Spring 2008
VOLUME 57 NUMBER 2

The Newsletter of The National Association of
ScienceWriters™

FEATURES

Critics Focus on Science and Environmental Reporting **3**

Modeling Strategies for Arranging Web Stories **4**

When Scientists Must Choose Journal Publication Over Wikipedia **5**

Embedded in Iraq Again and Again and Again **6**

54-Year-Old Science Writer Re-Enlists in the Army **8**

The Poynter Institute Offers "EyeTracking" Discount **10**

Lights, Camera, Action… and Science Accuracy **10**

The Write Programs to Use **11**

Taxes and Reporting Royalties **13**

Yale Climate Forum **14**

NEWS

Site Relaunched for Northwest Research News **24**

Mentoring Success **24**

Hilts Named Knight Science Journalism Fellow **25**

COLUMNS

President's Letter **15**

Dispatches from the Director **16**

Cyberbeat **17**

PIO Forum **18**

Our Gang **19**

News From Afar **21**

Regional Groups **22**

In Memoriam **25**

Letters **26**

Books By and For Members **27**

New Members **30**

Bulletin Boards/Ads **31**

JOURNALISM 2.0 REPORTS ON SCIENCE 2.0

by Curtis Brainard

Web 2.0—the "second generation" Internet of user-oriented social networks, wikis, blogs, and information-tagging devices—has spawned at least two progeny since Tim O'Reilly coined the term in 2004: Journalism 2.0 and Science 2.0.

Scientific American made conjoined twins out of them [in January] with its latest experiment in networked journalism: an article about networked science. The magazine's website published a 2,700-word story by veteran freelancer Mitch Waldrop titled, "Science 2.0: Great New Tool, or Great Risk?" An introduction explains, however, that the piece is a work in progress, and invites readers to post comments and questions that will be incorporated into a final version, which will be published in the May issue of the magazine.

Science 2.0 is not actually the progeny of Web 2.0—it belongs more appropriately, as Waldrop points out, to the Open Access and Open Data movements in scientific publishing. Its proponents, members of the public and scientists alike, argue that scientific and other scholarly research should be free and permanently accessible to anyone online. The justification is twofold: that taxpayers fund roughly half of the research published in peer-reviewed journals, and that open access will generally improve science because data and ideas will circulate (and germinate) more freely. A number of open-access journals, such as the Public Library of Science (PloS), have sprung up in recent years, in opposition to subscription-based journals like *Science* and *Nature*. The National Institutes of Health has announced, however, that starting in April, scientists it funds must turn in their peer-reviewed papers to NIH to be posted in a free, online archive. Trade groups such as Association of American Publishers have opposed open access, arguing that it could hurt both profitability and the quality of research.

…some have worried about issues like irrelevant or hostile posting and quality control of information.

Science 2.0, however, has less to do with the ideological side of the open access movement than it does with the technical side and how information is actually shared (wikis, blogs, online journals, etc.). Of course, many

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of the criticisms and defenses of Science 2.0 are the same as those for open access in general. As Waldrop notes:

> Many scientists remain highly skeptical of such openness, especially in the hyper-competitive biomedical fields, where patents, promotion, and tenure can hinge on being the first to publish a new discovery. From that perspective, Science 2.0 seems dangerous: using blogs and social networks for your serious work feels like an open invitation to have your online lab notebooks vandalized, or worse, have your best ideas stolen and published by a rival…
>
> The acceptance of any such measure would require a big change in the culture of academic science. But for Science 2.0 advocates, the real significance of web technologies is their potential to move researchers away from an obsessive focus on priority and publication toward the kind of openness and community that were supposed to be the hallmark of science in the first place.

GRAPHIC BY CAROL KERR GRAPHIC DESIGN WITH IMAGE FROM CJR

What's really interesting about Waldrop's article, however, is that versions of these same criticisms and defenses apply to the Journalism 2.0 experiment he is conducting. As the media adjust to a more dynamic (and fast-paced) platform, some have worried about issues like irrelevant or hostile posting and quality control of information. The technique that Waldrop uses, "networked" reporting, is relatively hassle-free: It asks readers to submit comments and questions in traditional blog style, which may or may not be used in the final, print edition. This is much less risky than using a wiki, for example, which allows readers to actively edit the work in progress, a lesson that the *Los Angeles Times* learned the hard way in 2005. Waldrop's piece is at least *Scientific American*'s third experiment in networked reporting. The results of the first, which involved a story about paleoanthropology and Lucy's Baby, were published in December 2006. The novelty of the terminology surrounding such endeavors led me to inappropriately refer to the article as "wiki-reporting."

…highlighting, rewarding, and engaging with your top participators is absolutely crucial…

Whatever the proper term may be, such efforts are not the only variety of Journalism 2.0. *Scientific American* has, in fact, been a leader in trailblazing various other techniques, from blogs and podcasts to web tags in the magazine. The publication's 60-Second Science podcasts, launched in 2006, became so popular that they transitioned into their own website last November during a major redesign of SciAm.com. During that redesign, *Scientific American* also launched a new suite of "community" pages on its regular site. As of December, the community (a more sophisticated version of old web 1.0 chat rooms) comprised over 20 "consistently active" blogs (there are 105 in all), in addition to discussions groups, videos, pictures, and a variety of topic pages from chemistry to the environment to space exploration. Anyone can join and the welcome note urges readers to:

CJR Critiques Science and Environment Reporting

Columbia Journalism Review has launched The Observatory, a full-time department dedicated to critiquing the press coverage of science and the environment. According to a Jan. 15 article announcing the launch, Curtis Brainard wrote:

> The Observatory will monitor science journalism—covering the coverage—with an eye toward improving the journalism and thereby improving the discourse. It will be a guide to the best and worst of science and environmental journalism; it will tell you where the press excels and makes bold innovations. And it will point out where it falls victim to spin, engages in alarmism, perpetrates false balance, misrepresents the science in peer-reviewed literature, or displays questionable priorities in news judgment.
>
> Our democracy needs a steady supply of high-quality news and information to function properly, and thus our journalism-on the environment, medicine, and everything else-needs to be as sharp as it can be. Working to ensure that it is has been *Columbia Journalism Review*'s mission for nearly 50 years, and we are now extending this mission to the world of science journalism.

The Observatory can be found on the *CJR*'s website, **www.cjr.org**. ■

> Uncover cool stories and news and participate in lively discussion that will force you to think. Be inspired, launch a blog, and stake your place in the realm of the new, new media.

The *Scientific American* community now has 2,460 registered users. Christie Nicholson, the community editor, says that she is very pleased by the rapid proliferation of individual blogs on the site as well as the high quality of material presented there, something she says differentiates *SciAm* from other nascent online communities. "We've clearly got a highly educated, sophisticated audience," Nicholson says, but "highlighting, rewarding, and engaging with your top participators is absolutely crucial" to getting such a community off the ground. Nicholson has spent a significant amount of time on the "back end," sending e-mails to the most active readers, copying quotes from discussion leaders onto the homepage, and otherwise working to reinforce the *sense* of community. But after just two and a half months, she says, the momentum has become self-sustaining.

Scientific American's editor, John Rennie, concurs that as other news outlets struggle to nurture similar communities, active engagement on the part of editors and staffs is key: "It would be a fatal mistake to just scratch out an area on the ground and say, 'Here's where the community is,' and then just expect people to jump in." Those who have jumped in to *SciAm* have been very responsible participants, Nicholson says, and the publication has had few difficulties with hostile or irrelevant posting. When it comes to experiments like Waldrop's article on Science 2.0, the fact that the site doesn't allow readers to live-edit the draft guards against irresponsible tampering. But if all goes well with this article, Nicholson would like to see the platform evolve into something "not quite wiki, but more than commenting."

Scientific American is not the only pioneer of what can now be called, because of its growing momentum, Science Journalism 2.0. In January 2006, *Seed* Media Group, which publishes *Seed* magazine, launched the resoundingly successful ScienceBlogs.com community. The site features a running ticker, which [as of January] counted 67 blogs, over 56,000 posts, and over 626,000 comments. There are also links back into the magazine, as well as to *Seed* online's "Daily Zeitgeist," a collection of links to timely takes on science issues from throughout the web. It all supports *Seed*'s creed that "science is culture."

Wired magazine's science team has patched together a more external Science Journalism 2.0 community. Rather than keeping it in-house, as *Scientific American* and *Seed* do, Wired Science relies on a Facebook page, a Twitter account, Google Reader items, and a del.icio.us feed. The community appears to be the result of the Wired Science blogging unit's effort to give its "loyal readers complete access to the fermenting vat of journalistic juices from which our posts bubble daily," according to a post last week by Brandon Keim. "It might not ever be truly *complete*, which in some ways is a Platonic ideal attainable only through real-time links to our gray matter-something you'd probably enjoy even less than us. But we can give you access to a rough cut of this chapter of science journalism, as well as a chance to shape it yourself." ■

"Journalism 2.0 on Science 2.0: How the Web is shaping next-generation reporting, Columbia Journalism Review*, Jan. 17, 2008.*

HOW TO REPLACE THE EDITOR WITH A COMPUTER

It is the ultimate editorial decision: what to put on the front page and where to put it. Should pride of place go to another piece on the presidential election because that is what everyone is excited about? Or would a story about a parrot that can do algebra be more eye-catching, because that is what nobody is expecting? Editors usually make their decisions based on simple rules of thumb, such as how many days in a row the elections have been on the front page and what subjects other newspapers are focusing on, as well as their gut feelings about whether readers will be intrigued by, say, a novel animal story.

On the web, though, the competition between popularity and novelty takes on a new dimension, because it is easy to change the choice and line-up of stories many times a day, even many times an hour. It is also easy to measure which stories are getting the most attention. So Fang Wu and Bernardo Huberman, a pair of researchers at Hewlett-Packard's laboratory in Palo Alto, Calif., decided to compare two strategies designed to maximize readership, one based on the previous popularity of a story, the other on its novelty. What they found is that the best strategy depends, quite sensitively, on how quickly readers tire of a new story—a result that could turn editorial decisions into a rational process, rather than an intuitive one.

Drs. Wu and Huberman began by choosing a clear case of a novelty-based strategy, a website called digg.com. The idea of this self-styled "digital media democracy" is that any registered user can submit a story he has found on the Internet. The new submission then appears on an "Upcoming" stories web page. Other users can vote for the story by clicking on a "digg it" icon. If the submission collects enough diggs fast enough, it is promoted to the first page in its category—say science or business. If it does really well, it also

makes it on to the digg.com home page, the equivalent of a newspaper's front page. However, when its popularity fades and the digg rate decreases, it is relegated to a more obscure part of the site and replaced by a new, upwardly mobile piece.

…a result that could turn editorial decisions into a rational process, rather than an intuitive one.

Drs. Wu and Huberman began their study last year by analysing various aspects of digg.com, such as the minute-by-minute variation of diggs for over 1,000 stories. From this they developed a mathematical model which describes how the popularity of a story decays. The core of this model is a function called a stretched exponential relaxation, which is similar to the decay curve of a radioactive material. As with radioactivity, stories have a half-life—in other words a period by which half of newly promoted stories are relegated to a nether page. In the case of digg.com's home-page, that half-life is 69 minutes.

However, unlike the simple exponential that describes radioactivity, which has only one variable, a stretched exponential describes a process controlled by several independent factors. Digg rates, for example, depend on the time of day that a story is posted and the category it belongs to.

Armed with that insight, Drs. Wu and Huberman have now constructed a simulator to test various strategies for arranging stories. On the digg.com home page there is space for 15 stories, and those stories are sorted in chronological order with the most recent—in other words the most novel—on top. Using their simulator, the two researchers were able to compare this strategy with others, notably one in which the stories are sorted by popularity. This means putting the story with the largest number of diggs on top. Because the number of diggs grows with time, these sorting strategies have almost the opposite effect: sorting by novelty tends to put low digg stories at the top of the page; sorting by popularity puts high digg ones there.

The diggers and the levellers

The simulator—a virtual world that reproduces the way people digg stories—was allowed to run with each strategy for the equivalent of a year. Measured by the total number of diggs in this period, the novelty-based strategy for ordering stories on the home page proved far superior to the popularity-based one. In other words, digg.com is doing the right thing. However, if the half-life is increased, the situation changes. When it rises above 350 minutes, sorting stories according to their popularity rather than their novelty generates more diggs. This switchover is mathematically analogous to phase transitions in nature, such as the way water freezes as soon as the temperature drops below 0°C.

For the average editor, that analogy might seem abstruse. But what it means in practice is that if you run a website, you would be wise to learn more about exactly how interest in your stories cools off if you want to display those stories in a way that will entice the largest number of people to read them. You digg? ■

"Hold the front page," The Economist*, March 6, 2008.*

PHYSICISTS SLAM PUBLISHERS OVER WIKIPEDIA BAN

Scientists who want to describe their work on Wikipedia should not be forced to give up the kudos of a respected journal. So says a group of physicists who are going head-to-head with a publisher because it will not allow them to post parts of their work to the online encyclopedia, blogs, and other forums.

The physicists were upset after the American Physical Society withdrew its offer to publish two studies in *Physical Review Letters* because the authors had asked for a rights agreement compatible with Wikipedia. The APS asks scientists to transfer their copyright to the society before they can publish in an APS journal. This prevents scientists contributing illustrations or other "derivative works" of their papers to many websites without explicit permission.

…the authors had asked for a rights agreement compatible with Wikipedia.

The authors of the rescinded papers and 38 other physicists are calling for the APS to change its policy. "It is unreasonable and completely at odds with the practice in the field. Scientists want as broad an audience for their papers as possible," says Bill Unruh at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, who has been lobbying separately against strict copyright rules.

Gene Sprouse, editor-in-chief of the APS journals, says the society plans to review its copyright policy at a meeting in May. "A group of excellent scientists has asked us to consider revising our copyright, and we take them seriously," he says.

