

The Newsletter of The National Association of

ScienceWriters

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STORY IGNORED WHEN PRESS BAFFLED BY STATISTICS

by Lila Guterman

Last fall, a major public-health study appeared in *The Lancet*, a prestigious British medical journal, only to be missed or dismissed by the American press. To the extent it was covered at all, the reports were short and usually buried far from the front pages of major newspapers. The results of the study could have played an important role in future policy decisions, but the press's near total silence allowed the issue to pass without debate.

The study, though scientifically robust, had several elements working against it. One was its subject matter: Researchers had done a door-to-door survey of nearly 8,000 people in 33 locations in Iraq to estimate how many people had died as a consequence of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation. Americans, and their media, were reluctant to accept the study's conclusions—that the number was likely around 100,000; that violence had become the primary cause of death since the invasion; that more than half of those killed were women and children.

Adding to the scent of propaganda was the fact that *The Lancet* had rushed the study into print at the lead author's request. Some reporters may have guessed that the rushed publication—with the U.S. presidential election looming—meant that the study itself was essentially political. But medical journals often fast-track papers that have immediate importance to doctors or to public-health policy. When I was working on a follow-up article about the study for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in January, I made three phone calls to other major medical journals and quickly discovered that the manuscript's turnaround time, about four weeks, was not outside the norm for fast-tracked papers and did not necessarily mean that editing and peer review had been compromised.

But there's more to the matter than ideology. The way the researchers presented their results made it difficult for statistics-shy journalists to grasp their significance. The scientists, from Johns Hopkins University, Columbia University, and Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, reported a so-called 95 percent confidence interval. They said that they were 95 percent sure the number of deaths lay between 8,000 and 194,000.

Eight thousand and 194,000? What's a reporter to make of such a broad range? The lower end of that range overlaps well with previous, nonscientific estimates, but the middle and upper range seem outrageous. True, had the researchers surveyed more houses in more neighborhoods, the interval would have been narrower. But each day spent traveling within Iraq for the study presented grave dangers to the American and Iraqi researchers.

Lila Guterman is a senior reporter at The Chronicle of Higher Education.



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SUBMISSION DEADLINES

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Reporters' unease about the wide range may have been a primary reason many didn't cover the study. One columnist, Fred Kaplan of *Slate*, called the estimate "meaningless" and labeled the range "a dart board."

But he was wrong. I called about ten biostatisticians and mortality experts. Not one of them took issue with the study's methods or its conclusions. If anything, the scientists told me, the authors had been cautious in their estimates. With a quick call to a statistician, reporters would have found that the probability forms a bell curve—the likelihood is very small that the number of deaths fell at either extreme of the range. It was very likely to fall near the middle.

The *Washington Post's* Rob Stein quoted a military analyst at Human Rights Watch as saying, "These numbers seem to be inflated." If even Human Rights Watch doesn't believe the estimate, why should you? (The analyst told me that he hadn't read *The Lancet* paper at the time, and that he told Stein so, although the *Post* didn't mention that. The analyst now has no reservations about the study's conclusions.) A reporter asserted in the *New York Times* that "the finding is certain to generate intense controversy," even though she quoted no one critical of the study.

British newspapers, by and large, did better—most journalists there seemed unfazed by the wide range of the possible death toll and some newspapers put the story on page one.

The way the researchers presented their results made it difficult for statistics-shy journalists to grasp their significance.

Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that the British government felt forced to acknowledge it. Parliament held hearings and the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, wrote a lengthy response to the paper. But the Bush administration has kept mum on the topic, sticking to General Tommy Franks's oft-quoted, "We don't do body counts."

Had the U.S. and U.N. responded as they did to the lead author's similar studies in the Congo a few years ago, tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid might have gone to Iraq, and military decisions could have been altered. But without a nudge from journalists, the government has managed to ignore the paper. Even though it tries not to harm civilians, the military makes no attempt to quantify its "collateral damage."

In the meantime, five months have passed since the paper came out. If the death rate has stayed the same, roughly 25,000 more Iraqis have died. ■

"Dead Iraqis: Why an Estimate was Ignored," Columbia Journalism Review, March/April 2005.

JOURNALS DEMAND MORE DATA FOR FULL DISCLOSURE

by Anna Wilde Mathews

Doctors and patients who rely on articles in prestigious medical journals for information about drugs have a problem: The articles don't always tell the full story.

Some omit key findings of trials about a drug's safety and efficacy or inconvenient details about how a trial's design changed partway through. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last year reviewed 122 medical-journal articles and found that 65 percent of findings on harmful effects weren't completely reported. It also found gaps in half the findings on how well treatments worked.

The problem calls into question whether journals can play the role of gatekeeper in an era when articles are increasingly used as marketing tools. Editors have "found themselves playing a game of research hide-and-seek," says Jeffrey Drazen, editor in chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. They have "had experiences where authors tried to pitch it, where they were telling you the good news and not the bad news."

Now some top journals are cracking down. This year *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*, a leading British medical journal, started demanding that everyone who submits an article also submit the original study design plans, so that peer reviewers can see whether the authors changed the goalposts when publishing the study. It's weighing whether to make the plans and the reviewers' comments public.

"We want to make sure that we're not misleading the public," says Kamran Abbasi, deputy editor of *BMJ*.

JAMA and other top journals are also asking authors more frequently for their original study designs. Editors at *JAMA* sometimes call in independent statisticians to review the results. Several medical journals are also requiring that sponsors of clinical trials starting this July or later register details such as goals and size in a public database if they wish the results to be published.

The measures reflect a growing body of research about discrepancies between journal articles and the full results of the studies behind them. Journal editors are also responding to the escalating debate in Washington on ensuring drug side effects are properly disclosed. In the wake of the withdrawal of Merck & Co.'s painkiller Vioxx over cardiovascular side effects, some legislators are calling for tougher safety scrutiny of drugs on the market.

The *JAMA* study last year said articles often cherry-

Anna Wilde Mathews is a Staff Reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

picked strong results to report, even if those results were in a different area than the study was designed to test. Typically scientists set up clinical trials to answer one or two primary questions—for example, whether a drug reduces the risk of a heart attack and stroke. These are called the primary outcomes. The *JAMA* study found that 62 percent of trials had at least one primary outcome that was changed, added, or omitted.

"It was a shock to find that what we thought was the most reliable information wasn't," says Douglas Altman, an author of the *JAMA* study and director of the Center for Statistics in Medicine, in Oxford, England.

One well-publicized dispute over data interpretation came in 2000 when a *JAMA* article said Pfizer Inc.'s painkiller Celebrex minimized damage to the stomach compared with older drugs. It later emerged that the authors used only six months of data even though they had some data extending to 12 months. When all the results were included, Celebrex didn't look markedly better than its rivals. (Separately, a study last year suggested Celebrex might increase heart risk.) Today, the 2000 article is part of a shareholder suit alleging that Pfizer misled investors about its drug.

"We were burned very badly," says Catherine DeAngelis, *JAMA*'s editor in chief. She says the journal got tougher as a result. Today, "the single thing we change most often is the conclusion," she says. "It comes in as, 'This product is the greatest thing,' and we say, 'Under these circumstances, in this population, this medication seems to control a, b and c.'"

In an e-mail, a Pfizer spokeswoman said the authors of the Celebrex study "presented the data in the manner that they felt was the most meaningful." Many patients discontinued the treatment after six months, "making analysis of data beyond six months difficult," she said.

