



ScienceWriters™

National Association
of Science Writers, Inc.

Spring
2009

GOOGLE
SETTLEMENT ON
AUTHORS' RIGHTS

ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR
DOWNSIZING

FIGHTING FOR OPEN
ACCESS
AND THE DEFEAT
OF H.R. 801

FROM THE PRESIDENT:
NASW CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT
VOTE

SCIENCE
JOURNALISM AND
THE MEDIA SHIFT

ENTERING THE
E-TEXTBOOK
MARKET

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FROM THE EDITOR

Financial woes in the economy at large, and the news industry in particular, continue to roil the waters for science writers.

What can individuals do? Plenty.

This issue contains information on the Google Book Search Class Action Settlement and what authors need to do to protect their rights and claim their fair share of settlement money.

Two articles on downsizing examine the ethical responsibilities both of those delivering bad news and those on the receiving end.

In need of low-cost or no-cost journalism training to maintain a competitive edge? Read about the resources available through The Poynter Institute's News University (NewsU). Enrollment in this virtual e-learning campus recently topped 100,000.

Looking for new writing markets? Jane Stein offers the pros/cons of writing e-textbook writing. And the NASW Grievance Committee reports on its successful track record assisting members in collecting payments from laggard publishers and clients.

As individuals and as a community, we'll continue to find ways to weather the storm and to advance the profession of science writing.



Lynne Friedmann

IN THIS ISSUE

NEWS

- 23 Chicago Party
- 24 Raeburn Kicks Off
Virginia Tech Series
- 25 Letters to the Editor
- 25 In Memoriam
- 26 AAAS Fellows
- 27 Science Journalism Awards
- 28 NASW Contacts
- 28 New Members

COLUMNS

- 12 Scholarly Pursuits
- 15 Books By and For Members
- 18 President's Letter
- 18 Cyberbeat
- 19 Dispatches from the Director
- 20 The PIO Forum
- 21 The Free Lance
- 21 Our Gang
- 22 Regional Groups

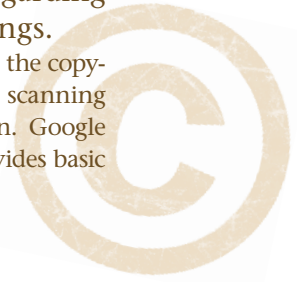
FEATURES

- 1 Google and the Class Action Suit for Writer's Rights
- 2 Downsizing 101: Giving the Bad News
- 4 Downsizing 102: When It Happens to You
- 6 NASW Education Committee
- 7 Entering the E-Textbook Market
- 8 The Shift in How Science Meets the Media
- 10 Fighting H.R. 801, the Fair Copyright in Research Act
- 11 NASW Grievance Committee
- 14 Tips for Surviving an IRS Audit

Google Book Search Copyright Class Action Settlement

If you are a book author, book publisher, or other person who owns a copyright in a book or other writing, your rights may be affected by a class action settlement regarding Google's scanning and use of books and other writings.

Authors and publishers filed a class action lawsuit, claiming Google violated the copyrights of authors, publishers and other copyright holders ("Rightsholders") by scanning in-copyright books and inserts, and displaying excerpts, without permission. Google denies the claims. The parties have agreed to a settlement. This summary provides basic information about the settlement. "Books" and "inserts" are described below.



WHAT DOES THE SETTLEMENT PROVIDE?

The settlement, if court-approved, will authorize Google to scan in-copyright books and inserts in the United States, and maintain an electronic database of books. For out-of-print books and, if permitted by rightsholders of in-print books, Google will be able to sell access to individual books and institutional subscriptions to the database, place advertisements on any page dedicated to a book, and make other commercial uses of books. At any time, rightsholders can change instructions to Google regarding any of those uses. Through a Book Rights Registry ("Registry") established by the settlement, Google will pay rightsholders 63 percent of all revenues from these uses.

Google also will pay \$34.5 million to establish and fund the initial operations of the Registry and for notice and settlement administration costs, and at least \$45 million for cash payments to rightsholders of books and inserts that Google scans prior to the deadline for opting out of the settlement.

WHO IS INCLUDED?

The settlement class includes all persons worldwide who own a U.S. copyright interest in any book or insert. The meaning of "U.S. copyright interest" is broad. Please read the full notice to determine whether you are included in the settlement.

There are two sub-classes:

- The "Author sub-class" (authors of books and other writings, and their heirs, successors and assigns), and
- The "Publisher sub-class" (publishers of books and periodicals, and their successors and assigns).

WHAT MATERIAL IS COVERED?

"Books" include in-copyright written works, such as novels, textbooks, dissertations, and other writings, that were published or distributed in hard copy format on or before Jan. 5, 2009. U.S. works must be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office to be included in the settlement. "Books" do not include periodicals, personal papers, sheet music, and public domain or government works.

"Inserts" include any text and other material, such as forewords, essays, poems, quotations, letters, song lyrics, children's book illustrations, sheet music, charts, and graphs, if independently protected by U.S. copyright, contained in a book, a government work or a public domain book published on or before Jan. 5, 2009 and, if U.S. works, registered (alone or as part of another work) with the U.S. Copyright Office. Inserts do not include pictorial content (except for children's book illustrations), or any public domain or government works.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Read the full notice, which is available at <http://www.googlebooksettlement.com>. Decide whether you should:

- **Remain in the settlement.** If you do so, you will be bound by the court's rulings, including a release of your claims against Google.
- **Object to or comment on the settlement.** You must object/comment in writing by May 5, 2009.
- **Opt out of the settlement and keep your right to sue Google individually.** You must opt out in writing by May 5, 2009.
- **File a claim for a cash payment** (if you are eligible to do so). You must file your claim by Jan. 5, 2010.

The court has appointed class counsel to represent the two sub-classes. If the settlement is approved, class counsel for the author sub-class will request attorneys' fees and expenses that Google has agreed to pay. You can also hire your own attorney at your own cost.

The court will determine whether to approve the settlement at a fairness hearing on June 11, 2009. ■

(Source: Court-Approved Summary Notice)

Get complete information, including the full notice:

VISIT <http://www.googlebooksettlement.com>

CALL 888-356-0248

WRITE Google Book Search Settlement Administrator
c/o Rust Consulting
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Downsizing 101

Charged with giving the bad news? *Here are your ethical responsibilities*

BY BRUCE WEINSTEIN, PH.D.
THE ETHICS GUY®

Most discussions about downsizing focus on the legal, economic, or psychological issues raised by this practice. These are essential concerns, but we rarely consider how or why downsizing is also an ethical issue. The next two columns are an attempt to redress that problem. Here, we'll consider your ethical responsibilities if you are the one charged with giving the bad news. In the second column, we'll look at what you ought and ought not to do if you are the one being downsized.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Downsizing refers to a company's decision to reduce its workforce for reasons other than poor performance, criminal conduct, or unethical behavior on the part of those being let go. The word is a euphemism meant to soften the blow as much for the company as it is for the soon-to-be eliminated. There is nothing wrong with making a difficult task easier to bear. In fact, there are good ethical reasons for doing so, as we'll soon see. Still, there is no getting around the fact that downsizing is a type of layoff, with all that this implies. The ethical manager will keep in mind what is really going on when he or she is charged with letting good people go.

WHY DOWNSIZING IS AN ETHICAL ISSUE

Any time we're faced with a decision that can affect the rights or well-being of others, we're looking at an ethical issue. No matter how strong the justifications for reducing the workforce are, or seem to be, laying off loyal and productive employees is an upsetting experience for all concerned, and those on the receiving end face not just financial but psychological injury.

How so? For many of us, the workplace isn't just a place for work; it's where we develop and maintain some of the most important relationships we have. During the week, we spend more time with co-workers than with our families, and for better or worse, work is how many of us define ourselves and give meaning to our lives. Getting laid off compromises all of these things, so managers should think of downsizing as a deep and painful trauma for those being let go, and not as a mere setback or reversal of fortune.

Yes, downsizing has legal implications, and it is understandable that companies want

BRUCE WEINSTEIN, PH.D., IS THE CORPORATE CONSULTANT AND PUBLIC SPEAKER KNOWN AS THE ETHICS GUY. HE HAS APPEARED ON "THE TODAY SHOW," "GOOD MORNING AMERICA," "ANDERSON COOPER 360," "AMERICAN MORNING," AND MANY OTHER NATIONAL TELEVISION SHOWS. HIS COLUMN, "THE ETHICS GUY," APPEARS EVERY OTHER WEEK ON BUSINESSWEEK.COM/MANAGING/. THEETHICSGUY.COM

to minimize their liability when they downsize. Yes, there are economic matters to consider, which makes downsizing a management issue, too. But at its core, downsizing is an ethical issue, and the good manager is concerned not just with protecting the company's financial and legal interests but also with honoring the dignity and integrity of the human beings who work on the front lines and who are the lifeblood of the organization.

DOING IT THE RIGHT WAY

I propose the following management guidelines for downsizing ethically:

1 Do it in person.

This seems an obvious thing to do, but I'm surprised by the number of reports I've heard about employees who were downsized on the phone or by e-mail. Managers who use this method claim it makes the whole thing easier to deal with. Yes, but for whom? Certainly not for the employee being let go. As uncomfortable as it is to end someone's employment, the right thing to do is to have a private conversation with him or her in person. The ethical principle of respect for others requires nothing less.

2 Do it privately.

Respecting others means honoring their wishes and values, and it is reasonable to assume that most people would prefer to have troubling news delivered in private. This means in your office, with the door closed. I've heard of managers who broke the bad news at the employee's cubicle within earshot of everyone in the vicinity. Again, one would think that this would be a matter of common sense and common decency, but apparently neither is all that common.

3 Give the person your full attention.

Interrupting the conversation to take phone calls, check your BlackBerry, or engage in other distractions isn't just rude, it tells the other person that the matter at hand isn't all that important to you. That's yet another violation of the principle of respect. The impulse to turn your attention to less troubling matters is understandable, but along with the privileges of being a manager come responsibilities, and downsizing with integrity is one of the most important obligations you have.

4 Be honest, but not brutally so.

Must you always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Yes, if you're giving sworn testimony in a court of law, but beyond the courtroom the duty to tell the truth is constrained by the duty to minimize harm. In practical terms, this means being forthright with the employee but also choosing with the care the words, tone of voice, and demeanor you use. Compassion—literally, “suffering with” someone—honors the dignity of your employee and speaks to the better part of your nature.

We can't always make things better, but we shouldn't make things worse.

5 Don't rush.

A shock takes time to absorb. Imagine that your physician says you have a serious illness. Wouldn't you expect him or her to allow the news sink in, rather than to summarily dismiss you and call for the next patient? Being let go isn't as serious as getting a diagnosis of cancer or heart disease, but it is still a major, life-changing event. You owe your employee the space to absorb the information, and you may have to explain more than once what is happening and why. You would demand nothing less if it were happening to you, and you would be right to do so.

YOU VS. THE COMPANY

These guidelines assume that the organization has good reasons for downsizing—but what if you don't see things this way? For example, suppose your company believes that it is necessary to shift its customer service jobs overseas, and you believe that doing so is



DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY DRIVE THE FIVE KEY MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- 1** Do it in person
- 2** Do it privately
- 3** Give the person your full attention
- 4** Be honest, but not brutally so
- 5** Don't rush

both unethical and bad for business. In this case, you not only have a right to object, you have an ethical obligation to object.

Does this mean that you should be prepared to give up your job on moral grounds? Not necessarily. Depending on your personal circumstances, your duties to your family or to yourself might justifiably override the value of making a statement by quitting. Even if you are committed to keeping as many jobs in the U.S. as possible, this goal will take time to achieve, and it may be easier to do so from within the company than from the outside.

The bottom line is important, but so are the values of respect, compassion, and simple human decency. The good manager takes all of these into account—always. ■

(Source: *Ask the Ethics Guy!* BusinessWeek, Sept. 12, 2008.)

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR THE SUDDENLY UNEMPLOYED

- 1 Get angry...later
- 2 Don't take it personally
- 3 Get a recommendation
- 4 Be a self-promoter
- 5 Grief is good
- 6 Accentuate the positive

Downsizing 102

When It Happens to You

Being laid off is one of the most traumatic events we can experience. Consider these guidelines should you find yourself suddenly out of a job.

BY BRUCE WEINSTEIN, PH.D.

Americans are bracing for massive job losses in the wake of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Even before the recent worries on Wall Street, anxiety about employment was high; earlier this year, the U.S. Labor Department released a report stating that there had been a net loss of 63,000 jobs, which was the biggest monthly decline in five years.