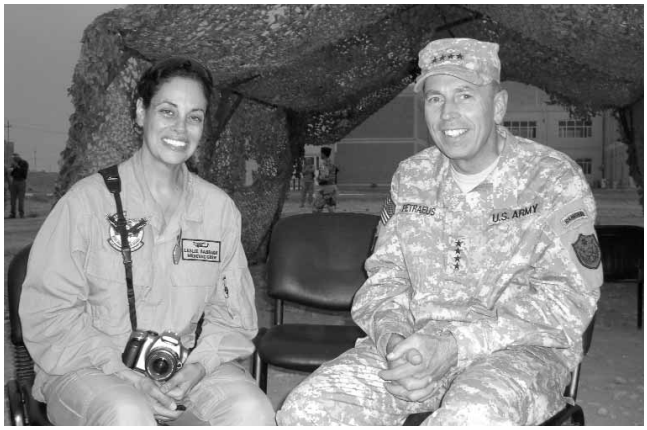
Some publishers, such as the UK's Royal Society, have already adopted copyright policies that allow online reproduction. ■

(Source: New Scientist*)*

ASSIGNMENT IRAQ: TEST YOUR COURAGE EARLY AND OFTEN

by Leslie Sabbagh

July 2005 Baghdad—Sitting in the center seat of a Medevac Blackhawk helicopter flying over the slums of Baghdad, I fight down panic. Over the headset comes the voice of the commanding officer who has radioed his crew from the company headquarters some 20 miles north. His voice is tight and hard and the news is not good. We're flying into one of Baghdad's most violent neighborhoods to rescue multiple U.S. military casualties injured in a roadside IED (improvised explosive device) attack. That's good for an additional 10 beats/minute on the heart, but it gets worse, the commanding officer tells us the pickup zone (PZ) is hot and we will have "…no Apache gunship support. Repeat, hot PZ and no Apache support." He tells the crew to continue the mission at their own discretion. I've flown many times with the 50th Medical Company, 101st Airborne and have yet to hear a crew turn down a Medevac mission. I know we're going in. They confer briefly and within seconds radio their intent to evacuate the wounded.



Leslie Sabbagh and General David H. Petraeus

A weird lightheadedness sets in, my brain stops thinking and that is truly frightening. Mindlessness is death in a combat zone where the ability to think and adapt instantly is the foremost rule for survival. It takes an enormous effort and through brute stubbornness, I beat back the fear. "You will not freak out," I scold myself mentally. "You will sit here and you will not panic. You begged for this assignment. You will not embarrass yourself or your editors."

The internal tirade works as I force myself to block images of the horrific wounds that high-velocity AK-47 rounds and burning shrapnel inflict on the human body. I sit back, and begin to do my job again—to witness and record the actions of the crew I'm flying with, the wounded they evacuate, and the effect it has on us all.

Freelance Leslie Sabbagh is a contributing editor to Reader's Digest. *As* SW *was going to press, she was heading back to Iraq, this time as a public diplomacy officer assigned to the embedded provincial reconstruction team in Fallujah where she'll work with Iraqis on a grassroots level.*

It all started some six months earlier, in a trendy restaurant in New York City's publisher's row. I convinced my editors at *Popular Mechanics* to send me into Iraq and combat zones. As a medical journalist who'd just written about a wounded veteran, I was, I contended, the perfect candidate to cover the unsung heroes on the war's medical front. My years of operating-room observation and writing for physicians made me uniquely able to talk with the military's medical personnel, from the field medics giving superb lifesaving care at point of injury to the highly expert and committed ER staffs at the Combat Support Hospitals. The editors agreed.

I found myself in a frenzy of work: the first step going through the laborious, tedious process necessary to receive a military embed. After hours of e-mails and conversations, my handlers, the public affairs officers for the military, and I hashed out the details for my embed with the 28th CSH (Combat Support Hospital) in Baghdad and the 50th Medical Company, 101st Airborne, based at Camp Taji.

Once the unit agreed to embed me, the PAOs were totally hands-off. About five days in to the embed I realized what a unique opportunity I'd been given. I had unprecedented access to the company's 150 soldiers. Over the course of a life-altering month, I lived, flew, and worked with the 50th, getting maybe four hours of sleep a night to maximize my time on missions.

I started planning my next tour before I left Iraq. The realization that I wanted to cover combat operations came as I watched my crew launch on a recovery mission of a downed Apache helicopter without me. Inexplicably, I felt a sense of loss, of being left behind. (Given the inherent danger and sensitivity of the situation, civilians are usually denied missions in which aircraft have been downed by enemy fire.) Standing in the beating desert sun watching the birds launch, I realized there were untold numbers of the most compelling stories to tell in Iraq. I vowed then to return.

In June 2007, I was back in Iraq for three publications—*Popular Mechanics*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Reader's Digest*, covering subjects from the science and technology of war to combat casualty care to interviews with the top U.S. commander, General David Petraeus. Unlike the acute stress and physical and emotional challenges of the 2005 experience, this tour would last almost four months and tap into deeper reserves.

After five days at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait (every

bean, bullet, and letter delivered to Iraq and Afghanistan flows through the camp), I flew into the military side of Baghdad International Airport, already tired and a little sick from the 130°F heat. What a difference two years had made—the dusty, hot, crowded tents and soldiers sleeping flat on their backs in the dirt that I remembered from 2005 were history.

Now, everywhere concrete barriers protected buildings, tents, hooches, and checkpoints. In the Green Zone (then ironically called the Amber Zone by the inhabitants due to the frequent mortar attacks), the barriers lined the streets and entry ways to compounds and neighborhoods. Getting used to indirect fire attacks was new, too. Mortar attacks occurred often in early- to mid-summer, and they scared me a lot at first. The huge thudding boom reverberates in the bones and belly. I got more used to them as time went on, but even during my last days there I never grew complacent. And as I write this now, any loud, sudden noise still has me ducking.

A Medevac team evacuates a wounded soldier after a roadside attack.

Leslie Sabbagh and a flight crew safe after a night mission.

My 10-day stint with the 28th CSH in Baghdad featured streams of grievously wounded American troops and Iraqi civilians, security forces and insurgents that flooded the ER. In late June and early July, the pace of combat operations was intense, and the numbers and wounds of the casualties reflected that. I was struck by the absolute fortitude and courage of the medics and techs, many of whom were the same age or younger than the wounded they treated. Their bravery stays with me.

My own courage was tested early and often. In July I embedded with a great group of soldiers who'd been charged with taking back one of Baghdad's killing fields—a mostly Sunni neighborhood. I came within a heartbeat of refusing that embed when learning that I was going to a Joint Security Station (JSS) that combined Iraqi Army with U.S. forces in a former al Qaeda enclave. Until now, the vast majority of my time in Iraq had been spent in the air, flying on Medevac missions or in CSHs. Now I was walking in the midst of heavily armed soldiers, knocking on Iraqi doors, all with one very wary ear cocked to the sporadic, but ongoing, gunshots ringing out. I took my courage from them and as long as they weren't concerned, I could maintain my composure.

If 2005 had been my baptism of fire in a war zone, 2007 would prove an almost constant test of my courage and resolve. And truth is I was often frightened. That embed in Ghazaliyah was dangerous—during my four-day visit, on a route near our JSS two soldiers were killed and two gravely wounded by an EFP (explosively formed projectile) attack. Even worse, that attack was facilitated by the Iraqi police the unit was training. And just hours before our scheduled convoy back to Camp Victory the unit discovered an IED on our compound's access road—from the safety of the compound the boom of its detonation was reassuring but far too close.

Moving through other embeds, I learned to cope with my fear. Once, a Medevac pilot told me to "…put it away. You just put it away." I pictured boxing up my fear and shoving it far back on a high, dusty, inaccessible shelf in an old unused closet. And, after six weeks or so, exhaustion and familiarity take over, annoying at first but gradually welcomed because both blunt terror.

Having said all that, far and away my best coping mechanism wasn't strength of will or visualization techniques or determination—my touchstone for courage and resolve was the troops themselves—the men and women I was covering.

I drew on their strength, especially the line units and ground troops: Patrolling, flying, caring for their wounded comrades, training the Iraqi security forces. They did their jobs, day after day, often after facing unspeakable tragedy. How, I wondered, do they do this? The constants in every unit I worked with were humor, courage, commitment, and camaraderie.

By October, I'd lived out of backpack for four months, embedding with more than 10 line units, I'd seen Iraq from the western desert wastes of al Anbar province to the lush, stunningly beautiful Kurdish north. I'd talked with top political leaders, tribal sheiks,

village muqtahs, and provincial ministers. And I'd visited Iraqis in their homes and celebrated with them in villages. I'd eaten their food, similar to my own ancestral Lebanese cuisine, and commiserated with them about the long, torturous history of al Iraq and what lies ahead.

Iraq challenged me in ways I could never have foreseen, and I've changed on a fundamental level. While I love my house and friends, I find it awfully dull being in the States. I miss the camaraderie and honesty that comes from shared danger. I remember many times sitting outside in Balad with a Medevac crew chief, medic, or pilot while he smoked. We talked, or not, and there was no discomfort in being still. We all had a shared frame of reference. ■

FANTASY CAMP: WHY I RE-ENLISTED AT AGE 54

by Neil Gussman

If you are reading this article, you write about science. That is, you tell others about the results of years of hard work that led to a successful discovery—or a failure worthy of note. I write a column about the history of chemistry, everything from speculation about who was first to invent fireworks to the inside story on the discovery of fluoride treatments. Which is to say, I report on the discoveries of others. It is a rare science writer who both does the science and reports on the findings. Rarer still is the person who can make history and write about it.

On Thursday, Aug. 16, 2007, with my wife and children looking on, I enlisted in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard 23 years after I was discharged from the Army, in 1984, and 35 years after my initial enlistment at age 18, in 1972. So now I am a 54-year-old father of four with a lovely wife and a good job as communications manager for a museum and library in Philadelphia—and a low-paying, part-time job that could lead to an extended stay in a country rated near lowest in the world for tourism.

What will I be doing in the National Guard? Chemical weapons are now banned in 182 countries, but they are still high on the shopping list of terrorist groups. The Pennsylvania Army National Guard, and I suppose other branches of the military, are short of people who are willing to serve as chemical weapons specialists. I have a background in chemistry that will allow me to do this job well.

Although my motivations for enlisting are complicated, part of going back into the Army was the simple desire that strikes every science writer at some time to switch sides of the lab desk.

Why the Army? In the summer of 2006, I became restless and began to wonder if riding a bicycle an average of 200 miles per week, year-round, to train for racing was the best thing to do with my time. By the fall of that year, I switched my training to include more walking, less riding, and more time with my wife and kids.

On a walk with my oldest daughter she talked about painting a mural on the wall of an inner-city church. My other daughter told funny stories about tutoring third graders in a city school. Five years ago, my wife donated a kidney to someone she barely knew and served as a hospice volunteer. These walks and discussions helped convince me I should be doing something for the community. I read online about the National Guard being involved with looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction at large public gatherings. It seemed like something I could do and could be both community service and some real excitement.

In the spring of 2007, I called Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Askew, an Army National Guard recruiter at Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn. I told him I wanted to join, I had experience with chemical weapons, and that in a few weeks I would be 54 years old. He said, "Send me your DD214s (discharge papers) and we'll see what we can do." Although the enlistment age limit is 42 years (one year can be waived), I would be eligible if my current age minus my years of service were less than 43 years. In other words, if the "Army math" was right I could enlist. Sgt. Askew was confident enough that he set me up for the physical and aptitude test.

After learning about defending against WMDs in the post-9/11 world, I should have a lot more to write about.

I took both tests on the same day—one very long day that began at 5:45 a.m. I signed some papers then joined 32 others in line for vision and hearing tests, blood draw, the inevitable urine sample, and all the other preliminaries before we were told to enter a large linoleum-tiled room with chairs around its perimeter on three walls and doors to exam rooms on the end. I was one of five prior service guys; we all sat close to one end of the room. At 54, I was the oldest guy in the room. The next oldest was 43 and the other three prior service guys were under 30. The rest looked like college students.

The doctor who examined me was a 68-year-old

Neil Gussman is communications manager for the Chemical Heritage Foundation.

civilian. He was the only person that day to make any reference to my age. After listening to my heart and lungs he said, "A young fella like you should have no trouble with the PT test."

By noon the physicals were completed and we moved on to the aptitude test. Multiple-choice questions covered math, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, spatial relationships, and science. After he scored my test, the Navy chief petty officer in charge of the exam walked out from behind his desk and said, "Let me shake your hand. I believe you are the first recruit in quite a while to ace the test. You know, we get guys in here 18 years old just out of high school and they can barely pass with a 31. And here a guy your…uh…a gentleman like yourself gets a 99. Good job."

With the medical and aptitude tests behind me, two unexpected hurdles presented themselves on my road to enlistment. The first was the age waiver took longer than I'd hoped. It eventually did come through but not in time for me to sign up on my 54th birthday.

The second hurdle was a doozy. On May 9, 2007, during a later-afternoon training ride I was at the bottom of a hill going 51.8 mph (the bike's computer records max speed) when I locked wheels with another rider and flipped onto the road, landing on my head and right shoulder.

I remember very little of what happened but was told by another rider that I became unconscious the moment I hit the pavement. My worst visible injuries were scrapes from sliding on the road and my forehead. My glasses pushed into my face at the moment of impact and peeled part of my forehead up from my face. There was a lot of blood.

But the worst injuries were not visible. I broke three of the seven vertebra in my neck: I cracked the first two and broke C-7 in pieces. I also broke four ribs, my collarbone, right shoulder blade, and my nose. Within 30 minutes of the accident I arrived (via Medevac) at Lancaster General Hospital. Over the next two days, a plastic surgeon repaired my face; a neurosurgeon who had just returned from service in Baghdad replaced my seventh vertebra with bone from a cadaver.