Journal editors rarely see the complete design and outcome of the studies summarized in articles submitted for publication. A typical article is perhaps six or seven pages long, even when the research behind it took years and involved thousands of patients. Peer reviewers—other scientists who work voluntarily to review articles before they are published—also see only the brief article. They might fail to notice suspicious omissions and changes in focus, or, if they do, lack the time or inclination to follow them up.

The system relies, in essence, on a scholarly honor system. "Science depends on trust," says Drummond Rennie, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco, and deputy editor of *JAMA*. "But if you have trust, you're going to be fooled. You can't have a policeman in every lab."

JAMA has tightened scrutiny of articles that are co-authored by academic researchers and industry scientists. To prevent the industry authors from slanting the data, *JAMA* demands that the academic authors, like

corporate chief executives under Sarbanes-Oxley requirements, sign statements attesting that they have taken part in the data analysis and stand by their findings.

"I want an academician to put his or her reputation on the line, and that of the institution," says Dr. DeAngelis, the *JAMA* editor in chief.

Disputes are rarely clear-cut. Scientists may legitimately disagree whether an article that leaves out a certain figure is deceptive or merely reflects the fact that no several-page summary of thousands of pages of data can be comprehensive.

***The problem calls into question
whether journals can play
the role of gatekeeper in an era
when articles are increasingly
used as marketing tools.***

As part of a bid for Food and Drug Administration approval to sell the anticholesterol drug Mevacor without a doctor's prescription, Merck and partner Johnson & Johnson set up 14 mock drugstores and solicited customers through advertising. The store shelves were lined with products including over-the-counter Mevacor. A label on the drug instructed potential users that they should take it only if they met several conditions, such as having moderately high cholesterol and at least one risk factor for heart disease. The idea was to simulate the real-life circumstances under which the pills would be sold.

An article summarizing the results of the experiment in the November 2004 issue of the *American Journal of Cardiology* said about two-thirds of the people who decided to try the drug met the conditions or came close. The authors, who worked for Merck and J&J, said the study's full results made a "compelling case" that Mevacor was suitable to be sold over the counter.

In reviewing the case, the FDA highlighted another figure, one that never appeared in the article: Just 10 percent of the people who took the drug fully met the label's conditions. The others included in the two-thirds figure met many of the conditions but not all. After hearing a presentation by agency officials, an FDA advisory committee in January voted to reject the drug companies' request.

Edwin Hemwall, a vice president at the Merck-J&J joint venture that wants to sell the drug over the counter, says the label was conservatively written and the two-thirds figure accurately captured the percentage of users who were right for the drug. It included people who had been advised by their doctor to take Mevacor and some who were a year younger than the minimum ages on the label (45 for men, 55 for women). "We felt that that really represented, from a global perspective, the type of person who fit the label," Dr. Hemwall says. The FDA, he says, "went very, very strictly by the label."

The journal's editor, William Roberts of Baylor University, said he didn't remember details of the article and couldn't comment.

Some editors say it's impossible to sift through thousands of pages of raw data to check a paper's fairness, given the cost and demands on the time of reviewers. Ultimately, that's the job of the FDA, says David Pisetsky, a Duke University professor who is the editor of *Arthritis & Rheumatism*. "People have to be realistic about what a journal can do," he says.

Alan Goldhammer, an associate vice president at the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the top drug-industry trade group, says some of the new scrutiny unfairly singles out drug companies—for example, by forcing them to get academic scientists to check off on their work. "When is enough enough?" asks Mr. Goldhammer. "Why are our submitted articles different from all other submitted articles?"

They're different, journal editors contend, because of their potential use in marketing. In 2003, an article in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* concluded that the Alzheimer's drug Aricept helps elderly people live at home longer. It cited "significant delays" in the date when people who took Aricept entered a nursing home. Pfizer and Eisai Co., the drug's co-marketers, ran ads in medical publications that cited the study and said the drug "helps keep patients in the community for more than five years."

Critics, in letters to the journal, called the study "seriously flawed" and "misleading." They suggested that its design tended to weight the Aricept group with the most compliant patients and those with the most social support—making it unclear whether their superior results had anything to do with the drug's effects. Those in the non-Aricept group included people who refused the companies' offer for free ongoing treatment with the drug and some who dropped out of an earlier clinical trial of it.

The study acknowledged the possibility of "selection bias" between the groups, but suggested this wasn't a fatal flaw. David Geldmacher, the article's lead author and a professor at the University of Virginia, says the study results were "meaningful" and the two groups were "comparable to a reasonable standard." Thomas Yoshikawa, editor in chief of the journal, says the article was "topical and relevant" and its science "reasonably good." The Pfizer spokeswoman said in an e-mail that the company "stands by our advertising and the results of this study," adding that they are consistent with a different study published this January in the same journal.

A 2001 analysis in *JAMA* found that side effects were adequately reported in only 39 percent of nearly 200 articles surveyed. The median space devoted to safety concerns was roughly a third of a page—about the same as the authors' names and affiliations.

In 2001 the *New England Journal of Medicine* published an article about the Eli Lilly & Co. drug Xigris for sepsis, a body-wide response to infection that is often fatal. The article described Xigris as effective in a broad spectrum of patients. But four consultants to an FDA advisory committee later published a commentary in the journal, saying the FDA's analysis showed the least-sick patients got no benefit and suffered side effects. The FDA approved the drug only for sicker patients.

William Macias, a Lilly official, and Gordon Bernard, a Vanderbilt University professor who was the lead author of the article, say the authors used a different statistical analysis than the FDA, and their method showed no meaningful differences between the subgroups. Dr. Drazen, the *New England Journal's* editor in chief, defends the article, saying the main point was to tell readers the overall results.

"One solution to this is to publish the raw data" that emerge from a trial, says Dr. Abbasi of *BMJ*, the British journal. "The way things are going in terms of openness, you can't rule it out." ■

"Worrisome Ailment in Medicine: Misleading Journal Articles," *Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 2005.

THE DAY THE SIMPSONS RECEIVED A DOSE OF NUCLEAR REALITY

by Carl Goldstein

When *The Simpsons* completes its 17th, and probably last, TV season, in 2006, many establishment institutions will breathe a little easier, none more so than my employer for 25 years, the nuclear-energy industry.

Although hardly a staple of the show, Homer Simpson's bumbling, cavalier job performance at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant was a leitmotif of dysfunction that sustained—nay, illuminated—more than 300 mostly brilliant episodes.

The nuclear angle and the plant's unctuous, bullying owner, Montgomery Burns, were introduced early on, but only one episode out of 13 in the first season (1989-90) focused, quite scathingly, on the nuclear plant. Using Google to search plot synopses for the past 16 years, it appears that Homer's job and the plant were

NASW member Carl Goldstein retired 10 years ago as vice president, public and media relations, for the Nuclear Energy Institute. Carl was a fixture in the pressroom of AAAS annual meetings for 24 years, helping background science writers on nuclear energy. He resides in Silver Spring, MD.

central to only one or two shows each season.

Nevertheless, it didn't take long for the nuclear industry to sound the alarm and to press its trade association to do something. To head off potentially self-defeating protests to the Fox network, the U.S. Council for Energy Awareness (now, the Nuclear Energy Institute) decided to offer the show's creative team a tour of a California nuclear power plant for some attitude adjustment. As the spokesman for the association, this became my mission impossible. (I could relate to Waylon Smithers, Burns's put-upon PR man, though I was leery of his fascination with Malibu Stacy dolls.)