Whether or not your own job is in jeopardy in the near future, at some point in your career you may become a victim of downsizing. What should you do? What you should avoid doing at all costs? We'll consider these questions in this column, the second of a two-part series on the ethics of downsizing.

WHAT'S ETHICS GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Being laid off is one of the most traumatic events we can experience. On the Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale, getting fired is the eighth most stressful life experience, behind the death of a spouse (No. 1) or going to jail (No. 4), but ahead of the death of a close friend (No. 17), foreclosure on a mortgage or loan (No. 21) or in-law troubles (No. 24). Rightly or wrongly, many of us define ourselves by our jobs, which is why one of the first questions we ask someone we meet is, "What do you do?"

I've already shown why downsizing has ethical implications for the bearers of bad news. But ethical issues are also at stake for those on the receiving end. If you've just been downsized, I'll bet your first response was, "That's not fair!" Even if your company had—or believes it had—good reasons to eliminate your position, from your point of view it feels as though an injustice has occurred. And of course fairness is one of five fundamental ethical principles. Even if it's hard to see how ethics plays a role in other areas of your life, when you're on the receiving end of a perceived injustice, ethics moves front and center into your field of vision.



But it's not just fairness that is at stake here. When you ask yourself, "How will I be able to pay my bills now?" the underlying question is, "How can I meet my responsibilities to my family, myself, and those to whom I owe money?" All of these responsibilities are ethical ones and are applications of the principles of avoiding harm, of making things better, and showing respect for others.

Finally, we've all known people who let the loss of their job get the better of them, so the ethical principle of compassion, which applies to how we treat ourselves, too, is also on the table.

A CODE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

I propose the following guidelines for you to consider, should you find yourself suddenly out of a job.

1 Get angry...later.

It's easy to react with hostility when you're told that your position is being eliminated. Don't. The suggestions I've made for dealing with anger-provoking situations are especially relevant in this circumstance. It's only human to be terribly upset or even filled with rage, but acting on those feelings may violate the do-no-harm principle. Less obvious but also important to think about is the damage you would do to a valued relationship that you may not be able to undo. You won't regret holding back, but you will regret losing your cool.

2 Don't take it personally.

We'd like to be able to control our lives and shape our destiny through the sheer force of will, but sometimes things happen to us that have absolutely nothing to do with what we've done or who we are. This is one of those times.

3 Get a recommendation.

One of the best ways for a potential employer to find out how valuable you are is to hear from your current boss, but you may have to be the one to make this happen. Get a recommendation in writing as soon as possible. Volunteer to write it yourself. If a letter is out of the question or doesn't arrive in a timely fashion, ask your boss to send you a short e-mail; even a one- or two-line testimonial will do. Get your boss's permission to put his or her direct phone number on your résumé and give out at job interviews.

4 Be a self-promoter.

We're raised to believe that it's wrong to toot your own horn, but if ever there were a time to put that belief aside, it's now. As Rabbi Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be?" (Of course, he wisely added, "But if I am not for others, what am I?") One of our greatest challenges is striking the right balance between self-absorption and devotion to others. Still, there is not only no harm in standing up for yourself; it is unethical not to do so.

Believing in yourself is one of the best ways of applying the principle of compassion to your own life. Consider this as well: How can others benefit from your expertise if you don't get the word out?

5 Grief is good.

Grief is a natural and healthy response to losing something or someone of value in your life, and taking your grief seriously is another important way to treat yourself with kindness. It is a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek counseling in the wake of

being downsized. If you sustained an injury to your back, you would have no qualms about getting physical therapy. Why shouldn't you seek the appropriate remedy when your world is turned upside down? Many of us still attach a stigma to psychotherapy—wrongly so.

6 Accentuate the positive.

Is it possible that one of the worst things that could happen to you might turn out to be the best? Take a look at Harvey Mackay's *We Got Fired!: ...And It's the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Us* (Ballantine Books, 2004). Michael Bloomberg, Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, Home Depot founder Bernie Marcus, Lee Iacocca, and Robert Redford are just a few of the wildly successful people who explain how losing a job led to something much better.

Yes, it's dispiriting to get laid off, but Mackay's book reminds us of the riches that may lie just beyond the horizon, which would have been unavailable had we stayed where we were.

BOTTOM LINE

Taking the high road is challenging enough when all is going well. The real test of your character comes from how you respond when things are at their worst. Following the above guidelines will help you show the world—and yourself—that nothing, not even the loss of your job, can hold you back from success. ■

Note: Nothing in this column is intended to be or should be construed as legal advice. Please consult an attorney for legal questions you may have about your termination. ■

(Source: BusinessWeek, Sept. 26, 2008.)

At a time when the economic crisis afflicting the news industry has reduced the size of training budgets in many newsrooms, The Poynter Institute's News University (NewsU) has experienced exponential growth and become a "go to" training resource for many journalists.

NEWS UNIVERSITY: VIRTUAL E-LEARNING CAMPUS

NewsU courses are inexpensive—and often free.

NewsU is the world's leading source of online journalism training and attracts journalists, educators, students, corporate communicators, bloggers, and others interested in journalism, to a virtual e-learning campus. NewsU's self-directed courses, webinars, and online group seminars are planned and produced by Poynter faculty and staff, and include offerings created in conjunction with one of more than 30 partners. NewsU users, representing more than 200 countries, take one of more than 85 online courses on topics ranging from writing better ledes to multimedia storytelling.

Recently NewsU recorded its 100,000 registered users, making it bigger than the student body of any U.S. university. NewsU was launched by The Poynter Institute in 2005 with funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. More information at <http://www.newsu.org>.

(Source: news release)

NASW Education Committee Activities

BY ROB IRION AND JEFF GRABMEIER

The NASW Education Committee ran several programs at the AAAS meeting in Chicago. For the first time, NASW gave travel fellowships to 10 undergraduates to attend the meeting. In exchange, the students covered sessions for NASW's website. We paired each student with a mentor, edited their news stories, and posted them at www.nasw.org/resource/beginning/aaas2008.

The students embraced the opportunity. One wrote: "Few students have this spectacular experience as an undergraduate...having the ability to not only see the AAAS events, but truly step into the role of reporter, was a fantastic experience I will not soon forget."

For our annual mentoring program, we paired 31 graduate students and undergraduates with mentors from all walks of the profession, matching their interests as closely as possible. Elder statesman David Perlman of the *San Francisco Chronicle* kindly agreed to speak at our orientation. Each pair then spent time at the meeting talking privately, attending sessions, or even filing stories or editing multimedia reports.

NASW also sponsored an internship fair, attended by 45 students. Freelancer Jenny Cutraro once again organized the fair, and volunteer Melissa Blouin helped run it. Fifteen recruiters participated, including major national magazines and online news sites, several federal labs, and a private company. Students signed up for several short chats with editors;

we expect many of these connections will lead to internships.

"I was surprised by how many big names in the science writing world attended," one student wrote. "The NASW really did a great job in pulling it all together." ■

ROB IRION AND JEFF GRABMEIER ARE CO-CHAIRS OF THE NASW EDUCATION COMMITTEE.



NASW Education Committee activities at the 2009 AAAS meeting included the ever popular internship fair (top). The kick-off to the mentoring program featured sage advice from David Perlman. A group photo of winners of the NASW Travel Fellowships. (Bottom) Lynne Friedmann, David Perlman, and Cris Russell smile for the camera.

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A New Way to Learn, a New Way to Publish Textbooks

BY JANE J. STEIN

With most college textbooks running more than \$100—some top \$200—students and teachers alike are looking for ways to get books cheaper. One place to look is on the Internet: E-textbooks can often cost less than half the price of a paperback version.

While it's still early in the development process, traditional publishers and entrepreneurs are entering the e-textbook market. With about four million students a year taking online courses in the United States, it's a potentially huge market to tap. While most courses use "regular" textbooks, e-books will surely increase in popularity.

After three print versions of *Decisions for Healthy Living*, a college health education textbook I co-authored with Buzz Pruitt, professor of Health Education at Texas A&M University, we opted for an e-version. Several things went into our decision:

- We were not pleased with some of our publisher's demands about content (we're not alone here);
- We were not pleased with the marketing done by the publisher (another common complaint);
- Used books, which are very easy to purchase online, return nothing to authors;
- We had access to experts in distance learning and computer know-how in putting books online;
- It was time for a change and time to experiment.

The e-version of *Decisions for Healthy Living* is used at Texas A&M, University of Maryland, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and some community colleges. Students buy the right to an online version for six months, and each student gets his or her own password to access the book. The book sells to students for \$45; the print version is nearly \$100.

Early results are promising. About 400 students a year at Texas

A&M have logged on for the book, and we don't hear complaints from them. And from the teacher's viewpoint, the e-book results in a broader course experience. For example, e-links in the book get students directly to other sources of information—the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other popular websites. "Put it all together—lecture, book, instant sources—and the students get everything they need to pass the final," according to one professor.

We have learned that the e-book works best in courses designed for e-learning. At the University of Maryland, for example, about three dozen students take an online health education course in the winter and summer, and most buy the e-book. Because it's a distance learning course, most of the students live off campus, and it's not as convenient for them to borrow a textbook from a roommate or read it in the library. There also is the convenience factor for these students. They tend to be mobile—on the road for work or commuting—and most often have a laptop and therefore their textbook with them. From the author's perspective, this is all good because it prevents—or minimizes—students sharing an e-book. Students taking an in-class course at a Dallas community college, in contrast, did not like the e-version—they wanted everything in print—and eventually the Pruitt-Stein textbook was ultimately dropped.

The initial approach to marketing the book was to contact community colleges where a personal health education course is taught. Four thousand e-mails yielded a dozen responses, but to date no schools have signed on.

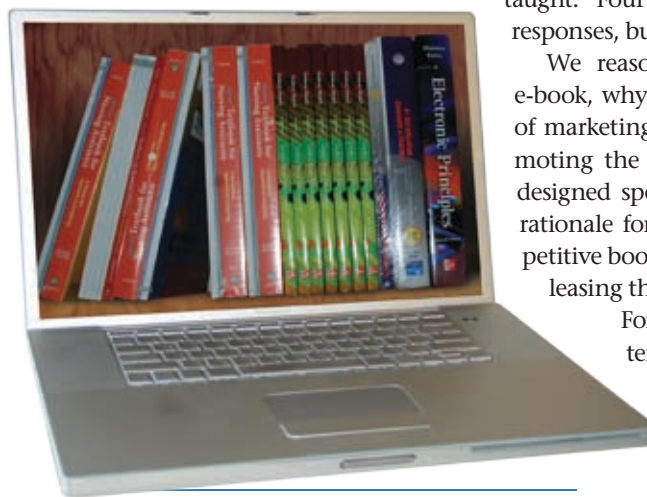
We reasoned that if we have an innovative e-book, why not do innovative marketing? Instead of marketing the book, the next plan calls for promoting the online personal health course that is designed specifically to mesh with the book. The rationale for this is that there are dozens of competitive books being marketed, but fewer people are leasing their online courses.

For Buzz and me, this venture is a contemporary take on self-publishing with added expertise. We have a small team of specialists to do the marketing, put the book online with web links and provide passwords. An e-book also makes updates easier. Delete an old table or graph; insert one with the latest data.

While we took the entrepreneurial approach, traditional textbook publishers also are getting into the act. Sites such as **atomicdog.com** ("we break down books

into their basic parts—atomic parts") and **chapters.com** can get you e-textbooks from a range of publishers. There's a lot of flexibility online, too. For \$1.99, chapters.com will give you...well, a chapter. And McGraw-Hill Education, among others, lets you design a textbook online to your specifications. Select the chapters you want, leave out those that are not germane to your course, and—voila—you have an instant new book.

Another e-textbook operation, **CourseSmart.com**, is reaching out to the Green Generation. Its marketing materials note that they have 4,700 books with an average costs savings of nearly \$60 in addition to saving more than 149,000 trees. ■



...traditional publishers and entrepreneurs are entering the e-textbook market.

NASW MEMBER JANE J. STEIN, THE CO-AUTHOR OF *DECISIONS FOR HEALTHY LIVING*, IS A WASHINGTON, D.C.-BASED HEALTH WRITER AND EDITOR, PUBLICATIONS MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT.

Science Journalism: Supplanting the Old Media?

BY GEOFF BRUMFIEL

John Timmer's slide into journalism was so gradual even he can't put his finger on the point at which he stopped being a researcher.

He started reading Internet websites and message boards a decade ago, while he was working as a postdoc in a developmental neurobiology lab at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. One day, one of his favorite sites, *Ars Technica*, announced that it was looking for someone to help with its science coverage. It was 2005, and a school board in Dover, Penn., had gone to court over the promotion of intelligent design. "I thought, wow, it really feels like the public has completely lost touch with what science is all about," says Timmer. "So I basically e-mailed the existing author and volunteered."