I left the hospital eight days later in a neck and chest brace. I walked three miles that day and at least that much every day after that. The accident confirmed how strong my desire was to be in the Army and to serve.

In August, I reported for duty at Company E, 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation Brigade, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn. I didn't receive my uniforms until later that day, so I showed up for duty dressed like the civilian I had been since July of 1984. I stood at the back of morning formation in blue jeans and a T-shirt. The first sergeant called us to attention and made a couple of announcements about the days activities. Then he said, "Gentlemen, I want to introduce you to the youth movement in today's Army National Guard. Specialist Gussman, come up front."

After the formation, the three other 50-year-olds in the unit introduced themselves. I was busy in-processing for the first day, but on Sunday, I sat with my new peer group at lunch. In addition to the now four 50-year-olds, we were joined by two guys in their late forties. At the other end of the very long lunch table were a dozen guys between 19 and 22 years old. One topic of our lunch conversation was breaks in service. The other old soldiers had short breaks in service and all except me had more than 20 years service already. I had been out for 23 years. Which means, the young guys at the other end of the table had not even been conceived, let alone born, when I finished my last enlistment.


PHOTO BY LAURE JOUMEL

Science Writer and Army National Guard Specialist Neil Gussman

In March I went to a two-week school to learn the current equipment in my new trade. For the last six months I have been doing the more prosaic business of being a soldier: training for future missions, qualifying with weapons, taking the annual fitness test, and eating mystery meat. If everything works out I will learn the trade of chemical weapons detection and, after my Army service, I will be able to join antiterrorist groups that do this kind of work.

But to return to the original question of why the Army. I have spent my professional life in the competitive world of advertising and public relations. Before that I worked on a teamster's loading dock and served as a tank commander in the Army. Returning to the Army gives me a chance to give back to the community in a way that suits me well. I missed the Army when I got out and probably should have gone back sooner. I have written about the history of chemical weapons and have a presentation about them titled, "Generals Prefer Bombs." After learning about defending against WMDs in the post-9/11 world, I should have a lot more to write about. ■

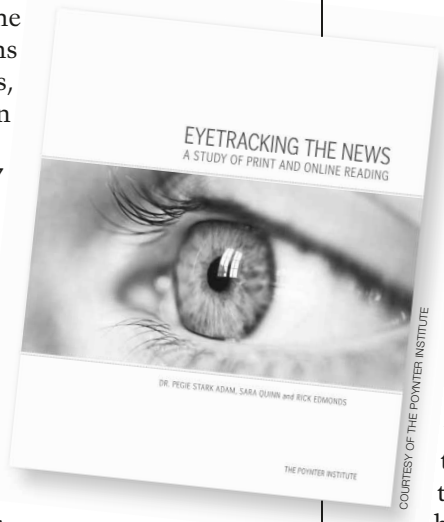
POYNTER OFFERS DISCOUNT ON *EYETRACKING THE NEWS*

As part of its commitment of service to the journalism industry, The Poynter Institute is offering a special discount on *EyeTracking the News: A Study of Print and Online Reading*, a scientific look at how people navigate through the news in print and online that's based on the results of The Poynter EyeTrack07 study. For a limited time, the book will be available for $39—a $20 savings off the regular price of $59.95.

EyeTracking the News reports on a carefully crafted, rigorous study of what attracts attention and what doesn't —both online and in print. It offers insight into design elements and story formats that capture and maintain readers' attention and includes the following findings:

- Online readers read more text than print readers, regardless of the length of the story.
- Alternative story forms—like Q&A, timeline, or a short list—drew a higher amount of visual attention, compared to regular text in print. These forms also helped readers to understand and remember what they'd read.
- As powerful as full page ads are in broadsheet, a half-page or almost full-age attracted as much attention.

While the book's primary audience is editors and reporters, anyone with a need to understand how people read the news, including public relations and marketing professionals, should find the information valuable.



COURTESY OF THE POYNTER INSTITUTE

The Poynter EyeTrack07 study was designed with input from editors and designers around the world and included 600 participants between 18 to 60 years of age. The research study followed participants' eyes as they read stories from two tabloid newspapers, two broadsheet newspapers, and two newspaper websites in four U.S. cities.

To learn more about the research and to order a copy of the book, visit **eyetrack.poynter.org**.

…Anyone with a need to understand how people read the news…should find the information valuable.

Founded in 1975, in St. Petersburg, Fla., The Poynter Institute (**www.poynter.org**) offers training throughout the year in the areas of online and multimedia; leadership and management; reporting, writing and editing; TV and radio; ethics and diversity; journalism education; and visual journalism. Poynter's News University (**www.newsu.org**) offers newsroom training to journalists and journalism students through interactive e-learning modules and links to other journalism education and training opportunities. ■

(Source: news release)

SOMETIMES IT'S OKAY TO SACRIFICE ACCURACY FOR ENTERTAINMENT

by Wayne Grody

In Eddie Murphy's remakes of the "Nutty Professor" movies, the main character had a working molecular biology lab, with real state-of-the-art equipment. But it wasn't the director's job to figure out what the set needed to convince moviegoers of its authenticity—it was mine.

I have had the privilege of serving as a technical advisor on a number of motion picture and television productions, by virtue of my field of expertise (molecular and clinical genetics, which happens to be a hot topic in the news and on film these days), my sideline as a film critic for a national physicians' magazine for 10 years, and my location at the University of California, Los Angeles, the natural place for Hollywood filmmakers to turn when they have technical questions.

I have found that filmmakers—from the directors to the actors to the sound men to the carpenters—have much in common with the scientific and medical colleagues I work with at UCLA. All are genuinely interested in these topics and want to learn as much about them as they can. Like us, all are highly professional, take great pride in their craft, work very long hours (18 hours a day or more on some shoots), and depend heavily on technology.

Some science-fiction films have been amazingly prescient. A TV-movie I worked on called "Condition: Critical" involved an epidemic of prion disease which predated the advent of human transmission of bovine

Wayne Grody is a molecular biologist and clinician at UCLA. His research, which has been cited a total of nearly 2,000 times, focuses on the molecular genetics of metabolic and heritable neoplastic disorders.

spongiform encephalopathy.

My entry point to any given project may vary. Sometimes I am contacted by a screenwriter who has only a germ of an idea he wishes to flesh out, sometimes by a producer or director for edits on a script already in production, and sometimes by the production's Visual Effects Department asking how best to depict DNA replication by computer-generated imagery (CGI) on the screen. For an episode of "Chicago Hope" I got a writing credit for a story on Munchausen syndrome (a patient feigning pheochromocytoma).

For both Eddie Murphy "Nutty Professor" movies, the studio's art department asked me for assistance in designing the set for Professor Klump's laboratory. They came to my research lab at UCLA and took lots of pictures, then we sat down with the Fisher products catalog and started on page one as I pointed out what they needed to order as "props" (with a budget of $50 million, money was no object).

Sometimes my advice goes unheeded. Klump was supposed to be a biology professor at a small liberal arts college, but his laboratory occupied an entire soundstage on the Universal Studios lot—about 10 times larger than the best-funded faculty member at a major research university. And while we tried to make it look as much like a real-world molecular biology lab as possible (I brought my graduate students along with me to help "dress the set"), when the director arrived for the first scene to be shot there, he ordered some of the visually boring thermal cyclers and centrifuges replaced by flasks and tubes of bubbling green and purple liquids—more reminiscent of Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory than a modern facility.

…the number of Ph.D. scientists watching [TV] accounts for no more than 0.00001 percent of the Nielsen rating audience.

In general, I've found that producers of comedy have less interest in adhering to the facts than those involved in dramas. For instance, comedy productions accept fewer of my dialogue corrections and suggestions—even something as basic as changing "ounces" to "grams." At the other end of the spectrum are shows like Crime Scene Investigation ("CSI"), which prides itself on faithfulness to the underlying science. When I consult for that show, the writers call and e-mail me extensively to ask if a desired plot point could really happen or be detected by DNA fingerprinting. A similar experience occurred recently when I met with the writing team for "Medium" (interesting given the show's dubious premise of a woman using psychic abilities to solve crimes).

Even on the dramas, however, a cherished scientific truth will sometimes have to be discarded in order to enable an essential story development, such as a normally three-week-long forensic DNA analysis that's fictionally done in one hour for the sake of plot pacing. In truth, few will ever notice these gaffs. As one TV producer told me, the number of Ph.D. scientists watching his show accounts for no more than 0.00001 percent of the Nielsen rating audience.

While inaccuracies can be frustrating, they're often not a turnoff—I've found that scientists are among the greatest fans of fictionalized retellings of their profession and their discoveries. Perhaps scientists can appreciate more than others the factual premises from which these tales spring, or long for a world in which big discoveries come easily and often (the antithesis of real science, as we all know). We cannot expect the film studios to adhere to the same rigorous standards of *Science* and *Nature*, and even scientists can afford to relax their vigilance once in a while and simply enjoy the entertainment. ■

"My life as an advisor to TV and film," The Scientist, *March 16, 2007.*

THE DIGITAL SCIENCE WRITER: HOW TO WRITE

by Tabitha M. Powledge

I despise Microsoft Word. No, I take that back. What I hate is that Word masquerades as software for writing. The pathetic term "word processor" is exactly the right description for Word. This is a program that cares about form, not content. Word is also a monster, poky to load and rapacious with memory. I never use it unless I must, usually when I'm editing someone else's manuscript, or a publication insists on tracking changes.

Fortunately, there are nimble alternatives for both Mac and Windows, some of them free. A small selection is discussed here. They all let you write without getting in your way. A few are even designed for writers.

I discovered some of these programs on the site devoted to what many people think is the best writing software for the Mac, maybe the best writing software there is, Scrivener. A 30-day trial is free; $39.95 to keep (**www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.html**).

You can write in Scrivener, even huge documents, but the program also claims to be an outliner and something of a project manager. From the site: "keep all of

Freelance Tabitha M. Powledge, who writes mostly about neuroscience, paleontology, and science and medical policy, can be reached at tam@nasw.org.

your research—image files, PDF documents, movies, sound files, and web pages—right inside Scrivener." An attractive notion, to have a chunk of research available right next to your manuscript without having to jump to a different program.

I can't evaluate these claims because I can't test Scrivener. In another life I'll get a Mac, but for now I'm stuck with Windows. Still, the Scrivener folks generously devote a page to alternative writing software for both Mac and PC. This is a valuable roundup of several programs for each operating system with brief descriptions, excellent for one-stop shopping (**www.literatureandlatte.com/links.html**).

Thus, I went to the Scrivener site to drool and found Windows writing programs. The site particularly recommended PageFour and RoughDraft. They have similarities. Each is fast to load and not greedy. Each is organized around tabs so you can keep several projects in front of you at once—or notes and interviews related to the piece you're working on. Each also generates .rtf files, which permit most of the formatting options you'll need (like italics and boldface) and also can be imported by pretty much any word processor, Word included, and other kinds of programs too. Each includes a choice of fonts and some document formatting, meaning that usually you won't have to default to Word to tweak its appearance. Each has essential tools such as word count, spellchecking, and a thesaurus. Each incorporates Explorer-type file management and keyword searching.

Each is optionally a two-pane program, a screen format that has become just as popular as tabs. Do your writing in the larger window and put other stuff in the smaller one. The programs differ in just what other stuff.

What I hate is that Word masquerades as software for writing.

PageFour keeps lists of your documents there (the program calls them notebooks) and also outlines of the document you're working on, including related folders. RoughDraft calls its small pane a side panel, and it features tabs for four different kinds of content. This includes Files (a tree view of all your drives and their content, with some file management possible), List (which shows results of your file searches with search terms highlighted), Insert (which permits automatic word-completion plus insertion of special characters and text from four clipboards), and the fourth tab is Pad, the place for your outline or notes or interviews or outtakes.

Either of these programs will fill your basic writing needs nicely. I lean toward RoughDraft largely because it's less authoritarian than PageFour. For example, RoughDraft lets you store your documents anywhere you like on your hard drive. PageFour wants to store all your work, no matter what the subject or who for, in one specific folder. Storing documents elsewhere is a bit of a big deal involving a number of steps. On the other hand, PageFour has a very nice Snapshot feature that lets you save various versions of what you're writing nearly automatically.

The program differences are traceable to a philosophical difference between them, illustrated by this quote from PageFour's Help: "When you use PageFour, you do not need to know about files, file locations, saving under different names, etc. The Notebook has built in functionality to do all this for you." PageFour wants you not to bother your pretty little head about trivia like where to store a file and how to save different versions of it. RoughDraft doesn't want to complicate your writing life either, but it also doesn't assume you're a complete n00b or someone who can't quite be trusted to protect your work.

Also, although it's perfectly possible to park notes, interviews, and other research miscellany in individual tabs in the main window of either program, giving you easy access to them while writing, you still must hop back and forth between tabs. That's why I like RoughDraft's Pad feature, which puts your outline or source material right in front of you while you're writing in the other window, no hopping required.

Also, RoughDraft (**www.richardsalsbury.com**) is completely free. One caveat: RoughDraft development stopped in 2005. Maybe that's why embedded URLs are not colored and clickable, as they are in PageFour. That age gives me pause, although it seems to be a mature program; I've used it often and had no trouble.

PageFour (**www.softwareforwriting.com**) is still being actively developed, and the full version is $34.95. You can use the free trial version for as long as you like, but the amount of content you're permitted is limited.

I had intended to write only about these two .rtf programs designed specifically for writers, but I recently acquired a client who insists on plain text files. Which meant a hurried reaquaintance with text editing software, which I haven't used much recently.

There are dozens of text editors, programs that generate plain text (.txt) files. All are superior to Windows Notepad. Most are perfectly OK for our kind of writing, even though their target users are folks who write code. (Also, in most cases you probably want at least an .rtf program too. That way you'll have basic formatting available so you can italicize species names correctly for the benefit of editors who have no clue.) Wikipedia has a very long list of text editors, far more than you want to know, at **http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_text_editors** and a very long chart comparing their features at **http://**

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_text_editors.