After much tedious negotiation, both with the host utility and 20th Century Fox,

Simpsons Executive Producer Sam Simon, his *Woman Friday*, an associate producer, and five zany writers piled into a rented minibus with me in April 1990 and we drove 75 rain-soaked miles to the power plant south of Los Angeles. Excepting *Woman Friday*, my guests' combined age probably did not exceed mine by more than 20 years.

The *Simpsons* crew reflected Hollywood brashness, but little glamour. The writers were a bit grungy, profane, and seemingly oblivious to the written word beyond gag books and scripts. They were intoxicated by their precocious success. Their backgrounds were mainstream—from biophysics to social work—and there wasn't an English major among them. A couple had written advertising copy and hated it.

They insisted the show is non-ideological—Homer Simpson has to work somewhere, and a nuclear plant, they decided, has endless comic possibilities.

I tried hard to "dress down" for the occasion, but never came close to their funky, expensive attire. Yet they, of all people, tisk-tisked that the utility did not have a dress code for the control-room personnel. The men sported elaborate, clumsy sneakers—more like space shoes—and I worried that they would trip over their untied laces as they climbed through the plant.

Their conversations were like a stream of hilarious comedy routines and they found humor in everything (issued hard hats at the plant, they caromed off the walls

like kids). They were "on" every minute of a long, long day. They read their handouts on the bus, but squirmed through the briefings. All insisted they had no particular bias against nuclear energy—two, in fact, said they were strongly pro-nuclear. They insisted the show is non-ideological—Homer Simpson has to work somewhere, and a nuclear plant, they decided, has endless comic possibilities.

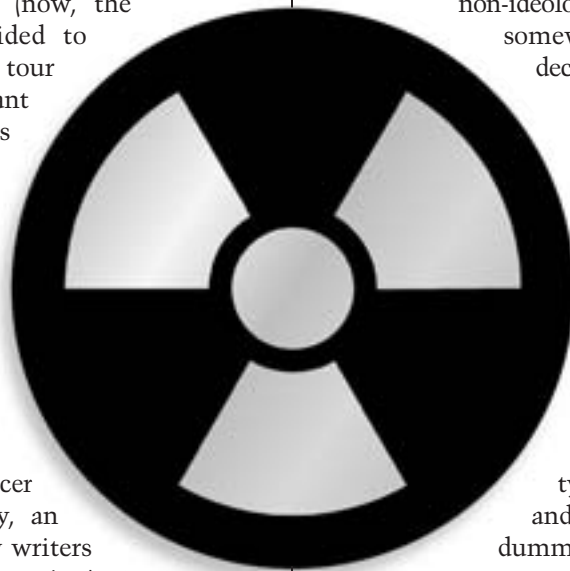
Indeed it does, and they became all too apparent on our tour: the officious, under-exercised security guards (the ones at the Fox studio were no different); the polyestered parade of technicians; the sudden mid-tour disappearance of our company guide, summoned to take a "random" urine analysis (a bit of corporate overkill to impress our gang with the utility's tough drug policy); the show-and-tell person who knocked over a dummy nuclear fuel assembly (the writers pounced on this as inspiration for a new bumbling character); the jargon-laced signs ("If large mammals [e.g., turtles, otters] impact outflow screen, notify supervisor immediately"); and some green ooze spotted in the plant's non-nuclear sewage treatment plant (which prompted a stream of scatological comments).

Simon told me the show's producers, even in those early days, were being pressured by anti-nuclear organizations to be more negative about my industry. The show gets tons of mail, but baby Maggie's addiction to a pacifier troubles many more viewers than some stray atoms.

Asked if his team had any positive impressions of the tour, Simon said it confirmed how well the writers and animators (in South Korea!) captured the ambiance of a nuclear power plant without a shred of research. He did concede that future episodes should show more women in the plant.

After a 10-hour excursion, we returned to the Fox lot. The writers trudged off to their cluttered, cramped quarters (in the "Stars Building" yet) to make up for lost time. The thanks were perfunctory, although they included some nice *Simpsons* sweatshirts. In my trip report I told my staff that I would be surprised if, a week later, any one of the group could remember what they had done on April 16, 1990.

In retrospect, the tour was both necessary and superfluous, gratifying and a little scary, a wonderful lark for me and a sort of commercial break for my guests. Did we generate a more benign attitude toward nuclear energy? In the words of bratty Bart Simpson, "No way, man!" ■



IMAX FILM AT CENTER OF CONTROVERSY

by Cornelia Dean

"A New Screen Test for Imax: It's the Bible vs. the Volcano," New York Times, March 19, 2005. Copyright ©2005 by The New York Times Co. Reprinted with permission.

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WHY DINO DISCOVERY COINCIDED WITH MOVIE RELEASE

[The following is a transcript of a National Public Radio segment of *Morning Edition*.]

STEVE INSKEEP (host): Now that digital recorders let TV viewers skip the commercials and many Internet users skip television entirely, advertisers are looking for more creative ways to sell their products. And that also applies to the selling of movies. With the glut of films seeking attention, studios have tried subtle ways to slip movies into the public's consciousness. NPR's Kim Masters reports.

KIM MASTERS: If you're watching a show like *The Apprentice* or *Survivor* and you see the contestants drink a certain soda or use a particular cell phone, you probably know those products are not appearing by chance, that the use of those products is a form of advertising. But if you happen to be watching the ABC sitcom *My Wife and Kids*, you might not suspect that dialogue in the show could be there to sell a movie.

[Soundbite of *My Wife and Kids*]

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Everybody loves *E.T.* They're even putting it back into theaters.

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: I don't care.

UNIDENTIFIED TEEN: Mom, let me handle this. You know who's in this movie, too?

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: Who?

UNIDENTIFIED TEEN: The girl from *Charlie's Angels*, the one with red hair and brown roots, Drew Barrymore.

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: The one who throws and kicks?

UNIDENTIFIED TEEN: Yeah, your favorite.

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: Why didn't you say so?

MASTERS: When Universal Pictures was looking for ways to promote the 2002 rerelease of *E.T.*, the studio bought part of the plot of that episode. One of the series writers, Janis Hirsch, says the star of the show wasn't pleased and insisted that the promotion be relegated to a subplot.

JANIS HIRSCH (Screenwriter): Damon Wayans, to his credit, said, "It will be a B story and I will not be in it."

MASTERS: The television audience had no way of knowing that the show was, in effect, also a commercial. But Universal marketing president Adam Fogelson says that kind of product placement is a fixture in today's world.

ADAM FOGELSON (Universal Pictures Marketing President): The truth is when you're watching any television program on today and ask, "Well, that car, is that car that that character is driving, is that car there

because the director of that show said it has to be that car? Is that car there because that car company has a special, important relationship with that company? Is that toothpaste, is that building, is that anything?" That's part of the culture that we're living in today.

MASTERS: That worries Gary Ruskin. He's with Commercial Alert, an organization that is asking the federal government, so far without any success, to require broadcasters to run an on-screen disclosure when advertising is embedded in programming.

GARY RUSKIN (Commercial Alert): It's stealth advertising. It's inherently deceptive because many people don't realize that the ads are ads, and so disclosure rectifies that problem.

MASTERS: Universal's below-the-radar strategies have gone beyond the realm of television. Think back to all those big-screen adventures in *Jurassic Park*.

