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National Association
of Science Writers, Inc.

Spring
2011

REALITY CHECK FOR BOOK

WRITERS

NASW EXPANDS

MENTORING

AAAS MEDIA
PANEL PONDERES

SCIENCE
AND JOURNALISM

LINK TO THE PRIMARY

SOURCE

THE FACE OF

CANCER
—ONE WRITER'S STORY

WCSJ2011 MOVES TO

DOHA



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FROM THE EDITOR

Recently, I spent an afternoon in the home office of the late Howard Lewis, my predecessor as editor of *ScienceWriters*. Howard's wife Joann had asked for help in making final disposition of his NASW files.

Fortunately, Howard was a meticulous record keeper and in short order my attention turned to his neatly arranged folders of correspondence, some of which were exchanges between the two of us preserved as delicate, onion-skin carbon copies. This brought a smile and reflection on how, working on opposite coasts, we relied on land-line phone calls, unreliable faxes (read 'em before they fade), snail mail, and floppy discs to produce *ScienceWriters*.

Working on this issue, I had a heightened sense of appreciation for the impact of technology not only on this publication's production but also its content: Readers will be hard pressed to find an article in the following pages that doesn't reference blogs, source linking, Facebook, Twitter, online expert databases, and NASW website features.

In the ever-changing digital environment, the timeless aspects of our profession—mentoring, scholarship, the craft of writing, and journalistic credibility—remain.



Lynne Friedmann

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A Case of Never Letting the Source Spoil a Good Story

PERHAPS IT'S TOO EMBARRASSING FOR SOME WRITERS TO RISK LINKING TO PRIMARY SOURCES THAT READERS CAN CHECK FOR THEMSELVES

BY BEN GOLDACRE

Why don't journalists link to primary sources? Whether it's a press release, an academic journal article, a formal report or perhaps (if everyone's feeling brave) the full transcript of an interview, the primary source contains more information for interested readers, it shows you're working, and it allows people to check whether what you wrote was true. Perhaps linking to primary sources would just be too embarrassing. Here are three short stories.

This week the *Telegraph* ran the headline "Wind farms blamed for stranding of whales." It continued: "Offshore wind farms are one of the main reasons why whales strand themselves on beaches, according to scientists studying the problem." Lady Warsi even cited this as fact on the BBC's Question Time this week, while arguing against wind farms.

But anyone who read the open-access academic paper in PLoS ONE, titled "Beaked whales respond to simulated and actual navy sonar," would see that the study looked at sonar and didn't mention wind farms at all. At our most generous, the *Telegraph* story was a spectacular and bizarre exaggeration of a brief contextual aside about general levels of man-made sound in the ocean by one author at the end of the press release (titled "Whales 'scared' by sonars.") Now, I have higher expectations of academic institutions than media ones, but this release didn't mention wind farms, certainly didn't say they were "one of the main reasons why whales strand themselves on beaches," and anyone reading the press release could see that the study was about naval sonar.

The *Telegraph* article was a distortion (now retracted), perhaps driven by its odder editorial lines on the environment, but my point is this: if we had a culture of linking to primary sources, if they were a click away, then any sensible journalist would be too embarrassed to see this article go online. Distortions like this are only possible, or plausible, or worth risking, in an environment where the reader is actively deprived of information.

Sometimes the examples are sillier. Professor Anna Ahn published a paper recently showing that people with shorter heels have larger calves. For the *Telegraph* this became "Why stilettos are the secret to shapely legs," for the *Mail* "Stilettos give women shapelier legs than flats," for the Express "Stilettos tone up your legs."

BEN GOLDACRE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BAD SCIENCE COLUMN IN SATURDAY'S *GUARDIAN* AND OF THE BAD SCIENCE WEBSITE ([HTTP://WWW.BADSCIENCE.NET/](http://www.badscience.net/))

Yet anybody who read even just the press release would immediately see that this study had nothing whatsoever to do with shoes. It didn't look at shoe heel height, it looked at anatomical heel length, the distance from the back of your ankle joint to the insertion of the Achilles' tendon. It was just an interesting, nerdy insight into how the human body is engineered: if you have a shorter lever at the back of your foot, you need a bigger muscle in your calf. The participants were barefoot.

Once more this story was a concoction by journalists, but no journalist would have risked writing that the study was about stilettos if they'd had to link to the press release—they'd have looked like idiots, and fantasists, to anyone who bothered to click.

Lastly, on Wednesday the *Daily Mail* ran with the scare headline "Swimming too often in chlorinated water 'could increase risk of developing bladder cancer,' claim scientists." There's little point in documenting the shortcomings of *Mail* health stories any more, but suffice to say, while the story purported to describe a study in the journal *Environmental Health*, anyone who read the original paper, or even the press release, would see immediately that bladder cancer wasn't measured, and the *Mail*'s story was a simple distortion.

Of course, this is a problem that generalizes well beyond science. Over and over again, you read comment pieces that purport to be responding to an earlier piece, but distort the earlier arguments, or miss out the most important ones: They count on it being inconvenient for you to check. There's also an interesting difference between different media: most bloggers have no institutional credibility, so they must build it by linking transparently and allowing you to double-check their work easily.

But more than anything, because linking to sources is such an easy thing to do and the motivations for avoiding links are so dubious, I've detected myself using a new rule of thumb: if you don't link to primary sources, I just don't trust you. ■

"A Case of Never Letting the Source Spoil a Good Story," *The Guardian*, March 19, 2011.

Explaining Research: the Aftermath

BY DENNIS MEREDITH

Most authors have experienced that darkly hilarious moment when they open their royalty statements and discover their minuscule income for years of toil. Indeed, my latest royalty statements for *Explaining Research* show that my recompense for three years of interviewing and writing, and for an investment of thousands of dollars (see sidebar), were a whopping \$1,646.97—still not enough to offset my \$2,000 advance, not to mention my own investment.

But the royalty statement doesn't tell the whole story of the book, and it's a story that I hope my fellow NASW authors and proto-authors will find useful. The lessons I learned about negotiating with publishers (SW, winter 2010-11), marketing, self-publishing, and ancillary income have made the project eminently worthwhile.

And the book itself might well ultimately turn a profit. The initial royalty statements reflect only very early sales of the book. Given indications that teachers are adopting it for academic courses, the income might be larger in the future...I hope.

I'm certainly pleased with the book's publisher, Oxford University Press. Although commercial publishers give significantly larger advances and better royalty rates, Oxford was the right choice, given the book's potential as a textbook. Also, an agent whose opinion I trust told me that the book would likely not be considered by a commercial publisher, given its academic audience. And while Oxford did all the promotion it promised—for example, sending the book widely to reviewers—the vast majority of marketing fell to my wife Joni and me. It's a reality that faces even authors of high-profile commercial books, and one that all authors must embrace if their books are to be successful.

The book taught me two major lessons about marketing. First, marketing is largely based on hunches. Investment in any marketing efforts almost never yields hard data on payback. The only measure we had of return on investment from our marketing initiatives was an increase in website hits, since the book is heavily integrated with its website.

The other marketing lesson is more comforting: that almost all the effective marketing efforts an author can undertake are either free or cheap. So, with those lessons in mind, here's which marketing efforts seemed to work for me, and which ones didn't:

The book's website (www.ExplainingResearch.com) was a highly worthwhile investment in time and money. Of course, the website was necessary because I posted the book's references and resources there. But beyond that, the site was the prime marketing "brochure" for the book. I think a key to the site's usefulness was that it

didn't concentrate on highlighting me as the author, but rather the content and value of the book itself. I've been told that readers really don't much care about the author—unless he/she is a brand like Stephen King—but the information the book offers.

Social media did not really work for me. I launched a blog (www.ResearchExplainer.com), a Twitter account (@explainresearch) and an Amazon author page. Perhaps I did not blog, tweet, or cultivate contacts enough, but the traffic to none of them seemed to offer sufficient payback for the effort. A major issue—and one that faces any freelancer—is whether to spend time blogging, which doesn't bring in a check, or freelancing, which does. So, I ultimately decided to continue to blog, but to post only when I have an idea really worth blogging about, and only when I don't have a paying freelance assignment on deck.

The blog posts were more useful as updates for the book. When I wrote a blog post that contained new information or insights, I added a link to the post in the relevant chapter listing in the references and resources, so readers would readily discover it.

More productive, I believe, were the guest posts I did for the Oxford University Press blog. They reached the publisher's huge audience, and seemed well worth the effort.

Another tip: I linked my blog with my Twitter and Facebook accounts and Amazon Author page, so my blog posts automatically appeared there. Also, I posted blog pieces on the relevant LinkedIn groups, of which I was a member. These groups can be quite large. For example, the Science & Technology Media Professionals group has 1,500 members, and the PRWise group has 7,310.

Also useful for marketing purposes were articles I wrote for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The Scientist*. They reached large audiences that were prime targets for the book. Again, I synergized the effort by



DENNIS MEREDITH (www.DENNISMEREDITHCONSULTING.COM) IS A SCIENCE WRITER AND RESEARCH-COMMUNICATION CONSULTANT.

posting the articles on my blog and listing them in the press room of the book website.

E-mail seemed to be by far the most effective marketing tool, and it was free. Joni sent about 30,000 (yes, 30,000!) personalized e-mail messages to teachers, researchers, librarians, and administrators involved in research communication. We decided that recipients would not consider the message spam since we sent only a single personalized message, and the information was useful. Indeed, we only received a few complaints, in contrast with the scores of thank-yous and requests for review copies from teachers. And, when Joni sent an e-mail blast to relevant lists, we saw a major increase in website traffic.

The one exception to “free or cheap” in our marketing was the \$936 we spent on 500 packages of gourmet cookies imprinted with the book’s cover and reviews. We distributed those at the 2010 AAAS meeting as part of the book’s launch. They were quickly snapped up, and we did see a large jump in web traffic at that time.

As extensive as our marketing efforts were, we don’t hold a candle to Rebecca Skloot, author of the bestselling *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Of course, central to her success is that she wrote an extraordinary book that has garnered deservedly rave reviews. But she is also highly adept at marketing. For example, over the decade spent writing her book, she managed her writing career to make contacts that would help secure reviews, published excerpts, and media attention. And she is an adept user of Twitter. As of this writing, she has 10,988 followers and has sent out 6,608 tweets.

However, as important as Skloot’s book is, she and her father still had to organize her own book tour. Her publisher and others in the business declared the book tour “dead.” However, Skloot drew on her extensive social network to solicit expense-paid speaking engagements, and her father scheduled the four-month tour.

Explaining Research also taught lessons in self-publishing, because I elected to publish a supplement *Working with Public Information Officers* myself. After Oxford asked for 10,000 words to be cut from the manuscript, I excised that section and used the print-on-demand company Lightning Source to produce the booklet. The advantage is that Lightning Source books automatically appear for sale on Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other outlets. The books are also listed in the database of distributors Baker & Taylor and Ingram, which owns Lightning Source.

The disadvantage is that Lightning Source demands that you act like a publisher, not an author. There is no handholding, and you are expected to supply the cover, layout, and other data, as would a publisher. Fortunately, there are many design companies that can supply just such handholding, and I found one in 1106 Design.

Importantly, Lightning Source is not like the so-called POD publishers like Lulu, iUniverse, etc. These are vanity publishers that make their money from charging fees to authors, rather than book sales.

The print cost for the booklet was \$2.52 per copy, and I set a cover price of \$10. I found that I could give a “short discount” of only 20 percent, and the online booksellers would still list the book. And although bookstores will not stock a book at that discount, they weren’t an appropriate outlet for the booklet, anyway.

I’ve not made that investment back—probably in part because I purposefully “sabotaged” print sales by posting its content online

as a service to researchers and public information officers. However, the experience taught me about the machinery of POD; and with the rapid rise of ebooks, self-publishing is becoming a more cost-effective route.

The key to making money from a book, I learned, is to use it as a “platform” for workshops and paid speaking engagements. After some research, I found that I should charge \$2,500 for half-day communication workshops, and I charge \$1,500 for one-hour talks

on research communication topics. This latter fee is low. Speaking fees typically range from \$2,500 to \$10,000, according to professional speakers. And the fee schedule in *Writer’s Market* lists \$5,000 as the average fee for a “national event.” The schedule also lists average fees for regional events (\$615), local groups (\$219) and class presentations (\$183).

And while my topic of research communication is a natural for workshops and

talks, just about any nonfiction book could provide fodder for an interesting fee-paid talk.

Beyond directly earning income, of course, a book also enhances a writer’s reputation and visibility, quite likely leading to freelance assignments—a phenomenon that is not quantifiable.

So, given this experience, should you write a book? The best advice I’ve heard is from veteran *New York Times* writer Cory Dean. In her book *Am I Making Myself Clear?* she declares “Don’t think about writing a book unless you really cannot help yourself.”