Over the next few years Timmer's work on the site grew steadily, while his research career stalled. Today the 42-year-old draws a full-time salary as *Ars Technica*'s science editor. He works with writers echoing his earlier experience: graduate students and postdocs type up brief summaries on research in their areas of expertise during down time and lunch breaks. The write-ups are more technical than you might read in a newspaper—a recent post included a lengthy discussion on "functionalizing" cells to bind them together with DNA—but that's fine, Timmer says. The idea is to provide people already interested in science with greater insight into how research works. A typical posting can earn a writer anywhere from the price of a pair of movie tickets to around \$100, and that is often incentive enough for young academics.

Timmer's tale is emblematic of a shift in the way science meets the media. In part because of a generalized downturn, especially in newspaper revenues, the traditional media are shedding full-time science journalists along with various other specialist and indeed generalist reporters. A *Nature* survey of 493 science journalists shows that jobs are being lost and the workloads of those who remain are on the rise (for full results see <http://tinyurl.com/c38kp6>). At the same time, researcher-run blogs and websites are growing apace in both number and readership. Some are labors of love; others are subsidized philanthropically, or trying to run as businesses.

IT'S A BLOG WORLD

Traditional journalists are increasingly looking to such sites to find story ideas. At the same time, they rely heavily on the public-relations departments of scientific organizations. As newspapers employ fewer people with science-writing backgrounds, these press offices are employing more. Whether directly or indirectly, scientists and the institutions at which they work are having more influence than ever over what the public reads about their work.

The amount of material being made

Independent science coverage is not just endangered, it's dying.

available to the public by scientists and their institutions means that "from the pure standpoint of communicating science to the general public, we're in a kind of golden age," says Robert Lee Hotz, a science journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*. But that pure standpoint is not, or should not be, all that there is to media coverage of science. Hotz doubts that blogs can fulfil the additional roles of watchdog and critic that the traditional media at their best aim to fulfil. That sort of work seems to be on its way out. "Independent science coverage is not just endangered, it's dying," he says.

What's more, the amount of material

available is not a good proxy for its reach. Press releases and blogs will not find the same broad audience once served by the mass media, says Peter Dykstra, who was executive producer of CNN's science, technology, environment, and weather unit until it was closed down last year. Now at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, an independent think tank in Washington D.C., he says that science and environment news will be "ghettoized and available only to those who choose to seek it out."

Science journalism boomed in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the United States—where by 1989 some 95 newspapers had dedicated science sections—and elsewhere, the field's precipitous rise was supported by buoyant profits in the media sector. "The model of a major paper was that they did really serious science coverage," says Deborah Blum, who won a 1992 Pulitzer Prize for her reporting in the *Sacramento Bee* on the use of animals in research, and who now teaches at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. But there was a problem with the science sections, she says. "They didn't make money."

Most papers were willing to support their sections, even at a loss, because science was the thing to have. Today, in a harsher mass-media landscape, that has changed. Across the United States, newspaper science sections have been shut down: this month *The Boston Globe* stopped running its weekly science and health section. Nor is the written word the only casualty, as the closure of Dykstra's seven-person unit at CNN indicates. *Nature's* survey shows that, of those working in the United States and Canada, one in three had seen staffing cuts at their organization.

The European industry has not yet reached the level of crisis seen in the United States, says Holger Wormer, a professor of science journalism at the University of Dortmund in Germany. Many newspapers in Germany are considering staff cuts but, at the moment, science journalists are faring relatively well. "Science departments are still small but they are regarded as quite important," he says. Because larger German papers such as *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* have science sections, smaller papers are willing to support their own science coverage, at least for now. In France, declining circulations are also creating problems, according to Stéphane Foucart, a science writer at *Le Monde*. In the past six months, *Le Monde* has scaled back its science

GEOFF BRUMFIEL IS A SENIOR NEWS REPORTER FOR *NATURE*.

coverage. Newspapers and broadcast outlets in the United Kingdom are also under pressure, and science and environmental jobs are among those that have been lost.

Unsurprisingly, among the science reporters who remain, the workload is on the rise. *Nature's* survey reveals that 59 percent of journalists have seen the number of items they work on in a given week increase over the past five years. They are not just doing more reporting, but more types of reporting. Many are now being asked to provide content for blogs, web stories, and podcasts—something they weren't doing five years ago.

FAST AND DIRTY

Under these straitened conditions the mainstream media's need for quick and accurate science content is being met primarily by public-relations departments, according to Fiona Fox, director of the Science Media Centre, an organization in London that supplies journalists with scientific information (*Nature's* editor-in-chief, Philip Campbell, sits on the Science Media Centre's board, and the Nature Publishing Group provides support for it). Mark Henderson, science editor for *The Times*, based in London, says that he tries to avoid relying solely on releases "as much as possible," but "if there's a good press release and you've got four stories to write in a day, you're going to take that short cut." *Nature's* survey shows press releases to be a top source of story ideas for science journalists, with 39 percent routinely quoting from them directly.

This demand for stories and ideas has been matched by an increase in supply. In Britain as in the United States, contraction in the media has made jobs in public relations particularly attractive for students at science-writing programmes. "You'd be amazed at the diversity of places for science communicators," says Blum. Government agencies, universities, museums, and non-governmental organizations have all hired her students, she says—almost all of whom are finding jobs, despite the woes of the traditional media.

The Science Media Centre demonstrates the new opportunities that exist now. It was started in 2002 by an amalgam of non-commercial and commercial interests seeking to influence the public debate on news topics such as genetically modified foods. What began as a relatively modest attempt to connect journalists to sources of scientific expertise has expanded dramatically over the past seven years. Today, the centre's six-person staff sends out daily e-mails filled with quotes from prominent scientists on the latest news that end up in tomorrow's stories. It has also begun providing fact boxes and background documents that journalists can insert directly into their coverage. Fox is happy at the centre's success, but uneasy too. Ideally, she says, science journalists should be picking up the phone and talking to scientists directly: "We are successful because of a serious problem in journalism, and it's not one to be celebrated."

STRAIGHT TO THE MASSES

As journalists become more dependent on scientific public relations, scientists themselves have begun reaching out to mass audiences through the Internet. Such outreach is not new; but unlike books and lectures, science blogs operate with a quick

turnaround that more closely resembles that of the traditional media. The most successful sites are drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each month.

Many of those blogs were started by scientists who simply wanted to reach the public with information about their research. "I'd always find that people were interested in what I did," says Derek Lowe, a researcher with Vertex Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, Mass., and author of *In the Pipeline*, a blog about drug discovery and the pharmaceutical industry. "Most people have no idea how drugs are actually found," he says. Lowe started his blog in early 2002, and now it regularly draws around 200,000 page views a week.

Paul Myers, a biologist at the University of Minnesota in Morris, says that he started his blog Pharyngula "largely out of boredom," but now that he gets more than half-a-million weekly page views, he sees it as a valuable tool for talking to a public audience. Myers freely admits that his readers "are not just there for the science"—his attacks on religion are a mainstay of the blog's appeal. But he certainly considers himself a source of scientifically reliable information for his readers.

Although science blogging did not start off as a business, there are attempts to make it one. Since 2006, the publisher of *Seed*, a magazine about science, has gathered more than 100 science blogs—including Pharyngula—on a range of topics on to a single website, ScienceBlogs, and now pays its bloggers on the basis of how many hits their posts receive. Fabien Savenay, a senior vice-president for marketing at Seed Media Group in New York, declines to say whether the blog site makes money for the organization. But, he says, the project "has been a successful franchise for us in that it has

great traffic and engagement." Another U.S. magazine, *Discover*, has recently been amassing a smaller but impressive stable of bloggers, too. Other magazines, such as *WIRED*, prefer a more journalistic approach to blogging, using a team of reporters on their science blog to provide a pace, range and quality of posting no individual could match.

Bloggers with a science background, like bloggers on most other topics, often demonstrate open scorn for the mainstream media (MSM in blogpeak). "You get a press release that is slightly rehashed by somebody in the newsroom and it goes in the paper! It's wrong, it's sensationalist, it erodes the public trust in scientific endeavour," says Bora Zivkovic, author of *A Blog Around the Clock* on ScienceBlogs and an online community manager for the Public Library of Science journals. Myers takes a similar view. "Newspapers realize that they can get their audience by peddling crap instead of real science," he says. Not surprisingly, those who came to blogging from journalism—such as Carl Zimmer, who writes for a range of publications, including the *New York Times*, and blogs at *Discover*—tend to disagree. But Larry Moran, a biochemistry professor at the University of Toronto, Ontario, who blogs at Sandwalk, seemed to speak for many bloggers when he recently wrote "Most of what passes for science journalism is so bad we will be better of [sic] without it."

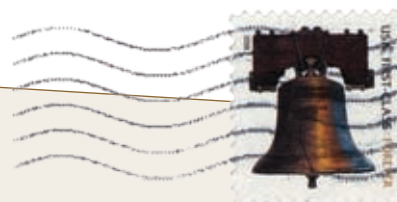
While journalists such as Zimmer expand their mainstream work into their blogs, bloggers with roots in the lab are moving

JOURNALISM continued on page 29

Protest to Bill Closing Access to NIH Research

NASW has joined CASW, the Society of Environmental Journalists, and the World Federation of Science Journalists in protesting H.R. 801, the Fair Copyright in Research Works Act, which would repeal open access to NIH-funded science. ■

NASW members may want to write to their own local Congressional representatives. Additional information:
<http://www.taxpayeraccess.org> and
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.uscongress/legislation.111hr801>



To: The Honorable John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI)
Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee
and
The Honorable Lamar Smith (R-TX),
Ranking Republican of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: The Fair Copyright in Research Works Act

Dear Reps. Conyers and Smith,

On behalf of several national and international organizations of science and environment writers, we strongly urge the House Judiciary Committee to reject H.R. 801, "The Fair Copyright in Research Works Act," introduced in the House of Representatives and referred to your committee on February 3, 2009.

As Thomas Jefferson put it, "An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic." As journalistic organizations whose mission it is to help uphold Jefferson's charge, we find it unacceptable that H.R. 801 would prohibit American taxpayers from accessing the results of crucial biomedical and other research funded by their taxpayer dollars. This bill could severely affect the media's important role in providing independent coverage of scientific research and its results to the American public.

This bill would reverse the National Institutes of Health Public Access Policy and make it impossible for other agencies to put similar policies in place. It would prohibit federal agencies from requiring, as a condition of funding, public access to the products of the research they fund. The current NIH policy grants millions of Americans access to critical health care information in the thousands of papers published each month in the NIH's PubMed Central Database.

What is more, H.R. 801 would not only block biomedical information but it would also stop publication of scientific results coming from other federal agencies. Information on pressing issues such as climate change, energy research and other areas vital to the wellbeing of American taxpayers would be withheld from them.

The advancement of science as an endeavor that benefits humanity also depends on the open sharing of information. Federally funded basic research and technological innovation have been engines of progress and prosperity for the United States in past decades.

We urge you to reject H.R. 801, so that the critical benefit of access to information about federally funded research stays open to the public who pays for it.

Sincerely,

Mariette DiChristina
President
National Association of Science Writers

Cristine Russell
President
Council for the Advancement of Science Writers

Christy George
President
Society of Environmental Journalists

Pallab Ghosh
President
World Federation of Science Journalists

NASW Grievance Committee: A Lesson in Solidarity

BY DAN FERBER, ROBIN MARANTZ HENIG, AND ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL

In a perfect world, publishers and science writers would work together collegially. Writers would produce professional quality work by deadline, publishers would edit promptly, and payment would be equally prompt and in full. Unfortunately, the publishing world is far from perfect, and occasionally publishers fail to hold up their end of the deal—behavior that can turn freelancers' paychecks into vaporware. The NASW Grievance Committee exists to help right such wrongs.

Since it began operations in early 2006, the committee has successfully helped more than a dozen writers obtain fair solutions to grievances with publishers. In February, we managed to get a member a payment of \$4,250, money she had been owed for a full 18 months! She'd gone back and forth with the scientist for whom she had done a writing project (and gotten paid the first half or so of the money originally contracted for). Then the scientist moved to a new university and told the writer he was trying to get her paid by his new institution but wasn't having any luck. The grievance committee sent him an e-mail saying that his failure to pay would be publicized via Words' Worth. He replied, quite huffily, that he didn't respond well to threats. Yet within two weeks, he paid in full.