Working with a paleontologist, the studio has arranged to have news about real-life dinosaur discoveries coincide with the release of each *Jurassic Park* film. Jack Horner is curator of paleontology at the Museum of the Rockies. He was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship for his work in 1986 and he's been a consultant on all three *Jurassic Park* movies. Just before the third movie was released, Horner announced the discovery of what might have been the biggest *Tyrannosaurus rex* ever found, maybe bigger than Sue, the current record-holder. You can see Horner talking about this discovery on the DVD for *Jurassic Park III*.

[Soundbite of *Jurassic Park III* DVD]

JACK HORNER (Paleontologist): Today we were doing something very exciting. We were actually taking out the largest *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton ever found...

MASTERS: But in fact, Horner acknowledges that the *T. rex* was found several weeks earlier than he said it was. Universal came up with the idea of asking Horner to fudge the date so the discovery could happen closer to the release of *Jurassic Park III*. Horner says that was OK with him.

HORNER: We decided that we could alter discovery dates, at least for the press, for the opening of the movie.

MASTERS: Universal sent a press release about the discovery, with video footage, to news organizations. Horner says he was happy to accommodate the studio's request because Universal has been paying for a good part of Horner's work.

HORNER: It was a nice tidy sum, and allowed us to do a lot of things we wouldn't normally have been able to do. So sitting on a little media hype for a short period of time certainly was within reason as far as I'm concerned.

MASTERS: And Horner doesn't think that altering the date affects the science. That would have been the case if he had published the incorrect date in a peer-reviewed

journal, he says. But he didn't do that. What appeared in the popular press he believes to be meaningless.

HORNER: You know, you can go to the press with anything and they'll publish it.

MASTERS: Fudging the date was irrelevant, Horner continues, in part because the discovery of what was presented as the world's biggest *T. rex* was somewhat hyped in the first place.

HORNER: Sixth-graders like it a lot because it's—you know, they like big. But scientifically speaking, it's not that important.

MASTERS: In fact, Horner has helped the studio come up with discoveries for each of the *Jurassic Park* movies. Universal marketing executive Fogelson.

FOGELSON: Are there dinosaurs out there that are about to be discovered all the time? Yes. Do we make sure that one gets discovered at around the time of a *Jurassic Park* movie? Well, you know what? We've had three *Jurassic Park* movies. I believe we've discovered a new dinosaur with each of those three movies, and I can tell you if there's a fourth, we probably will discover another one.

MASTERS: Thomas Holtz is a *T. rex* expert at the University of Maryland. He says Horner has done world-class work. He agrees with Horner that the discovery of the potentially biggest *T. rex* didn't make much of an impression in the scientific community. In fact, that claim has never been verified because Horner never did publish the data in an academic journal. Even if he did, Holtz says, the date of discovery wouldn't be a critical piece of information. But Holtz says altering that date in a press release seems weird.

THOMAS HOLTZ (University of Maryland): We're in the business of presenting observations and facts, and although it's a trivial fact, you know, once you start doing that, who knows what else will follow? I hope nothing worse, but—and I honestly, I have to say, I don't see what advantage it gives them, either.

MASTERS: Gary Ruskin from Commercial Alert says Horner's action strikes him as a sad example of the commercialization of science.

RUSKIN: It's not the proper role of paleontology to hawk movies. The proper role of paleontology is to tell us about dinosaurs.

MASTERS: Universal's Fogelson says the public has made it clear when it feels that the industry has gone too far. A few years ago, there was a brouhaha when it became known that studios were posting movie plugs anonymously on the Internet. That practice, Fogelson says, has stopped. ■

"Movie studios look for creative ways to market their films," Morning Edition, *National Public Radio*, May 11, 2005. Copyright © 2005 *National Public Radio*®.

ADVENTURES IN THE BLOGOSPHERE

by Steve Nadis

Things like this were not supposed to happen to me, a respectable (if not respected) science writer with a long list of credits to my name.irate readers were not supposed to compare me to soiled feminine products, threatening to inflict bodily harm for some innocent remarks I allegedly made about our president.

Welcome to the blogosphere, the online equivalent of mud wrestling, where anything and everything is possible.

How did I find myself in this situation—me a straight-laced, by-the-books science scribe who never imagined chronicling the likes of Britney Spears and Johnnie Cochran? Why didn't I stick to writing about black holes? I was happy enough doing that, just minding my own business. But then I got dragged down, *deus ex machina*-style, in some kind of cyberspace undertow—the victim of an unfortunate chain of events that transformed a successful (i.e., not yet starving) science journalist into a writer of the lowest form of prose, one step below the tabloids. That's right—a blogger.

As with many of the literary messes I've gotten myself into, the blame in this case ultimately falls on Boyce Rensberger, director of MIT's Knight Fellowship program, which I somehow bluffed my way into during the 1990s. Last year Boyce sent out one of his usual notices: The editor of Harvard's Kennedy School magazine wanted an article on the electric power grid and wanted it fast. I landed the assignment because my mother-in-law worked for the head of the school's electric utility program, giving me an inside track to the Big Cheese (and conflicts of interest I'd rather not disclose). The article went well, even by my mother-in-law's lofty standards, and before long, the editor called again. The postman always rings twice.

As usual, the conversation started harmlessly enough. "Interested in an article about blogging?" she asked. "Maybe," I said, "mainly because that's a subject I never considered remotely interesting." Starting from logic that twisted, things were bound to go downhill.

I kicked off my reporting with an interview of Evan Thomas—a Harvard visiting professor who'd done stints at *Time* and *Newsweek* when he wasn't waxing journalistic on TV. Thomas, who has little affection for blogs, let me know "there's a lot of garbage out there"—an offhand remark that has become my mantra.

Next I met Rebecca MacKinnon, a former CNN

correspondent who became a born-again blogger during her journalism fellowship at Harvard. She told me her story and showed me how to start up my own blog in "three simple steps." At the time, starting a blog was the farthest thing from my mind. I was just writing an article about other people's weird hobbies; I didn't need one myself. But later that night I got curious, figuring it couldn't hurt to see what these silly folks were up to.

I went to the wrong Web site (blog.com instead of blogger.com), so it took 10 difficult steps rather than three simple ones to get going. But within an hour, I had my own blog, "CALL ME SNAKE," and my own domain name, <http://cambridgeguy.blog.com>. I was ready, in other words, to start putting out some garbage.

True to my blog's subhead—"Old News Unfit to Print"—I initially posted a lot of old humor pieces that were "unfit to print," or at least unpublishable. But now that I had my own place, I could put up anything I wanted. I never had an outlet like this before—somewhere to display all those gems the world had been missing out on due to the shortsightedness of a few thick editors.

Sticklers might say that I was merely "self-publishing" rather than "blogging." Although the term is ill-defined, the basic idea in blogging is to post stuff on a daily basis—the content of which is up to you—but it should be somewhat timely, things you're thinking about that day, even if it's total crap. And then there's the correspondence aspect. On most blogs, anyone who wants to can chime in with their own two cents worth (or less).

***There's instant gratification
in blogging. You can publish
something in seconds and
hear back from readers you don't
know in a matter of minutes.***

I was inspired by Allan Friedman, a Kennedy School graduate student I interviewed for the story. Friedman, whose blog is called "GEEK/WONK," considers the site an outlet for ideas that are too small for academic papers. Maintaining the blog, he adds, forces him to try to have one good idea a day.