Well, I guess I can’t. I’ve already started on my next book. ■

MONEY OUT, MONEY IN

Explaining Research

Costs:

(Not counted: travel expenses for interviewing trips)	
Lawyer fees	\$ 2,950.00
Indexing	1,245.00
Cartoon rights	1,200.00
Cookies	936.00
Books purchased for marketing	967.86
Website (two years)	
\$299 setup and \$29.95/month	658.40
TOTAL	\$ 7,957.26

Income (as of December 2010):

Book advance	\$ 2,000.00
Allowance for cartoons	1,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 3,000.00
NET LOSS	[\$ 4,957.26]

Working with Public Information Officers booklet

Costs:

Cover, layout and proofing	\$ 650.00
Amazon Search Inside file	25.00
Lightning Source setup	100.00
ISBN	28.00
TOTAL	\$ 803.00

Income (as of February 2011):

Payments from Lightning Source	\$ 262.00
NET LOSS	[\$ 541.00]

...that darkly hilarious
moment when (authors)
open royalty statements
and discover their
minuscule income...



Energetic AAAS Panel Highlights How Science and Journalism Differ

BY BUD WARD

AAAS media/science panel delves into the proper role of media in convincing the public about climate change and explores differing views on what precisely makes news, helping illustrate scientists' and media's sometimes vast cultural differences.

We all know what happened in Tucson and in Egypt... but the public square is narrowing. There are fewer things that we all know."

The speaker was Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. He was addressing an overflow meeting at the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, AAAS, in Washington, D.C. His messages were quick and to the point, his explanations easily understood by those well beyond the media world.

Summing up the challenges facing traditional news organizations, Rosenstiel said the online world is increasing the supply and quantity of discussion and comment even while the "reportorial component" is shrinking across a wide segment of mainstay media and audiences.

The problem "is more a revenue crisis than an audience crisis," particularly for print news outlets, he said. Rosenstiel pointed to a nationwide newsroom employment decline of roughly 30 percent over the past decade, with at least one major daily—the *Los Angeles Times*, where he once was media critic—down 50 percent over that period. Classified advertising revenues had comprised 40 percent of newspaper revenues in 2000, but 75 percent of those revenues "are now gone," he said, primarily to places like craigslist.com.

Reporter Elizabeth Shogren of NPR in Washington, D.C., said she finds it frustrating that coverage of climate change now may be

going back several years to again addressing fundamental questions such as whether Earth is warming and whether human activities are contributing to that warming. She said she had thought scientific understanding and informed coverage of the climate issue had gotten beyond those points, basically to explore what steps might be taken to confront challenges of climate change.

But with many of the new congressional members expressing strong reservations, and growing confusion among much of the public at large, she said she feels it necessary to repeatedly address those questions of whether Earth's atmosphere is warming and whether human activities play a role in that warming. "Back to Square One," as she put it.

*...in making science news
digestible and tantalizing,
reporters at the same time can
"include the spinach" that over time
will help the public learn while they
are becoming better informed.*

"You haven't made your case yet" to policymakers and the public generally, she said, directing her comment at the climate science community, represented at this particular AAAS panel by MIT climate scientist Kerry Emanuel. "What do you want me to do about it?"

That rhetorical remark prompted a challenge from Emanuel. "No. You haven't," Emanuel said, prompting a rapid-fire exchange with Shogren,

Rosenstiel, and panelist Seth Borenstein, Associated Press science reporter, over the proper roles of the media—and also of climate scientists themselves—in science education.

"If you're waiting for the press to persuade the public for you, you're going to lose," Rosenstiel argued, "because the press doesn't see that as their role."

BUD WARD IS EDITOR OF *THE YALE FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE & THE MEDIA* ([HTTP://WWW.YALECLIMATEMEDIAFORUM.ORG](http://www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org)).

MAKING THE IMPORTANT INTERESTING... AND ADD SOME SPINACH

Reporters do have a responsibility to “make the significant interesting,” Rosenstiel continued, prompting Borenstein to use a food metaphor: He said that in making science news digestible and tantalizing, reporters at the same time can “include the spinach” that over time will help the public learn while they are becoming better informed.

Rosenstiel agreed that the media have an obligation to provide the public with “sense-making stories” that can help them better understand complex but vital issues such as climate change. “The public needs enough facts to push them past beliefs,” he said, laying out the case for providing science coverage based on strong science.

Speaking from the audience, former *New York Times* science reporter Andy Revkin, Dot Earth blogger now working with Pace University, urged the panelists to look at “next steps” that can help the public better understand issues related to sustainability and climate change. He suggested, for instance, that the scientific community could better reward, rather than seemingly punish, scientists who do effective outreach with the media and the public.

“You touched on a raw nerve,” MIT’s Emanuel responded, pointing to what he said is a common concern among many of his scientist peers. He lamented “an attitude in our culture: if we’re doing outreach, we’re not in the lab.”

Emanuel also related experiences he said he and other scientists have had in dealing with press interviews. He agreed that some scientists and some journalists share a common goal of pursuing truth, and in those cases, he said his experiences with reporters generally have been quite satisfactory. On other occasions, however, Emanuel said he has been frustrated when journalists/interviewers seem more interested in pursuing a particular story line, perhaps out of interest in increasing sales or readership.

SCIENTISTS AND MEDIA AND “DIFFERENT TRUTHS”

Referring to a 2010 story in the *Boston Globe* outlining the deteriorated personal relationship between Emanuel and fellow MIT faculty member Richard Lindzen, the latter a widely recognized “skeptic,” AP’s Borenstein replied that scientists and journalists sometimes can be legitimately pursuing “different truths.” In that story, about which Emanuel had major concerns, veteran *Globe* environmental reporter Beth Daley had addressed the “truth” of the dicey personal relationship between what earlier had been two colleagues, while Emanuel was more interested in reporting of the “truth” on climate science. The exchange helped illustrate some underlying differences distinguishing the science and journalism communities.

Addressing Emanuel’s comment about reporters’ wanting to fan readership or sales, Rosenstiel replied that in traditional newsrooms, reporters seldom have had any real awareness about how many readers or viewers their work actually attracts. He said that situation is changing somewhat now with “new media” managers increasingly tracking online “hits” and “eyeballs” and search engine results.

MOST PLANES DAILY LANDING SAFELY... IT’S NOT NEWS

Another exchange involving an audience member—in this case Peter Gleick, the head of the Pacific Institute—also helped illustrate fundamentally different approaches distinguishing the media and the science community.

Borenstein had noted in his prepared remarks that through December 2010, NOAA record keeping had indicated 311 consecutive months in which world mean temperature, land and ocean, had been warmer than normal.

That has been the case for each month since February 1985, Borenstein said—the month that actor Mel Gibson was named *People* magazine’s “sexiest man alive” and Minolta had introduced the world’s first auto-focus single lens reflex camera.

Borenstein said he had been eager to see if a cool January 2011 might end that 311-month streak, which he said would provide a strong “record-broken” peg for a story.

Gleick, a respected water resources expert, wasn’t buying it. “Why isn’t 312 straight months a story?” Gleick asked. His question prompted comments of approval from a number of climate scientists in the audience.

Borenstein’s response: “It is the equivalent of planes landing safely every day.” He schooled the audience that more of the same isn’t news for most editors and reporters. What makes news is breaking that mold, not simply sustaining it yet again, he explained. Again, it was an exchange that helped illuminate some of the differing thought patterns that distinguish scientists and journalists. ■

Editor’s Note: Bud Ward organized and moderated this AAAS panel as well as reported it in The Yale Forum (March 4, 2011).

Call for Entries



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Cancer in Kyoto

a first-person account

BY SANDRA KATZMAN



A dermatologist recommended removal of a facial mole in October 2009. In November, another doctor touched my arm gently and said, “You have lung cancer. I am sorry. You will probably die in December 2011.”

The small private clinic that removed the benign mole referred me to a Kyoto University Hospital kidney specialist after finding Hepatitis C in a routine blood test.

Extensive blood tests showed tumor markers. Doctors searched for the tumor. Asymptomatic, week after week I saw images: CT scans, MRIs, X-rays, PET-CT scans.

Lung cancer specialist Young Hak Kim of the Department of Respiratory Medicine inspires my confidence with his fluent English and straightforward explanations.

Dr. Kim explained the PET-CT. Bright

yellow showed between the lungs, on the throat, and under the left arm. These sites had taken up the radioactive marker indicating rapid sugar uptake, typical of cancer. Only one more diagnostic test remained: a biopsy.

He withdraws tissue from a swollen lymph node on my neck. In Japan, where I have lived since 1996, Kyoto is considered a propitious place to die.

The tumor is non-small cell lung cancer with metastasis.

In January 2010, after the first infusion of chemotherapy as an inpatient for a week, my

nurse brother visited. There might be pain if there is bone metastasis, Dr. Kim replied to his question, and paralysis or loss of consciousness if brain metastasis. National health insurance covers all kinds of therapy, including hospice.

After the second infusion of chemo, tumors had shrunk, and new tumor strand formation was arrested. I am one of the 20 percent for whom chemo reduces tumor size. My co-payment for each of the six infusions was about US\$1,200.

"You are a very successful case," Dr. Kim said. It was December 2010, half a year after the last infusion, with no tumor growth yet.

"Are you surprised?" I asked.

"No."

"How much longer do I have? Five years?"

"Maximum."

In mid-January 2010, hospital social services provided a consultation. I want to donate my body. The doctor, who translated for the nurse and social worker, said I could be a cadaver for medical students. Japan does not have assisted suicide.

But a week later, I'm told that Hepatitis C precludes body donation. Organ donation is possible. Cremation is the norm; permission is needed for ashes to leave Japan.

At the free legal services consultation, the lawyer says I can write my own will using a document from the Internet. She has suggestions: get advice of U.S. and Japanese lawyers for compliance, and notarization by the U.S. Embassy.

A visiting doctor came to my house, an introduction set up by social workers. I ask why a chemo patient might need home help. He says vomiting can require intravenous nutrition. I am told that when "active dying" begins, I might want to make bilingual cards for "Where is my cat?" and "I need to pee."

A retired pathologist cousin says I am getting as good or better care at less cost than in the U.S. The Japanese lawyer says if my life exceeds my May 2014 expiry work visa, exceptions exist to stay in Japan. I decide to stay in Japan as a university professor, and to die in Japan. I welcome the cancer's irrelevance to my classroom.

A Japanese friend writes: "I received your sad New Year's card. I agree with your feeling of acceptance. I also have aches in my body. However, I don't go to hospital so I will not find out about any serious sickness."

In May 2010, the first round of chemo ends. Tumors and tumor markers are stable. Monthly deposits of US\$800 for large medical expenses reimburse me from the Kyoto department of the National Health Ministry. Dr. Kim answers more questions. Because of my resistance, different chemicals will be chosen for the second round of chemo which will be oral and without side effects. Many are available at a similar price.

I obtain an Organ Transplant card. The 1997 Law on Organ

Transplantation was revised in 2010 to relax conditions for organ donation. Now, a brain-dead person's family can give permission; driving licenses and health insurance cards provide space to express holders' intent.

Cities are the smallest administrative units and insurance agents of the National Health Care Plan in Japan, subsidized by the central government. An individual's premiums are calculated according to income. I pay about 30 percent of health costs.

When I came to Japan as a full-time employee, the Japanese company paid my medical insurance. In 2000, I became self-employed. My health insurance payments average US\$200 a month.

Funds planned for retirement pay instead for cancer care and piano rental.

My biggest reimbursement was US\$15,000 for my December hospitalization. Since the 1980s, reimbursement rates have decreased. Japan has been an aged society since 2001, according to the United Nations definition of over 14 percent of the population being over 64 years old. A study published in 2001 (in *Aging Issues in the United States and Japan*) projected "the share of medical

expenditures in the whole economy will rise, reaching 10.8 percent in 2015, then gradually decline to 8.5 percent in 2040."

THE CHANGES IN MY WRITING

My medical experience has changed me as a writer.

First, reports to family and friends scoreboard the cancer. The chronicle's frequency stretched from three weeks to three months as acute suspense of diagnosis progressed to chronic stability.

Second, I started a cancer blog (slkatzman.blogspot.com). A Japanese professor

accepted my change of subject in our bilingual language exchange. As she pursues scholarly themes, I jam about my part in the U.S./Japan paradox of smokers and lung cancer.

Third, knowing I have cancer has lent caution and ambition in my undertaking a collaborative communication research project.

My writing load changed focus. I report fewer stories as a Tokyo stringer for an energy industry news outlet. The cancer blog also leads to contribution to *Health Care for Women International*; I am inspired by an emeritus editor's remark that not enough has been written about cancer from a patient's point of view.