I have space to discuss only one text editor, so I picked one I've used for many years. NoteTab (**www.notetab.com**), feature-rich and very sophisticated, pioneered the tabs and optional two panes that are now so common. It comes in three flavors, two of them paid. Unless you're a programmer in your other life, you probably don't need NoteTab Pro ($29.95). But if you want spellchecking and a thesaurus, you'll want NoteTab Std ($19.95).

Those are about the only writerly tools missing from NoteTab Light, the free version. Otherwise, Light is hardly crippled at all. And it possesses a valuable feature that I don't believe I've seen in any other text editor: autocorrect. You'll never type "hte" instead of "the" again, and you can also add all those pesky words youre abt to mispell.

[Chart comparing features of the three versions at **www.notetab.com/chart.php**.]

If you're looking for a text editor superior to Notepad, NoteTab Light should be first on your list. But be warned: NoteTab has the defects of its virtues. It's easy to plunge in and start writing, but the program does a lot of things, and mastering the extras you want may take a bit of effort. The valuable clipbook feature was pretty frustrating when I first encountered it several years ago. It's easier now. NoteTab is under constant development, so today it includes something it lacked back then: a useful Help file. ■

REPORTING ROYALTIES

by Julian Block

Question: I am a self-employed writer and have authored fiction and nonfiction books. At present, I am represented by two agents—one for nonfiction and another for fiction. Under my agenting contracts, each gets a percentage of my earnings.

When filing time rolls around, both agents provide 1099 forms that show what they have sent me during the year in terms of advances, royalties received from publishers, and other payments related to my books. But they do different kinds of bookkeeping!

One agent's 1099 lists the gross (full) amount she received from the publisher as my income; that is, she does not allow for the commission subtracted by her up front before sending a check for the balance to me. The other one handles things differently; his 1099 lists only the net (after commission) payment he actually sent to me.

How should I report these payments on my return? I know that I have to include payments received from agents in the total figure shown on the line for gross receipts on Schedule C of Form 1040, but I'm not sure which figures to report!

Answer: Let consistency be your guide. The amount of income you declare should be consistent with the figures shown on your 1099 forms. Otherwise, the IRS's ever-vigilant computers might go bananas, with unpleasant consequences to you.

When it comes to monies you received via an agent, what you should declare depends on whether the agent submits a 1099 form for you that shows the gross amount (total paid by the publisher) or the net amount (amount actually paid to you after the agent's commission is deducted).

Does the 1099 filed by the agent list the gross amount? Then that's the figure you should include in totaling your income to come up with your gross amount on Schedule C—and remember to include the agent's commission, which is deductible on the line for commissions and fees.

And if you fail to do that? First, you overstate your net profit. Second, you overpay your self-employment taxes and income taxes—federal, and, perhaps, state and city. You should not count on the IRS to catch your mistake. These kinds of miscues are spotted, if at all, in the course of audits.

To recover an overpayment, you must file an amended return within three years from the filing deadline (including any extensions) for your return. Do the recalculation on Form 1040X (Amended U.S. Individual Income Tax Return). Changing a federal return might also require amending a state return. In that event, file your state's version of the Form 1040X.

Does the 1099 from your agent instead list the net amount, the sum on the check actually sent to you after the agent's commission taken off the top? Then you should use *that* amount in arriving at your gross income figure—and you should *not* deduct the commission on the line for commissions and fees, since it's already been subtracted from the income figure.

To make that perfectly clear, here's an example. Say your agent receives a check from your publisher in the amount of $50,000, deducts the 15-percent commission of $7,500, and sends you a check for $42,500. After that year's end, you receive a 1099 form that shows $50,000. You should include the *full* $50,000 in your reported gross income and deduct the $7,500 commission on the line for commissions and fees. If, on the other hand, the 1099 shows only the amount actually sent to you,

*Julian Block is an attorney in Larchmont, N.Y., who has been cited as an "accomplished writer on taxes" (*Wall Street Journal*). This article is excerpted from his* Tax Tips For Small Businesses: Savvy Ways for Writers, Photographers, And Artists*, available at julianblocktaxexpert.com.*

$42,500, you should include only $42,500 in gross income and deduct nothing. Either way, you pay tax only on the $42,500; either way, the serenity of the IRS's computers will be preserved. ■

YALE FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE MEDIA

by Lynne Friedmann

A new website whose aim is "connecting leading climate scientists and researchers with the reporters covering their work" is also a new outlet for freelance writers.

The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media (**www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org**) is an online publication and forum to foster dialogue on climate change among scientists, journalists, policymakers, and the public. Edited by NASW member and veteran environmental journalist/journalism educator Bud Ward, The Yale Forum seeks to provide print, broadcasting, and online reporters and editors timely and credible information on one of the most important and complicated issues of our time.

The genesis of the initiative was a series of six workshops in recent years, organized by Ward, which brought members of the press together with scientists in the hope of improving dialogue between them.

"Throughout all of the workshops consistent feedback was 'find a way to keep the dialog going,'" said Ward. "I was approached by Yale and gave them a proposal to do pretty much what we've launched."

The Yale Forum debuted in Oct. 2007. It includes news briefs, feature articles, book reviews, common climate misconceptions, and media resources on climate change causes, consequences, and solutions. There's also analysis and discussion of the process by which climate change is communicated through traditional and new media.

Articles come from journalists, students, and scientists. Ward envisions building a small stable of regular authors and another stable of contributors who write two or three times a year. He's also looking for photos to buy.

"I would love to hear from NASW members who have in interest in climate and journalism," he said. "Look at this as a good (freelance) outlet."

A number of writers already have.

Under the banner "Words Matter," *San Diego Union-Tribune* reporter Bruce Lieberman examined the semantics of using "climate change" or "global warming" in stories or when speaking about the issue.

Freelance Christine Woodside produced a series from the vantage of different news beats. A couple of titles: "Covering Climate Change from the Business Writer's News Perspective" and "Covering Climate on the Auto Beat: Changing Consumer Tastes Broadening Coverage."

Search climate change news most days and you'll likely find few references to public health issues. This led Janet A. Phoenix, M.D., MPH, to write "Covering Public Health and Climate Change" in which she wonders if the U.S. media are under-reporting an important link on potential impacts fairly characterized in a recent *Washington Post* article as being "diverse and sometimes contradictory."

A pair of tag-team articles by J. Madeleine Nash, former senior science correspondent for *Time* Magazine, and glaciologist Lonnie G. Thompson, The Ohio State University, offer their respective experiences on how journalism mixes with science on an expedition to remote mountain glaciers. Read about it in "Covering Climate At 20,000 Feet" (Nash) and "The Scientist/Journalist Experience on Remote Mountain Research Expeditions" (Thompson).

And you know climate change has passed a critical threshold in the media when it appeared on the Sunday comics page...twice on the same day in two popular strips ("Hi and Lois" and "Family Circus"). Read more in "Climate Change and the Sunday Comics Page."

...connecting leading climate scientists and researchers with the reporters covering their work...

The Yale Forum is updated every two weeks and new features are being added in response to subscriber recommendations. For example, a RSS feed was launched in January.

With initial seed funding provided by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Ward said in early April, the publication effort now has raised foundation funding to support it and a series of journalism workshops through at least its first three years.

To date, about more than 700 individuals have signed up for the listserv announcements and RSS feeds; a mix of journalists, university educators, and research scientists. Traffic is coming in through links from other websites and word of mouth.

Since a major goal of The Yale Forum is to promote cross talk between journalists and scientists, Ward took note that Joe Witte, a meteorologist with WJLA-TV, the ABC affiliate in Washington D.C., said he had subscribed after being referred to the site by Stanford University climatologist Stephen H. Schneider.

"That's a real good sign," said Ward.

If you have a story idea, pitch Ward at bud@yaleclimatemediaforum.org. ■

Lynne Friedmann is editor of ScienceWriters.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Robert Lee Hotz

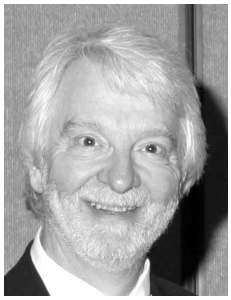


PHOTO COURTESY OF SIGMA XI

When it comes to picking the next generation of NASW officers, we are changing our ways—to encourage more of you to join the leadership of our science-writing community.

Let me explain. I wonder how many of us realize that, under our current custom, those board members nominated as officers of NASW are required to make a decade-long commitment to the operation of this 2,900-member organization. As a member of the NASW executive committee, every officer, after serving at least one two-year terms as a board member at large, must serve two years each as secretary, treasurer, and vice president leading up to the presidency—and then a full two years as president.

It is a major commitment—and I can't think of a more rewarding one. Even so, let's be realistic. Serving on our executive committee also has become an unusually demanding volunteer enterprise. Our most talented members and energetic science writers—the very people best suited to lead NASW through the 21st century—may be understandably shy of making so long a commitment, especially when they may also be among the busiest with their own careers and families.

After much discussion, the current officers and the board decided that this 10-year officer track has out-lived its usefulness. We decided to shorten it, so that becoming an officer of NASW will be more attractive to a new generation of pressed-for-time volunteers. Like many things in NASW, this officer track was a custom born of the common sense of its day. There's nothing in the constitution about this linkage of the officer track as it currently exists. So changing it is simply a matter of changing our management practice. The board therefore has voted unanimously to revise our custom.

That's the news. We are, with the full support of the board, officially revising the duration of the NASW officer track. Nothing, however, in the NASW constitution concerning the roles, requirements, qualifications, and duties of the NASW executive committee is being changed. The nominating committee will continue to be responsible for selecting the candidates for officers as in the past.

Here is how it will work from now on: Any one on the board of directors nominated to become president of NASW will first have to serve a term as vice president. But, in a departure from current practice, they will not have to serve terms as secretary and treasurer as required prior experience for the presidency. Instead, a board member can serve up to two terms as secretary or treasurer, without being required to move up. Let me emphasize that. There will be a two-term limit for the secretary and treasurer, to ensure periodic turnover. But either the secretary or the treasurer may if they desire—and are selected by the nominating committee—move up to higher office to serve as vice president and then president.

To make it a gentle transition, we will start the new process with the upcoming election of the new secretary for the executive committee. We then will let the reform follow the current officers up the pipeline in each succeeding election. Our current secretary, *Congressional Quarterly*'s Peggy Girshman, will be the last then to

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

NASW Board Election

It's an election year, both for The White House and the 2009-10 NASW executive board.

The board consists of four officers (president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary) and 11 members at large. NASW officers must be working members of the press.

Candidacy for board member at large is open to any NASW member in good standing and is not subject to specific term limits, though it is expected that members will recognize appropriate contribution levels and assist the executive committee in ensuring reasonable turnover.

A nominating committee, appointed by the president, nominates one member for each officer position and shall also nominate at least 15 members, including at least six who are qualified to serve as officers, to run for at-large seats on the executive board.

There is also a petition process to the nominating committee by which a group of 20 or more members may nominate an individual for officer or board member at-large positions. Deadline for receipt of nominating petitions of September 1. Send completed peititions to director@nasw.org.

Ballots will be distributed to all members by October 20. Votes received by December 1 shall be counted. Of those at-large candidates qualified to serve as officers, the four garnering the most votes shall be elected to the board. The remaining at-large positions will be granted to the seven remaining candidates with the most votes, regardless of whether they are qualified to be officers. In the event of a tie, a run-off election between the contested nominees shall be held as expeditiously as possible. ■

complete the old extended officer track as secretary, treasurer, vice president, and president. When the time comes, she will be succeeded as president by someone elected under the new system.

Like Peggy, our current treasurer Nancy Shute at *U.S. News & World Report* and our current vice president Mariette DiChristina at *Scientific American* all were chosen for the executive committee in the expectation that they would each serve a term as president.

To preserve continuity, we will stick to that succession and they have generously agreed. I know they will serve us all well as our leaders. We hope this change will make it just that bit easier for some of you to volunteer to follow in their footsteps. ■

DISPATCHES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Tinsley Davis

As NASW's new executive director, I consider myself lucky to be able to exercise my passion for science writing by continuing the work of the legendary Diane McGurgan and shepherding our growing organization forward.

Diane will continue to be part of the NASW office, until June 2009, serving as senior executive consultant. You'll still find her on the other end of the phone line while she and I work together to transition all of the organization's functions in a gradual fashion. The website will always reflect the most current contact information for each NASW service (renewals, mailing list, etc.). Simpler still is to direct your questions and requests to director@nasw.org which currently lands in both our "in" boxes.

The power is in your hands

As of last summer's new database debut, members have the ability (and responsibility) for updating their database information. Roster information is printed from this database, so please go online and verify the correctness of your entry by May 10. It's fast and simple to update.

Greener renewals for 2009

If NASW were the electric company, many of you would find yourself in the dark. At press time, 30 percent of members (that's about 800 of you) haven't paid their dues. Dues are what support NASW's operating budget, so please renew today. At the same time, be sure to submit your annual Authors Coalition survey via the mail or through nasw.org. To all those who have paid, thank you! I look forward to making the renewal process greener and less cumbersome for all involved by taking it completely online for 2009.

Meetings and AWOL luggage

Before joining NASW, I was a microbiology researcher but left the lab for an education/science writing position at the Museum of Science, Boston. At the museum, public presentations were part of my daily life. I thought that I had encountered all possible distractions: antsy children, fire alarms, breastfeeding moms. But on February 5, I found myself presenting in Doha, Qatar, a country I'd only recently come to pinpoint with certainty on the household atlas, standing with two simultaneous translators (Arabic and French) filling the ears of 80 audience members as I struggled to navigate a non-English version of PowerPoint, while wearing the same clothes since departing Boston, thanks to lost luggage.