That got me thinking. I take one vitamin a day and watch about one TV show a day. How hard could it be to have one good idea? That notion, more than anything else, got me going down this path, the destination of which is still unknown.

On the upside, I now have somewhere to put things that had no home before. Possibly for good reason; maybe they should have remained homeless. My Chicago cousin, for example, keeps trying to get his ridiculous ideas into my blog. "This could be a blog!" he says of any foolish thought that crosses his mind. And

Steve Nadis lives in Cambridge, Mass. and writes about science writing.

the scary thing is, it *could* be a blog. (And the even scarier thing is, in most cases, it *is* a blog.)

Now that I have my own Web hideaway, I have a license of sorts to expound on subjects about which I know nothing—a chance to cast aspersions about Britney's "big secret," for instance, which is the kind of mystery that's peripheral to most articles about cooling flows in galaxy cluster cores.

Here are some of the riveting topics I've tackled in recent months: How I hate the terms "runup" and "snarky," how I was "downsized" by Google, how I spent my Nashville vacation (not listening to country music), the true origins of "gonzo journalism," personal tips on tax evasion, cosmetic surgery for pets, my "60-second" review of a movie I watched for 60 seconds, and my ongoing struggle with [New England] Patriots Obsessive Disorder.

There's instant gratification in blogging. You can publish something in seconds and hear back from readers you don't know in a matter of minutes. That can be a rush, especially when they say something positive about your work, such as the comment I just received from an anonymous responder (the best kind) who said: "This is well phrased." (I admit it: I'm easily pleased. I'd even settle for "This doesn't suck too bad" or "I've seen worse.")

On the downside, blogging can be a vast sinkhole—an incredible time drain that consumes every free moment you have, as well as free moments you don't have. At that point, you're cutting into your livelihood, which is supposed to be science writing, yet it's all slipping away...

You write your posts, edit your posts, respond to comments, create Web links, join "Web rings" (don't ask), and meet every technical demand the "ringmaster" throws at you—a challenge for someone like me who doesn't know his html's from his http's. Then, after you read the blogs of the people who read your blogs, and add a few encouraging words, you might find there's no time left for "work." Or sleep.

When I view this avocation in a rational light, it's not surprising that a doubt or two creeps in. Sometimes I wonder, shouldn't I be spending my time more productively? Shouldn't I take the same 400 words a day and write a best-selling novel instead, or a hit screenplay? But then I come to my senses with an epiphany worthy of Joyce: "Nah-h-h..."

I mean, honestly, how could I give it up and just walk away? I've got friends out there, people who count on me, people with strange names like GateMouth, Pink Elephant, MickeyOne, Jungle Jerk, the irascible Burt, B.G. (short for Big Guy, which is not dirty, despite the way it sounds), BlueBalls (which sounds dirty and is), and DrMax, my Blogarama neighbor—a funny guy who, like me, nobody reads.

Occasionally, I'm hit with diversions that pull me out of the blogosphere. Earlier this spring, for instance, a friend e-mailed me an elaborate graphic someone else

had put together about electing the new pope—a "Pope Bowl" modeled after the NCAA basketball tournament. It was funny enough, I suppose, but I resented the intrusion, which came in the middle of an urgent posting. So I responded the way I always do, irritably. "Who's got time to waste on stuff like this when they could be wasting it blogging?" ■

RELIGION AND NATURAL HISTORY CLASH AMONG THE ORTHODOX

by Alex Mindlin

"Religion and Natural History Clash Among the Ultra-Orthodox," New York Times, March 22, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by The New York Times Co. Reprinted with permission.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Laura van Dam

We live in an era when many general-assignment reporters are writing breaking science and technology news stories. What's more, we all know of reporters and writers who have other beats but who are developing—for newspapers, magazines, television and radio shows, Web sites, and book publishers—material that to at least some extent involves science.

To ensure outstanding science writing—work that is both accurate and compelling—NASW members, as experts in science writing, must reach out to other reporters and editors no matter their beat or the focus of their stories. We need to be a resource whether or not these writers and editors ultimately join NASW.

One indicator of the respect writers hold for NASW is the interest shown by nonmembers in attending our annual professional workshops since we opened the doors to a limited number of outsiders at our February 2004 and 2005 annual professional workshops. Nonmembers are learning about science writing, too, through some of our electronic lists, such as nasw-talk, nasw-freelance, and nasw-books, and the public section of the NASW Web site.

By taking the lead, NASW is conveying to general-assignment writers and editors how to identify worthy news topics and do fine reporting and writing about science, medicine, health, and technology.

In that spirit, NASW has undertaken several new initiatives: the first is through the membership committee, chaired by board member Nancy Shute. This committee is contacting minority journalism organizations to offer speakers and tip sheets on science writing. This effort has already resulted in organizing a panel titled "Ten Tips for Better Science Reporting" to be held at the Asian-American Journalists Association conference, in August. The program description reads: "You don't need to be a science writer to cover this topic well. Our panel of top science writers explains how keeping an eye on trends in science and medicine can improve your coverage of any beat." The membership committee is also proposing similar panels/workshops for other minority journalism organizations.

As previously reported, (SW, Spring 2005), NASW and CASW representatives shared a booth at last fall's



PHOTO BY HOWARD SAXNER

Unity conference, in Washington, D.C. That meeting attracted more than 8,000 journalists, primarily from five minority journalist associations. NASW representatives provided career advice and handed out tip sheets on valuable science sources and story ideas involving cutting-edge science within various beats—be they business, sports, politics, or entertainment.

Concurrently, board members Curt Suplee and Sally Squires are investigating other avenues for NASW outreach to general reporters, writers, and editors. The NASW board anticipates considering Curt and Sally's recommendations at the next NASW board meeting, in late October.

These new initiatives compliment decades of groundwork CASW has conducted as part of its annual New Horizons in Science briefings. One aspect of which is a Traveling Fellows program that brings in reporters from small newspapers without a science writer. And for nearly 20 years, CASW's "Traveling Gurus" program has sent veteran science writers to meet with editors and reporters at small newspapers, to impart wisdom on how to make local stories out of national science pieces, cover science in general, and where to find appropriate sources. Over the years, many CASW board members/NASW members have participated, including David Perlman, Jerry Bishop, Lewis Cope, Phil Boffey, and Joann Rodgers. For more information on this program see the obituary on CASW Board Member Dick Smyser (SW, Spring 2005) who was the driving force behind this effort using his extensive contacts with editor at small newspapers.

Another CASW initiative is its "Brown Bag Meetings," in which established science writers introduce up-and-coming scientists to media "ins and outs" and how best to share research with reporters who write for general readers.

I envision additional NASW outreach with fellow journalism organizations, such as the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Association of Health Care Journalists. Other possibilities for NASW to enhance the profession include offering workshops to select educational journalism programs.

As a member of CNJO (Council of National Journalism Organizations), NASW is learning, too, how other constituents of that group reach out to reporters and writers. For example, the Criminal Justice Journalists association offers on its Web site a daily news digest of about a dozen articles, and the Poynter Institute sponsors more than 50 seminars and conferences for journalists devoted to the craft and values of American journalism.

I encourage and would appreciate both your comments on the notions described here and your other outreach ideas. ■

Laura van Dam is a freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at lvandam@nasw.org.

CYBERBEAT

by Russ Clemings

It won't happen overnight, but the coming months are going to bring big changes to NASW's Web site.

First, we're in the process of hiring a designer to freshen up the current site's look, which is more than seven years old and—let's face it—looks every bit its age.