THE DISASTER IN JAPAN

When the earthquake hit, I was on a Lake Tahoe vacation. E-mail subject lines alerted "E.Q." and "are you OK?" I browsed headlines with a cousin whose son had just married in Japan. The newlyweds sent photos of themselves in hardhats on the 30th

CANCER continued on page 29



(left) Sunrise against Higashiyama (eastern mountains) in Kyoto. (left inset) Sandra Katzman. (above) Kamo River flows through Kyoto. I can walk home from Kyoto University Hospital.

Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world
of science writing

BY RICK BORCHELT

Mind Your Metaphor!

Metaphors are more powerful—
and more persistent—than we may realize.

I admit—even though I know the best birding is in the hour or two around dawn, come Saturdays I really want to sleep in. But somehow with the new job I’ve gotten into a new schedule of waking earlier even on the weekend, and you’d think that would motivate me to get up. It doesn’t. I typically continue to doze and listen to the NPR weekend broadcasts. Which, for this column, was a good thing.

As I listened this morning, wondering what my three articles for Scholarly Pursuits were going to be, I realized I was listening to an interview with Stanford’s Lera Boroditsky, a psychologist who specializes in linguistics and meaning. The name was familiar—I’d just seen an interesting piece she’d written for *Scientific American* on how different world languages shape thought—but here she was talking about something much more concrete: the surprisingly powerful effect of even simple or implied metaphors on how people interpret the associated message. The interview sent me on a hunt for the paper she just published with co-author Paul Thibodeau in *PLoS ONE* on our community’s favorite buzzword du jour: framing.

■ ■ ■

“SCHOLARLY PURSUITS” FEATURES ARTICLES FROM JOURNALS PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD. IF YOU READ AN ARTICLE YOU THINK WOULD MAKE A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR THIS COLUMN, SEND IT ALONG TO RICKB@NASW.ORG.



RICK BORCHELT IS SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE AT NIH.

Thibodeau, Paul and Lera Boroditsky (2011) Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning. *PLoS ONE* 6(2): e16782.

Every good writer uses them: metaphors and comparisons that help render complex scientific concepts understandable by lay audiences. DNA as “the blueprint of life,” for example, or even as simple as the body’s “battle” against disease. The authors argue we should be very careful even with the seemingly most benign of metaphors—they can be very powerful.

In this particular paper, their focus is metaphors used in crime and criminal justice and how they might affect public policy and crime interventions. In their experiment, Thibodeau and Boroditsky invented a town, Addison, and engaged participants in the experiment in a series of discussions about how to handle crime in this fictional ‘burb. In one set of materials, the authors presented an account of crime in Addison by describing it as a “wild beast preying on the town of Addison” and in another as “a virus infecting” Addison (and

*The influence of the
metaphorical framing is
covert: people do not recognize
metaphors as an influential
aspect in their decisions.*

varied the intensity of the metaphor by leading with it, ending the account with it, shortening the phrase, and various other tweaks). Then they asked participants what should be done about crime in Addison; by large majorities, those participants who read a crime-as-beast narrative favored punitive and enforcement solutions while those who read a crime-as-virus narrative favored reform and social solutions. This strong affect persisted with little attenuation whether the metaphor was offered early in the narrative to frame the conversation or at the end. And, possibly even more importantly, when participants were later asked to identify in the narrative what words or concepts were most important in how they picked a solution to crime, *they almost never identified the metaphor as the reason even though the rest of the narrative was identical between narratives.* “The influence of the metaphorical framing is covert: people do not recognize metaphors as an influential

aspect in their decisions,” they explain.

The beast/virus frame even extended to what kind of information people looked for to flesh out their ideas. “When asked to seek out more information to inform their decisions, we found that people chose information that was likely to confirm and elaborate the bias suggested by the metaphor—an effect that persisted even when people were presented with a full set of possible solutions,” the authors write.

Just how strong is the influence of metaphor? Mightier than the sword? Stronger than steel? Harder to shake than white on rice? “The influence of metaphor we find is strong: different metaphorical frames created differences in opinion as big or bigger than those between Democrats and Republicans,” conclude Thibodeau and Boroditsky.

■ ■ ■

Fox, Susannah (2010) Cancer 2.0: A summary of recent research. Accessed online 5 March 2011 at <http://pewrsr.ch/Cancer20>.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project does a super job of tracking trends in online use by various segments of the public and what they use it for. One of Pew researcher Susannah Fox’s particular interests is how people are using the Internet to access health information, and information about chronic diseases like cancer in particular. One might think that all other things being equal, people with known chronic diseases would use the Internet more than healthy Americans to find information about their health. In this case, one would be wrong.

“The deck is stacked against people living with chronic disease,” Fox writes. “They are disproportionately offline. They often have complicated health issues, not easily solved by the addition of even the best, most reliable, medical advice. And yet, those who are online have a trump card. They have each other. Pew Internet’s research finds that having a chronic disease increases the probability that an Internet user will share what they know and learn

...people living with chronic disease remain strongly connected to offline sources of medical assistance and advice.

from their peers. They unearth nuggets of information. They blog. They participate in online discussions. And they just keep going.”

Many Americans, regardless of their health status, go online to find out more about health—their own, obviously, but also that of their family and friends. “Eight in 10 Internet users go online to look for health information, no matter their health status. Searching online for certain topics is almost universally popular: specific disease information, treatment options, and prescription drug information, for example,” she notes. What sets the chronically ill apart from the general public, Pew research suggests, is that “more than any other group, people living with chronic disease remain strongly connected to offline sources of medical assistance and advice”:

- 93% of adults living with chronic disease ask a health professional for information or assistance in dealing with health or medical issues

- 60% ask a friend or family member

- 56% use books or other printed reference material

- 44% use the Internet

- 38% contact their insurance provider

“By comparison,” the report explains, “adults who report *no* chronic conditions are significantly *more* likely to turn to the Internet as a source of health information and less likely to contact their insurance provider.” This finding tracks data at the National Cancer Institute, which notes in related research that trust in health care providers increased while trust in online sources has waned since the early 2000’s. (CancerNetwork.com: August 9, 2010. Available at: <http://www.cancernetwork.com/display/article/10165/1635865>)

Two online activities stand out among people living with chronic disease, the Pew study reports: blogging and online health discussions. “When other demographic factors are held constant, having a chronic disease significantly increases an Internet user’s likelihood to say they work on a blog or contribute to an online discussion, a list-serve, or other online group forum that helps people with personal issues or health problems.”

The great equalizers in online activities are likely to be increased access to broadband and mobile Internet platforms, the report concludes. “Broadband and mobile Internet access is spreading to more Americans, making them more likely to

access health information whenever and wherever they need it. The always-on, always-with-you Internet enhances people’s online experience and creates a positive feedback loop, reinforcing their interest in using the internet to gather and share information. Two waves are crashing together—an increase in technology and an increase in chronic disease—and both are driving us forward toward engagement in online health resources.”

■ ■ ■

...most searches for science were most probably carried out for formal or informal educational-related reasons.

Baram-Tsabara, Ayelet and Elad Segev. Exploring new web-based tools to identify public interest in science. *Public Understanding of Science* 20(1) (2011) 130–143.

Marketing firms turn Internet search term analysis into profits; Israeli researchers used the same kind of analysis to help figure out how interest in science and technology topics rates in the online world.

The authors analyzed searches on Google Trends (GT) (www.google.com/trends), which analyzes and displays the proportion of searches for terms compared to the total number of searches made on Google over a defined period of time (between 2004 and the present) and shows how frequently topics have appeared in Google News stories and in which geographic regions people have searched for them the most; Google Zeitgeist (GZ) (www.google.com/press/intl-zeitgeist.html), a monthly

SCHOLARLY PURSUITS continued on page 29

Grant Range
\$1,000 to \$50,000

Who Can Apply?
NASW members and
non-members

Submission Format
A single .pdf

BASICS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Requests for Individual, Group, or Organization Projects

- Proposal of 1,500 words or less
- Anticipated impact(s) on the science writing community
- How the project will serve NASW members and non-members alike
- How the project is in keeping with the NASW mission
- Why you or your team are uniquely qualified to deliver
- List of team members and their roles, if applicable
- Resume for each team member
- Budget and delivery timeline

Rolling Deadline for Individual and Group Projects:

Applications being accepted until further notice but must be received a month in advance of a planned event or program for which funding is requested

Deadline for Organization Proposals:

June 1, 2011

Where to Submit

E-mail to: programs@nasw.org
Note: See article (right) for specifics on subject line format

More Information

<http://www.nasw.org/funding-individual-or-group-projects>

Opportunity is Knocking: Funding for Group or Individual Projects

BY ROBIN LLOYD

Do you have a great idea for a science writing resource? Are you a member of a local science-writing group with big plans for an important project workshop that has insufficient funding?

NASW invites proposals from individuals or groups for grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000 for projects and programs that are designed to help science writers in their professional lives and/or to benefit the field of science writing. Proposals should serve non-members as well as members, although preference will be given to projects serving NASW members.

This exceptional opportunity is made possible through funds received by NASW from the Authors Coalition of America, an association that collects and distributes money from various foreign and domestic “reprographic rights organizations” to its member organizations.

We encourage creative thinking, thus the guidelines for these proposals are consciously broad.

INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP PROJECTS

Individuals or groups may apply for grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000. Proposals should serve non-members as well as members, although preference is given to those serving NASW members. It should not be for individual works, e.g. underwriting a single investigative piece or book, but could, for instance, underwrite a study of the state of science writing in the U.S. or beyond.

Send proposals of 1,500 words max., along with resume(s), as a *single .pdf* to programs@nasw.org. Format e-mail subject line as follows with date of submission, for example:

Member Project RFP, 00/00/2011

ORGANIZATION PROJECTS

NASW already funds travel fellowships and career grants, and underwrites a portion of the annual workshops to keep registration fees low. Now, we seek big ideas for the organization to develop new ways to serve science writers. For example, a special research fund; underwriting studies of the field of science writing; hiring a lobbyist; or underwriting prizes.

Make the case for your big, bold idea in no more than 1,500 words, include as many specifics as possible: the audiences it would serve, how this fits the NASW mission, and the approximate cost.

Proposal narrative, along with a resume for each team member, should be sent as a *single .pdf* to programs@nasw.org. Please put the name of the applicant(s), title of the project and amount requested at the top of the proposal. E-mail subject line should be formatted as follows with date of submission, for example:

Idea for NASW RFP, Last Name, 00/00/2011

REVIEW PROCESS

For requests up to \$2,000, applicants will be notified by the NASW program committee of a decision within a month of proposal receipt. Applications that exceed \$2,000 that are approved by the NASW program committee will then be reviewed by the NASW executive board, which will notify applicants of its decision. ■

BOARD MEMBER ROBIN LLOYD IS CHAIR OF THE NASW PROGRAM COMMITTEE.

Lower Self-Employment Taxes for Writers

Only Applies to 2011 Tax Year

BY JULIAN BLOCK

Tax legislation enacted last December includes a provision that reduces Social Security taxes for employees and self-employment taxes for writers, artists, photographers, and other freelancers. The legislation cuts their taxes by 2 percent for 2011 only. Savings for NASW members will vary, depending on how much they receive from salaries or from freelancing. Their savings can be as much as \$2,136.

Let's start with the rules for Social Security taxes. They are known officially as FICA (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) taxes. Employers also have to match those payroll taxes.

FICA taxes consist of two components with different rates. Normally, the rate is 6.2 percent for the Social Security benefits portion (the old age, survivors, and disability insurance fund). There's a cap of \$106,800 on the amount of wages subject to the 6.2 percent rate. Therefore, withholding from paychecks for Social Security taxes stops at \$106,800.

For 2011 only, the 6.2 percent rate drops to 4.2 percent. The savings on payroll taxes is \$600 for employees who earn \$30,000; \$1,000 when they earn \$50,000; and tops out at \$2,136 when earnings exceed \$106,800.

The other FICA rate is 1.45 percent for the Medicare fund (the federal hospital insurance program for the elderly). There's no cap on the amount of wages subject to the 1.45 percent rate. Employees whose earnings top \$106,800 are nicked for Medicare taxes on every dollar of their salaries and other forms of compensation. They forfeit \$14.50 to Medicare taxes for each \$1,000 of compensation (\$1,000 multiplied by 1.45 percent). For 2011, there's no reduction of the 1.45 percent rate.

There are similar rules for self-employment taxes—Social Security taxes for the self-employed. Individuals liable for SE taxes include writers and others who operate their businesses or professions as sole proprietorships, in partnerships with others, or as independent contractors.

Their SE tax rate is 15.3 percent on net earnings (receipts minus expenses)—twice that paid by typical employees, because they pay both the employer and employee halves. Like FICA taxes, SE taxes consist of two components with different rates. Normally, the rate is 12.4 percent for the Social Security benefits portion. Here, too, the ceiling is \$106,800 on the amount of earnings subject to the 12.4 percent rate.