Hosted by the World Federation of Science Journalists, the Qatar Foundation, and Aljazeera, the "Science Journalism Meets Science in Qatar" program brought together participants in the federation's SjCOOP (Science Journalism Co-op) project to discuss its pioneering work over the last two years. Started in 2006, SjCOOP fosters mentoring of journalists from developing countries by more experienced science writers.

Deborah Blum, who serves as NASW's international liaison, and I were invited to speak as part of the partnership project between NASW and the Arab Science Journalists Association. I shared some principles and ideas for running a science writing association; Deborah conducted a narrative science journalism workshop. We were pleased to receive positive feedback on both presentations. We were equally pleased to be part of the more informal exchanges: lunchtime conversations over hot tea and hummus, a multinational hockey game, impromptu African dances at a formal dinner, a fascinating tour of Aljazeera headquarters, and even a few opportunities to explore the city of Doha, with its sand, palm trees, and glittering skyline of new construction.

Humbled and inspired, from the moment we landed, by the passionate and dedicated science journalists we met, we hope to be part of other international exchanges and the global-science writing community. [More information on science writing in the Arab world can be found on page 20.]

As WFSJ moves towards it next SjCOOP iteration in Latin America, I encourage NASW members to get involved and share in the excitement. ■

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

CYBERBEAT

by Russell Clemings

Things continue to evolve rapidly with NASW's Internet services.

Our new mail server went into operation one day before Thanksgiving and, after a few early snags, is now running smoothly and reliably.

More than a few of the shakedown issues had to do with three major Internet service providers—Comcast, Verizon, and Roadrunner—that reflexively listed our new server as a spammer, mainly, it seems, because it was new and unfamiliar to them. We were able to restore service to all three within hours and have taken steps that, so far at least, have prevented any recurrence.

We continue to ask that users of those providers, as well as AOL, refrain from reporting as spam any mail received via an NASW alias or NASW listserv. Doing so can jeopardize mail delivery from NASW.org to all customers of that provider. When necessary, we are suspending NASW.org aliases for repeat violators who disregard our warnings.

We now have both anti-spam and anti-virus software running on the new server. Those new features, along with the heavy load created by some of our busier listservs, have already led us to upgrade our server from the bare-bones model that we initially contracted for with Servint Internet Services.

Our anti-spam software (SpamAssassin) automatically rejects incoming mail from known spammers that are listed on either the Spamhaus or Spamcop blacklists, then runs what's left through a complex scoring system before sending it on. Mail that scores high on multiple spam tests is rejected. In borderline cases, the mail is sent on, but a header reading "X-Spam-Flag: YES" is added. NASW.org alias users may be able to filter their mail into a spam folder by using that header.

Our anti-virus software, ClamAV, examines incoming e-mail for a large number of known viruses, worms, and "phishing" scams, in which con artists try to trick recipients into revealing bank account numbers and other sensitive information. The system turns away hundreds of such messages daily. Nevertheless, it's still a good idea to keep your own anti-virus software updated in case something slips past ClamAV.

Together, these two features currently intercept and prevent delivery of between 70 percent and 90 percent of all e-mail coming into our server. Senders whose mail is rejected are sent a reply so that they can track down the problem and try again, in the rare (none reported to date, in fact) case of a legitimate e-mail wrongly rejected.

In an ideal world, spam and viruses would be few and far between and we would be able to deliver all mail that comes into our server. But the reality, we have discovered, is that, if we did that, our server would be labeled as a spam source by the major providers listed above, among others, and none of your mail would reach you.

Finally, by the time you read this, we will have implemented two more features of our new system.

One is a piece of software that allows us to conduct surveys quickly and analyze the results easily. We're using it for the first time to collect feedback on the last two annual meetings.

The second is the long-awaited automation of an important albeit unpleasant part of NASW's administration—revoking website privileges and other NASW Internet services for members who have not paid their annual dues.

Members who have missed the deadline are receiving an initial, one-time e-mail warning them that their services are in danger of revocation. This e-mail is generated automatically after the annual dues deadline and when all incoming payments have been entered into our master membership database. A second e-mail will be generated—and web privileges automatically revoked—after the May 15 final deadline for dues to be paid, as provided by the NASW constitution.

Now, some highlights from the lists:

Both NASW-talk and NASW-freelance had lengthy February threads on the controversy surrounding artificial heart developer Robert Jarvik's role as a spokesman for the cholesterol-lowering statin drug Lipitor. The discussion started with whether Jarvik was truly an authority on heart disease—as well as whether he could row his own boat, as the Lipitor ads implied. Later, it migrated to broader questions of how patients and doctors respond to celebrity endorsements of pharmaceuticals and the merits of statin drugs and cholesterol reduction in preventing heart attacks.

On NASW-PR, two threads focused on the rules for releasing news about research by an institution's scientists. In January, the list tackled the question of "early online publication," and whether a press release should coincide with the online publication or be held until the print version is out. In February, a restrictive policy on releasing news from the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections was subjected to criticism.

NASW members can catch up on the discussion for all three lists by using the "archives" link under "listservs" at the NASW home page (**www.nasw.org**). An NASW member username and password are required. ■

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.*

PIO FORUM

by Emily Carlson

Producing a Computational Biology Primer for Students

COURTESY OF NIGMS

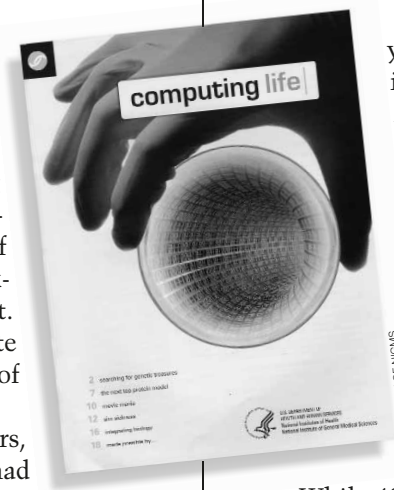
Three years ago, I joined the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) as a science writer tasked with covering research developments supported by the institute's computational biology center. Although one of the smallest and newest parts of NIGMS, the center was launching some of the most exciting initiatives, including one to create video game-like simulations of pandemic flu spreading across the country.

Around NIH, my institute is well known for its free educational publications—some award winning—on topics ranging from structural biology to genetics.

Even before I came on board, there had been talk of producing an educational booklet geared toward high school and college students that featured the excitement of computational biology and that would foster the field's next generation of researchers from all walks of life.

Creating this booklet would be my responsibility.

I wrote a prospectus that described a 20-page publication unlike NIGMS's other offerings. It would be more magazine-like than textbook in nature. It would include short articles, features, student profiles, and Q&As with young researchers as well as promote a companion website, where new stories, movies, podcasts, and links would be posted and updated on a continuing basis. Producing a booklet with a dynamic online component would spare the expense and time of compiling the more comprehensive booklets and avoid a quickly outdated product. Such a format could also serve as a template for future booklets on other areas of NIGMS-supported research.



COURTESY OF NIGMS

Internal staff and outside advisors, including high school teachers who had reviewed NIGMS's earlier publications, fine tuned the initial prospectus. Next came "concept clearance" from our parent agency—the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—for permission to produce a publication. The request included explanations of how the booklet would comply with congressional mandates, why the government needed to produce it, a breakdown of anticipated costs, and a justification for using full color. We got the green light.

To find cutting-edge computational biology topics of interest to high school students, I talked to NIGMS experts, magazine editors, and teachers, one of whom suggested drawing any connections I could to popular crime-solving TV shows. With a good idea of specific research and people to feature, I pulled together a team of writers (including a summer intern), made assignments, and edited their work.

All the while, I spent considerable time reading online content in an effort to make the print publication mirror a website, noting how different fonts, colors, and graphics lured the reader's eye from story to story. With this in mind, the writers' work included critical thinking questions, fun activities, "did-you-know" nuggets, and links that could be featured in call-out boxes.

The text was sent to demanding critics: teachers and teenagers.

One response was brutal: "airy," "too simplistic," and "not substantive."

Follow-up with reviewers revealed that, in some cases, the text received low marks because it had been compared to the style of other NIGMS publications. Reworking the overview, adding a few details, and changing wording addressed these concerns.

Time to call in the graphic designers. Their challenge: To create a product that looked like it belonged to the same family of publications but had a very different personality. The designers, who had worked on our other publications, were very excited about breaking the mold.

The leading cover design—an androgynous human head that showed networks in the neck and binary code spewing from the brain—led to the final title and overarching theme for the booklet: *Computing Life*.

We were on track and heading toward the finish line when, in early 2007, I discovered another NIH institute had already used a version of our cover image on its educational material! Back to the drawing board for a new design showing a gloved hand holding a Petri dish that opens into a colorful vortex lined with 0s and 1s.

While 40,000 copies were being printed, we developed and launched the companion website (**http://publications.nigms.nih.gov/computinglife**).

It's still too early to tell how the 24-page *Computing Life* stacks up against our existing publications. Since October, we've shipped nearly 4,500 copies in response to some 750 individual requests from the general public and teachers, who can order free copies and classroom sets of NIGMS publications at **www.nigms.nih.gov**. We're also tracking the number of visits

Emily Carlson is a science writer at NIH'S National Institute of General Medical Sciences.

to *Computing Life* online. Right now, web traffic lags behind that of our major other publications, suggesting we need to do more to promote the site. Positive feedback has also been received from readers on postage-paid comment cards inside each printed booklet. According to one reader, the publication achieved what it set out to do: "I like computers and use them every day, but never imagined they could be used in this way." ■

OUR GANG

by Jeff Grabmeier

PHOTO BY JO McNULTY, OHIO STATE

His Ship Has Come In. **Bob Finn** recently won the Samter Journalism Award from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology for his article "Myth Persists on Seafood Allergy/Contrast Link." The article appeared in *Skin & Allergy News* and and on the Elsevier Global Medical News newswire. Bob is the San Francisco bureau chief for the International Medical News Group. Talk to him at finn@nasw.org.

Hoisting a New Sail. **John Gever**, of Wheeling, W.Va., reports that he has "left the cold, cruel world of freelancing for the carefree employee life" at *MedPage Today*, an online provider of medical news and continuing education. Other carefree working stiffs can congratulate John at jgever@gmail.com.

Captaining a New Ship. Another former freelancer is **Julie Corliss**, of the Boston area. She has accepted a full-time position as a senior medical editor for *Special Health Reports* at Harvard Health Publications. Julie says she welcomes resumes from experienced medical/health freelance writers. Touch base with her at julie_corliss@hms.harvard.edu.

Jumping Ship. **Nancy McGuire** tell us that she has "jumped ship" from the public affairs department in the Office of Naval Research. She is now doing research communications work for HPTi (High Performance Technologies, Inc.) in Arlington, Va. Nancy will be working on the company's contract with the Army High Performance Computing Research Center, which is a computer modeling and simulation consortium that includes several universities and NASA. As always, you can reach Nancy at nmcguire@nasw.org.

Tack on Another Award. The awards keep rolling in for NASW member and Foothill College astronomy instructor **Andrew Fraknoi**. This time, Andrew has won the prestigious American Institute of Physics Andrew Gemant Award. The Gemant Award, named for a physicist who wrote both nonfiction and fiction, is often given for interdisciplinary work in the physical sciences. Andrew was cited for "his extraordinary contributions as a teacher, a public lecturer, co-author/editor of a syndicated astronomy newspaper column, host/producer of a weekly radio show, and numerous guest appearances on national TV." Andrew is at fraknoi@fhda.edu.

Full Steam Ahead! **Phil Kibak** has joined the American Association for Clinical Chemistry in Washington, D.C., as senior editor for its monthly publication *Clinical Laboratory News*. He'll be covering the regulatory beat on issues of interest to laboratorians. Most recently, he worked at MasiMax Resources, Inc., a Rockville, Md. government consulting group. Prior gigs include media relations positions with The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions (Baltimore), the American Heart Association National Center (Dallas), Edelman Public Relations (Chicago), and the Walther Cancer Institute (Indianapolis). Contact Phil at pkibak@aacc.org.

A Good Cut to His Jib. Another award-winning NASW member is **Ken Chiacchia**, a science writer at the University of Pittsburgh. Ken received the journalism award in the 2008 Carnegie Science Awards, which recognize and promote outstanding science and technology achievements in western Pennsylvania. Congratulate Ken at chiacchiakb@yahoo.com.

Smooth Sailing Ahead. After 13 years as a freelancer based in Portland, Ore., **Linda Roach** has taken a job as a senior editor for a publisher of ophthalmology magazines, Ethis Communications (New York, N.Y.). Linda was one of the handful of NASW members who were newspaper science section editors in the mid-1980s when she worked for *The Oregonian*. Later she wrote about science and medicine for the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Miami Herald*, was awarded a Kaiser Media Fellowship in Health (1993-94), and went freelance upon returning to Oregon in 1995. Get all the details from Linda at linda.roach@nasw.org.

Hitting the Deck Running. Another NASW member with a new job is **Andrea Widener** of Chevy Chase, Md., who is now a science writer at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Andrea comes to HHMI from the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, where she was the news editor. Andrea is at andrealwidener@yahoo.com.

Sailing Overseas. **Janet Yagoda Shagam** of Albuquerque, N.M., will give her annual science writing workshop (May 16-23) for European Neurosciences Institute graduate students in Göttingen, Germany. The institute, affiliated with Georg-August University and the Max Planck Institute, attracts students from throughout the world. Janet says many workshop students say they are interested in either combining science journalism with their research careers or making

Jeff Grabmeier is assistant director of research communications at Ohio State University, in Columbus, Ohio.

writing for the public their main focus. Ask Janet all about it at janetyagoda@nasw.org.

At the Home Port… In news that hits close to home, **Pam Frost Gorder** (gorder.1@osu.edu) and **Emily Caldwell** (caldwell.151@osu.edu) were recently named assistant directors in my office, Research Communications at Ohio State University. Pam, a 12-year veteran of our office, was promoted from science writer. Emily has been at the university for 11 years, most recently as assistant director of media relations in the university's medical center. She previously held several other positions in the university's communications office.