In late 2008, a member was offered 50 percent of the \$5,200 owed for an article for a specialty health publication, even though her editor indicated that the submitted piece needed only minor rewrites. The writer was never given the chance to revise the story before she was offered the kill fee. One grievance committee member called the editor-in-chief to listen to the publisher's side of the story and convinced her that the writer was owed the full amount. Payment arrived within two weeks.

Here are a few other cases the committee has taken on:

■ In August 2008, two members were being stiffed by a publication that had just moved from print to a web-only format. We told the publisher that it didn't matter what format the work was used in; the writers had done the contracted work and deserved full payment. Payments to both writers, totaling \$7,375, arrived shortly thereafter.

■ In July 2008, a member was having trouble getting paid for a large, ongoing project for the public-relations office of a medical school. In this case, the grievance committee assisted by offering tactical advice and moral support. The member wrote his own letter to the dean, urged on by us to be a little more forceful than

GRIEVANCE continued on page 29

REACH GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR DAN FERBER AT FERBER@NASW.ORG; COMMITTEE MEMBERS ROBIN MARANTZ HENIG AT ROBINHENIG@NASW.ORG AND ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL AT ESHELL@BU.EDU.

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Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world
of science writing

BY RICK BORCHELT

talk & tech are featured in this issue: The importance of two-way communication when scientists discuss research findings with the public, demystifying search-engine optimization (SEO) as it pertains to journalism, and coping with life's demands through some digital escapism.

■ ■ ■

Davies, S. R. (2008). Constructing communication: Talking to scientists about talking to the public. *Science Communication*, 29(4), 413-434.

Okay, so it's been more than 20 years since the now-famous Bodmer Report from the Royal Society told scientists they needed to get off their high horses and engage the public in direct dialogue about the research they do. The House of Lords followed up with two more reports—prompted in large part by ugly public scraps over government mishandling of communication about sheep scrapies and mad cow epidemics—urging scientists to pontificate less and discuss more and on this side of the Atlantic, AAAS and other scientific societies similarly have called for new ways to talk with the public about science. Is it working?

Research by Sarah Davies, who conducted a series of focus groups among scientists across several disciplines in the UK, suggests that despite the high-level rhetoric not much has changed at the lab bench. While she found that researchers were aware of the push to have scientists talk more about their research, and in fact many had taken the time and expended resources to do so, *how* they talk about their work with the public seems pretty impervious to change. Researchers she talked with still cling to the now-discredited deficit model—the public is ignorant, and it is up to scientists to make them better able to appreciate and support their work—when they have the chance to talk to the public.

The overarching framework, she notes, is one-way communication: The assumption underpinning their approach to public communication is that “transfer of information will unproblematically ‘educate’ the audience,” a model of communication that is “simplistic at best.” Even where alternate frameworks emerged in the conversation, such as the possibility of debates or town meetings, “they remain bounded by a framework of the ultimate primacy of scientific knowledge... It seems likely, from this data, that much of the time scientists and engineers will simply assume that any public communication in which they are involved is to be one-way and for the purpose of educating an ignorant public.”

*...how (scientists) talk
about their work with
the public seems pretty
impervious to change.*

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RICK BORCHELT IS DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE GENETICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER AT JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.



Richmond, S. (2008). How SEO is changing journalism. *British Journalism Review*, 19(4), 51-55.

The SEO of the title stands for search engine optimization in this think piece by Shane Richmond, communities editor of Telegraph.co.uk. It's what online editors do when they tag online content with keywords in the pieces they post, and what online writers do when they write the keyword-rich copy that computer search engines will rank highest.

"It's about ensuring that your content is found by the millions of people every day who use search engines as their first filter for news and those who don't search at all but trust an automated aggregator, such as GoogleNews, to filter stories for them. These people are essentially asking a computer to tell them the news," Richmond writes. "To do that, you need to ensure your article contains certain keywords. That means not only the words that someone types into a search engine but also the keywords that the search engine knows are commonly associated with the search term."

*...SEO (search engine optimization)
can push journalists to get to the point
earlier in the story...*

SEO has been roundly vilified by journalists who see pressure from their editors to load up their stories with sometimes unrelated catch phrases or trendy jargon. Richmond's colleague Charles Booker wrote in *The Guardian* last year, for example, that SEO means "'your modern journalist is expected... to shoehorn all manner of hot phraseology into copy' in an attempt 'to con people into reading it.'"

Not necessarily, says Richmond. SEO can push journalists to get to the point earlier in the story and use terms that are more common in everyday usage. One casualty he predicts, though, will be the delayed drop lede, a standard narrative ploy to build suspense in feature writing. In search engine optimization, he notes, "the further down your story a search engine has to travel to reach a keyword, the less value it will attach to the article."

What about the widely held concerns that search engines will end up dictating the news agenda as well as the way journalists format stories, or that websites will only carry those stories that chase traffic, not the niche stories of intense but limited interest? These are editorial questions, Richmond argues, not inherently SEO questions: "Different editors will make different choices, but they are editorial choices, not SEO choices. SEO is value-neutral. It doesn't require you to dumb down, to fill your stories with the names of celebrities or to write 500 articles about Viagra every month."



Knobloch-Westerwick, S., Hastall, M. R., & Rossmann, M. (2009). Coping or escaping? Effects of life dissatisfaction on selective exposure. *Communication Research*, 36(2), 207-228.

What motivates people to spend hours on YouTube or browsing blog content, anyway? That's the Holy Grail of developing outreach strategies online (in print or broadcast, too, for that matter).

Typically, says Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick from Ohio State University and her colleagues from the University of Erfurt and the Dresden University of Technology, academics and others invoke escapism as the concept most likely to explain why people consume "seemingly trivial media content." But an alternative framing of this phenomenon is what some scholars are now calling coping, using the web to manage life's demands when they just get to be too much. As the authors parse it, somebody with "seemingly overwhelming demands can turn to the media to find information that could help addressing and eliminating the problems (problem-focused coping) or to find unrelated, absorbing content that allows them to forget the issue (emotion-focused coping)."

In this study, they used noninvasive software tagging to monitor the online media use of 287 students in Germany as they browsed the content of an experimental online magazine. In a separate (and as far as the students were concerned, unrelated) exercise, the students were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with different parts of their lives (life domains) and some rudimentary demographic information. The researchers then looked for correlations between the students' satisfaction with their "life domains" and what they selected to read online.

Not surprisingly, lower satisfaction with college careers and money issues were associated with longer self-selected exposure to information in the news stories about college, career, and personal finance—textbook problem-focused coping. For students in a romantic relationship, higher satisfaction with that relationship meant they spent more time reading romantic articles. For single students, though, *lower* satisfaction with their romantic status (or lack thereof) also led to longer times poring over romantic content.

The most interesting pattern, however, was for health information, which showed a distinctly curvilinear pattern, where both low *and* high satisfaction with their personal health produced lower self-selected exposure to health information and health stories than did moderate levels of satisfaction. The researchers hypothesize generally that if personal dissatisfaction for a life domain is either very low or very high, the time spent on media messages related to that life domain is lower than for a medium level of life satisfaction. ■

*...academics and others
evoke escapism as
the concept most likely
to explain why people
consume "seemingly trivial
media content."*

IRS Audit Survival Strategies

BY JULIAN BLOCK

Just because you can back up every item on your return, don't think you can forget about an audit. Those relentless IRS computers may bounce your return for any number of reasons, including pure chance. If you face an audit, here are some tips on how to make the experience less traumatic and less costly.

The audit usually begins with a letter of notification from the IRS. What you have to do after that depends on the type of audit you must undergo and the records you need to assemble. Here are the three types of audits.

CORRESPONDENCE AUDIT

This is the simplest type of inquiry. The IRS will want more information to justify one or two relatively simple items on your return. Send an explanation of your position by return mail, along with any records needed to support it.

Do not, though, send originals; send copies. Records can be mismailed, misfiled, or mishandled by either the Post Office or the IRS and might not be available when you need them.

In case your records are too extensive or bulky to photocopy and mail conveniently, or if you feel it would be difficult to explain your position in writing, you can ask the IRS for an in-person appointment.

Be sure to comply with the deadline set in your audit notice or arrange for an extension. Otherwise, the IRS has no choice but to rule against you and send a bill for additional taxes.

OFFICE AUDIT

The audit notice will list a specified time for a face-to-face meeting at the nearest IRS office. But you can phone or write the

agent and reschedule the appointment for another time if that is more convenient.

Pick your time carefully. The IRS examiner might be more harried right before lunch or more distracted on Friday or the day before a holiday.

The audit letter will list a number of items—business deductions for things like office supplies and costs incurred to attend conferences sponsored by NASW or other writers' organizations, or personal write-offs for things like contributions, medical expenses, and exemptions for dependents. There are also blank spaces to fill in other items not listed. Next to each item is a box. Those that are checked will tell which items are up for audit. Thus, you know in advance that this is what you are going to be asked about. If the items checked can be readily documented by checks and receipts, it might be possible to have the inquiry handled as a correspondence audit.

Before you appear for an office audit, organize your records and go over your explanation. If the IRS questions an item for which you have no substantiating records, at least you'll have some explanation ready.

It's also a good idea to do your own audit and see whether you can uncover some deductions or anything else in your favor that you overlooked when you filed. Then you might be able to reduce any added taxes that the IRS wants to impose. You are entitled to argue new points in your favor, as well as to defend your return as filed.

...comply with the deadline set in your audit notice or arrange for an extension. Otherwise, the IRS has no choice but to rule against you...

FIELD AUDIT

This type of audit is conducted at your home or place of business or at the office of your tax adviser. It can involve an extensive examination of your entire return and is usually reserved for someone with a more complex return showing business or professional income.

An audit can be fairly routine—say, proof of expenses that the IRS concedes are deductible. Either you can come up with the required records or you can't. You may be able to handle the audit without professional help. But if a point of law is the issue, then it might be wise to have a tax expert on your side. You can ask for a delay in which to seek help. ■

JULIAN BLOCK, AN ATTORNEY IN LARCHMONT, N.Y., HAS BEEN CITED AS "AN ACCOMPLISHED WRITER ON TAXES" (*WALL STREET JOURNAL*). HIS BOOKS INCLUDE *TAX TIPS FOR WRITERS*, *PHOTOGRAPHERS*, *ARTISTS*, AVAILABLE AT WWW.JULIANBLOCKTAXEXPERT.COM. COPYRIGHT 2009 JULIAN BLOCK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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BOOKS

BY AND FOR MEMBERS

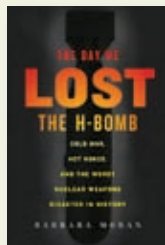


Ruth Winter
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or e-mail ruthwrite@aol.com

Send material about new books

Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

The Day We Lost the H-Bomb: Cold War, Hot Nukes, and the Worst Nuclear Weapons Accident in History by Barbara Moran (NASW), published by Random House.



Barbara Moran marshals a wealth of new information and recently declassified material to give the definitive account of the Cold War's biggest nuclear weapons disaster. On Jan. 17, 1966, a U.S. Air Force B-52 bomber exploded over the sleepy Spanish farming village of Palomares during a routine airborne refueling. The explosion killed seven airmen and scattered the bomber's payload—four unarmed thermonuclear bombs—across miles of coastline. The book tells the riveting true story of the nuclear buildup that led to this deadly accident, the far-reaching consequences of the crash, and the massive search for the missing bombs. *The Day We Lost the H-Bomb* is a work of military history that effortlessly and dramatically captures Cold War hysteria, high-stakes negotiations, and the race to clean up a disaster of unprecedented scope. The book recounts in detail the fragile peace Americans had made with nuclear weapons—and how the specter of imminent doom forced the United States to consider not only what had happened over Spain, but what could have happened. ■ *The publicist for the book is David Moench at dmoench@randomhouse.com or 212-782-8282. Moran can be reached through her website www.WrittenByBarbaraMoran.com or at Barbara_Moran@verizon.net.*

Krafft Ehricke's Extraterrestrial Imperative by Marsha Freeman (NASW), published by Apogee Books.



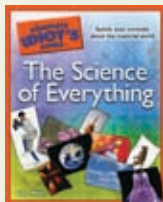
Krafft Ehricke (1917-1984) was a space visionary who made significant contributions to astronautics and laid the philosophical basis for space exploration. Marsha Freeman's book benefits from a collaborative relationship she shared with Ehricke for the last few years of his life. Ehricke came to the United States as part of the German rocket team, following the end of World War II. But from the age of 12, his eyes had been fixed firmly on the stars. In his youth, he used his imagination to describe what manned trips to the moon and planets would entail, and then spent his adult career working to make those visions become a reality. This book includes a foreword by Apollo astronaut Harrison Schmitt. The book brings back into public light Krafft Ehricke's contributions as well as papers, article, speeches, and interviews that have been unavailable to the public. ■ *Contact Freeman at krafft@erols.com. Contact Apogee books through its marketing director, Ric Connors, at marketing@cgpublishing.com or 905-637-5737.*

Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul by Stuart Brown, M.D. and Christopher Vaughan (NASW), published by Avery/Putnam.