For 2011 only, the 12.4 percent rate drops to 10.4 percent. The savings on SE taxes is \$600 for writers with net earnings of \$30,000; \$1,000 when net earnings are \$50,000; and tops out at \$2,136 when net earnings exceed \$106,800.

The other SE rate is 2.9 percent for the Medicare fund, with no earnings ceiling. Self-employed persons whose earnings top \$106,800 pay Medicare taxes on all of their earnings. They surrender \$29 to Medicare taxes for each \$1,000 of earnings (\$1,000 multiplied by 2.9 percent). For 2011, there's no reduction of the 2.9 percent rate.

WHAT HAPPENS IN 2012 AND BEYOND?

Will Congress conclude that a one-year break on payroll taxes and SE taxes should remain in effect beyond 2011? Extending it would add to the federal budget deficit. But Congress almost always renews "temporary" provisions—especially when they benefit millions of individuals. And, in case you forgot, 2012 is an election year. ■

JULIAN BLOCK IS AN ATTORNEY AND AUTHOR BASED IN LARCHMONT, N.Y. HE HAS BEEN CITED AS "A LEADING TAX PROFESSIONAL" (*NEW YORK TIMES*), "AN ACCOMPLISHED WRITER ON TAXES" (*WALL STREET JOURNAL*) AND "AN AUTHORITY ON TAX PLANNING" (*FINANCIAL PLANNING MAGAZINE*). FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HIS BOOKS, VISIT JULIANBLOCKTAXEXPERT.COM.

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More Information

See article on page 10 and log on to www.nasw.org/funding-individual-or-group-projects

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
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Primer on Nuclear Reactors

As officials assess the impact of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami on that country's crippled nuclear power plants, a new publication issued by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (www.amacad.org) provides background on the cost, safety, and security attributes of the major nuclear reactor designs, as well as their properties with regard to refueling and fuel disposition requirements. The monograph, *Nuclear Reactors: Generation to Generation* is available online at <http://bit.ly/dI46dM>.

The authors, Stephen Goldberg and Robert Rosner, are senior advisors to the Academy's Global Nuclear Future Initiative. The Academy's Initiative is working with policymakers in the U.S., Middle East, and Asia to advance effective policies and procedures to ensure that the spread of nuclear power does not aggravate, and in fact reduces, international safety, security, and nonproliferation concerns.

System failures at Japan's Fukushima plants, which share the design features of many reactors operating in the United

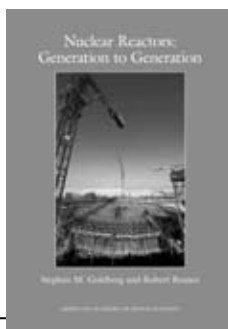
States, will lead to much greater public scrutiny of all nuclear facilities. The events in Japan may also increase pressure to retire some nuclear generating facilities earlier than their scheduled design life.

In assessing the attributes of reactor designs, both those already deployed and those on the drawing board, the authors of the Academy paper suggest that two questions will determine the future of nuclear power around the world: "What is safe enough?" and "What are we going to do about the nuclear waste?"

In addition to reviewing currently operating systems, the paper analyzes the viability of a new type of small "modular" reactor that is about to enter the market. Smaller than a rail car and one-tenth the cost of a conventional power plant, backers say this new generation of reactors could be quickly built and installed at existing nuclear sites or replace coal-fired plants.

Many of the crucial decisions that will shape the nuclear future will not be made by the United States alone. The Academy's Global Nuclear Future Initiative includes experts from foreign governments and international organizations. The project brings together technical communities and proliferation specialists to guide government and industry choices. Since the Academy is not identified with a particular stance on nuclear questions, yet has a fifty-year-old tradition of work on arms control, it offers a neutral forum for discussing these issues. ■

(source: news release)



*What is safe enough?
What are we going to do
about the nuclear waste?*

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2011 Travel Fellows at AAAS

NASW once again sponsored student travel fellowships to this year's AAAS annual meeting. Ten undergraduate students with a demonstrated interest in science writing received up to \$750 in travel expenses. The fellows were Raina Khatri, Allison McCann, Max McClure, Sandra McLean, Sonal Noticewala, Bouchra Ouatik, Megan Piotrowski, Rebecca Searles, Nick Stockton, and Sarah Zhang.

NASW's education committee made the selection from submitted applications and paired each student with a veteran writer for a one-day mentoring program at the meeting. In turn, the fellows reported on some of the scientific sessions that they found most interesting and newsworthy. Read their articles at <http://www.nasw.org/articles/aaas>. ■



NASW Internship Fair

Alan Brown shares an informal lunch with several other mentors and their student "mentees" Feb. 20 at the AAAS meeting in Washington. NASW helped arrange a record 41 mentor-student pairs for the meeting. In addition, 60 students participated in the NASW Internship Fair on Feb. 19, doing their best to impress 24 recruiters looking for the next generation of science writers to fill their intern positions. ■

Mentoring PIOs at AAAS

BY MELISSA LUTZ BLOUIN

As part of the PIO committee's effort to support fellow PIOs, a mentoring program for new PIOs was launched at the AAAS meeting in February.

The PIO mentoring program captured the interest of nine relatively new public information officers who were matched with nine experienced PIOs.

Mentors began by helping new PIOs register for the meeting; some of whom didn't realize they were eligible for free registration.

"(It was helpful) learning what PIOs in other organizations are doing and how that differs from what we're doing in my organization," said one participant. "It was great to have an opportunity to compare notes and get some words of wisdom from someone who has been in the field for a long time."

A few participants grabbed lunch together, while others chatted over coffee

in the break room. The venue was left up to the pair.

Some of the new PIOs found it particularly valuable to have this program offered at a national conference such as AAAS.

*A few new PIOs
did not know they could
receive free registration
for the AAAS meeting.*

"(What helped was) her introduction to the world of journalists," said another participant. "I didn't know my way around a conference newsroom—she introduced me to it."

Some mentors offered practical advice to PIOs with specific questions and challenges. Others introduced their matches to the "ins and outs" of the AAAS news area.

"She showed me all of the different areas and activities available to PIOs, such as press briefings, breakroom, and the EurekaAlert reception," another participant said. "It was nice having someone tour me around, rather than having to figure it out on my own."

In addition to the immediate advantage of knowing that they would get to talk extensively with at least one person at the meeting, some of the participants also came away with new contacts in the PIO world.

"I look forward to maintaining a long-distance relationship with my mentor," one participant said.

Feedback also included the suggestion that NASW host a small networking event where the participants could all meet one another and giving mentors specific ideas for assisting their match.

Given the success of the program, the PIO committee plans to run it again next year at AAAS in Vancouver, Canada. ■

MELISSA LUTZ BLOUIN, DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, IS CO-CHAIR OF THE NASW PIO COMMITTEE.

BOOKS

BY AND FOR MEMBERS



Ruth Winter
44 Holly Drive, Short Hills, NJ 07078
or e-mail ruthwrite@aol.com

Send material about new books

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

***Once and Future Giants: What Ice Age Extinctions Tell Us About The Fate of Earth's Largest Animals* by Sharon Levy (NASW) published by Oxford University Press**



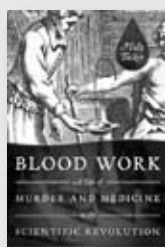
Levy, a California freelance with an interest in wildlife ecology, asserts that to save the elephant, lion, grizzly bear, and other megafauna we must first understand the mastodon. Scientists have long debated whether prehistoric people drove large ice age animals to extinction. Now, delving into the private lives of these long-gone giants, strong parallels are being uncovered between their fate and the plight of modern wildlife; and scientists suggest it may be possible to manage these large animals in ways that will help restore wild habitats. For example, bringing elephants and cheetahs to the Great Plains as stand-ins for their extinct native brethren. Critics, including biologists enmeshed in the struggle to restore native species like the gray wolf and the bison, see the proposal as a dangerous distraction from more realistic and legitimate conservation efforts. Deftly navigating competing theories and emerging evidence, *Once and Future Giants* examines the extent of human influence on megafauna extinctions and explores innovative conservation efforts around the globe. ■ Contact Levy at 707-822-3077, sharon@sharonlevy.net, or www.sharonlevy.net. Press representative for the book is Justyna Zajac at 212-743-8337 or justyna.zajac@oup.com.

***House, M.D. vs. Reality: Fact and Fiction in the Hit Television Series* by Andrew Holtz (NASW) published by Berkley Trade**



For those of us who like the fictional, sour-apple doc with the scruffy beard, Holtz gives us a behind-the-scenes look at the real lives of surgical residents. Brilliant diagnostician Gregory House solves puzzles everyday—using not just his vast medical knowledge but his razor-sharp instincts about human behavior. Holtz, in his new book explores some of the questions raised by the hit TV drama—and does the detective work to get the answers. The book carries a disclaimer “it was not authorized, prepared, approved, licensed, or endorsed by any entity involved in creating or producing the ‘House, M.D.’ television series.” Freelance writer Holtz, who earned a master of public health degree in the Oregon MPH program, is a former CNN medical correspondent. ■ The press representative for the book is Brady McReynolds at 212-366-2657 or Brady.McReynolds@us.penguinsgroup.com.

***Blood Work: A Tale of Medicine and Murder in the Scientific Revolution* by Holly Tucker (NASW) published by W.W. Norton**



On a cold day in 1667, a renegade physician named Jean Denis transfused calf's blood into one of Paris's most notorious madmen. In doing so, Denis angered not only the elite scientists who had hoped to perform the first animal-to-human transfusions themselves, but also a host of powerful conservatives who believed that the doctor was toying with forces of nature. Just days after the experiment, the madman was dead, and Denis was framed for murder. “In an era when science and superstition were barely distinguishable, blood transfusion became embroiled in contentious religious and ethical debates, served as a vehicle for political intrigue, and even drove men to murder,” writes Tucker, associate professor at Vanderbilt University where she specializes in the history of medicine. Amid this atmosphere of uncertainty, transfusionists like Denis became embroiled in the hottest cultural debates and fiercest political rivalries of their day. Taking readers from the highest ranks of society to the lowest, from dissection rooms in palaces to the filth-clogged streets of Paris, *Blood Work* sheds light on an era that wrestled with the same questions about morality and experimentation that haunt medical science to this day. ■ Tucker can be reached at holly.a.tucker@vanderbilt.edu.

Changing Planet, Changing Health: How The Climate Crisis Threatens Our Health and What We Can Do About It
by Paul R. Epstein, M.D. and Dan Ferber (NASW) published by University of California Press



Much of the public discourse on global warming has focused on temperatures, melting glaciers, and slowly rising seas, but climate change is already harming the health of people around the world. Coauthors Dan Ferber and Paul Epstein, M.D., M.P.H., profile doctors, patients, scientists and others from Kenya, Honduras, and the United States who are already wrestling with these changes. The book reveals the surprising links between climate change and cholera, malaria, Lyme disease, asthma, and other maladies. Ferber, a contributing correspondent for *Science* and an Indianapolis freelance, and Epstein, associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, also highlight serious health risks that climate change poses via disruption of forests, coastal oceans, and agriculture. The book draws on large, multidisciplinary efforts that Epstein helped lead to document the public health dangers of climate change and devise a suite of innovative solutions that preserve public health. Al Gore has called the book “a landmark book that will raise our consciousness.” ■ See <http://changingplanetchanginghealth.com>, or contact Ferber at 317-347-9480 or ferber@nasw.org. Press representative for the book is Sam Petersen at sampetersenpr@aol.com.

Gravity
by Phillip Manning (NASW) published by Chelsea House



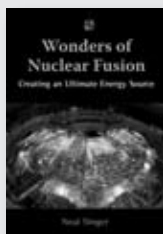
Gravity dominates the universe: It holds the Earth, the Sun, and the Milky Way together, and it keeps our feet firmly planted on the surface of our planet. When an object goes up, it is pulled back to Earth by gravity. These facts make it easy to conclude that gravity is a strong force, but it is actually a very weak force whose confusing and contradictory nature has stumped many investigators. An independent critic from Chapel Hill, N.C., Phillip Manning's book *Gravity* is part of the Chelsea House series called Science Foundations. “Before I started this project, which took about three months, I figured that any book in which the central characters are Galileo, Newton, and Einstein would be a fun undertaking,” Manning said. “As it turns out, I was right. It was a pleasure to watch the modern theory of gravity unfold as each of these great scientists probed the question: Why do things move?” ■ Manning can be reached at pvmanning@mindspring.com. At Chelsea House, the book's editor is Justine Ciovacco at 212-896-4258.