Setting Sail for Success. After spending over a year based in Delhi, India, as a freelance medical journalist, **Caitlin Cox** returned to the United State this past November. In January, Caitlin started as a medical writer/editor at the Cardiovascular Research Foundation, in New York. In this position, she is also the associate news editor of TCTMD, a website for interventional cardiologists. Say hello to Caitlin at caitlinecox@gmail.com.

Rocking the Boat. Virginia-based Freelancer **David Lawrence** was pleased to see that a recent issue of *Booklist* included a positive review of a chapter he wrote for the book *The Science of Michael Crichton*. *Booklist* said David's "skewering" of Crichton's novel *State of Fear* was the "most outstanding contribution" in the book, which examined the scientific credibility of several of Crichton's novels. David is at dave@fuzzo.com.

Dropping Anchor in a New Port. **Suzanne Clancy** has given up the freelancing life to become editor of the trade journal *Clinical Lab Products* (www.clpmag.com), which focuses on products and technology for the clinical lab industry. The magazine is published out of Los Angeles, but Suzanne will be able to telecommute from her home near San Diego. You can reach Suzanne at sclancy@ascendmedia.com.

Taking A New Tack. While some are leaving freelancing for staff jobs, others are taking the opposite tack. **Jon Van**, longtime science and technology writer for the *Chicago Tribune* is retiring, but plans to keep writing as a freelancer. Jon says he hopes to continue writing a weekly technology column for the *Tribune* to keep his connections to the paper and to the science and tech community in Chicago. Send greetings to Jon at jonvand2@gmail.com.

A New Dock by the Bay. **A.J. Hostetler**, one-time NASW board member and former science writer for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, is now a public relations coordinator for the Virginia Department of Health. The *Times-Dispatch* ended its 47-year-old science beat in January. The beat was started by NASW member Bev Orndorff, who served as science writer for 36 years, followed by A.J.'s 11-year term. A.J.'s new office offers a view of the James River and she is learning to use her "inside" voice now that she's no longer in a noisy newsroom. Contact her at aj.hostetler@vdh.virginia.gov. ■

Changing of the Guard

After five years, this marks Jeff Grabmeier's final Our Gang column. Thank you, Jeff, for keeping us informed as well as entertained with the creative "themes" for each of your columns. Jeff remains active on the NASW educational committee and with the annual intern fair held in conjunction with the AAAS annual meeting.

Starting with the summer issue, Pam Frost Gorder takes over the Our Gang reins.

Gorder's day job is covering research in the mathematical and physical sciences and engineering at Ohio State University where she writes about physics, astronomy, chemistry, geology, math, statistics and occasionally writes about psychology and marketing.

PHOTO BY JO MCCULLY

Pam Frost Gorder

Gorder is also a freelance writer with a column in *Computing in Science and Engineering*. Her work has also appeared in *New Scientist*, *The Sciences* (the magazine of the New York Academy of Sciences), *Science World*, and *21stC: The World of Research at Columbia University*.

Send Our Gang items to Pam Frost Gorder at gorder.1@osu.edu.

NEWS FROM AFAR

by Nadia El-Awady

A great time for Arab science journalism

Eight years ago, when I started writing science articles for the Arab/English language website IslamOnline.net, I hadn't the slightest idea that science journalism was a profession. I came from a medical background and journalism was something

Nadia El-Awady is president of the Arab Science Journalists Association. She can be reached at nadia.elawady@iolteam.com.

completely new to me. I knew that newspapers and magazines all over the world had science sections or were in some cases completely dedicated to science. But I didn't realize that there were people out there who made a living from covering science. The environment in Egypt at the time certainly gave me no reason to think otherwise.

One day, out of curiosity, I googled "science journalism." After months of working as a science journalist, I thought surely there is training for this specialized field of journalism. I wanted to enhance my skills beyond the valuable feedback I was getting from my editor.

To my surprise and delight "science journalism" brought up results showing it to be a profession with a following and a support network. Not only was science journalism taught in universities in the U.S., Canada, and the UK, more importantly I learned there were networks of science journalists in several countries.

It was the World Federation of Science Journalists, though, that really caught my eye. Oddly enough, at around the time I learned about that organization, my work on IslamOnline had come to the attention of a WFSJ committee and I was invited to speak at the 4th World Conference for Science Journalists, in Montreal, Canada, in 2004.

By then, however, I had already been quite busy networking with other science journalists around the world and in my own region. My first trip abroad as a journalist was to the 3rd World Water Forum, in Kyoto, Japan. I stuck close to some of the journalists there and was quite open about the fact that all this was new to me. They were generous in offering reporting tips and story angles they thought would be interesting to my audience.

I reached out to other Arab science journalists while writing an article for SciDev.net in early 2004 on the status of science journalism in Egypt and the Arab world. That gave me the opportunity to speak with fellow science journalists and learn about their problems and aspirations. I also learned about Egypt's long history in science journalism that included a network for science journalists in the 1970s that unfortunately waned following the death of the network's president.

I eventually became a founding member of the Arab Science Journalists Association (ASJA). I was also elected chair of the World Federation of Science Journalists' program committee and later a WFSJ board member and treasurer. Through both associations I finally had an opportunity to work with colleagues to provide a support network for science journalists all over the world and, more significantly, in the Arab region.

The highlight of all this has been the WFSJ's training program for science journalists in Africa and the Middle East, SjCOOP (Science Journalism Co-op). This program is giving science journalists in both regions valuable tools to enhance their skills. African and Arab science journalists who were previously isolated from each other due to their relatively small numbers can now tap into a large international network. This provides an important sense of belonging. Another significant component is mentoring. Each science journalist in the program is mentored by an experienced science journalist for a two-year period.

SjCOOP currently provides about 20 Arab journalists and 40 African journalists a systematic way to embark and build a science journalism career. It's a far cry from the hit-or-miss method I, and others, used to learn the ropes!

One year into the program, some SjCOOPies have started freelancing, won national and international awards, received scholarships to attend conferences and university courses, started new science beats in their newspapers, and written articles that have had impacts on science policies in their countries.

Hopes for a cascade effect are being realized. Already, one Arab mentee has been promoted to mentor, and we hope that in future programs, rather than having the four mentors we started with in the Arab region, several of those mentees will have enough experience to be mentors themselves.

In 2000, when I started working as a science journalist, nothing was available for me or my Arab colleagues other than the odd workshop here and there. Eight years on, our world has been profoundly affected by friends and colleagues worldwide who want to be agents of change. ASJA's young partnership with the NASW has provided wonderful opportunities to exchange activities and learn from each other, SjCOOP and the WFSJ have provided a huge international support network for us, and ASJA itself is becoming stronger by the day with 108 members and growing.

It's a great time to be an Arab science journalist! ■

Upcoming international meetings

June 15-20, 2008 • **Fifth Science Centre World Congress**, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. **www.5scwc.org**

June 25-27, 2008 • **10th PCST (Public Communication of Science and Technology) Conference**, Malmö (Oresund Region), Sweden. **www.vr.se/pcst**

July 18-22, 2008 • **3rd EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF08)**, Barcelona, Spain. **www.esof2008.org**

Summer 2009 • **6th World Conference of Science Journalists**, London, U.K. **www.scienceinlondon2009.org**

REGIONAL GROUPS

by Suzanne Clancy

Philadelphia

PHOTO BY MARC LIEBERMAN

Philadelphia-Area Science Writers Association (PASWA) celebrated the holiday season in fine style at Konak, a Turkish restaurant, in Philadelphia, worthy of rave reviews. Since the group hadn't met in a while, it was a great chance for members to catch up with one another.

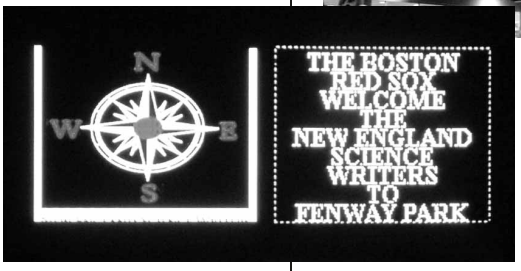
In January PASWA organized a meeting featuring Paul Offit, M.D., head of infectious disease at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and author of a number of books, including *Vaccinated*. Offit discussed the life of Maurice Hilleman, the subject of *Vaccinated* and inventor of eight of the most commonly used vaccines. The conversation also spilled over onto the topic of vaccinations and autism, which helped make for an interesting and challenging meeting.

New England

The party traditionally hosted by local science writers for the throngs of journalists covering the AAAS annual meeting was organized this year by the New England Science Writers and held at Boston's Fenway Park.

The catered eat-drink-dance-schmoozathon lured an estimated 550 pressroom registrants to the ballpark on a frigid Feb. 15 evening. Motown vibes of the six-piece Boss Band had the dance floor hopping with reporters, freelancers, PIOs, and science journalism students.

The event space was a pavilion within the Fenway infrastructure that looks out through a wall of glass over the legendary field, home to the 2007 World Series Champion Red Sox. Some partygoers braved the cold to walk out into the seating area. Even from indoors, it was hard to miss the brightly lighted electronic scoreboard displaying the NESW logo and a welcoming message.



Several NESW members and the steering committee—especially Richard Saltus, Deborah Halber, Carol Morton, and Pete Spotts—organized the event and led the six-month-long fundraising effort making it possible to entertain colleagues from all over the world in the style to which they have become accustomed. A complete list of event sponsors can be found at **www.nasw.org/users/nesw/Eventsponsors.pdf**.

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

New York

Science Writers in New York (SWINY) launched its 2008 programs with a Jan. 22 panel discussion on Life and Death: Confusing Choices, Troubling Decisions of Bioethics. The event took place at the Science, Industry, and Business Library, in Manhattan, and focused on the role of specially trained bioethics mediators in helping patients, family members, and caregivers with ethical aspects of dealing with terminal illnesses. The panel included Nancy Dubler, LLB, Gary Kalkut, M.D., and Lynn Richmond, NP, all affiliated with the Montefiore Medical Center's Bioethics Division (one of the nation's first certified programs in bioethics mediation), and Carol B. Liebman, JD of Columbia University Law School and co-author of *Bioethics Mediation*.

On Feb. 4, SWINY held its third annual winter holiday party, which each year celebrates an important winter birthday or other noteworthy occasion. This year SWINY chose Groundhog Day, honoring Puxatawney

Major League Science

New England Science Writers hit this one out of the ballpark.

Phil (and Phyllis). The evening of munching, sipping, and chatting took place in the cozy party suite of the Manhattan restaurant Friend of a Farmer. Don Witter Jr. (**http://donsguitarsite.com/**) enhanced the party spirit with delightful classical guitar music.

PIN IMAGE COURTESY OF SCONC

North Carolina

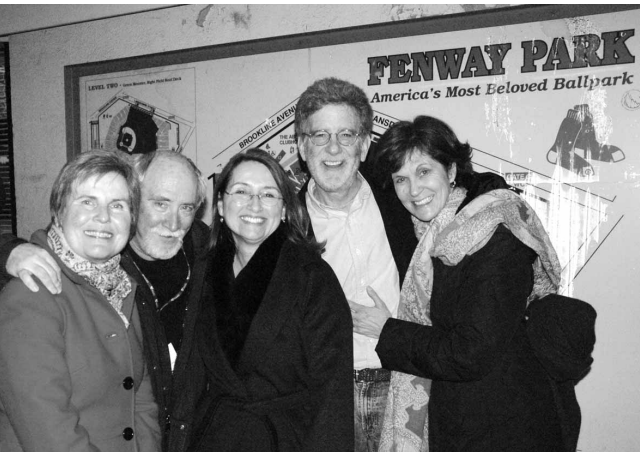
Science Communicators of North Carolina (**www.sconc.org**) came into the world in 2007, midwifed by Russ Campbell of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund and Chris Brodie at *American Scientist* magazine. From the outset, SCONC (pronounced "skunk") tried to include people who don't usually join science-writer groups: scientists, teachers, and museum curators in addition to journalists, writers, public information officers, and PR professionals. Membership now exceeds 180, most of whom are based in the Research Triangle. A few hail from the mountains (Asheville, Purlear), the Piedmont (Charlotte, Greensboro) and the coast (Wilmington, Beaufort).

SCONC has held its monthly meetings at institutions throughout the Triangle area, including Duke, UNC, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Shodor Foundation, the Hamner Institutes, the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, and Sigma Xi.

As the group has grown, so have its goals. SCONC plans to seek external funding for two ambitious programs: an interactive calendar for scientists, communicators and the public, and a blog aggregator for local science stories. But to apply for grants, the group needs more structure than it has now—SCONC hasn't yet incorporated or gained 501(c)(3) status. To help with these growing pains, it's collaborating with a local biotech incubator/accelerator program run by the Hamner Institutes, an independent, nonprofit research facility that bridges the basic and clinical sciences. The science-communicators group will be the first nonprofit to participate in the Hamner's accelerator program. As part of the deal, SCONC will be working with an MBA student from one of the local business schools to set up a strong framework for administration and operations.

The SCONC board of directors includes Karl Leif Bates (Duke), Helen Chickering (NBC Universal), Ernie Hood (Radio In Vivo), Becky Oskin (freelance), and Anton Zuiker (Duke) in addition to Russ and Chris. Karl, Becky, Ernie, Russ, and Chris are NASW members. ■

Writers Event a Success



"A very well-engineered party."
—Boston Globe Magazine's
Miss Conduct

(left) Among happy party goers are, l to r, Martha Lynch, Lynn Yarris, Lynne Friedmann, and Nate and Pam Patterson.

(right) The stylish and sultry Boss Band lived up to its name.

A trickle of guests soon became a packed house and everybody danced late into the night.