Stuart Brown, a psychiatrist, clinical researcher, and the founder of the National Institute for Play, has spent his career studying animal behavior and conducting more than six thousand "play histories" of humans from all walks of life—from serial murderers to Nobel Prize winners. This book explains why play is essential to our social skills, adaptability, intelligence, creativity, ability to problem solve, and more. Co-author Christopher Vaughan, a communications officer at Stanford University, says the message of the book is that the urge to play is a basic biological drive that nature uses play to promote brain development and social integration as well as prepare for the unexpected—which is why all higher juvenile animals do it. Humans are designed by nature to play throughout life. If we don't play, we get depressed, behaviorally rigid, are less adaptable, and less intelligent. The book provides a sweeping look at the latest breakthroughs in our understanding of the importance of this behavior. ■ *The publicist is Anne Kosmovski at averystudiopublicity@us.penguin.com. The book site is at: www.StuartBrownMD.com. Contact Vaughan at playbook1@gmail.com.*

***The Complete Idiot's Guide to The Science of Everything* by Steve Miller (NASW), published by Alpha**



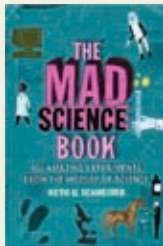
Why doesn't stomach acid dissolve the stomach itself? Why are most plants green? Why are there more tornados in the Midwest than on the coast? This volume answers these and more than 200 other questions, shedding light on the science behind them. The book addresses every major branch of science, including physics, chemistry, biology, geology, meteorology, astronomy, and cosmology. It highlights some of the big ideas that helped shape science as we know it and discusses the future of science with regards to nanotechnology, genetic modification, molecular medicine, and string theory. Miller is a freelance writer who specializes in physical science and educational writing. Prior to his career as a writer, he worked as a chemist for more than 20 years at manufacturing companies. ■ [Miller can be reached at www.manta.com/coms2/dnbcompany_dp9770](http://www.manta.com/coms2/dnbcompany_dp9770) or at 814-234-1459. The press representative is Dawn Werk at dawn.werk@pearsoned.com.

***The Why Files: The Science Behind the News* by David J. Tennenbaum (NASW) with Terry Devitt (NASW), published by Penguin Books**



These two NASW members have, for more than a decade, trawled the headlines to bring a deeper understand of everyday events and phenomena to the public. Their whyfiles.org is reputedly the number one science destination on the web. Their new book is formatted like a newspaper and is divided into sections including: World News, Metro, Business Life, Sports, Arts and Leisure, Travel, Style, Opinion Page, and more. The Why Files originated 13 years ago with an off-the-cuff remark by a NSF grant officer who wanted to know how people learn about science on the web, a medium then in its infancy. Today, www.whyfiles.org clocks several hundred thousand users per month and has been heralded by the AAAS, *Popular Science*, and *Wall Street Journal*, among others. ■ [Tennenbaum can be reached at 608-265-8549](tel:608-265-8549) and [Devitt at 608-262-8282](tel:608-262-8282). The press representative is Yen Cheong at yen.cheong@us.penguinrpgroup.com or 212-366-2275.

***The Mad Science Book: 100 Amazing Experiments from the History of Science* by Reto U. Schneider (NASW), published by Quercus (UK)**



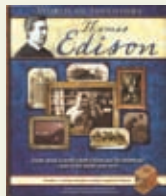
Schneider says his work on mad-science experiments originated as a by-product of his time as the head of the science section of a now-defunct Swiss news magazine. "I accumulated a stack of research studies about weird experiments. Unfortunately, my editor had no desire to see these appear in print, because they violated all the basic journalistic criteria: They were utterly inconsequential, hopelessly ancient, or both." Schneider decided to hold on to his pile of clippings. Several years later, he was offered a chance to write a science column for *NZZ Folio*, the magazine of a major Swiss daily newspaper. The column led to a book called *Science Book of the Year*, which became an immediate bestseller in Germany and was later translated into nearly a dozen languages. "In order to find out which of the more than 100 experiments qualifies as the weirdest, I initiated a poll on madsiencebook.com (where you can also watch film clips of strange studies)." ■ [Schneider can be reached at r.schneider@nzz.ch](mailto:r.schneider@nzz.ch). The press representative for the book is Nicci Praca at nicci.praca@quercusbooks.co.uk.

***The AMS Weather Book: The Ultimate Guide to America's Weather* by Jack Williams (NASW) With Forewords by Rick Anthes and Stephanie Abrams, published by The University of Chicago Press**



The former *USA Today* weather editor, Williams explores the science behind the weather, stories of people coping with severe weather, and those who devote their lives to understanding the atmosphere, oceans, and climate. The book's historic discussions and profiles illustrate how meteorology and the related sciences are interwoven throughout our lives. Williams had previously authored the highly successful *USA Today Weather Book*, but by 2004 the book was out of date. "*USA Today* wasn't interested in doing a third edition, but the American Meteorological Society was interested in a book for the general public," he said. Williams retired from *USA Today* in 2005 and went to work for the AMS with the main job of writing *The AMS Weather Book*. ■ [The book's publicist is Stephanie Hlywak at 773-702-0376](mailto:shlywak@press.uchicago.edu) or shlywak@press.uchicago.edu. Williams can be reached at weatherjack@mac.com or 703-845-8293.

**World of Inventors:
Thomas Edison** by
Dennis Schatz
(NASW), published by
Silver Dolphin



Science educator Dennis Schatz has written for children a biography of Thomas Edison. In this 40-page book, Schatz describes Edison's life and his world-changing inventions: the phonograph, electric lighting, movie projectors, and more. The book includes a hand-crank-powered kinetoscope, filmstrip images to view, and blank strips to make simple moving pictures. Schatz is senior vice president for strategic programs at Pacific Science Center, in Seattle. A research solar astronomer prior to his career in science education, he worked at the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley. ■ [Schatz can be reached at www.dennisschatz.org](http://www.dennisschatz.org). The press representative for the book is Betsy Pringle at 425-827-7120 or betsyp@beckermayer.com.

**Fossil Detective:
Neanderthal Man
Europe** by Dennis
Schatz (NASW),
published by various
publishers in Europe



Schatz presents young readers, ages 9-12, with fossil clues that lead to the discovery of how a Neanderthal man died. Along the way, children learn about prehistoric humans, the world they inhabited, and the modern-day archaeologists who study them. The kit includes "fossils" to dig out (and the tool to excavate them). *Fossil Detective* is available in Czech, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. ■ [Schatz can be reached at: www.dennisschatz.org](http://www.dennisschatz.org). The press representative for the book is Betsy Pringle at 425-827-7120 or betsyp@beckermayer.com.

**Under The Radar:
Cancer and the Cold
War** by Ellen Leopold,
published by Rutgers
University Press



Leopold, who specializes in writing about the politics of health, describes how nearly every aspect of our understanding and discussion of cancer bears the imprint of its Cold War entanglement. She writes about the current biases toward individual rather than corporate responsibility for rising cancer incidence rates, research that promotes treatment rather than prevention, and therapies that can be patented and marketed. Taking into account a wide array of disciplines, her book challenges the understanding of cancer and how we approach its treatment. ■ [Leopold can be reached at eleopold@comcast.net](mailto:eleopold@comcast.net). The phone for Rutgers University Press is 800-848-6224.

**Something Incredibly
Wonderful Happens:
Frank Oppenheimer
and the World He
Made Up** by K.C. Cole
(NASW), published by
Houghton Mifflin
Harcourt



K. C. Cole—a friend and colleague of Frank Oppenheimer for many years—has drawn from letters, documents, and extensive interviews to write a very personal story of the man whose irrepressible spirit would inspire many. As a young man Frank followed in his famous brother's footsteps—growing up in a privileged Manhattan household, becoming a physicist, and working on the atomic bomb. Tragically, Frank and Robert both had their careers destroyed by the Red Scare. But their paths diverged. While Robert died an almost ruined man, Frank came into his own, emerging from 10 years of exile on a Colorado ranch to create not just a multimillion dollar institution but also a revolution that was felt all over the world. His Exploratorium was a "museum of human awareness" that combined art and science while it encouraged play, experimentation, and a sense of joy and wonder. Its success inspired a transformation in museums around the globe. In many ways it was Frank Oppenheimer's answer to the atom bomb. ■ [Contact Cole at kccole@usc.edu](mailto:kccole@usc.edu). Publicist for the book is Michelle Bonanno at michelle.bananno@hnhpub.com or 617-351-3832.



NASW President
Mariette DiChristina
Scientific American and
Scientific American Mind
 MDICHRISTINA@SCIAM.COM

President's Letter

VOTE "YES"

EVEN AS AMERICAN CITIZENS TOOK TO THE POLLS IN THIS PAST FALL'S HISTORIC NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, OUR OWN NASW MEMBERS WERE CASTING BALLOTS FOR OUR ORGANIZATION'S NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS AND THE MEMBERS AT LARGE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. TO SOME PEOPLE, THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FELT OVERDUE. IN NASW'S CASE, THE 2008 ELECTION REALLY WAS OVERDUE—AND THAT FLAWED TIMING IS SOMETHING THAT WE NEED YOUR HELP TO RECTIFY IN YET ANOTHER MEMBERSHIP VOTE; YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CAST BALLOTS ELECTRONICALLY FROM MID-MAY TO THE END OF JUNE. LET ME EXPLAIN.

Historically, NASW has held its elections every other year in the late fall, with final results announced in December. Each new set of officers and board members took office officially on Jan. 1. The elected board would meet in person for the first time at the annual meeting and workshops—in the past held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in the middle of February. That worked well with new board members meeting only a month and a half after they took office.

Now, however, NASW's workshops and annual membership meeting are held in late October; the election results coming in well afterward. As a result, the current sitting group of officers and board members, who took office this past Jan. 1, will not gather in person until this coming October—10 months into their respective two-year terms. We could set another date to meet earlier, but—in addition to the difficulty of dragging people off their work desks more than once a year—doing so would involve extra travel costs for the board and NASW that most of us would prefer to avoid in these challenging economic times.

Instead, I would like to move the elections into the summer (beginning in 2010), so that the next board will take office in October and gather together in person for the first time the same month at that annual meeting. Yes, I realize that will shorten the current board's term by about two months, but it is a necessary one-time correction.

According to the NASW constitution, changing the election timing requires a simple majority vote of the entire membership. To fix this situation for the future, in other words, we'll need

about two minutes of your time to fill out an electronic ballot. Soon we will send a notice over NASW-announce with a link to take you to a site where you can cast your vote to amend our constitution.

Following the dictates of NASW's constitution, I declared my intention to have a membership vote on this amendment during the annual membership meeting back in October 2008, as you may have read in the minutes (SW, Winter 2008-09), and gathered the requisite 20 signatures from those present to support the following amendment:

The executive board will set the timing of the biennial NASW elections within six months of the annual meeting, with timely notification of the members thereafter.

With this wording, the board, if it should ever again need to move the timing of the annual meeting in the future, can do so without having another member-wide vote. That way we do not have to impinge on your time with this sort of tedious administrative detail more than once!

So please take a few moments to vote "yes" when you get that NASW-Announce message. Let me know if you have questions or need further information. Many thanks for your help in smoothing our NASW operations. ■



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Cyberbeat

THREE YEARS IS A MILLENNIUM ON THE WEB, AND THOUGH IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, IT'S NOW BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE THE LAST BIG REVAMP OF THE NASW.ORG WEBSITE.

Actually, from the perspective of your humble cybrarian, the revamping is pretty much non-stop. And to be honest, the time since our big redesign has been filled with tasks large and small.

We moved our member database online. We got our own "virtual" server and stopped sharing space at a university. Just recently, we started handling membership renewals online. Soon, maybe even before you read this, we'll be holding an election using our own website instead of a contractor's.

What's happening now is a little different. Led by our Internet committee co-chairs Kelli Whitlock Burton and Terry Devitt, the committee is discussing where we go from here.

We may not do another full redesign, but we'll surely be doing some tweaks. There will undoubtedly be a strong new focus on content—generating it, getting it posted quickly, and letting our members know when something new appears on the site.