The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human by V.S. Ramachandran, M.D., Ph.D. published by W.W. Norton



Ramachandran is a professor in the psychology department at the University of California, San Diego, and the author of *Phantoms in the Brain*. In this new book, Ramachandran sets his sights on the mystery of human uniqueness. Taking us to the frontiers of neurology, and drawing on strange and thought-provoking case studies, he offers insight into the evolution of the human brain. Ramachandran reveals what baffling and extreme case studies can teach us about normal brain function and how it evolved. Synesthesia becomes a window into the brain mechanisms that make some of us more creative than others. And autism—for which Ramachandran opens a new direction for treatment—gives us a glimpse of the aspect of being human that we understand least: self-awareness. Ramachandran tackles the most exciting and controversial topics in neurology with a storyteller's eye for compelling case studies and a researcher's flair for new approaches to age-old questions. Tracing the strange links between neurology and behavior, this book unveils a wealth of clues into the deepest mysteries of the human brain. ■ Ramachandran can be reached at vramachandran@ucsd.edu.

Wonders of Nuclear Fusion: Creating an Ultimate Energy Source (Barbara Guth Worlds of Wonder Science Series for Young Readers)
by Neal Singer (NASW) published by University of New Mexico Press



Singer, a science writer for Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, introduces young readers to what fusion is—and isn't. He explains the ways scientists have approached and developed fusion and discusses its advantages over other forms of energy production. For example, inside an encapsulated space at Sandia, scientists test the Z Machine, a pulsed power structure that uses electricity and magnetism to produce nuclear fusion. Although much of the research has focused on the development of nuclear weaponry, the Z Machine may also help scientists find a way to harness fusion energy in order to provide clean, renewable energy to the world's growing population. “My day job for the last 15 years has been at Sandia, where I watched, interviewed, and wrote about Z Machine researchers as they lifted Z by its bootstraps into fusion,” Singer said. “I've also been at other sites at Sandia where work on ITER (in France) and the National Ignition Facility (in California) is progressing. So I've had an inside view on development of these machines, which I drew on to write the book.” ■ Singer can be reached at nsinger@sandia.gov. Book's publicist is Katherine MacGilvray at 505-277-3291 or katm@unm.edu.



NASW President
Nancy Shute
 Freelance
 NANCY@NANCYSHUTE.COM

President's Letter

WE LIVE IN AN ERA OF INCREASING GLOBALIZATION, BUT SOMEHOW IT'S STILL A SURPRISE WHEN GREAT WORLD EVENTS AFFECT OUR OWN LITTLE LIVES. THAT'S THE FEELING I KEEP COMING BACK TO AS I WRITE THIS COLUMN, EXPLAINING HOW THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS (WCSJ) CAME TO BE MOVED FROM CAIRO, EGYPT, TO DOHA, QATAR. MAKING THAT MOVE IS A MUCH MORE CHALLENGING THAN CHANGING THE MAILING LABELS ON A FEW BOXES. BUT I'M CONFIDENT THAT WE'RE GOING TO PULL OFF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE JOURNALISM CONFERENCE IN THE ARAB WORLD.

Here's the back story. In June 2009, NASW partnered with the Arab Science Journalists Association in a bid to hold the next World Conference of Science Journalists in Cairo. The goal was the first WCSJ outside the developed world, and the first in an Arab nation. Former NASW presidents Laura van Dam and Deborah Blum had pioneered efforts to get NASW more involved in the global science journalism community and WCSJ. The bid was successful and two years of hard work began. NASW gave \$10,000 in seed money to WCSJ, and pledged another \$50,000 for speaker and attendee travel grants. Deb built an extraordinary program with a special emphasis on science journalists in Africa and Asia, while conference co-chairs Nadia El-Awady and Dalia Abdel-Salam led fundraising and planned events around Egypt's extraordinary scientific and cultural heritage.

Then came Jan. 25, and the start of the Egyptian protests. I was glued to the coverage of Al Jazeera English, watching as tens of thousands of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square, demanding free speech and self-determination. On Feb. 11, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak bowed to the will of the people, and ended his 30-year reign.

But epic moments in history can make conference planning difficult. A new government in Cairo meant that permissions for conference events at the

Pyramids and the National Museum were no longer valid. Many countries including the United States issued travel warnings telling their citizens not to travel to Egypt since the political and security situation was uncertain. The NASW board and executive board discussed the situation at great length. We felt deeply torn between the wish to support the Arab Science Journalism Association and their extraordinary work organizing the Cairo conference, and the need to assure that the conference venue would be a place where attendees would feel comfortable.

On Feb. 19, representatives of the Arab Science Journalists Association, NASW, CASW, and the World Congress of Science Journalists met in Washington, D.C., to tackle the difficult question: If not Cairo, where? That discussion, in the words of NASW secretary Beryl Benderly, "Was lengthy, heartfelt, sincere, and productive." Many options were explored, including moving the meeting to the United States. The group felt it crucial to keep the meeting in the Arab world, if at all possible. NASW followed the lead of the organizers and ASJA in finding the right solution, and we were delighted that a unanimous decision emerged to move WCSJ to Doha, Qatar.

I admit to a few moments of sadness in realizing that we won't be convening at the Pyramids. But I'm increasingly excited about the opportunity to explore Qatar, a tiny country perched on a peninsula in the heart of the Persian Gulf.

Doha's Education City, where sessions will be held, houses campuses for universities including Carnegie Mellon, Weill Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M, and Northwestern (which has a journalism program there). Doha is home to Al Jazeera, and there should be good opportunities for science journalism in the region, as well as that organization's work covering the extraordinary changes of this Arab spring. Beyond the city, I'm eager to learn about desert flora and fauna, and am hoping that the post-conference field trips will include a nighttime trip into the desert with the Bedouins.

Most important, I'm looking forward to getting together with hundreds of science journalists from around the world—China,

Uganda, Argentina, Russia, Finland, South Africa, to name just a few countries. I want to hear how they do their work and the challenges they face, and learn from them. The events of this spring make it clear that we live in a tightly connected world. Strengthening the ties among science journalists worldwide will help us all as we create the future of science journalism. ■

*...epic moments in history
 can make conference
 planning difficult.*





Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
CYBRARIAN@NASW.ORG

Cyberbeat

WE'VE MOVED INTO A SECOND PHASE IN OUR OVERHAUL OF THE NASW.ORG WEBSITE. HERE ARE SOME THINGS WE'VE ALREADY UNDERTAKEN IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE OUR SITE A CORE DESTINATION FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN SCIENCE WRITING:

- A news-ticker-like Twitter block displaying tweets from NASW members and other relevant sources.
- Daily updates for the site's "featured articles" section on the front page, linking to blog posts, articles, essays, images, and musings about science and science writing.
- Tighter connections with NASW's Facebook (www.facebook.com/sciwri) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/ScienceWriters) pages. New "featured articles" on the website are now automatically cross-posted to those two pages.

*...the NASW board
authorized a six-month pilot
project for a web editor...*

More is coming. As you may already know, the NASW board authorized a six-month pilot project for a web editor to develop content for the site and promote connections with social media sites. The goal is to increase the organization's visibility (and ultimately, its membership).

You can help. If you have an idea for an article about some aspect of science writing—especially if you're willing to write it or know someone who can—please send it to cybrarian@nasw.org.

Beyond that, if you just feel like expressing yourself on any subject that is related to science and science writing, you can log into the site and write a blog post. Just use the "My NASW" link at the top of the page. We will select the best member

CYBERBEAT continued on page 19

Their Commitment to NASW

Dispatches FROM THE Director



Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG



One of the joys of being executive director is working with dedicated volunteers; including our 15-member board. In addition to performing important oversight and legal duties and addressing myriad organizational concerns, board members are active throughout the organization.

President Nancy Shute not only keeps all the balls in the air but seeks to further our connections within the international science writing community by seeking election to the World Federation of Science Journalists' board. Vice President Peggy Girshman chairs the workshop committee, responsible for determining the professional development content of ScienceWriters2011. Treasurer Ron Winslow heads the finance committee, currently in the throes of budgeting for 2011-12. Secretary Beryl Benderly turns around meeting notes at lightning speed to provide official record of NASW business. Beryl, our designated representative for the Authors Coalition, also volunteers on the AC distribution committee.

Board members guide a number of vital committees. Coming off a long stint as Internet committee co-chair, Terry Devitt is active with the education committee and the new PIO committee. Current Internet committee co-chairs Adam Rogers and Mitch Waldrop continue to polish the website redesign and are evaluating a potential web editor role.

Award committee co-chairs Dan Ferber and Bob Finn oversee judging of the Science in Society awards. Bob is also on the membership committee with Mike Lemonick and Deborah Franklin (chair). In addition to reviewing membership applications, they are working on membership retention issues brought up during the board's recent strategic planning session.

Tammy Powledge continues her active involvement on the freelance committee. Jeff Grabmeier co-chairs (with member Rob Irion) the education committee. The group recently celebrated another year of successful activities for students at the AAAS meeting. Robin Lloyd chairs the program committee. The committee, which also includes Rosie Mestel, recently put out two RFPs to help science writers fund big ideas (see page 10).

As individuals, each board member is involved and committed to NASW and its 2,200 members. Together, the board's enthusiasm and energies are steering NASW toward a great future. ■

NASW Budget Report

*2010 marked
the shift from
calendar year
to fiscal year
accounting*

1. Recalculation by new auditors
2. Increase in merchant fees tied to increase in credit cards renewals by members
3. For the new web editor experiment
4. Includes ScienceOnline11 and WCSJ2011 support
5. Includes career and travel grants
6. Includes website redesign and "Big Ideas" grants
7. Difference reflects use of AC monies in hand vs. uncertainty in annual AC monies received

	2009 Proposed	2009 Actual	2010 Proposed	6 Months 1/1/2010– 6/30/2010 Actual	New Fiscal Year 7/1/2010– 6/30/2011 Proposed
Revenue					
Dues	\$ 160,000	\$ 162,652	\$ 160,000	\$ 77,625	\$ 160,000
Mailing List	18,000	15,700	18,000	5,500	15,000
Ads/Online and Magazine	30,000	29,285	35,000	22,020	30,000
Unrealized Gains (Loss)	1,000	11,119	1,000	<3,091>	1,000
Miscellaneous Income	–	4,155	–		0
Subtotal	\$ 209,000	\$ 222,911	\$ 214,000	\$ 102,054	\$ 206,000
Special Sources					
Dividends Interest	\$ 10,000	\$ 6,727	\$ 10,000	\$ 911	\$ 5,000
CASW Grant	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
SW Field Guide	2,500	1,707	1,800	886	1,200
Workshops	50,000	48,368	60,000	150	69,000
Authors Coalition	150,000	176,095	50,000	98,397	50,000
Subtotal	\$ 214,000	\$ 234,397	\$ 123,300	\$ 100,344	\$ 126,700
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 423,000	\$ 457,308	\$ 337,300	\$ 202,398	\$ 332,700

Expenses					
Salaries	\$ 78,000	\$ 73,500	\$ 75,000	\$ 37,500	\$ 77,500
Payroll Taxes and Benefits	22,000	15,255	15,000	6,190	23,000
Postage	4,000	4,582	4,500	1,390	5,000
Printing	4,000	1,130	4,500	337	4,500
Supplies	2,500	2,379	3,000	331	3,000
Telephone and Internet	3,500	1,847	3,800	613	2,500
Accounting Fees	8,500	11,475	9,000	5,481	15,000
Legal Fees	2,500	4,325	2,500	9,702	20,000
Corporate Taxes	360	8,058	400	4,729	8,500 ¹
Bank Charges					
(e.g. merchant services fees)	3,000	6,359	3,500	3,614	6,500 ²
Check and Payroll Services	1,800	2,045	1,800	938	2,100
Insurance	2,500	2,098	2,200	2,772	6,000
Bad Debt	500	1,474	500	–	500
Board Expenses	10,000	13,900	10,000	285	17,500
Staff Travel		8,149		1,708	10,500
Website Support and Maintenance	25,000	25,185	36,000	14,156	26,000
Website Editor and Content	–	–	–	–	13,140 ³
Magazine Publication	45,000	49,676	55,000	34,667	50,000
Magazine Editor and Content	23,000	17,250	23,000	11,500	29,000
Awards	15,800	22,649	15,800	446	15,000
Directory	18,000	32,145	5,000	1,500	5,000
Organizational Dues	300	300	350	439	350
Local Groups/Meetings	1,000	835	1,000	1,125	1,500
SW Field Guide	–	–	–		0
Annual Workshops	75,000	84,025	80,000	8,026	100,000
Authors Coalition		<i>See Authors Coalition Details below</i>			
Elections	–	–	1,500	400	1,500
Outreach and Education	63,500	18,534	27,500	3,201	55,000 ⁴
Fellowships and Grants	54,300	56,808	100,000	29,100	102,500 ⁵
Special Projects	83,000	16,455	–	49,335	123,500 ⁶
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 546,060	\$ 480,428	\$ 480,850	\$ 229,485	\$ 724,590⁷

Authors Coalition Details					
Workshops		\$ 61,728		\$ 8,667	
Fellowships and Grants		47,227		30,860	
Content and Design		37,787		40,842	
Outreach and Education		18,435		1,875	
Administrative Allowance (10% of Annual Disbursement)		10,000		8,000	
TOTAL AC Funds Released from Restriction		\$ 175,177		\$ 90,244	

Bank Report			
	12/31/2008	12/31/2009	6/30/2010
CDs	\$ 160,122	\$ 0	\$ 0
Mutual Funds	53,896	41,417	38,395
Cash and Equivalents	236,293	382,057	399,288
Total	\$ 450,311	\$ 423,474	\$ 437,683

Cyberbeat

continued from page 17

blog posts for display on the front site.