The list of planned improvements is long and ambitious but eminently doable, given the many advances in Web browser and server capabilities since the late 1990s. You can expect a more logical navigational scheme, more attractive graphics, and a search engine that actually works, among other things.

Some of the changes won't be visible to you as a user, but will make it easier to keep the site's content updated regularly. Also planned is lots of new content, much of it funded by Authors Coalition money, which represent non-title-specific royalties from photocopies made outside the U.S. and apportioned to NASW on the basis of the annual Genre Survey, accessible through the members' Web site.

The new content will include a market-rate database and a wide array of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions), articles and other commentary designed to help NASW writers who own the affected copyrights.

In addition, the dormant NASW bookstore lives again. Four years of backlog books by and for NASW members we're recently added—including most of the books reviewed in *ScienceWriters*. Every purchase made through the NASW bookstore sends a little bit of money our way to support NASW's operations, and your purchases aren't limited to the books listed—the site includes a search box to find and order anything sold by Amazon.com. So do your holiday shopping early and help NASW at the same time.

I owe a tremendous debt to the many people who have answered questions and helped me figure out this cybrarian job since I took over April 1. They include most notably my predecessors Bob Finn and Craig Hicks, backup cybrarian A'ndrea Elyse Messer, executive director Diane McGurgan, and our very patient and supportive Internet Committee co-chairs Mariette DiChristina and Kelli Whitlock Burton. Thanks to all.

Now, to the lists.

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



nasw-teach

The usually placid waters of nasw-teach were roiling in May when New Jersey freelance science writer Jessica Snyder Sachs posted an advice request. She'd been talking to a major university about a science writing course that would enroll both journalism and science majors. "While I realize that they're trying to maximize the chance that we'll have sufficient enrollment to make a go of the classes, I have misgivings."

Most of those who responded urged her to give it the old college try.

John Travis of *Science* magazine offered this, from his experience teaching the same content to separate classes of journalism and science majors. "The science majors were initially taken aback at doing 'journalistic' writing because the course had been advertised, before I was hired, as a broad survey on science and media. But no one dropped the class and many of the science majors, who had no journalistic training, clearly outperformed some of the undergrad journalism majors."

The cross-pollination can be especially beneficial to the science majors. "Because I'm a journalist, I teach that style of writing to everyone, and I think it works fine," said Mike Lemonick of *Time* magazine. "True, most science majors probably won't end up doing journalism, but learning how to explain science in plain English and how to structure a piece of writing to make it flow logically is a very good exercise for people who normally only communicate with other scientists."

"I prefer a mix of students from science, journalism, and other fields," Barbara Gastel of Texas A&M University concurred, "as it makes for productive discussion; students learn from each other, reinforce knowledge from their own fields by presenting it to others, and implicitly model some of the journalist-scientist interactions we discuss in class. Perhaps the important thing is to be clear up front about the nature of the course—so that, for example, the science majors aren't expecting a course in technical writing."

"Science writing requires 'science' and 'writing'—two disparate disciplines," said Lonny Lippsett of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. "No wonder it is so hard, but avoiding attempts to bring them together only makes it more difficult."

Eventually, the discussion circled back around to the question of just how well journalists and scientists can be expected to play together in the classroom.

"I've found that former science students who just jumped into writing sometimes show a stunning lack of understanding about who journalism is supposed to serve," Port Angeles, Wash., freelancer Stephen Hart wrote about the clash of cultures. "What with the decline in investigative journalism nationally in all fields—some would say the decline of journalism—I think it'd be a good idea for any classes in science writ-

ing for scientists to include some journalism basics: What is a free press and why do we want one? Why not just use a press release? Should sources or their PR people edit (or even see) copy? What is your responsibility as the writer and to whom?"

The criticism goes in both directions, Barry Palevitz of the University of Georgia noted: "One of the big problems in journalism, one that scientists often complain about, is the notion journalists have of objectivity and neutrality in reporting, and giving equal weight to all opinions. But that presents a fundamental disconnect with the scientific process, because in science, NOT ALL OPINIONS OR IDEAS ARE BORN EQUAL. It all comes down to data."

From the debate emerged at least one point of consensus—a session on teaching science journalism would be a great addition to a future NASW program.

nasw-talk

It must be something going around, this whole question about how scientists and journalists are different. Whatever it is, it must be contagious, because nasw-talk's got it too.

"I've been asked to be the graduation speaker for one of the science departments at a big local university," said Maryn McKenna of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "I think I know what I'm going to say—but I'm curious what all you far-flung colleagues would want to say, if given a chance."

First up was Harvey Leifert of the American Geophysical Union. "Tell them it is important that they communicate regularly with the general public about their research, not just with their colleagues. They should always be able to describe their latest project in a few pithy sentences in plain English and also explain why it is important."

"I would tell young scientists," said Colorado Springs writer Matt Bille, "LEARN TO WRITE ENGLISH! You will compete for funding in a world where many people do not understand the jargon of your field. The better you can communicate with the media, your agency's appointed leaders, your corporate board of directors, or whomever, the better off you'll be."

But how to achieve that state of grace? Mary Miller of the Exploratorium, in San Francisco, offered some suggestions. "It starts by closely examining what is important and beautiful and meaningful about their work and finding a way to express that to an audience beyond their peers," she said. "...Scientists are the first line of information about their field and they need to take initiatives to get the word out."

Lest anyone forget, however, Massachusetts freelancer Richard Robinson pointed out that another good trait for a would-be scientist is affection for science:

"The only reason to go to graduate school is because

they absolutely, completely, and utterly love bench work. If not, they should find another path through life... Science classes, and even a science major, are a great way to go through college, but that is not sufficient reason to become a scientist. Many would-be scientists discover this too late, because nobody told them early on."

In another thread, Jennifer Wettlaufer of East Aurora, N.Y., asked how to solve that perennial reporter's problem—taking notes in bad weather. The answer, by consensus, can be found here www.riteintherain.com.

nasw-freelance

Leave it to the hardworking folks on nasw-freelance to bring things back to the practical issue of money.

"I have always heard that even if a prospective employer says to send your salary requirements with your application, the best thing to do is to say your requirements are negotiable and always get the employer to name a number first," Alaska writer Barbara Maynard said in mid-April. "Does this advice apply to applications for contract work?"

Opinions vary.

"Having been on the other side of the desk, I think it's wise to be responsive to the request for rates," said Ohio writer Faith Reidenbach. "Today's typical editor is WAY overworked, under time pressure, and clueless about negotiating, unlike the HR people who negotiate salaries. They want to know, from the start, whether your fee is in their ballpark."

Better to stay flexible, countered New York City freelance Dodi Schultz: "I'd say that if at all possible, wait for the client to name a figure first. In your case, 'forget' to send that particular piece of information. If you're backed into a corner and forced to come up with a number, do so in the form of a range that will give you wiggle room."

The discussion ventually evolved into an exchange on the relative virtues of hourly fees versus charging by the project. But for this column, the last word goes to Maryland health columnist Alan Wachter:

"This is just one opinion, but I believe you should set an hourly wage for client/agency work, state your rate on request, and stick to it. If you do pharma/medical pr/medical education writing your hourly wage cannot be a secret; secrets become general knowledge among those who regularly hire freelances about 10 minutes after you tell the first person who hires you..."

"A different approach is needed for publications, where your regular hourly fee will price you out of the running for many assignments. For pubs, I accept the usual and customary rate the pub pays and it is always significantly lower than fees for pr, ghost writing and medical education work."