We'll try to find ways to reorganize what we have to make it easy for members and the public to get what they need from the site. Behind the scenes, we'll probably be revamping the site's software to make updates easier and clear up small annoyances.

If you have any suggestions, criticisms or pet peeves about the website or any other NASW.org services, put them in an e-mail to cybrarian@nasw.org and I'll share them with the committee chairs.

NASW-FREELANCE

A story about George W. Bush's reading habits prompted a query from Auburndale, Mass., science and technology writer Jeff Hecht in a thread that began just before the new year. He was wondering, he said, "How many of us engaged in journalism actually read a book a week?" Put another way, "How many of us who are full-time freelancers are just too swamped making a living and dealing with the other obligations of life to keep up with that pace?"

Oregon science and technology writer Candis Condo claimed credit for reading "100 books in 2008, and most of that was nonfiction. I have kept a reading journal for years. BUT, I am not employed full time. Certainly when employed full time, I was only able to read half that amount."

That's more than Sherborn, Mass., science writer Richard Robinson. "The newspaper every day, *The New Yorker* every week, and the NYT Book Review religiously. But for actual books, not many. And when I do, it's history and farming, not science."

Robinson named a couple of titles, which prompted other list members to post their own recently-read lists, which prompted Elverson, Penn., freelancer Lisa Bain to note that since last April, almost all of her reading has been on the Kindle, Amazon's electronic book reader.

"One of the first things I noticed when I started reading on the Kindle is that I read more carefully and don't skim nearly as much. A Kindle page has fewer words and more space between lines, so I find myself reading every word...I like the fact

What is Your Affiliation?

Dispatches FROM THE Director



Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG



Thanks to all those who renewed

NASW strives to make your jobs easier, connect you with peers, create opportunities for learning, help you find outlets for your writing, and fight for the free flow of information. NASW—a staff of one, several dedicated contractors, and a small army of volunteers—is wholly supported by member dues, with additional, but variable, income from the Authors Coalition of America. Built on the ethics of journalism, we do not fundraise, and have kept dues at the same \$75 rate since 2002. Thank you for renewing for another year. We know it's not a great time for anyone's wallet, but we believe that NASW membership is a great value, and we look forward to working with you.

Get it ~~write~~ right.
Members to check
profiles for accuracy.

New feature

We want to recognize dedication to the field of science writing in more than just our annual member directory. Starting in 2010, membership cards will have a new feature: a "member since" line that will show the year in which your consecutive years of membership began. For

instance, if you joined in 1994 and have renewed each year since, you will have been a member since 1994. If you joined in 1994, but did not renew again until 1997, your member since year will be 1997. So check your membership data online and contact me if something appears off. Remember that the clock only starts ticking from the date that you become a full member, not a student member.

What do we mean by "affiliation"?

Puzzled about the "affiliation" box in the online database? By affiliation we mean where you work (not other organizations to which you belong). An example of affiliation might be:

Job Title: Senior Writer
Affiliation: A Great Publication

or

Job Title: Freelance
Affiliation: None (or list a steady client here)

The information for the annual membership directory gets pulled for printing in May. Please check your entry and make any corrections by May 5, 2009. ■

that I'm saving paper and no longer have to keep building new bookshelves to store all the books I buy. However, I don't like not being able to share my books with friends and family. For me that's the biggest negative.

New York City freelancer Jonathan D. Beard suggested another negative: "Lisa is paying less per title with Kindle. Fewer of her dollars are going into the pot for writers and publishers to share. That could be bad for them."

Maybe not as bad as it sounds, replied another New York freelancer, Maia Szalavitz. "Actually, you do pretty well royalty wise. I think it's 50 percent, or at least it was in my most recent contract. The problem will come when people start pirating and downloading for free."

To read more, search the NASW-freelance archives for Bush Book Club and Kindle.

NASW-TALK

Deputy humble cybrarian and Penn State PIO A'ndrea Elyse Messer stirred the creationist pot on NASW-talk in late January.

"Someone just came into my office and handed me a booklet (four-color) titled 'What REALLY happened to the Dinosaurs?' ... I've never seen this one before. It is a bit scary in its claim that the Bible is the 'history book of the universe,' and that paleontologists who believe that dinosaurs and people did not ever live together are just wrong because they are atheists. How many of the students who receive this booklet won't question it?"

New York City web producer Dave Mosher leapt to the defense of student skepticism. "My thinking on this: If you're in college, you've figured out how to evaluate what is good information vs. what is poor information. Otherwise, you wouldn't be in college."

Others took issue with that sanguine view. And Vancouver, B.C. freelancer Katherine Austin said it's not just students that worry her. "I've had conversations with three close friends this week—these are intelligent, liberal-minded, college-educated people—that have left me feeling like I'm about to have a stroke," she wrote.

"One told me that there's an entire civilization of aliens living near the center of the Earth (entrance is in the Arctic) that were recently discovered via current 'physics experiments' (top secret, of course). The second told me that Edgar Cayce was 'the one real psychic with mystical powers,' that everything Cayce ever said or predicted had come true, and that this had all been verified by 'scientific studies'...

"The third friend told me that the theory of relativity was the result of Einstein's study of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), that the theory was his attempt to discover the religious truth at the center of all things, and that his purpose in formulating $E=mc^2$ was his final summation of why and how God made the universe—that this was 'the ultimate in scientific physics, i.e. metaphysics.'

"How do they know all of these things? They READ them—in a book or on the Internet, or SAW them, on the Discovery Channell! Therefore, my friends tell me, 'they must be true!'"

For more on the sorry state of scientific literacy, search the NASW-talk archives for Creationist Propaganda. ■



Mary Beckman
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The PIO Forum

Risk and Uncertainty in Describing Climate Change Science

ONE DAY IN MY NEW JOB AT PACIFIC

NORTHWEST NATIONAL LAB, A COLLEAGUE AND I WENT TO ONE OF OUR CLIMATE SCIENTISTS TO GRILL HIM. HE WAS GOING TO BE INTERVIEWED LIVE ON A RADIO WEBCAST, AND WE WANTED TO MAKE SURE HE'D BE UNDERSTANDABLE TO PEOPLE WHO AREN'T RESEARCHERS. WELL, HE BEAT US TO THE PUNCH. HE'D ALREADY UNCOVERED A SHORT ARTICLE ABOUT TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IN EOS, THE AMERICAN GEOPHYSICAL UNION'S WEEKLY NEWSPAPER.

The author, Susan Joy Hassol, is a self-described climate change communicator. She helps large groups of scientists write reports on various aspects of climate change. She wrote the article "after many years of working with scientists and coming up against the same issues and seeing the same mistakes made over and over." It is chock full of good information.

One reason her article stands out is that she gives many concrete examples of how certain words mean different things to scientists and the public. She says she has a much longer list, but it has yet to find a home.

I couldn't help but be amused at a couple of Hassol's examples. Aerosols, for one—tiny particles in the atmosphere. We've got a big atmospheric aerosol contingent up here, so I've been hearing the word a lot this past year. The public (and I, regardless of how much the scientists try to train me) think "spray can" when they hear it.

Unfortunately, climate change is no chuckling matter, and coverage of it by journalists is only going to rise with the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Hassol offers a couple of metaphors scientists can use—they certainly helped me with my constant struggle of keeping "weather" and "climate" straight. For example, we can't predict when any particular person will die (weather), but we can be sure of the average age of death (climate). Or put a pot of water on to boil: we can't predict when and where the bubbles will form (weather), but we can be sure the water will be boiling in about 10 minutes (climate).

Climate change research suffers from political baggage more so than many scientific fields. One of the concerns scientists have when speaking to the public (as well as journalists) is that they don't want to sound like advocates.

To avoid that, Hassol says she tells them to put statements in an if-then format. "Don't say we should cut emissions by 80 percent. Do say, if we stay the current course, this is what's going to happen." In that way, scientists are informing policy. Like the president's science advisor Harold Varmus told Jon Stewart

recently, “These are things that scientists can help with. We don’t make the policy. We don’t pass the bills.”

And scientists love to throw in their caveats, which Hassol says just confuses everyone. “If we do too much qualifying, we end up sounding like we don’t know anything,” she says.

Her article has generated quite a few positive responses from scientists, she says, including letters written to *Eos*’ editorial page. Of course, there is always one scientist who thinks communication between the science world and the real world is just fine: One letter to the editor pointed out that because “anthropogenic” has made it into media coverage, “virtually everyone now understands what it means.” Next time you’re on an airplane, ask the person sitting next to you for the definition.

As with any research, media can play a role in educating the public about the scientific issues. But Hassol thinks educating scientists about the English issue is just as important.

“It’s too big a job to think we can educate the lay public on science terms,” she says. “Isn’t it easier to educate scientists on different ways to communicate to the public? Scientists are a much smaller group—it seems to me much more doable.”

So when my climate researcher explained that the reason trees won’t be able to adapt to a changing climate as easily as people will was because trees don’t “migrate” as fast, and I responded with a smartaleck, “Of course they can’t migrate. They have roots,” I like to think I was just doing my part. ■ Hassol’s article, “Improving How Scientists Communicate About Climate Change,” is posted on her website at <http://climatecommunication.org/projects.html>.



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The Free Lance

NOW ON NASW.ORG:

A RENEWED “ALL ABOUT FREELANCING”

I’ve recently taken on the task of reviving the members-only All About Freelancing section of the NASW website. With help from several veteran freelance writers, I’ll be posting a lot of new material to the site over the next few months, ranging from feature articles to short “hey, look at this cool tool” items. Working with NASW’s freelance committee, my aim is to build a rich set of resources for today’s freelance writer, touching on issues such as contracts and negotiations, agents, social networking tools, taxes, “how I did it” stories, photo research, self-publishing, and other tools of the trade.

Anthony Elia, an attorney who specializes in intellectual property law, is writing a series about contracts. Nancy Allison, a freelance writer in Germany, will be reviewing freelancer’s websites and blogs. Long-time freelance writers Christie Aschwanden, Dawn Stover, and Rebecca Skloot also will be contributing articles on various topics. And in a number of

ongoing resource roundup articles I’ll be gathering together the best online and off-line tools in a variety of categories.

The All About Freelancing site is intended to help freelance writers do their jobs even better. I’d love to hear some feedback from NASW members. What topics would you like to see covered? Any freelance-related resources you know of that should be highlighted? Want to write an article or short item? Please contact me at cathydold@gmail.com with your ideas. ■



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Our Gang

Best Live Action Adventure. On March 31, **Helen Fields** left for a six-week research cruise aboard an icebreaker in the Bering Sea. The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy will carry more than 40 scientists on a mission to discover how climate change is affecting the Arctic ecosystem. Fields will collaborate with a photographer/scientist from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to document the expedition on the Polar Discovery website (<http://polardiscovery.whoi.edu/>). It’s the adventure of a lifetime, she writes on her blog (<http://heyhelen.com/>)—and a trip she wouldn’t even have attempted before she found herself among staffers who were laid off from *National Geographic* in November of last year. She writes: “If getting laid off means I get to do stuff like this, well, I’m all in favor of getting laid off.” Follow the action online, and write to Fields at fieldsh@gmail.com.

As Jennifer Wettlaufer walked the red carpet, she gave a shout-out to fans. She’s still a regular contributor to *Buffalo Spree* magazine and is now co-authoring a column on green architecture for the newly launched *Buffalo Spree Home*. E-mail her at buffalolink@earthlink.net to find out who she’s wearing.

John Moir snagged a nomination with his book *Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird from Extinction*. The book was one of two finalists for the 2008 William Saroyan International Nonfiction Writing Prize, sponsored by Stanford University Libraries and the William Saroyan Foundation. *Return of the Condor* is described as “a riveting account of one of the most dramatic attempts to save a species from extinction in the history of modern conservation.” The book grew out of “Bringing Back the Condor,” a cover story that Moir wrote for the January/February 2005 issue of *Birding* magazine. That feature won first place for nonfiction at the East of Eden Writing Conference at the National Steinbeck Center. Moir is both a staff writer for the National Science Teachers Association and a freelance science writer. Congratulate him at john@jmoir.com.

And the Oscar goes to...Ann Finkbeiner. Her book, *The Jaxons: the Secret History of Science’s Postwar Elite*, won the 2008 American Institute of Physics Science Writing Award. The

book chronicles the exploits of a secret cadre of scientists who advised the government on science and technology throughout the Cold War. Finkbeiner is a freelancer and a visiting associate professor in The Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University. Write her at AnnieKF@gmail.com.