PHOTOS BY DAVID E. GILBERT

ANNUAL MENTORING PROGRAM AND INTERNSHIP FAIR

Both the mentoring program and internship fair took place this year at the AAAS meeting in Boston, and were successful thanks to the hard work of NASW volunteers, notably Rob Irion, Jenny Cutraro, and Jeff Grabmeier, and others on the NASW education committee.

The mentoring program created 39 mentor-mentee pairs which, committee co-chair Jeff Grabmeier believes, may be the highest number to date. By all appearances the program was very successful. Many pairs were observed spending time together in the newsroom, in the halls chatting with other journalists, and so on.

Committee co-chair Rob Irion, director of the UC Santa Cruz science communication program, brought 10 students to the Boston meeting. All participated in the mentoring program and indicated they were very happy with the guidance received. Dan Ferber, freelance writer and former chair of the NASW freelance committee, was recruited to give opening remarks at the orientation. Several other mentors weighed in with useful remarks as well.

Considerable time was spent matching mentors and mentees—primarily by subject area and student career interests. It seemed to pay off in productive pairings.

The 2008 Internship Fair was one of the largest yet, with 59 students and 17 recruiters packing a hotel meeting room an entire afternoon. This year's list of recruiters included:

American Geophysical Union
Argonne National Lab
Brookhaven National Lab
Chemical & Engineering News
Conservation
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Discover
FermiLab
Genetics and Public Policy Center
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
New Scientist
Science
Science Editor
Science News
The Scientist
Smithsonian
Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC)

The committee was gratified with the number of new and returning institutions who participated. Jenny Cutraro had the chance to talk with several of the recruiters and each said this was an incredibly talented bunch of students. In follow-up e-mails to organizers, more than one recruiter said they'd have a hard time picking just one candidate from the group.

For the second year, AAAS funded 10 students to attend its annual meeting, paying for their transportation to Boston and meeting expenses. NASW was given total control in choosing the travel stipend winners. Out of 26 students who applied, Rob Irion chose the 10 best based on experience and clips. The students were thrilled with the opportunity. One said attending the AAAS meeting allowed him to see "what an exciting future science journalism holds." ■

NORTHWEST RESEARCH NEWS AVAILABLE THRU SCIENCENORTHWEST.ORG

NASW members may recall that Pacific Northwest National Laboratory created **ScienceNorthwest.org** as the website for last fall's CASW conference in Spokane. The URL has been retained and was relaunched, in January, as a science-news syndicate for research news from all the major Northwest research institutions.

ScienceNorthwest.org includes links to news releases and research magazines from partner institutions that include the University of Washington, Washington State University, University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Oregon Health & Sciences University, the

Intern hopefuls expectantly await their turn to meet recruiters.

(l to r) Jeff Grabmeier signals when another interview round is about to begin. Across the table are Tom Siegfried (*Science News*) and Robert Coontz (*Science*).

PHOTOS BY LYNNE FRIEDMANN

University of Idaho, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute and the Institute for Systems Biology, both in Seattle.

Research news from other Northwest organizations—such as regional or private colleges, and science centers—will also appear. Ultimately, site organizers hope to add original news material. Media and others can sign up to be notified each time a news release is posted to the site which is primarily designed for news media, but may also be of interest to others interested in science, engineering, and related topics. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory will maintain and update the site. ■

(Source: news release)

PHILIP HILTS NAMED THIRD DIRECTOR OF KNIGHT SCIENCE JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIPS

PHOTO BY BENJAMIN FINLEY HILTS

Philip J. Hilts

Philip J. Hilts, the author of six books, and a prizewinning health and science reporter for the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, has been named the third director of the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships. He will succeed Boyce Rensberger, who retires this summer after 10 years in the job.

Hilts, whose journalism career began in 1968, was the *Times* reporter who broke the story of the tobacco industry's 40- year cover-up of its own research showing that tobacco was harmful and addictive. His most recent book, *Rx for Survival: Why We Must Rise to the Global Health Challenge*, won the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Science and Technology and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year.

A longtime teacher of science journalism at Boston University, Hilts will also take over Rensberger's teaching role in MIT's Graduate Program in Science Writing.

The Knight Science Journalism Fellowships, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in February, is the nation's leading program for advanced education in science for mid-career journalists. Funded chiefly by an endowment from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, it is a component of the Science, Technology, and Society Program in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. It began in 1983 as the Vannevar Bush Fellowships in the Public Understanding of Technology and Science, founded by Victor K. McElheny, who retired in 1998.

For information, visit **web.mit.edu/knight-science**.■

(Source: news release)

IN MEMORIAM

Barbara Seaman

Science journalist and women's health education pioneer

PHOTO BY MICHAEL KEEL

Barbara Seaman

Barbara Seaman, 72, a journalist and patients' rights advocate who became a central figure in the women's health movement by bringing the issue of women's reproductive health to wide public attention, died of lung cancer on Feb. 27 at her home in Manhattan. She had been an NASW member since 1966.

The health movement of the 1970s urged women to educate themselves about their bodies and demand more control over their medical care. Seaman helped shepherd the movement by raising important, often overlooked questions about adequate testing for drugs. Her first book *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill* was considered groundbreaking when it was published in 1969 and led to congressional hearings into the safety of oral contraceptives.

Though *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill* made Seaman an enduring heroine of the women's movement, her work did not find favor everywhere. A self-described "muckraker," her polemical language and approach were sometimes considered distractions by reviewers of her books. She invoked Nazi medical experiments when confronting pharmaceutical companies, the Food and Drug Administration, and others in the position to research, market, and approve hormone drugs for women.

Seaman said her tone was justified because she had marshaled evidence that the pharmaceutical industry suppressed or ignored negative clinical studies of their products.

Born Barbara Ann Rosner on Sept. 11, 1935, in Brooklyn, her father was assistant commissioner of social services for New York City. He mother taught high school English. She earned a bachelor's degree in history from Oberlin College in 1956 and a certificate in science writing from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1968.

With her second husband, Gideon Seaman, a psychiatrist, Seaman wrote a column on marriage for Brides magazine. She was later a columnist for *Ladies' Home Journal* when, in the late 1960s, she began receiving letters from readers concerned about blood clots, heart attacks, depression, and other serious medical conditions after taking oral contraceptives.

"The early pills had 10 times the amount of hormones they have now," Seaman said. "They were a massive overdose."

During the 1970 congressional hearings about the

safety of oral contraceptives, Seaman and other activists were appalled not only by the lack of female witnesses, but also by testimony from one doctor that "estrogen is to cancer what fertilizer is to wheat." Feminists disrupted the hearings in protest.

Public outcry from the hearings stimulated research to find safer drugs as well as drug label warnings. By the 1980s, manufacturers in the United States drastically lowered estrogen doses in oral contraceptives; they had been lowered years earlier in Britain.

Seaman's other books include *Women and the Crisis in Sex Hormones* (1977); *The Greatest Experiment Ever Performed on Women* (2003), an expose of hormone replacement therapy; and *The Body Politic: Dispatches from the Women's Health Revolution* (2008), an anthology of writings from the women's health movement.

In a career that lasted four decades, Seaman remains best known for bringing women's health to the forefront of national consciousness. In an interview with the *New York Times* in 1998, the 40th anniversary of the birth control pill, she spoke about its long history:

"It may be the most-studied pill we have," Seaman said, "but that doesn't mean it doesn't need more study. There's an awful lot we still don't know. There's still a yellow light of caution. It's blinking a lot more slowly than it was, but it's still blinking."

(Sources: The Associated Press, Washington Post, New York Times*)*

Louise A. Williams
Media relations and science writer for NIH

Louise Ann Williams, 57, a senior science writer at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute from 1991 to 2005, died of ovarian cancer on Jan. 24 at her home in Arlington County, Va. She joined NASW in 1987.

At the institute, Williams handled media relations, wrote award-winning public education materials, and developed web content for science news and national public education campaigns. Her work included the institute's *Keep the Beat*, a cookbook on healthful eating. Williams had worked in media and publications in other sections of the National Institutes of Health beginning in 1987.

Williams was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Bethesda, Md. In the early 1970s, she received bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology from the University of Michigan and completed all but her dissertation for a doctorate. From 1973 to 1976, she was an NSF graduate fellow and did anthropological field work on a Navajo reservation in Arizona and in the Lower Illinois River Valley and Oaxaca, Mexico.

In 1982, she received a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University.

(Source: Washington Post*)*

Henry Urrows
NASW life-time member

Henry Urrows, 90, a freelance writer and lifetime member of NASW, died peacefully in his sleep Feb. 23 in Farmington, Conn. Born in Boston, he graduated from Harvard College, class of '38. He enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard in 1941 and served through 1945. In 1940, he married Elizabeth Swett of Waltham, Mass. with whom he collaborated on speeches and articles supporting socially worthy causes until her death in 1993. Urrows worked for many years with Harold Oram, a pioneering fundraiser for nonprofit organizations such as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. ■

(Source:The Urrows family)

LETTERS

I have very much enjoyed and profited from reading the *ScienceWriters* magazine over the years (20 of those, actually). Much of my take on the societal role of science journalism in relation to the role of scientists—as I recently reported it in an article in the book *Journalism, Science, and Society* (Routledge 2007)—has been informed by and sharpened from reading and ruminating on articles in *ScienceWriters*. In Europe, we have no magazine exclusively for science writers, probably because of all our national boundaries and languages, so I have very much appreciated being able to listen in onto yours.

Björn Fjæstad
Stockholm, Sweden

ScienceWriters *welcomes letters to the editor*

A letter must include a daytime telephone number and e-mail address. Letters may be edited.

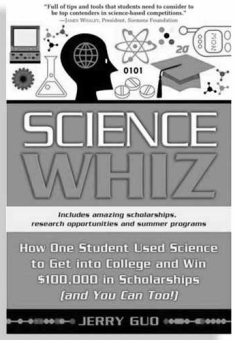
Letters submitted may be used in print or digital form by NASW. Send to Editor, *ScienceWriters*, P.O. Box 1725 Solana Beach, CA 92075, fax 858-793-1144, or e-mail lfriedmann@nasw.org.

BOOKS BY AND FOR MEMBERS

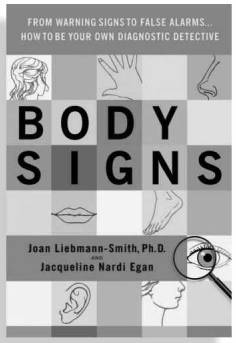
By Ruth Winter

Science Whiz: How One Student Used Science to get into College and Win $100,000 in Scholarships (and You Can, Too!) **by Jerry Guo (NASW), published by SuperCollege LLP.**

A scholarship and college guide for aspiring scientists, *Science Whiz* shows you how to take your interest in science to the next level while still in high school by developing powerful independent research projects, win competitions and scholarships, land a coveted research internship, get published, spend summers traveling the world on scientific expeditions, and more. Guo, a freelancer for *Science*, *Nature*, *The Scientist*, and *Smithsonian*, is a student at Yale who has won more than $120,000 in unrestricted scholarships. His research projects have been as varied as spam filters, Galapagos giant tortoises, flower genetics, and breast cancer. He has reported from the Galapagos Islands, Costa Rica, Three Gorges Dam, and Wolong Panda Reserve. Guo says, "I wrote the book because research at an early age changed my life, and I want to bring these opportunities to other students. It was one of those 'I wish there was something like this at the bookstore when I was back in school.'" He can be reached ji.guo@yale.edu and his publisher's representative is kelly@supercollege.com.

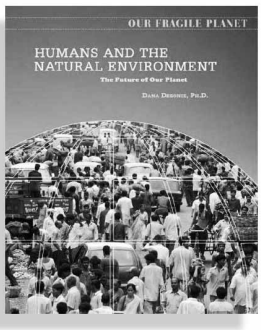


Body Signs: How to Be Your Own Diagnostic Detective **by Joan Liebmann-Smith, Ph.D., (NASW) and Jacqueline Nardi Egan, published by Bantam.**



We all notice things about our bodies that don't seem quite right. But when are these simply harmless physical quirks and when are they signs that a visit to the doctor is in order? Liebmann-Smith, a New York City freelance, produced this comprehensive guide which covers every body part from head to toe—and everything in between—to help you decode the often mysterious messages your body sends you. From brittle hair to hair in all the wrong places, mismatched eyes, streaked nails, inverted nipples, and excessive flatulence, to name just a few, the body supplies endless signs regarding its state of health and wellness. Most of the time, these require nothing more than a trip to the drugstore or cosmetic counter or no treatment at all. At other times, further attention is needed. Drawn from cutting-edge research and the latest scientific literature, and vetted by a panel of 18 medical experts, this book also includes historical trivia and fascinating factoids about each body area in question, plus an invaluable resource section. According to *Publisher's Weekly*, *Body Signs* is "quite thorough and packed with information, a handy and entertaining resource that fulfills its mission 'to alert you, warn you, and maybe even scare you into going to the doctor… and save you the time, expense and anxiety of going' when one isn't needed." To date, *Body Signs* is being translated into 17 languages. Liebmann-Smith can be reached at JLiebmann@aol.com or www.bodysignsbook.com The Bantam publicist, Theresa Zoro, can be reached at tzoro@randomhouse.com or 212-782-8663.

Humans and the Natural Environment: The Future of Our Planet **by Dana Desonie, Ph.D., (NASW), published by Chelsea House.**



An Arizona freelance, Desonie writes "I have been an NASW member for over a decade and finally now have something to report. I have a set of eight reference books on environmental issues aimed at grades 6 to 13 coming out. They are being published by Chelsea House/Facts on File. The first are already out and I just found out this morning that Booklist has named *Oceans: How We Use the Seas* one of the top 10 environmental books for youth!" How and why did she write the series? "I wrote the books because I was ready for a challenge. How it came about was sort of an accident. My husband's colleague, a biology professor, came to dinner on his last night before moving across the country. He mentioned that he was going to be writing a book for Facts on File and gave me the e-mail address of his agent. I contacted her and she gave me a list of sets that she needed authors for. I knew that writing eight books about the environment would be depressing but it was the only set that was left that I felt comfortable about the content. I always say that no one had written a set like that before because there's not enough Prozac in the world."