List subscribers can review these and other discussions at <http://lists.nasw.org>. ■

PIO FORUM

by Dennis Meredith

New chance for NSF-PIO partnerships

Over the years, I've had rewarding experiences working with my NSF public affairs colleagues on joint news releases. I believe that such releases—distributed to NSF's media lists—tend to receive more attention than if I issued the release only from my university. And posting the releases on the NSF Web site offers an excellent showcase for my university's research.

Frankly, I've also found that working with NSF has offered internal political benefits as well. I certainly know that my administrators and faculty are quite pleased when they see a Duke research release distributed by NSF and posted on its Web site.

Also, I believe that in an increasingly difficult political climate for supporting basic research, it's always a good thing to give the foundation as much ammunition as possible to make its case for funding.

I've always hoped such collaborations with NSF could be extended more broadly among PIOs at universities and other research institutions—especially since we share the goal of communicating our researchers' discoveries. So, I'm especially pleased at the recent efforts by NSF to encourage collaborations with PIOs.

For example, NSF has launched a handsome new Web site (www.nsf.gov) and is inviting PIOs to submit material for it. As you'll see, the site is very dynamic and graphics-oriented. And since NSF aims to update the site frequently, it is the market for a steady stream of news releases, features, photos, graphics, and videos from us.

Also, in some cases, NSF is willing to create graphics and other supporting materials that PIOs can use as well.

There are, however, guidelines and caveats about working with NSF. Of course, NSF retains control of its Web site content. And although the staff of the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs (OLPA) are enthusiastic about working with PIOs, we must appreciate that their time and personnel are very limited. They might not be able to participate in every joint release or other communication initiative worthy of attention.

We should also recognize that NSF will exercise judgment regarding the quality of releases, images, and other materials we offer. Quality of science news releases



PHOTO BY JIM WALLACE, DUKE U. PHOTOGRAPHY

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is not likely to be a problem for those institutions with trained science writers and other media relations professionals. And, for those institutions that do not have professional science writers, NSF is trying to offer writing help in appropriate circumstances.

NSF will also have to "triage" the stories coming in from PIOs, to concentrate on those that are the most newsworthy, strategic, and mission-critical. However, importantly, NSF is not limiting itself to publicizing research solely supported by the foundation, but also to research supported by multiple sources including NSF.

To aid NSF-PIO collaborations, we PIOs should always let NSF know as soon as possible about important findings or progress of NSF-sponsored work. To make this notification process more automatic, EurekaAlert! has

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recently launched an alerting service that will notify NSF any time a university or journal posts a release on NSF-funded research. This notification will give NSF advance notice so that it can prepare any supplementary material for the release. Participation is voluntary and can be activated by sending an e-mail message to webmaster@eurekalert.org, with "Sign up for NSF alert service" in the subject line.

Also, NSF is willing to link directly to our news releases from their site. Also welcomed are video and other images for a weekly Webcast planned for the site, as well as images for a planned image bank.

And, NSF is planning a radio service to distribute segments to stations nationwide, as well as post them on the OLPA Web site. NSF will manage production, but welcomes story ideas and technical help from news offices in setting up interviews.

In the past, a significant problem voiced by PIOs has been difficulty in figuring out which OLPA staff to contact and how to initiate and carry out collaborations. So, NSF is developing a PIO portal Web page that will include contact information, a feedback mechanism, examples of collaboration with NSF, FAQs, editorial procedures, staff lists, distribution information, best practices, information on NSF research and informational priorities, and instructions for tracking funding information. The portal is being developed with the advice of a group of consulting PIOs. (See the sidebar at left for a list of NSF staff contacts.) More generally, NSF has already held three workshops with PIOs to exchange ideas, and they plan to continue them, to ensure ongoing and productive collaboration.

Another problem PIOs have experienced is when principal investigators have not been motivated to notify PIOs about papers on NSF-sponsored research. One problem is with the wording of the merit-review criteria for broader dissemination of research that principal investigators receive from NSF. Those criteria do not include a recommendation that principal investigators work directly with PIOs. (See www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf022/bicexamples.pdf for those criteria.) The OLPA staff is trying to amend the language to include such a recommendation, which should encourage researchers to contact their PIOs about their NSF-sponsored work and its publication.

The mechanisms for collaborations between NSF and PIOs are still a work in progress—and will certainly be subject to the constraints on both OLPA and PIOs. However, to quote Bogie's famous line in *Casablanca* "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." ■



NEWS FROM AFAR

by Jim Cornell

New popular science magazine debuts in Australia

Everything is antithetical in the Antipodes. Summer is winter, spring is fall, and water goes down the drain in the opposite direction. Well, okay, that last point is debatable. But science journalism is definitely going against the flow Down Under.

While the rest of the world seems to be getting less and less quality science coverage—particularly from traditional media outlets—Australians and New Zealanders found a new monthly popular science magazine on their newsstands this summer.

Cosmos, according to its advance blurbs, is "a magazine of ideas, science, society, and the future" produced by Luna Media of Sydney, Australia. Published 11 times a year, with a double issue in December/January, *Cosmos* specializes in major articles on trends and results in science and technology solicited from writers worldwide. Regular features include interviews, photo essays, a travel section, book and movie reviews, new gadgets, humor, and an opinion piece or two.

The magazine's editor is Wilson da Silva, a veteran Australian science journalist and NASW foreign member, who notes that, "In Australia, there are well over a million people who are regular consumers of science on television; yet there isn't a high-quality glossy popular science magazine that caters to this audience. *Cosmos* will seek to be that magazine."

Apparently others agree, and the ambitious effort has gotten praise and encouragement from such well-known science popularizers as Robyn Williams and Paul Davies. To see for yourself, go to www.cosmosmagazine.com.

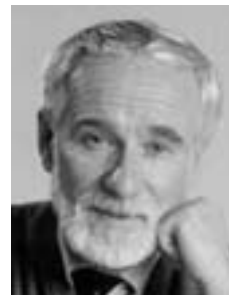


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PHOTO COURTESY OF COSMOS MAGAZINE

The *Cosmos* editorial team: (l to r): Editor's assistant Edwina Perkins, Deputy Editor Sara Phillips, Editor Wilson da Silva, Art Director Nick Howlett, Chief Sub-editor Belinda Bonham.

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

World Federation gets serious

Wilson da Silva is also the current President of the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) which, since the last issue of *ScienceWriters*, has expanded its membership base to 25 national organizations and shortened its Web address to the more easily manageable and memorable www.wfsj.org.

The WFSJ also used the AAAS annual meeting last February to hold both the first formal meeting of its executive board and its first general informational meeting for interested journalists since its grand "coming-out party" in Montreal last fall. The federation's new executive secretary, Jean-Marc Fleury, of Canada, organized

both events and, more important, compiled an impressive agenda for the year ahead.

Subsequent to the Washington meetings, the WFSJ Program Committee, chaired by Nadia el-Awady, of Egypt, developed a plan of action based on several board suggestions. Among those activities is an offer of help and assistance to fledgling groups of science journalists hoping to strengthen—or establish—national associations. The committee also hopes to conduct mentoring programs for both individuals and organizations in the developing world and to set up a registry of "experts," experienced journalists drawn from the ranks of WFSJ member organizations who would be available to teach, to mentor, or to speak in training sessions and education courses worldwide. Other plans call for WFSJ-sponsored seminars and symposia at major meetings, such as the World Science Forum, in Budapest, this November and ESOF, in Munich, in July 2006.