Special award for outstanding service. John Noble Wilford's coverage of archaeology for the *New York Times* won him the Outstanding Public Service Award from the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) in January. The award recognizes "exceptional contributions that promote public understanding of, interest in, and support for archaeology and the preservation of the archaeological record." In choosing Wilford, the AIA cited the more than 500 stories he has contributed to the subject over the last three decades—stories that "spanned human history, followed stories from a sensational start to more realistic conclusion, discussed the impact of modern war on ancient artifacts, and showed the ancients as recognizable human beings." Write to him at wilford@nytimes.com and find out what's happening in ancient history today. ■



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Regional Groups

CHICAGO

In January, the Chicago Science Writers gathered for an evening of drinks followed by a music and science performance that was truly cosmic. The visual-and-sound-graphic presentation of *Saturn*, held at the Chicago Cultural Center, launched a series of events combining science and the arts.

In 1992, Underground Resistance, the Detroit-based electronic musical trio of Mike Banks, Jeff Mills, and Robert Hood, set out to create a musical project about the planet Saturn and its rings in a full-length recording entitled "X-102 Discovers the Rings of Saturn." Fifteen years later, Banks and Mills produced a brand new musical soundtrack, featuring re-mastered original compositions paired with a visual version of the project and breathtaking images from the NASA Cassini/Huygen exploratory mission, which visited and documented Saturn and its moons. The presentation showed a trip through the rings and elsewhere in the solar system as music caught the spirit of the trip. Musician and director Jeff Mills discussed the presentation afterwards.

In February, the Chicago Science Writers were happy to host several hundred science writers for the annual party during the AAAS annual meeting in Chicago (see page 23).

NEW YORK

Science Writers in New York (SWINY) started 2009 with a well-attended workshop in January on social media for science writers. Panelists included social media evangelist Judith Meskill,

Natural Resources Defense Council web editor Scott Dodd, *Scientific American* contributing editor Christie Nicholson, WNYC web editor Adnaan Wasey, and NYU journalism professor Jay Rosen.

February brought another edition of SWINY's now-famous winter party, this year honoring Abraham Lincoln, the science president. Lincoln established the National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and he was the only U.S. president to hold a patent—for a method for buoying vessels through shallow waters. Held at the Fountain Gallery, a not-for-profit cooperative run by and for artists living with mental illness, the party featured music by The Outcats, led by flutist and former science writer Karla Harby. SWINY is now on Twitter; follow the group at <http://www.twitter.org/swiny>.

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia area Science Writers Association (PaSWA) started off the new year in fine fashion with its first Take-a-Paleontologist-to-Dinner event, where a fine Mediterranean fusion dinner was traded for a behind the scenes tour of Philly's Academy of Natural Sciences. The host was Ted Daeschler, co-discoverer of celebrated fish-with-feet *Tiktaalik roseae* and curator of the academy's new exhibit on *Hadrosaurus foulkii*, the first dinosaur skeleton to be mounted for display in the world. The group's trip into the history of paleontology was made complete with a rare look at fossilized mammoth bones from Thomas Jefferson's personal collection.

In February, PaSWA visited the University of Pennsylvania's new proton therapy center to get a glimpse of their new cyclotron before they hid all the cool stuff behind the drywall. Once operational, the cyclotron will generate a beam of protons that doctors will use to zap—and hopefully kill—cancer cells. According to Penn, the Roberts Proton Therapy Center will be the largest such center in the world.

SAN DIEGO

In March, SANDSWA officers and members participated in a joint luncheon meeting of the American Medical Writers Association and the Society of Technical Communicators. The purpose of the mixer was to share information about the respective organizations and to explore our commonalities as writers. Lynne Friedmann represented SANDSWA on a panel discussion about audience analysis. Nearly 50 people attended, and the event proved to be an excellent recruitment tool for SANDSWA (and NASW) as several AMWA and STC writers indicated they will be applying for membership.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Members of SoCal Science Writers Association and MIT alumni heard four speakers on counterterrorism at a symposium at Caltech on Feb. 28.

Jeff Jonas, IBM Distinguished Engineer, cited problems caused by faster computers. "Through traditional data mining, organizations can make sense of very little information," he said. "We should analyze large amounts of information quickly, to correlate activities between terrorists."

Michael Yeaman, Ph.D., UCLA infectious disease specialist, said America is vulnerable to bioterrorism and natural outbreaks, because anti-infection development is waning. He cited anthrax,

botulism, typhus, and cholera as the most threatening diseases, adding that yellow fever, phlebovirus, and influenza are emerging threats.

International lawyer John Shu said counterterrorism can supersede individual privacy. He explained that freedom from searches does not exist at borders, which include international airports. Moving to current politics, he said the Obama Administration may have difficulty closing Guantanamo prison, because other countries will not take prisoners now held there.

Final speaker was Brian Jenkins of Rand Corporation, who cited terrorists' use of communication technology. "The Internet is used to inspire, recruit, and instruct terrorists," he said. He concluded by asserting that terrorism's main threat is psychological. "Terrorist violence is calculated to create fear and exaggerate threats," he said. "Since 9/11, we have wallowed in fear." ■



Science Journalism Laureates

Do you know a writer who brings science to life? The Science Journalism Laureates program recognizes outstanding science communicators. Science journalists should be nominated by a colleague, editor or public information officer. Recipients will be honored at an expenses-paid, two-day conference on the Purdue campus in the fall. Nomination packages should contain:

- Letter of nomination
- 3 samples of work
- Up to 5 letters of support from colleagues

Send nomination packets by **May 15** to:
Purdue Science Journalism Laureates Nominations Committee
400 Centennial Mall Drive, Room 324
West Lafayette, IN 47907
(or e-mail to sciencelaureates@purdue.edu)

www.purdue.edu/sjl



Colby Beserra and the Party Faithful kept the dance floor packed.

More than 400 science writers from around the country as well as a number of international registrants at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting gathered May 13 for a party on the 80th floor of Chicago's Aon Building.


The venue was the Mid-America Club, which has floor to ceiling windows looking out on the city, with Lake Michigan and the busy Loop below. Guests dined on roast beef, ham and turkey as well as a selection of pastas as they caught up on news and enjoyed dancing to the beat of Colby Beserra and the Party Faithful.

AAAS Visitors Receive Big Chicago Welcome



The event got something of a second breath when people who had been at the party of the Annals of Improbable Research, in a nearby hotel, stopped by for a nightcap. A sword swallower who had been part of the Annals gathering joined the Chicago Science Writers party for a grand finale which delighted the attendees. The evening finished with a rendition of "Sweet Home Chicago."

The Chicago Science Writers thanks all who came as well as our sponsors: Abbott Fund, Northwestern University, Loyola University Medical System, University of Chicago, Baxter, AAAS, Science magazine, Fermilab, and the American Psychoanalytic Association. ■



Call for Entries

AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards

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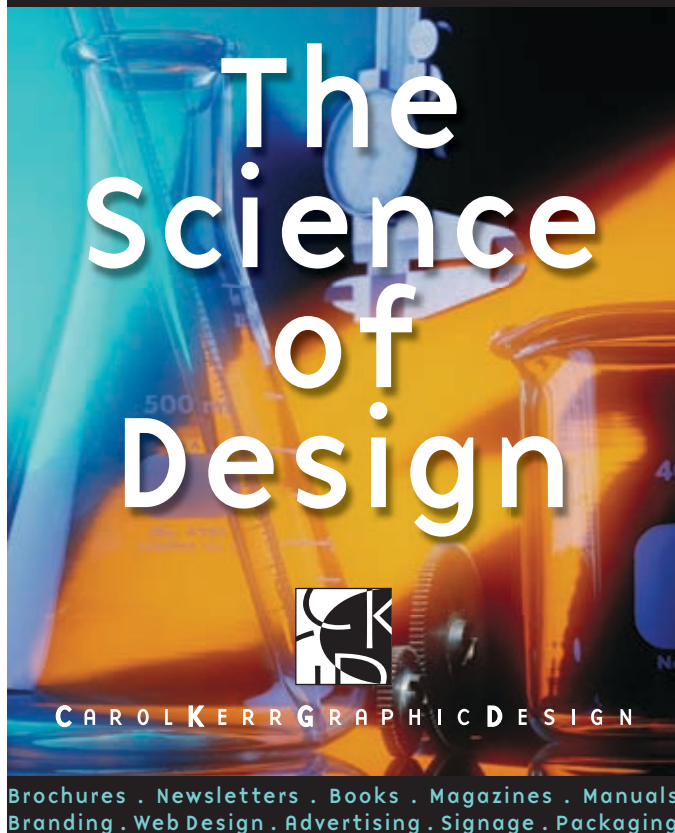
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Raeburn Kicks Off Inaugural Series at Virginia Tech

Paul Raeburn, a former science editor and senior writer at *BusinessWeek*, spent two days on the Virginia Tech campus, March 23 and 24, as the College of Engineering's first guest speaker of the newly funded Jebson-Nystrom Science and Technology Writer in Residence Endowment.

Bob Jebson of Culpeper, Vir., a 1956 metallurgical engineering graduate and a member of the College of Engineering's Committee of 100, founded a company, Environmental Systems Service, in 1973, and now maintains three facilities in Virginia. Jebson is a pioneer in the testing of water, wastewater and dairy products, and more recently expanded his company into food analysis. An admirer of technology communication, Jebson directed a \$50,000 gift to the College of Engineering's public relations program, and worked with Lynn Nystrom, director of news and external relations for engineering, to develop the guidelines that call for a nationally recognized science and technology writer to spend a few days on campus each year.

Jebson said he "established this endowment to enable the college to sponsor a science/technology writer in residence program to interact with students and faculty and share ideas about Virginia Tech's research and educational innovations with these distinguished guests."

"Paul was the natural first choice for this seminar. His credentials, including his premier role in organizing the international New Horizons in Science Briefings, a meeting we hosted at Virginia Tech twice in the past three decades, are among the best of all of today's science writers," Nystrom said.

Raeburn is a book author and commentator for National Public Radio's "Morning Edition," and an occasional guest host of NPR's "Talk of the Nation: Science Friday." From 1996-2003, Raeburn was at *BusinessWeek* magazine, and before that, he was the science editor and chief science correspondent at *The Associated Press*. Raeburn is a past president of the National Association of Science Writers. ■

(Source: news release)



RAEBURN PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TECH; EDSO PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TECH; WALLACE PHOTO COURTESY OF WALLACE TUCKER

Letters to the Editor

The past 30-plus years with NASW have been a wonderful roller coaster ride. Yes, there were lean times, years ago, when we had no money but recently NASW has accomplished so much. More importantly, we've had fun along the way.

Since my retirement was announced, I've been overwhelmed by the e-mails, notes, and phone calls from members saying the nicest things about me. Then came the surprise luncheon at the Palo Alto meeting and being roasted by some of the best. Parting gifts I've received include a wonderful MACpro laptop, printer/copier/scanner, and iTouch. I even received a dozen golf balls with my name on them and sheets of postage stamps with my face on them. Who could ask for more? Thank you, everyone.

I am absolutely delighted, happy, and thankful to be associated with such wonderful people. Love, hugs, and many thanks.

*Diane McGurgan
Hedgesville, West Vir.*

■ ■ ■

I really enjoyed reading Rick Borchelt's "Scholarly Pursuits" article in the latest issue of *ScienceWriters*, and look forward to reading more in this vein in the future.

*Margie Patlak, Freelance
Elkins Park, Penn.*

■ ■ ■

A Word from the Editor—The redesign of *ScienceWriters* prompted nearly 100 members to write letters and e-mail messages. This is more than the total number of letters to the editor in the past decade. Reaction was overwhelmingly and gratifyingly positive. In answer to two readers who questioned cost and materials: Authors Coalition funds were used in the redesign and *SW* is printed on recycled paper. ■

In Memoriam



Lee Edson
Prolific writer and author

Lee Edson, 90, the author or co-author of a half a dozen technology and science books, including *Worlds Around the Sun* with the late Carl Sagan, and *The Wind and Beyond*, an autobiography of aeronautics and rocket pioneer Theodore von Karman, died Dec. 13, 2008. He was an NASW member since 1965.

Edson, of Stamford, Conn., became a full-time freelance writer in 1965, writing hundreds of articles, including "The Search for

the Bionic Heart" for the *New York Times*, where he served as a book reviewer for many years. With Lewis Branscomb of IBM, he authored "The Future of the Computer" for *Science* magazine. In the *NY Times Magazine*, he penned "Computers Come Home," "Two Men in Search of a Quark," and "Lasers Come of Age."