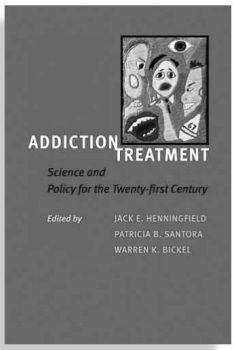
The *Our Fragile Planet* books are, in addition to *Humans and the Natural Environment*:

- *Atmosphere: Air Pollution and its Effects*
- *Oceans: How We Use the Seas*
- *Hydrosphere: Freshwater Systems and Pollution*
- *Biosphere: Ecosystems and Biodiversity Loss*

- *Climate: Causes and Effects of Climate Change*
- *Geosphere: The Land and Its Uses*
- *Polar Regions: Human Impacts on the Arctic and Antarctic*

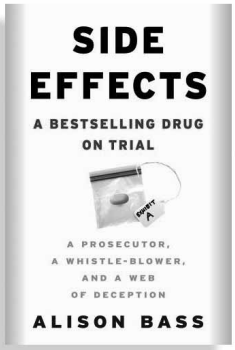
Members can contact Desonie at desonie@cox.net. She doesn't think there is a press representative for Chelsea. That alone is reason for an author to take Prozac.

***Addiction Treatment: Science and Policy For The 21st Century* edited by Jack Henningfield, Patricia Santora, and Warren Bickel, Ph.D. published by Johns Hopkins University Press.**



Two of the editors are clients of Dennis Tartaglia (NASW). The book features two dozen provocative original essays by leading scientists, policymakers, advocates, and artists. Tartaglia says the text provides material for anyone covering drug addiction and its treatment: "It will stimulate new thinking and perhaps provoke some readers—but it will never bore." It deals with such topics as whether addiction is the last excuse for bad behavior and whether addiction treatment even works. In their epilogue, the authors observed that H.L. Mencken's comment is so appropriate to addictions: "For every complex problem there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong." Jack Henningfield is adjunct professor of behavioral biology and director of the Innovators Combating Substance Abuse Program at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Co-editor Warren Bickel is the Wilbur D. Mills Chair of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Prevention and director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Bickel is a principal of HealthSim LLC and works with Catalyst Pharmaceutical Partners, a company that commercializes addiction medications. Editor/author interviews can be arranged through Tartaglia at M Booth & Associates, 212-481-7000, or through Robin Rennison at Johns Hopkins University Press, 410-516-6930.

***Side Effects: A Prosecutor, a Whistleblower and the Truth about a Bestselling Antidepressant* by Alison Bass (NASW), published by Algonquin Books.**



As the mental health reporter for the *Boston Globe*, Bass's front-page reporting on conflicts of interest in medical research, and her series on sexual misconduct among psychiatrists earned a Pulitzer Prize nomination. In this book she turns her investigative skills to a controversial case that exposed the increased suicide rates among adolescents taking antidepressants such as Paxil, Prozac, and Zoloft. *Side Effects* tells the tale of a gutsy assistant attorney general who, along with an unlikely whistle-blower at an Ivy League university, uncovered evidence of deception behind one of the most successful drug campaigns in history. Paxil was the world's bestselling antidepressant in 2002. Pediatric prescriptions soared, even though there was no proof that the drug performed any better than sugar pills in treating children and adolescents, and the real risks the drugs posed were withheld from the public. The New York State Attorney General's office brought an unprecedented lawsuit against giant manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline, the maker of Paxil, for consumer fraud. The successful suit launched a tidal wave of protest that changed the way drugs are tested, sold, and marketed in this country. Bass says her book "grew out of some reporting I did while I was at the *Boston Globe* and then took on a life of its own. I wrote it because I realized there was a great story here about some heroines (and heroes) who spoke truth to power, which could shed light on the larger issue of scientific misconduct and conflicts of interest in medicine." She can be

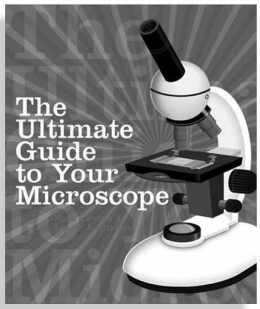
Heads up from Ruth

Almost all the publishers are insisting on electronic rights in their new contracts so they can put our work on the Internet, telephones, e-books, and other devices current or future. The payment split with authors is a matter of negotiation. The real problem, in my opinion, is copyright. Random House—and presumably other publishers will follow—has decided not to embed anything in a downloadable book that would stop one downloader from distributing a book free to their friends or just putting it up on a website. We, of course, will not get any payments for the free downloads. It happened in the music business and now it will happen to us if no one can stop it. My son, Craig, an expert on piracy for the Motion Picture Association believes the only thing to do is to make books so cheap they are not worth stealing. You can buy music on iTunes for 99 cents a download.

I would like to hear some suggestions about downloadable books from NASW authors. Write to me at ruthwrite@aol.com.

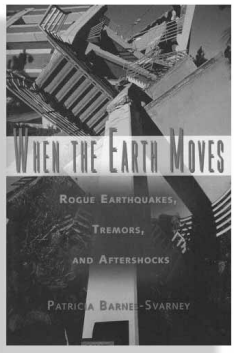
reached at abass@rcn.com or 617-332-5572. Christina Gates, publicist for Algonquin Books, can be reached at 919-967-0108 ext. 20 or christinag@algonquin.com.

The Ultimate Guide to Your Microscope **by Shar Levine (NASW) and Leslie Johnstone, published by Sterling.**



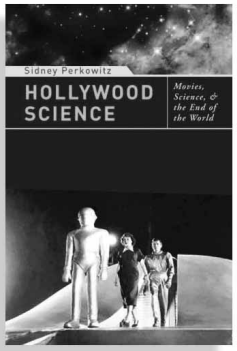
Levine is an award-winning author of children's science books and science toys/kits; Johnstone is head of a high school science department. The two Canadians have written more than 50 books. This book describes how to buy and use a microscope. Each step is illustrated and explained. They write, "A single drop of water can contain incredible living creatures. And pollen from a flower will come alive when sugar water is added to it. But the only way you can see these and many other amazing—and very small—things is with a microscope. All you need to do is learn a few basics, including how to create your own slides. Then dive into all kinds of fun projects, such as putting fingerprints, a spider's web, bird feathers, onion slice, leaves, and other easy-to-find objects under a microscope." Levine can be reached at sharlevine@shaw.ca and by jphone at 604-264-0303

When the Earth Moves: Rogue Earthquakes, Tremors, and Aftershocks **by Patricia Barnes-Svarney (NASW), published by Thunder Mountain Press.**



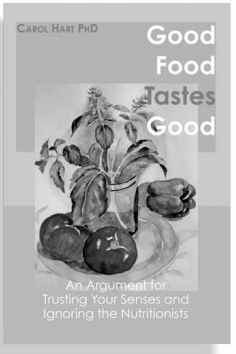
A freelance Endicott, NY writer/photographer, Barnes-Svarney says the concept for the book started with about 500 scientists —a group of geophysicists who crunched a bunch of data and developed a global seismic hazard map. "Some of the shakable places were expected," she says, "most along tectonic plate boundaries, but others have the potential to create violent quakes where you'd least expect. Add to this the horrible tsunamis that came out of 'nowhere' and struck the Indian Ocean, and this book was born." Unlike other natural disasters, scientists are far less able to predict an earthquake—and even the places that are prone to earthquakes still do not and cannot prepare. In her book Barnes-Svarney cites potential "unexpected" sites including the New Madrid Fault Zone right next to the Mississippi River; fractures in the crust that run through parts of New York, central North Carolina, and New Mexico; and a long sinuous cracked ridge from Utah to Montana. She points out that these are especially vulnerable areas, and much of our population is unaware that the threat of an earthquake is quite likely to occur. *When the Earth Moves* is an account of everything you wanted to know about the fault line that runs through Manhattan's Upper West Side, tsunamis, and sea volcanoes—and how to prepare yourself for the earthquake that just might be waiting in your own backyard. Barnes-Svarney may be reached at pat@patbarnes.net.

Hollywood Science: Movies, Science, and the End of the World **by Sidney Perkowitz (NASW), published by Columbia University Press.**



Sidney Perkowitz is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Physics at Emory University. He is also a dedicated film enthusiast. In this entertaining book, he discusses the portrayal of science in more than 100 films, including scientific biographies and documentaries. Beginning with early films like *Voyage to the Moon* and *Metropolis* and concluding with more recent offerings like *The Matrix*, *War of the Worlds*, *A Beautiful Mind*, and *An Inconvenient Truth*, Perkowitz questions how much faith we can put into Hollywood's depiction of scientists and their work: how accurately these films capture scientific fact and theory, whether cataclysms like our collision with a comet can actually happen, and to what extent these films influence public opinion about science and the future. It is a combination of history, scientific theory, anecdotes, and humorous observations. Reach Perkowitz at physp@emory.edu. Publicist is Meredith Howard at mh2306@columbia.edu.

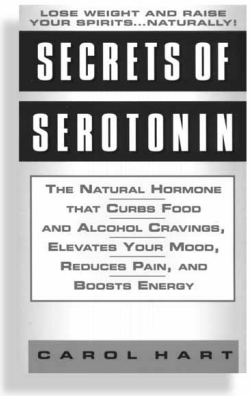
Good Food Tastes Good: An Argument for Trusting Your Senses and Ignoring the Nutritionists **by Carol Hart (NASW), published by SpringStreet Books.**



From baby's first spoonfuls of mushy canned peas on to the adult's low-fat microwaveable meal and sugar-free dessert, we are trained to believe that the senses are untrustworthy guides to the healthiness of food, according to Hart, a Narberth, Penn. freelance. In her book, Hart questions the quality of the science underpinning the nutritious-or-delicious dichotomy. "I undertook this book to answer questions I wanted to know about my food," says Hart, "such as, do I really have to eat broccoli if I don't like how it tastes? That's the basic question eight-year-olds keep asking their parents, and I

think it's a pretty good question. Fundamentally, that's asking whether 120 years of nutrition research is really more trustworthy than 100 million years of evolution." Hart describes how she believes nutritionists have a long, disquieting history of bringing their basic science experiments to the public far too rapidly. She gave as an example Wilbur O. Atwater, the man who invented calorie counting. "The most prominent American nutritionist of the late 19th century. Based on his research, Atwater confidently extolled the standard New England fare of salt codfish, potatoes, and pork and beans as providing the perfect balance of nutrients," Hart writes. "He advised working families not to waste money on those 'empty carbohydrates, fresh fruits and vegetables." Hart can be contacted at chart@nasw.org or 610-664-1879.

***Secrets of Serotonin: The Natural Hormone That Curbs Food and Alcohol Cravings, Reduces Pain, and Elevates Your Mood* by Carol Hart (NASW), published by St. Martin's Griffin.**



Hart observes that one would hardly expect a neurotransmitter to become a household name, but serotonin has that distinction. People seeking treatment for depression, addiction, eating disorders, or chronic pain disorders such as migraine and irritable bowel syndrome learn about serotonin when they are prescribed serotonin-active medication or when they decide to investigate non-pharmaceutical alternatives. *Secrets of Serotonin* was first published by St. Martin's in 1996 and was reprinted eight times, selling well over 150,000 copies. This revised and updated reissue brings the 1996 original up-to-date by including new research findings on such topics as the link between "yo-yo dieting" and serotonin deficiencies, and the reasons why serotonin-related problems (migraines, bulimia, depression) are far more common among women than men. The publicist is Katy Hershberger at Katy.Hershberger@StMartins.com or 646-307-5558. Hart can be contacted at chart@nasw.org or 610-664-1879.

***Tax Tips For Small Businesses: Savvy Ways For Writers, Photographers, Artists And Other Freelancers To Trim Taxes To The Legal Minimum* by Julian Block, self-published.**

Block is not only a lawyer, an accountant, and a former Internal Revenue Service (IRS) special agent, he is also a freelance writer, and he provides invaluable hints that your accountant may not know. For example, freelance writers have choices on how to claim expenses for furniture, computers, and so on, but the rules take some twists and turns. He explores the circumstances for which it is advantageous to employ children in a parent's business (and those for which it is not). He answers what he says is the most frequently asked question: "How long should I hang on to records?" and gives exceptions to the "three-year rule." He also recounts more complex questions from writers, such as the following: "For the past few years, my writing income has been meager. But this year's income will soar because of a six-figure book advance. According to a fellow writer, income averaging will lower my tax tab by many thousands of dollars. When I file next spring, do I need to complete some form for averaging that has to accompany the 1040 form?" Block's response: "The rules provide no break for someone whose income jumps. A top-to-bottom overhaul of the IRS code, the Tax Reform Act of 1986, included a provision that abolished averaging for nearly everybody. My advice is to focus instead on easy and perfectly legal ways for writers to trim taxes. A standard tactic is to stash some of the advance money into one of those retirement plans for self-employed persons." The book also includes tips about making payments at the end of the year, sending checks to the IRS, extensions of time to file, and making refund claims. In addition, Block provides a list of helpful booklets from the IRS such as Pub.463 Travel, Entertainment, Gift and Car expenses. Block has humorous quotations at the beginning of each chapter. For the chapter "Big Breaks for 'Small' Freelancers," he includes a quote from President Ronald Reagan: "If our current tax structure were a TV show, it would either be 'Foul-ups, Bleeps and Blunders'…or if it were a movie, it would be 'Take the Money and Run'… and if the IRS ever wanted a theme song, maybe they'll get Sting to do 'Every breath you take, every move you make, I'll be watching you.'" In the "Get Car Smart" chapter, he includes the bumper sticker quote: "IRS: We've got what it takes to take what you've got." Block and his book are available at www.julianblocktaxexpert.com. ■

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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continued on page 32

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continued from page 31

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