertaining and uninspiring to me, who viewed Foretran-run mainframes as dryly utilitarian.

Much of the impact has arrived and on-staff slots for science journalists are in decline. In another sea change, traditional reporting is challenged with fewer authoritative and accessible sources when scientists provide raw data online, and research is privately supported, even if coverage is not meant to promote.

The shift reminds me of someone remarking to a linguist, "You need to do something about the decline in language!" "We don't do anything," the scholar replied, "We just watch it."

Like sticking through successive rounds of musical chairs, staying in the Fourth Estate to report news without fear or favor is a nice role if you can get it. Meanwhile, audiences in the Web 2.0 era will form opinions from common sense—a sort of mental Wikipedian, self-policing, agreement on truth through a massive peer-review.

Internet analyst Bill Tancer notes this need for an authoritative content filter, in his book *Click*: "Until that occurs, all of this content faces the prospect of becoming a collection of noise that we may not bother to rely on in the future."

Nancy Garcia
Pleasant Hill, Calif.

BOOKS BY AND FOR MEMBERS

by Ruth Winter

***The Best American Science Writing 2008*, published by Ecco/Harper.**

One NASW member is included in this anthology: Carl Zimmer, a freelance from Guilford, Conn., for "Evolved for Cancer?" (*Scientific American*, January 2007). He wrote that natural selection is not natural perfection. "Living creatures have evolved some remarkably

complex adaptations, but we are still very vulnerable to disease. Among the most tragic of those ills—and perhaps most enigmatic—is cancer. A cancerous tumor is exquisitely well adapted for survival in its own grotesque way. Its cells continue to divide long after ordinary cells would stop. They destroy surrounding tissues to make room for themselves, and they trick the body into supplying them with energy to grow even larger. But the tumors that afflict us are not foreign parasites that have acquired sophisticated strategies for attacking our bodies; they are made of our own cells, turned against us. Nor is cancer some bizarre rarity: a woman in the U.S. has a 39 percent chance of being diagnosed with some type of cancer in her lifetime; a man has a 45 percent chance." Zimmer can be reached at carlzimmer.com or 410-975-9769.

***Side Effects: A Prosecutor, a Whistleblower, and a Best-selling Antidepressant on Trial* by Alison Bass, (NASW) published by Algonquin Books.**

Bass, a freelance writer and adjunct professor at Boston University, has written a book that tells the true story of a groundbreaking court case and the personal drama that surrounded the making and unmasking of a best-selling drug. It chronicles the lives of two women—a prosecutor and a whistleblower—who exposed the pattern of deception in the research and marketing of Paxil, an antidepressant prescribed to millions of children and adults. Bass lays out the connections between pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (the maker of Paxil), a top Ivy League research institution, and the government agency designed to protect the public—relationships that would ultimately compromise the health and safety of vulnerable children. Paxil was the best-selling antidepressant in the world in 2002, with sales of $3.3 billion worldwide, when Bass began investigating it.

Pediatric prescriptions for Paxil soared in the U.S. even though there was no hard evidence the drug performed any better than sugar pills in treating depression in children and adolescents. According to Bass, an influential Paxil trial in adolescents misrepresented data in order to minimize the suicide-related risks of the antidepressant, allowing GSK to mislead physicians and consumers about the safety and efficacy of Paxil. The New York Attorney General's case was the very first lawsuit filed against the pharmaceutical industry for consumer fraud and paved the way for other states to rein in the excesses of pharmaceutical companies. The settlement against GSK created an environment in which other drugs, including Vioxx, whose safety had not been properly disclosed, were pulled from the market; it also called for the public posting of all drug studies and additional black-box warnings on certain medications, something that the pharmaceutical industry had fought against for years. *Side Effects* introduces us to a fabulous cast of characters: a feisty district attorney in the mold of Erin Brockovich who takes on big pharma and wins; a courageous whistleblower whose own child suffers from mental illness; a controversial medical researcher being paid by the drug companies whose products he's testing; and of course the victims—those whose suffering was intensified by greed, negligence, and deception within the medical establishment. Bass can be reached at abass@rcn.com or 617-334-5572.

***Schizophrenia for Dummies* by Jerome Levine, M.D. and Irene Levine Ph.D. (NASW), published by Wiley.**

Jerome and Irene Levine are professors of psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine. When an agent called to see if Irene was interested in writing *Schizophrenia for Dummies* (part of the Wiley series with yellow and black covers), she didn't exactly leap at the opportunity. "I would be less than candid if I didn't confess that I worried that this project might be viewed as frivolous, simplistic, or even offensive" Irene said. "What would our colleagues think? How would the consumers and families we know react? Would Jon Stewart or David Letterman weigh in?" The Levines soon realized that the reactions they anticipated were indicative of the pervasive myths, misunderstandings, and stigma that still surround schizophrenia. "No one giggles when they hear *Diabetes for Dummies* or other health titles in the series," she observed. The Levines believe that despite major breakthroughs that have taken place in research, practice, and public policy over the past two decades, the lives of individuals and families directly affected by serious mental illnesses have improved only marginally because of limited mental health literacy—until the disease hits home. Using the time-tested *Dummies* format, the book is simple enough to be read and understood, not only by the one in 10 Americans who grapple with serious mental illnesses in their own families, but also by members of the general public who one day may come face-to-face with schizophrenia in a friend, neighbor, or colleague. The Levines maintain that with early diagnosis; state-of-the-art treatment and psychosocial interventions; access to housing, health and mental health treatment; and advocacy and mutual support—the possibilities of recovery and a life well-lived for people with schizophrenia looks quite promising. Contact Jerome Levine at jeromelevine@gmail.com or Irene Levine at Irene@irenelevine.com. Wiley publicist is Adrienne Fontaine at afontain@wiley.com or 201-748-5626. ■

Send material about new books to Ruth Winter, 44 Holly Drive, Short Hills, NJ 07078, or e-mail ruthwrite@aol.com. Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

The ASM is accepting nominations for the 2009 ASM Public Communications Award. The award recognizes outstanding achievement by journalists in communicating the significance of the microbiological sciences to the general public through print and broadcast media. Stories (both individual and in a series) concerning the microbiological sciences appearing in periodical print or broadcast media available to the general public are eligible for nomination. Not eligible are books, websites, and institutionally sponsored publications. Material must be published or aired in calendar year 2008. Prize is $2,500, a plaque, and trip to the 2009 ASM General Meeting in Philadelphia. Deadline: Jan. 31, 2009. Submission details at www.asm.org/media/index.asp?bid=2676. Questions: Contact Garth Hogan at ghogan@asmusa.org.

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