Finally, remember that most of our site's articles now accept comments from members and other logged-in users. A few of you have taken advantage of that function already, but we need far more to be involved.

Now, some recent discussions from the lists:

NASW-FREELANCE

As the social media wave continues to sweep through the journalism world, some late adopters are wondering how they can stay afloat.

Take Arcata, Calif., author Sharon Levy, who in mid-February was weeks away from her new book's release.

"Some promotional gurus have advised me that active participation on Twitter is 'not optional' these days for anyone seeking to promote a book," she wrote. "But the fact is, from my limited exposure to Twitter, it seems like an awful time sink that I will not enjoy."

Several participants quickly suggested studying Rebecca Skloot's use of social media to promote her book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, as detailed in the spring 2010 *ScienceWriters*. Almost all who responded said using social media is not optional.

"The space is very crowded, and with all due respect, books—in particular science books—are hard to notice unless you put in the time to get them noticed and more importantly distinguished," said Silver Spring, Md., medical writer Liz Scherer. "Your name alone isn't going to drive your sales."

Plainsboro, N.J., science writer Brian Switek provided more specifics about how Twitter, in particular, can help call attention to a book.

"Being able to tell readers about events, interviews, articles related to my book, etc., has, I think, brought my book a greater deal of attention," he said.

Others advised Levy to consider outlets beyond Twitter, including Facebook and some less prominent.

"Do a Goodreads giveaway," said Ann Arbor, Mich., writer Lorraine Hopping Egan. "I listed my book there and, zip!, some 900+ people signed up for a chance to win it. Besides Goodreads, I suggest setting up author profiles on Library Thing, Jacketflap (if you do kid books), WeRead, Shelfari, Amazon, and all those other book communities. Otherwise, they post a very bland and anonymous page about you."

To read more, see the NASW-freelance archives for the thread "Must I tweet?"

NASW-TALK

A discussion about ArXiv took a whimsical turn in early November after one participant said the online science archive could "become the 600-lb gorilla" of academic publishing.

"What exactly does the 600-lb gorilla mean? Someone tried to tell me it's the same as the white elephant in the room (that nobody talks about)," asked Richland, Wash., public information

officer Mary Beckman.

Several others gently pointed out that Beckman was mixing her Elephantidae metaphors.

"The elephant in the room is a thing/subject that everyone knows about but no one wants to talk about the 600 pound gorilla that sways the conversation because it can't be overlooked and it has force behind it." Penn State senior science and research information officer (and deputy humble cybrarian) A'ndrea Elyse Messer.

Some suggested that, in any event, the gorilla's weight was a subject of some uncertainty,

"A quick Google search finds that the most popular weight for (presumably metaphorical) gorillas is 100 lbs (335,000 hits), followed by 1,000 lbs (180,000), 400 lbs (158,000), and 800 lbs (136,000). I find the popular, lightweight version to be a surprising usage. 100-lb gorillas probably don't really need to be reckoned with," said Cambridge, Mass., public information officer David Chandler.

Empirical evidence paints a rather different picture, said University of Oregon public information officer Melody Leslie.

"Average weight of an African elephant is 4.6 tons. Average weight of an adult

male gorilla, 310-440 lbs. Females, 220 lbs. According to Wikipedia, occasionally a silverback of more than 510 lbs has been recorded in the wild. 'However, obese gorillas in captivity have reached a weight of 600.'"

For more, including the metaphorical viability of "beer goats don't tread water," see the NASW-talk archives for the thread "Stealing metaphors." ■

*...most of our site's articles
now accept comments
from members and
other logged-in users.*

UPCOMING MEETINGS

June 27-29, 2011 • 7th World Conference of Science Journalists, Doha, Qatar. www.wcsj2011.org

Sept. 4-8, 2011 • 6th Science Centre World Congress, Cape Town, South Africa. www.6scwc.org

April 18-20, 2012 • Public Communication of Science & Technology biennial conference, Florence, Italy. www.pcst2012.org/

March 26-29, 2012 • Planet Under Pressure: New Knowledge, New Solutions, London, United Kingdom. www.planetunderpressure2012.net

July 12-16, 2012 • 5th Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF2012), Dublin, Ireland. www.esof2012.org

For an extensive list of international conferences, particularly those related to the research in and about the developing world, visit www.scidev.net/en/events.



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Regional Groups

LOS ANGELES

In September, Science Writers of Los Angeles (SWoLA) visited the Jet Propulsion Lab, in Pasadena, to see the new Mars Science Lab rover (aka Curiosity), and talk to some of the mission scientists. Unlike its smaller rover cousins Spirit and Opportunity, Curiosity will be the size of a Mini Cooper and have the ability to carry a science payload of 70 pounds. Curiosity is scheduled to be launched in November 2011 and land on the red planet in August 2012. Writers also had the opportunity to tour the Deep Space Network Operations Control Center, the spot that controls the radio communications link for NASA spacecraft and some satellites. NASW member Whitney Clavin set up the tour.

In October, about 12 SWoLA-ers took an early morning ferry across the channel to Santa Catalina Island where they were given a half-day Jeep tour of the island's interior, hosted by the Catalina Conservancy. Catalina Island is home to non-native buffalo (brought to the island as background on a movie shoot in the 1920s), as well as endemic species and subspecies, including foxes, squirrels and birds—many of which were spotted on the tour with the help of the sharp-eyed conservancy tour guides. The Jeep tour explored much of the island and stopped at the island's small airport where the group lunched on bison burgers while learning about sustainability from Carlos de la Rosa, chief conservation officer. Some new projects starting up on Catalina include a new non-hormonal birth control method for the bison, and a way for hikers to use smart phones to photograph, describe, and tag invasive species for removal. Many thanks to Patricia Maxwell who organized the day's events and made sure that no one missed the boat!

NEW ENGLAND

Why blog? At a January event hosted by the New England Science Writers, a panel of some of the leading health and science journalist bloggers described blogging as a way to satisfy many journalistic ambitions: have an impact, engage influential

audiences, write more enterprising stories, achieve recognition, and use the blogs to draw attention to their other work.

"Find a niche you care about it, and report the hell out of it," said Ivan Oransky, founder of EmbargoWatch (<http://embargowatch.wordpress.com>) and co-founder of RetractionWatch (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com>). Oransky, executive editor at Reuters Health, considers himself a beat reporter probing the transparency and free flow of scientific information with his independent blogs. Breaking news on these blogs is more fun than editing blogs written by others, as he used to do at *The Scientist* and *Scientific American*.

"It's a dream gig," said Gary Schwitzer, founder of HealthNews Review, a website supported by the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making. "I can write what I want. No one tells me what to say or how to say it." Schwitzer said he "took on the voice of a curmudgeon" in countering misleading claims in news coverage of studies and their health policy implications. His blog (<http://www.healthnewsreview.org/blog/>) drives traffic to the HealthNewsReview.org website.



Blogging for 1,000 fans a day is more satisfying than broadcasting to millions, claimed former CNN medical news reporter Gary Schwitzer at a January event at the Harvard Faculty Club.

Dan Carlat, a psychiatrist who always dreamed of being a writer, now blogs about twice a week. He launched The Carlat Psychiatry Blog (<http://carlatpsychiatry.blogspot.com>) after authoring an article for the *New York Times Magazine* admitting he used to be a paid speaker on the pharmaceutical circuit. In a later op-ed piece for the paper, he proposed that doctors should not earn credit for continuing medical education funded by the drug industry. "Blog for passion," said Carlat.



One liberating feature of blogging is being able to write about sex, said Rachel Zimmerman (center) in a New England Science Writers Association panel that included Dan Carlat (left) and Ivan Oransky.

Former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Rachel Zimmerman posts six or seven times a day for CommonHealth at WBUR (<http://commonhealth.wbur.org>), co-blogging with Carey Goldberg, formerly of the *Boston Globe* and *New York Times*. Many of those posts involve "curation," or collecting and annotating links from elsewhere, a quick way to add currency and value to the original reporting on the blog.

At the time of the workshop, one of the most popular posts addressed the o.b. tampon shortage in stores, a consequence of manufacturing problems at Johnson & Johnson, as the *NY Times* reported shortly thereafter. Zimmerman said she also had unexpected success with a candid post drawing on personal experience titled "Special Report: My quest for pain-free sex," which extolled the virtues of pelvic floor physical therapy as a solution to that problem.

The blogging event was moderated by author and journalism professor Alison Bass (<http://alison-bass.blogspot.com/>), organized by freelance journalist Carol Cruzan Morton, and filmed by Dianne Finch of the Knight Science Journalism Fellowship at MIT. The session can be viewed online at

<http://neswonline.com/2011/03/01/journalist-bloggers/>, thanks to a grant from NASW.

In December, NESW timed its popular annual winter party at Johnny D's, in Somerville, for the week of the Knight Science Journalism Boot Camp to include the visiting scribes. The event was organized by Richard Saltus, science writer and editor at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

NEW YORK

On Dec. 7, Science Writers in New York (SWINY) teamed up with the Meetup.com group G4C (Games for Change) to host a panel program on the latest game technologies and their global impact. The panel was moderated by Josephine Dorado, a Fulbright scholar who introduced the concept of using computer games for learning and social change. She is the founder of "Kidz Connect," which lets young people from around the world create theatrical productions in virtual worlds, and is also a producer for "This Spartan Life" in Halo (a game) broadcast into Xbox Live, hosted by another of the panelists, Chris Burke. Burke talked about using commercial game space as social/learning space, as well as the extension of game culture beyond playing games. "This Spartan Life" has won a bevy of awards, and *Wired* magazine likened it to "a mash-up of The Charlie Rose Show and Doom." Coleen Macklin, an associate professor at Parsons The New School for Design, spoke enthusiastically about the way computer games are becoming increasingly sophisticated and fun learning tools. Melanie Stegman, Ph.D., is the head of learning technologies at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS). She designed "Immune Attack," which teaches high school students about the immune system, and spoke more broadly about the science of immersive learning through computer games. Asi Burak, co-president of G4C, discussed his deep commitment to affecting social change via gaming. He is the designer of the "Peacemaker" and "Play the News" gaming platforms.

The group's sixth annual winter party was held at Friend of a Farmer restaurant in the historic Gramercy Park section of Manhattan on Feb. 24. Almost 50 SWINY members and friends attended and enjoyed the restaurant's rustic ambience and real fireplace. Each year, the theme of the party honors a scientist who was born in February and had significant influence in his/

her field. This year tribute was paid to the inventive legacy of George W. G. Ferris, the American engineer whose childhood fascination with a water wheel near his rural home inspired him to design and build the popular carnival attraction that bears his name. The event was coordinated by SWINY co-chair David Levine and board secretary Sheila Haas. There were theme-related door prizes and a special gift for the first 40 arrivals.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DCSWA members gathered in January at the U.S. Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington to learn the ins and

outs of food regulation. A panel of experts, including USDA Undersecretary for Research, Education, and Economics Catherine Woteki, discussed the science of risk assessment, how outbreaks of food-borne illnesses are tracked, and what scientists are doing to reduce the occurrence of food-related illnesses. Also in January, DCSWAs enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of the Smithsonian's Asian art museums, the Freer Gallery of Art, and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, where they learned how conservators use X-rays to peer inside ancient statues; came face-to-face with the equipment researchers use to determine what materials a painting was made from (which helps with dating and repair efforts); and talked to a geologist who is trying to determine the provenance of the stone used to make some of the galleries' sculptures.

In February, DCSWA hosted an evening gala in Georgetown at the House of Sweden, home to the Swedish embassy, in conjunction with the AAAS annual meeting. DCSWAs mingled with hundreds of science writers from across the country and around the world, sipped bright blue "Particle Collider" drinks, and danced to tunes spun by DJ AutoRock (who by day is the American Chemical Society's Adam Dylewski). ■



Overlooking the Potomac River, the House of Sweden (home of the Swedish Embassy) was a spectacular site for the DCSWA-hosted party for those attending this year's AAAS annual meeting.