In 1989, the National Academy of Engineering commissioned Edson to write its history, *The Making of the NAE*. Before becoming a full-time freelancer, he was a program manager and consultant for the Stanford Research Institute, responsible for determining the impact of advancing technology on Fortune 500 companies. He was a technical editor for the Naval Ordnance Laboratory from 1943 to 1946, and a physical chemist for General Foods. He held a bachelor's degree in physics and English, and completed post graduate work in physics and mechanical engineering.

Edson was a constant participant in New Horizons in Science Briefings and the AAAS meetings throughout the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Along with NASW icons Jerry Bishop and Arthur Fisher, he could always be found in a late-night poker game at these meetings, usually alongside Ben Patrusky, and one or two others who are the legends of early meetings of the science writers.

Edson spent the 1985-86 academic year as the Writer-in-Residence at Virginia Tech's College of Engineering, the first such program of its kind at any engineering school in the country. This position led to him spending several years working with the Engineering College Magazine Association, assisting engineering students across the country in their writing endeavors and communication skills.

In what Edson often called his "checkered past with the Hollywood industry," he wrote several episodes of the highly touted television series, "Have Gun-Will Travel," starring Richard Boone as Jack Paladin, in the late 1950s, early 1960s.

Edson is survived by his wife of more than 50 years Lorna and their son.

(Contributed by Lynn Nystrom, Virginia Tech)

■ ■ ■



Karen Tucker
Writer and conservationist

Karen Tucker, 69, died on Dec. 11, 2008, from complications of cancer, at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla. She had been an NASW member since 1998.

Tucker and her husband, Wallace, along with four other couples, founded the Fallbrook Land Conservancy, in 1988. She served as chairman of the acquisitions committee and as a member of the executive committee. She was also involved in countywide conservation efforts, helping to found the Center for Conservation and Education Strategies, a networking group for environmental organizations.

With Wallace, she coauthored three popular books on astronomy. She also worked for 20 years as a science writer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Mass.

IN MEMORIAM continued on page 29

Marcia Bartusiak becomes a AAAS fellow for her “exceptionally clear communication of the rich history, the intricate nature, and the modern practice of astronomy to the public at large.” Bartusiak is currently a visiting professor with the graduate program in science writing at MIT. She is the author of *Thursday’s Universe*, a layman’s guide to the frontiers of astrophysics; *Through a Universe Darkly*, a history of astronomers’ quest to discover the universe’s composition; and *Einstein’s Unfinished Symphony*, about the on-going attempt to detect gravity waves, the last experimental test of Einstein’s theory of general relativity. All three were named notable science books by the *New York Times*. Her latest book is *The Day We Found the Universe*, a narrative history on the discovery of the modern cosmos.

Bartusiak’s journalism career spans three decades and began at a TV station in Norfolk, Vir. Assignments at the nearby NASA Langley Research Center sparked a love for science news, which encouraged her to return to college for a master’s degree in physics.

William Hammack, a professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering at the University of Illinois, was lauded “for distinguished contributions in communicating science, technology, and engineering to the public through his public radio work on *Marketplace* and through his service as a U.S. diplomat.” In over 300 radio pieces Hammack has explored the technological world revealing the secrets of his high-tech underwear, the mysteries of mood rings, the perils of nanotechnology, and the threats to privacy from technology. Hammack’s work emphasizes the human dimension to technology—from the trial, tribulations, and triumphs of inventors and scientists to the effect of technology on our daily lives.

Hammack is a regular commentator for American Public Media’s business show *Marketplace*, for Illinois Public Radio, and for Radio National Australia’s Science Show. Among top awards he’s received are: NASW Science in Society Award, American Institute of Physics Science Writing Award, and American Chemical Society’s Grady-Stack Medal. He is also a fellow of the American Physical Society.

A’ndrea Elyse Messer, senior science and research information officer at Pennsylvania State University becomes an AAAS fellow in recognition of her “exceptional performance as a science

communications officer in translating and disseminating research findings, mentoring science writers and scientists, and improving public understanding of science.”

When Messer joined the Penn State, she was the first science writer in the public information office in 17 years. She writes about engineering, the earth sciences, physical sciences and occasionally on the life sciences. A PIO for the past 27 years, she has been a science writer for 32 years. She edited 11 quarterly review journals on chemistry, environmental science, and pharmacology (all at once), agricultural book translations, wrote technical documentation for Bell Labs, and was a reporter for the *Attleboro Sun Chronicle*. She has a B.A. in science and culture (chemistry) from Purdue, an M.S. in journalism: science communications from Boston University, an M.A. in anthropology from Penn State, and is completing a Ph.D. in anthropology/archaeology.

David Perlman, science editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, was honored “for outstanding journalism achievements over a half-century that informed the public of science advancements and set the standard by which science writing should be judged.”

Still a news reporter at the age of 90, Perlman’s daily efforts have

brought knowledge and news to countless millions of readers, guiding them through the complex fields of chemistry, astronomy, cosmology, paleontology, seismology, and more additional “ologies” than most would care to count. At the same time, the accuracy, context, and thoroughness of his ongoing reporting have earned him the applause and respect of the hundreds of researchers whose work he has covered over the years.

A Columbia University journalism grad, Perlman never strayed far from his basic vision of what a newspaperman should be. An overview of Perlman’s reporting reads like a chronology of scientific advances for the last 50 years. His coverage of areas such as nuclear energy and arms control, health care and the environment, serve as models for other journalists. The number of American science writers who aspire to emulate his success in some small way is legion. Perlman’s contributions to American science writing are equally as great, ranging from his past president of NASW and continuing role on the CASW board, to his continuing mentorship of young science writers, some of whom have gone on to earn their own accolades as science writers, a lasting legacy of Perlman’s devotion to the field. ■



Four NASW Members Elected AAAS Fellows

Marcia Bartusiak, A'ndrea Messer, William Hammack, and David Perlman join the growing ranks of NASW members honored as fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

AAAS Science Journalism Awards



(Above) Master of Ceremonies Claudia Dreifus with lifetime achievement winner David Perlman. (Right) Sponsors and winners of the 2008 AAAS Science Journalism Awards. (Back, l to r) David Auston (The Kavli Foundation), Yoon Shin-Young, Stefan Lovgren, Joseph McMaster, Terry McDermott, John Carey, Daniel Grossman, Earl Lane (AAAS), Molly McElroy (AAAS). (Front, seated) Ginger Pinholster (AAAS), Kara Platoni, Seema Kumar (J&J Pharma R&D), David Perlman.



(Top right) Helen Fields, Laura Helmuth, and Mary Beckman at the pre-award reception. (Above) Kathleen Wren and Coimbra Scirica unwind.





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Complete contact information available at www.nasw.org

NEW MEMBERS

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*Student member

JOURNALISM

continued from page 9

into print. Myers will soon contribute a regular column to the *Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom. Derek Lowe now writes regular columns for *The Atlantic* and the trade magazine *Chemistry World* (both have also written for *Nature*). This work, though, tends towards opinion and analysis, not reporting. "Bloggers don't want to be journalists," says Zivkovic. "I want to write on my blog whatever I want. I may write a post about a new circadian paper, but the next eighty posts are about politics or what I ate for breakfast." Despite his distaste for how the trade is practiced, he thinks that there will always be a need for professional journalists covering science. "Somebody has to actually be paid to write about things as they come out," he says.

That is what John Timmer is looking for new ways to do at *Ars Technica*. But there is a problem: the online world, both in its blogger reaches and elsewhere, is polarized; people go to places they feel comfortable. Many of the people that Timmer originally hoped to reach when writing about intelligent design and the Dover trial probably go elsewhere for their news, he says, because "it's easy for somebody to pick their news sources based on their politics, and get that version of scientific issues." Dykstra worries that in a more fragmented media world, "environmental news will be available to environmentalists and science news will be available to scientists. Few beyond that will pay attention."

Others worry about the less questioning approach that comes with a stress on communication rather than journalism. "Science is like any other enterprise," says Blum. "It's human, it's flawed, it's filled with politics and ego. You need journalists, theoretically, to check those kinds of

things," she says. In the United States, at least, the newspaper, the traditional home of investigations and critical reporting, is on its way out, says Hotz. "What we need is to invent new sources of independently certified fact."

CULTURE MASH

Two Ivy League giants, Princeton University in New Jersey and Yale University, are trying to do something about the problems they see in environmental coverage with websites aimed at generating scientifically accurate news coverage. "We're bringing something new to the table," says Roger Cohn, a veteran journalist who now edits the Yale Environment 360 website, which is funded in part by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The site is home to reports by journalists and opinions by scientists on subjects such as climate change, but it has "no axe to grind on any one of these issues," says Cohn.

At the Princeton University website, Climate Central, the focus is mainly on video material. "We're just in the initial stages of preparing a weekly series of news stories about climate based on papers in journals," says Michael Lemonick, a long-time science writer for *TIME* magazine who now works at the site. As well as appearing on Climate Central, he says, the stories will be offered to the websites of big media outlets; some of the group's work has already been aired on the Public Broadcasting Service's evening news show "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," which reaches millions of viewers. Climate Central is funded by the Flora Family Foundation and The 11th Hour Project, a non-profit organization supporting climate awareness, based in Palo Alto, Calif.

Lemonick says his new job requires him to listen more closely to researchers. "If they say, 'you really left out this important fact,' I don't get to say, 'Sorry it's my story,'" he says. That doesn't mean that researchers make his story into a dry scientific paper, he adds. "They have to recognize the needs of the journalist, but we have to recognize the needs of the scientists. We're kind of fusing the two cultures." Timmer's path has also led him to a fusion of science and journalism. In May, media giant Condé Nast acquired *Ars Technica*, and he was brought on full-time. "When I'm interacting with press officers or researchers, I'm acting as a journalist," he says. "I don't think anybody would consider me a working scientist any more." But when asked how he sees the scientists writing for him, he becomes more philosophical: "Basically, however they see themselves." ■
"Science journalism: Supplanting the old media?" Nature, published online March 18, 2009 | Nature 458, 274-277 (2009).

GRIEVANCE

continued from page 11

he might have been otherwise. Before long the writer was paid in full. This case convinced us that moral and institutional support from established colleagues and savvy advice can go a long way.

■ In March 2007, a writer contracted to write for a science magazine, delivered a draft by deadline, and was told by the editor that the article looked very good. A higher-ranking editor at the magazine then killed the piece for what we considered to be capricious reasons. The magazine tried to pay a 25 percent kill fee, which would have cost the writer more

than \$3,000. We helped the writer draft a letter demanding full payment. That letter did the trick.

■ In October 2007, we learned that, unfortunately, NASW members are not always in the right. A member approached us with a grievance which consisted of many incomprehensible e-mails. We took on the case but upon digging a little deeper found that the writer had acted in a way that we considered unprofessional and was asking for an unrealistic amount of money for sub-par work. We ended up negotiating a compromise with the publisher, but in the future we might decline such a case. The experienced impressed upon us the need to obtain and evaluate documentation before proceeding.

The grievance committee is ready to be of service, but there are some cases we can't take. If you don't have a contract, letter of agreement, or at least an e-mail documenting an agreement, we can't do much to help. Without a paper or e-mail trail of exchanges with your editors, our job is a lot harder. And if you've signed a contract agreeing to a provision that comes back later to bite you, there's not much we can do. For example, a member asked for our help after signing a "pay on publication" contract. We couldn't do anything since the publication had gone out of business before publishing her article. So in this case "pay on publication" meant "pay never."

While we work in partnership with members, we expect that before coming to us with a grievance you will already have done everything possible to settle the dispute on your own: contacting the assigning editor to demand payment, contacting that editor's superiors if that doesn't work, following up with a phone call to initial requests, and if necessary, sending a letter by certified mail. We are also unlikely to accept disputes that are more than about a year old.

Our ultimate goal is to prevent grievances before they happen. For this, we need your help. As a first step, we're designing a survey with the NASW Freelance Committee that will, among other things, determine what kinds of problems our members have encountered while freelancing. Look for an upcoming nasw-announce posting with survey questions and please respond. We're all in this together. ■

IN MEMORIAM

continued from page 25

where she received a distinguished service award for her work as a founding member and science writer for the Education and Outreach program of NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory project.

Born in Pryor, Okla., in 1939, she later moved with her family to McAlester, Okla., where she attended high school and met Wallace. Shortly after graduation in 1957, she and Wallace eloped before he was scheduled to go into military service.

In 1972, Wallace resigned his position as leader of the theoretical physics group at a high-tech company in Cambridge to pursue a lifestyle that would enable them to work together. For many years they split their time between Fallbrook, Calif.,—where they worked on writing, land conservation and other projects—and Cambridge, Mass., where they both worked at the Center for Astrophysics. Karen is survived by Wallace, her husband of 51 years. ■

(Source: The Fallbrook Village Voice)

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