Correction

In "Our Gang" (SW, winter 2010-11) Jan Witkowski, executive director of the Banbury Center at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, was incorrectly identified (more than once) as "she." Our apologies to the distinguished gentleman. ■

Time for Change in Science Journalism?

Competition with Internet blogs could stir science journalists in traditional media to correct systemic faults in science reporting, says John Rennie

At Science Online 2011, a conference for journalists and bloggers in North Carolina, I sat on a panel which considered whether online science journalism could be better than its traditional media counterparts. My first response was “Mother of God, I hope so!”

My vehemence sprang not just from enthusiasm for the improvements possible through linking to primary sources, fostering dialogues with readers, incorporating multimedia and tapping the awesome explanatory power of LOLcats. Rather that online reporting could offer a fresh start—the opportunity to correct major defects in the existing coverage of research. I would like to challenge editors and reporters in all media to reconsider fundamentally how they define science news.

Most categories of news are built around discrete events. A building burns down; a law is passed; a sports team wins a match: these things happen once and they cannot unhappen. News media race to inform the public quickly about these events and the consequences that unspool from them.

Science progresses more gradually, however. Investigators may accumulate findings on one discovery slowly, through repeated experiments. They may discuss preliminary results at scientific meetings. They may write and publish a research paper on their work in a professional journal but others in their field may not accept the conclusions until they have replicated the results, which might later be revised or retracted. There is rarely a distinct moment when a finding or theory comes to be accepted as canon by a consensus of scientists.

Scientific publication is thus like a debutante's ball: it formally presents a discovery

to society but makes no guarantees about its eventual prospects. Yet, journalism typically treats the publication of a paper in a journal as a newsworthy, validating event. The journals themselves encourage that practice by distributing embargoed press releases about the contents of upcoming issues. They oh-so-helpfully identify scientific papers that might be important advances and explain their significance to harried reporters on deadline (in return for a promise not to publish until a set date and time).

The somewhat preposterous consequence of this arrangement is that the news media rely heavily if not exclusively on the embargoed press releases in choosing stories to cover: perhaps because the embargo gives them time to prepare a good story but more compellingly because each news outlet realizes all its competitors will run one. Out of fear of being scooped, all media then publish stories on the same research papers at the moment the embargo ends. In that stampede of coverage, opportunities for distinctive reporting are few. Reporters seek informed, disinterested commentary on the findings from other scientists at other labs, but those scientists are at a disadvantage because the paper is new to them, too. And so they are usually quoted uttering cautious banalities about “results that are exciting if they hold up.”

Because the journals publish new research reports every week, the system has tremendous forward momentum. News writers can rarely look back to see what (if anything) has actually come of past discoveries they have reported previously.

Surely there must be a better way. So consider this (admittedly unrealistic) thought experiment: What would happen if all the *CHANGE* continued on page 29

“Time for change in science journalism?” The Guardian (online), Jan. 26, 2011.

JOHN RENNIE IS A FORMER EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN* AND HE NOW WRITES THE GLEAMING RETORT ON PLOS BLOGS.

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News From Afar

A Unifying Cause

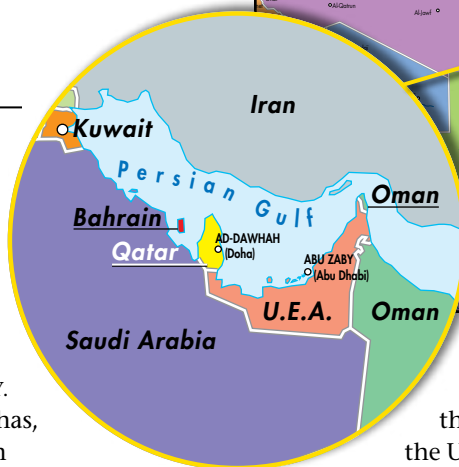
WITH THE RECENT AWAKENING

IN THE ARAB WORLD OF MOVEMENTS FOR DEMOCRACY AND FREE SPEECH, IT IS TIMELY THAT THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS (WCSJ), ON 27–29 JUNE, WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME BE HELD IN AN ARAB COUNTRY.

Even organizing the conference in Qatar has, in its own small way, promoted collaboration between the Western and Arab journalists involved. It can only be hoped that the mingling of science reporters at the event will have a similar, and lasting, effect. Western journalists attending the conference should take the opportunity to see the Middle East, meet its scientists and learn more about how science might contribute to sustainable development of the region, and the substantial challenges it faces, in particular at this crucial and historic moment in the region's history. Support for science in the Arab world has long been at levels far below those in other countries, although there have been some recent improvements (see "Egypt's youth 'key to revival,'" <http://bit.ly/eG3U0l>).

A twinning between the young Arab Science Journalists Association and the well-established U.S. National Association of Science Writers in 2007 made the joint bid to bring the conference to the Arab world possible. That twinning also built powerful ties between science journalists in the Arab world and in the United States. Arab journalists were invited to American science and science journalism conferences, and American journalists attended the first Arab science journalists conference, in 2008. There was much to learn for both sides as they shared challenges, advice and opportunities. It created mutual understanding between two regions that are often perceived as being at odds with one another.

It is a great pity, although understandable given the recent unrest and uncertainty in Egypt, that the organizers decided to relocate the conference from its original planned venue in Cairo to Doha in Qatar. It would have been symbolic to hold a major conference of journalists in a nation that has just overthrown the shackles of a dictatorship that repressed free speech and the critical thought and questioning



that science and science journalism thrive on. But at least the venue has been kept in the Arab world, and has not been moved to the United States, which was discussed as an alternative venue at one point.

Holding the conference in Qatar will hopefully also provide a boost to science journalism in the region, which has suffered, as has all journalism and civil society, under authoritarian regimes. There are no dedicated science journalism courses in any of the universities in Arab states and, although there have been improvements, much of the science journalism there remains poor. The conference is a chance for Arab science journalists to rub shoulders with colleagues from all over the world and exchange their experiences. The connections made will be invaluable as science becomes more global. Many local and regional organizations are now thinking about projects they can put together to train and support science journalists. This will create a momentum to support the profession long after the conference has come and gone.

Past conferences have catered too much to Western issues, but this year's WCSJ, with a rich program and speakers from more than 40 countries, promises to begin providing greater balance. Speakers from the Arab World, Africa, Latin America, and Asia will give delegates greater insights into the science needs and challenges of the developing world. There is much reconstruction of civil society to do in the fledgling democracies of Tunisia and Egypt, and science journalism can play its own small part in prompting debate on crucial science-based issues in every sector, as well as bringing greater scrutiny to the glaring needs in research and higher education. ■

*A conference of science
journalists can strengthen
ties between the Arab
world and the West.*

"A unifying cause," (editorial). Reprinted by permission from Macmillan Publishers Ltd: Nature, March 23, 2011, © 2011.



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Our Gang

Mary Crowley, director of public affairs and communications at the Hastings Center, can now also call herself a television producer. Crowley approached WGBH-Boston/NOVA three years ago with an idea for a show on the ethical questions raised by biotechnology. They agreed that the stories bioethics grapples with are prime television material. NIH agreed, too. Crowley and the public television team applied for and received an almost \$1 million challenge grant, and will start production on the show this spring. Look for airtime in a year. Write to her at crowleym@thehastingscenter.org.

Freelancer **Karen Louise Hoffmann Little** is now reporting from Mexico City for the English-language magazine *Mexico Weekly*, where she's writing as many science stories as she can. Ask her for the latest at hoffkar@gmail.com.

A'ndrea Elyse Messer, senior science and research information officer at Penn State, has edited a special section for the journal *Archaeological Record*. The section, titled "The Media's Image of the Archaeologist Through Time," covers portrayals of the discipline over past decades. Messer says that she wrote the paper on the 1960s herself, because she remembers that decade so well. Write to her at aem1@psu.edu to discover what '60s-era archaeologists dug up at Woodstock.

Freelancer **Michelle Nijhuis** has embarked on a yearlong, \$40,000 fellowship from the Alicia Patterson Foundation, for a project called "The New Ark: Rescuing Rare Species in an Age of Global Change." She will investigate the sometimes radical methods that people use to save critically endangered species. Named in honor of a former editor of *Newsday*, the Alicia Patterson Foundation provides support for journalists who engage in "rigorous, probing, spirited, independent, and skeptical work that will benefit the public." To find out more, write to Nijhuis at michelle@nasw.org.

Larry O'Hanlon and his family now call the Big Island home. After more than 12 years freelancing for *Discovery News*, O'Hanlon has become communications and public programs officer for the W.M. Keck Observatory. There, he writes about research done at the telescopes as well as delivers science into schools and to the community at large. "I used to do those things on my own as a volunteer in New Mexico," he says. "Now I can't believe I'm being paid to do it in Hawaii." Write to larryohanlon@gmail.com for a tour of Mauna Kea.

Following eight months as an intern and contract writer for *Chemical & Engineering News*, freelancer **David Pittman** has started a new full-time job. He's now at FDAnews, a newsletter publishing company that follows the regulatory affairs of the Food and Drug Administration. He covers the drug and medical device industries' efforts to comply with the FDA's vast rules,

regulations, and inspections—and he still plans to freelance on the side. Write to him at david.pittman4290@gmail.com.

A public information officer and educator at the University of Florida has been named president of the American Medical Writers Association. **Melanie Fridl Ross** is director of health science center news and communications at UF, where she also teaches reporting. She is also senior producer of "Health in a Heartbeat," which airs on public radio affiliates in 18 states and Washington, D.C. Check out "Health in a Heartbeat" at <http://goo.gl/Fcy6C> or on iTunes. And when you write to Ross at ufcardiac@aol.com, please address her as "Madame President."

While many developed countries have eradicated malaria, the disease is still responsible for nearly two-thirds of deaths of children under the age of five in the West African republic of Mali. For five weeks starting in mid-March, freelancer **David Taylor** will report on research and practice against malaria in one of its strongholds. "Nearly every family in Mali has been touched by malaria," he says, "including those of two researchers at the University of Bamako whom I'll be following." The trip is made possible by his 2011 International Reporting Project Fellowship. The project aims at getting coverage for under-reported health stories abroad, and Taylor hopes to have several stories for U.S. magazines and newspapers when he gets back. Wish him well at dataylor@igc.org.

Wendy Meyeroff has been writing about caregiving since the 1980s—"long before it became trendy," she says. Now that she's freelancing regularly for the American Heart Association, she's begun covering that same topic for the magazine *Heart Insights*. In the latest story, "When Your 'Inheritance' Includes Caregiving," she tackles what happens when one family member automatically assumes that another will provide care when the time comes. Read it online at <http://goo.gl/vXDSI>, and write to her at wendy@medicalwritingplus.com.

Freelancer **Brian Vastag** is in the midst of a six-month contract writing for the *Washington Post* while some of the regular staff members are on leave. "I'm covering science...all of it!" he says. "Perhaps this is a good chance to remind NASW members that the *Post* still publishes a print Health & Science section every Tuesday." Tell him you saw his byline at bv@brienvastag.net.

Kitta MacPherson isn't a physicist, but she's always loved writing about physics. Now she can do it full time as the new director of communications for the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL). For 27 years, as science writer and editor at *The Star-Ledger* of Newark, she covered all the major fusion breakthroughs at PPPL. Then she became the lead science writer in Princeton's office of communications. Now, she says, "It's all physics all the time, and I couldn't be happier." Write to kittamac@pppl.gov to congratulate her on her new "high-energy" position. ■

■ ■ ■

**Our Gang seeks career news updates—
whether you are a staff writer, freelance, broadcaster,
blogger, editor, educator, student, or hybrid.
E-mail Pam Frost Gorder at gorder.1@osu.edu**

Descent of Radium

A fraction of common uranium
Each thousand million years will lose
Three helium nuclei and become
The glowing metal radium, which accrues
In residues and turns hands numb,
Stuns mutated cells, and disintegrates
By half its mass each millennium
Descending through the atomic weights
Of radon, bismuth and polonium,
The last of these a source of rays
Greater than those it descended from,
Decaying by half each hundred days
When half-lives spent, its radiation dead,
It transmutes to the element of lead.

— Jim Fisher

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New Website for Clark/Payne Award

The Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award website has a new look, updated content, and a new URL (<http://clark-payne.org>).

Now in its 22nd year, the Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award is intended to encourage young science writers (age 30 or younger) by recognizing outstanding reporting and writing in any field of science. The winner receives \$1,000 and expenses to attend the annual meeting of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) and the New Horizons briefing of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW), where the award is formally presented.

The award is given in memory of Ev Clark, a veteran journalist at *BusinessWeek*, *New York Times*, and *Newsweek*; and Seth Payne, his long-time friend and colleague at *BusinessWeek* and a founder of the award. It is designed to carry on the legacy of both men, who offered friendship and advice to generations of young journalists.

The award is limited to non-technical, print and online journalism. Eligible are articles published in newspapers (including college newspapers), magazines, newsletters, and online publications and other websites. (Books or articles in technical journals and trade association publications are ineligible.)

Both freelancers and staff writers are eligible. This year, the deadline for applications and material submissions is June 30, 2011.

The award is given by the Clark/Payne Fund and NASW, in conjunction with the National Press Foundation, which administers the endowment. Former *BusinessWeek* senior correspondent John Carey is director of the award. Carey's Ev Clark Award (and former *BusinessWeek* colleague Steve Wildstrom generously gave of his time to create the new award website. ■

In Memoriam

Jack Popejoy

Radio news anchor; distinguished earthquake reporter

Jack Popejoy, a morning news anchor who was a distinguished earthquake reporter for more than 25 years on Southern California radio, died Feb. 5, at the age of 63.

His passion for scientific reporting reached back to high school, when he wrote science spots for a radio show in the Northeast. An astronomy major at Amherst College, Popejoy joined Los Angeles radio station KFWB in 1986, and a year later was making "learned" historical comparisons while reporting on the Whittier Narrows earthquake, the *L.A. Times* said in 1987. Four days before the magnitude 5.9 temblor struck in 1987, KFWB had finished airing Popejoy's series on earthquake preparedness.

He was a creator of the annual Great California ShakeOut, which was billed as the state's largest disaster drill when it made its debut in 2008. He was also dedicated to overall disaster preparedness and often taught workshops on the subject.

Popejoy did the voice-over for the ShakeOut's earthquake soundtrack and told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2008: "We want to make it feel cool to duck, cover and hold."

Born in 1947 in Austin, Texas, Popejoy spent his early years in New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. After earning a bachelor's degree in 1969, he launched his radio career in Boston and Philadelphia and came to Los Angeles in the early 1970s to write jingles for commercials.

He broke into the L.A. radio scene first as a weekend DJ and later a newscaster. From 1980 to 1982, he worked in TV news in San Francisco. He returned to Los Angeles in 1983 and joined KCOP, Channel 13 as a reporter.

When his radio station needed a website in the 1990s, Popejoy taught himself to write HTML and put one together.

During his career, Popejoy received 27 Golden Mike Awards from the Radio and Television News Association of Southern California.

(source: Los Angeles Times)

■ ■ ■

Herman Weisman

ScienceWriters has learned of the death of Herman Weisman, of Silver Springs, Md., who had been an NASW member since 1962. ■

SCIENCEWRITERS WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A letter must include a daytime telephone number and e-mail address. Letters submitted may be used in print or digital form by NASW, and may be edited.

Mail to:
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P.O. Box 1725
Solana Beach, CA 92075

E-mail to:
editor@nasw.org

One Way to Deal with Embargoes. Ignore Them, But Don't Peek at the Goods Either



Say “embargoes” in a bar full of science journalists and get ready for heated discussion. Most reporters don’t like somebody telling them news and also telling them it can’t be used until “we say so.” But most go along with it—it seductively provides time to prepare a story with some confidence one will not be beaten. And while this power has eroded with the rise of the Internet, several major journals still put do-not-publish-until signs on their research papers, and press releases frequently have embargo dates that don’t correspond to anything very important other than the source’s whim.

At the small specialty outlet Universe Today, publisher Fraser Cain announces a new policy: *We’re Done With Embargoes*. He and his staff will henceforth ignore embargoes but with a curious twist. They also will ignore, until the appointed date, the material that is embargoed.

The new policy is in the name of egalitarianism, from the looks of it. It is to say to the world that we will no longer accept the special status of anointed journalists, designated by whatever press list a public relations man has on hand, to get the news in advance. If the public along with bloggers, twitterers, and even “science fiction

reporters” does not merit getting a piece of information, count us out (and how does one report fiction? Seems self-canceling, if to report is to act as a journalist covering reality).

Or to quote a part of this new policy:

If you have a story to tell the world, announce it publicly somewhere: on your website, by e-mail, through a Twitter feed, call us on the phone, whatever. There are so many ways to get the story out, and have it amplified beyond your wildest imagination. We’ll pick up the story and run with it, or not.

But if you give us a news release with an embargo, we’re not going to spring into action. We’re going to wait until you’ve announced it publicly on the Internet before we decide if we going to cover it, and how we’re going to cover it. We’re not going to access password protected journal pages, or participate in insider conference calls. If you have a news scoop, we’re going to ask you if we can report on this right now, and if we can’t, we’re going to ask you to call back later.

Good luck with that. It will be difficult, one thinks, to not start work on news until it is public but that other news outfits are obediently preparing under wraps for the designated time. Perhaps Cain has announced this policy in full expectation of compliance. But will the writers at such a place, enthusiasts about space and astronomy that they are, NOT look at an embargoed paper to which they have access? Not ever? Some of the info, they’ll know, they will be expected to cover as news when it goes fully public. Surely, he’s not going to put a boss’s spyware logger on their laptops. I should check back in six months to see how it’s going, or hope some little birds will tell us.

...if you give us a news release with an embargo, we’re not going to spring into action.

By the way, the announcement notes that Universe Today used to get turned down for access to embargoed material. It was such a small start-up, Cain writes, that it got shrugged off. It’s not so small anymore. He reports it recently hit four million page views in a month and has 60,000 RSS subscribers. ■

(source: Charlie Petit, *Knight Science Journalism Tracker*)



A curious bird is the pelican

His bill holds more than his belly-can.

And there’s room in his cheek

To hold food for a week

But I don’t know how-the-hell he-can.

—Ogden Nash



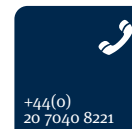
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Three NASW Members Elected AAAS Fellows

Mariette DiChristina, Bud Ward, and Cristine Russell Honored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Mariette DiChristina is recognized for “distinguished science journalism and editing that has had a major impact on public understanding of science.” DiChristina oversees *Scientific American*, *ScientificAmerican.com*, *Scientific American Mind*, and all newsstand special editions. She is the eighth person and first woman to assume the top post in *Scientific American*’s 165-year history. Under her tenure, *Scientific American* is offering activities for kids, parents and society at large as part of the White House initiative Change the Equation. The magazine is partnering on educational outreach with the Google Science Fair and NBC Learn.

She joined *Scientific American* in 2001 as executive editor. Previously, she spent nearly 14 years at *Popular Science*, ultimately as executive editor. There, her work in writing and overseeing articles about space helped garner for the magazine the Space Foundation’s 2001 Douglas S. Morrow Public Outreach Award.

DeChristina served as NASW president in 2009 and 2010. Her chapter on science editing appears in the second edition of *A Field Guide for Science Writers*. A frequent lecturer, she has appeared at the New York Academy of Sciences, California Academy of Sciences, 92nd Street Y in New York, Yale University, New York University, and many others.

Bud Ward is recognized for “outstanding leadership, reporting, and service to professionals in environmental journalism and for his efforts to enhance media’s role in public understanding of science.” The founding editor of *Environment Writer*, newsletter for journalists, Ward was a co-founder in 1989 of the Society of Environmental Journalists. He established the Central European Environmental Journalism Program in 1991 to help Central European journalists learn about the responsibilities of independent news media in a market economy and democratic system. His nonprofit journalism education group throughout the 1990s published a dozen reporters’ guides to covering environmental issues and held newsroom workshops on computer assisted reporting on toxic release inventory (right-to-know)

chemicals in local communities.

Authoring and coauthoring books on environment and on journalism while also teaching, Ward has held a series of NSF-funded workshops on reporting on climate science for journalists and leading scientists. Named George Mason University’s 2009 “Climate Change Communicator of the Year,” he is currently running workshops for, and working with, broadcast meteorologists to improve public understanding of climate change science. He oversees the jury and evaluates entries for the Metcalf Institute’s \$75,000 Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment, and is founding editor of *The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media*. A freelancer since 2002, he lectures frequently on climate change and journalism issues.

Cristine Russell is recognized for “dedication and exemplary science communication that explores scientific risk and public policy in journalism and academia.” An award-winning journalist who has written about science, health, and the environment for more than 35 years, Russell has long been interested in the challenges of communicating to the public about controversies in science, particularly hazards to public health and the environment. She covered science and public policy as a longtime national science reporter for *Washington Post* and earlier *The Washington Star* and traveled the globe, from Antarctica to China.

She currently writes about media coverage and topical science issues, particularly climate change, as a contributing editor for *Columbia Journalism Review*, a correspondent for *TheAtlantic.com*, and a freelancer. A past NASW president, Russell now serves as the president of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing and on the World Conference of Science Journalists 2011 steering committee. She is a senior fellow in the Environment and Natural Resources Program at Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and she wrote about the future of science journalism as a spring 2006 fellow at HKS’s Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy. ■

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*Student member

CANCER

continued from page 7

floor of their Tokyo office building.

Skiing for sport was the antithetical antidote. Cold snowy mountains replaced mediated images of what used to be called tidal waves. On American lips, "tsu" lost its pronounced sting.

For the next weeks in my native California, I experienced a disconnect. I knew only what I read in newspapers. A stupefied look greeted "I live in Japan."

The newlyweds have not left Tokyo, and fertility was the concern of family members. The bride's father is a world-renowned gynecologist.

The crisis in Japan will not change my future plans. Dr. Kim told me, "The earthquake and tsunami in northeast Japan are extremely disastrous. But there is no influence in west Japan for the present. The nuclear power plant is located in Fukushima. Fukushima is far from Kyoto, and the leaking radiation level is still low."

In news reports, U.N. Nuclear Chief Yukiya Amano stated, "There are areas where we don't have information. We don't, and the Japanese don't, either."

The clothes of a person on the escalator at the airport in Japan seemed to glow with a green tint. I hadn't realized my worry. ■

SCHOLARLY PURSUITS

continued from page 9

report on the most popular search queries in different countries; and Google Insights for Search (GIS) (www.google.com/insights/search/#) a more elaborate development of GT that also combines some features from GZ. It shows the top searches and increasingly popular searches in specific categories (such as science, news and current events, entertainment, etc.), provides related searches, and allows for a more advanced cross-national comparison using a visual world map.

Among their findings:

■ A comparison of the terms "horoscope" and "Mars/NASA" on GT reveals that all three terms were the subject of a very similar proportion of search queries submitted to Google. However, searches for NASA and Mars are influenced by events such as the launch of *Discovery*, whereas searches for horoscope are usually stable, and peak only in the last weeks of each year.

■ "Nanotechnology" and "biotechnology" both

result in rather stable trends, while "cloning" and "stem cell" fluctuate in relation to media attention (i.e., their Google News coverage and search trends display similar patterns).

■ The top search terms related to the query "science" were science museum, science fair, science center, science projects, computer science, science journal, science project, museum of science, science fiction, and science fair projects. Thus most searches for science were most probably carried out for formal or informal educational-related reasons.

"The different patterns may help researchers identify and differentiate general and stable interests as a result of ongoing education activity from ephemeral interests that correspond to trendy fashions and media coverage," the authors write. "They also may shed some light on the ways in which science on the media is being further explored by the audience, for example, what would be a starting point for information seeking." ■

CHANGE

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editors and reporters of the extended science press, including the legions of science bloggers, self-imposed a moratorium that forbade writing about new scientific findings until six months after their journal publication?

Obviously, reporters could then take more time with their stories and they would have a far wider set of scientists to whom they could turn for commentary, which would in turn be less rushed and better informed. The more important change, however, would likely be to story selection. Many stories now reported breathlessly would probably not be reported at all, or would become parts of more comprehensive roundups of related work. Other discoveries that are now overlooked—because reports of them appear either in less prestigious journals or at the same time as more spectacular work—might finally get their due.

Because "newness" would no longer be a primary factor driving the selection of science news, assigning editors might give more weight to overview stories about trends in research, or the accretion of ideas within fields, or more deeply analytical pieces. Articles could do a better, more thoughtful job of providing context. When different publications did then report on the same research, the stories would be less interchangeable.

Indeed, blogs and science pages offer some such stories already, but doing more of them would be a smarter use of their resources. As a past editor in chief of *Scientific American*, which was exclusively a monthly science magazine until the 1990s, I can attest that plenty of engaged science readers will happily trade prompt, superficial coverage for something more.

Postponing coverage of research is not a real or preferable remedy to the ills of science journalism. Nevertheless, I do urge publications to rethink and broaden their science coverage. If nothing else, they should consider that, thanks to the web, readers can increasingly find their way to the press releases from journals and research institutions at popular sites such as Science Daily and Futurity.org. If our journalism does not offer substantially more value to readers than these alternative "news" sites, something is wrong. ■

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