Later this spring, Fleury made an exploratory trip to Europe to meet with potential funders and supporters, as well as to formalize ties with several national associations there. The initial scorecard was most encouraging: several major international NGOs and foundations expressed an interest in supporting WFSJ programs.

Past NASW president Deborah Blum is our official emissary to the WFSJ. She also serves on the Program Committee, as do I. Either of us would be delighted to hear from NASW members with ideas or suggestions for greater cooperation and collaboration between U.S. journalist and their foreign counterparts. Specifically, WFSJ is seeking experienced journalists, especially those with experience in coaching and/or mentoring other science writers, who might help establish the proposed mentoring programs. If you are willing and able, contact Fleury directly at jfleury@idrc.ca.

German science journalism initiative looks west

The Bertelsmann Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Germany's publishing giant, continues its extraordinary program to improve the quality—and quantity—of science journalism in that country. In cooperation with other German foundations, Bertelsmann has co-sponsored a series of educational initiatives, including university courses and a landmark national conference on science communication (*WissensWerte*) held in Bremen last fall.

This fall, the effort will move beyond Germany when the foundation brings a score or more of mid-career German journalists to the United States for a two-week tour of research and educational facilities in New York and Boston. In addition, U.S. scientists, journalists, communications experts, and public-policy makers will address the writers on issues ranging from the state of U.S. science journalism to the debates over genetics research.

Several NASW members have been influential in advising and guiding the program organizers.

Upcoming international meetings

Nov. 10-12, 2005, World Science Forum 2005, Budapest, Hungary. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in partnership with UNESCO and ICSU, is organizing the meeting around the broad theme of "Knowledge, Ethics, and Responsibility." While these forums (the first was also held in Budapest since 1999) are long on science policy and short on research results, the meeting offers an opportunity to observe the politics of international science and an excuse to explore firsthand Hungary's emerging research programs, particular in biochemistry and genetics. More information is at www.sciforum.hu/.

Nov. 14-15, 2005, Communicating European Research Conference, Brussels, Belgium. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research hosts this second conference covering various aspects of science communication, but, obviously, with an emphasis on "best practices" in public affairs for research institutions. Online registration and more information are available at www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2005.html.

May 17-20, 2006, PCST-9 (9th International Conference on Public Communication of Science and Technology), Seoul, Korea. The conference theme is "Scientific Culture for Global Citizenship" and will provide academics and professionals in science communication an opportunity to interact. For more information visit www.pcst2006.org/main.asp.

July 15-19, 2006, EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF), Munich, Germany. The first edition of this eclectic, wide-ranging, AAAS-like scientific smorgasbord was held in Stockholm last August and proved an instant success. As a result, a large turnout of scientists, journalists, and experts in S&T politics and policy from across Europe is expected at the next forum. Check it out at www.esof2006.org.

Science communication takes on new importance across Africa

The need for better public communication of science and technology has become widely recognized by both scientists and journalists in Africa, if developments of the past year are any indication.

For example, a loose network intended to improve reporting on water issues in African countries was launched last March in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Africa Water Journalists Network will allow more than 1,000 journalists to share information and story ideas through a forum on the network's Web site. Later this year, the network will produce an Internet-based newsletter, *The Water Chronicle*, intended to provide contributing journalists with on-the-job training. James Dorsey of the *Wall Street Journal* and Rupert Wright of the *Sunday Times* will act as editors, according to a report in *SciDev.net*.

Similarly, the Science Communicators Association of Nigeria (SCAN), a national network of science journalists, research institution public relations officers, and other science communicators, has been formed to foster better public communication of science and technology in that country. A major aim, again according to *SciDev.net*, is the improvement of science and technology reporting, which is still in its infancy in Nigeria. As a first step, SCAN will encourage every newsroom in Nigeria to create a science and technology desk.

Two other major associations representing the broad spectrum of science journalists in Africa have been established. In November 2003, a small group of Arab science journalists opened an informal e-group groups.yahoo.com/group/arabsciencejournalists/ to discuss ways of promoting a science and technology culture in the Arab world. As the group grew, and discussions evolved, 15 science journalists from Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania, the Sudan, Lebanon, and Yemen met in Cairo in April 2004 for a capacity-building workshop that resulted in the formation of the Arab Science Journalists' Association. Today, the group has more than 100 members in North Africa and the Middle East. For more information, go to www.arabsciencejournalists.net/ and click on the English version.

Even newer is the African Federation of Science Journalists, an association that grew out of informal discussions between African delegates to the 4th World Conference of Science Journalists in Montreal last fall. Membership includes journalists covering science, health, environment, and technology in and from all regions of Africa. For more details, contact former Knight Fellow Diran Onifade, of Nigeria, at diranx@msn.com.

In South Africa, efforts to improve science communication have taken a different approach. Here the emphasis has shifted from journalists to researchers and science-policy specialists, in hopes of helping them better communicate their work to non-scientists. To achieve

this goal, the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA), with some long-distance help from an NASW member, has created that country's first academic course in science communication.

The course will be taught in large part by local experts, but Bruce Lewenstein of Cornell University has organized 12 live and interactive video sessions to be aired at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria—"distance learning" at its most distant!

Although the course is free, the 20 participants will have to find the time (and, if necessary, the price of airfare and accommodation) to spend three full days each month in Pretoria, from August to November this year. Despite this, the course was in high demand. Within one week of its announcement, 30 people had applied. ■

J. KELLY BEATTY HONORED FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE TO PLANETARY SCIENCE



For more than 30 years, Kelly Beatty has shared with the public his passion for planetary science.

J. Kelly Beatty, editor of *Night Sky* magazine and executive editor of *Sky & Telescope* magazine, has been awarded the 2005 Harold Masursky award for meritorious service to planetary science by the Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) of the American Astronomical Society. The Masursky Award honors "individuals who have rendered outstanding service to planetary science and

exploration through engineering, managerial, programmatic, or public service activities." It is the highest honor the DPS bestows upon nonscientists. Beatty will receive the award at the society's annual meeting, in September, at Cambridge University, England.

For more than three decades Beatty has reported on planetary science for *Sky & Telescope* magazine. In that capacity he has written more than 100 feature-length stories along with a seeming endless list of shorter news reports. His work has appeared in newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *Boston Globe*, on National Public Radio, and in a host of book chapters.

Beatty regularly speaks about science in classrooms and has been a fixture at planetary-science conferences since the 1970s. His most notable achievement, *The New Solar System*, is currently in its fourth edition and is used as an introductory textbook at universities across the United States.

Beatty studied geology, planetary science, and astronomy at Caltech and earned a master's degree in science journalism at Boston University. Keen to nurture the next generation of science writers, he serves as a mentor in *Sky & Telescope's* internship program, training students to report on science clearly and accurately while inspiring them to share the excitement of scientific discovery with the widest possible audience.

Currently Beatty serves as editor of Sky Publishing's magazine for beginning stargazers: *Night Sky*. Through its pages Beatty shares his passion for astronomy and assures readers that using a telescope need not be intimidating. ■

(Source: news release)

PATRICIA THOMAS NAMED KNIGHT CHAIR IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL JOURNALISM



PHOTO BY ELSA WILKENS

NASW member Patricia Thomas, who has written about medicine, public health, and life science research for more than 30 years, has been named the first holder of the Knight Chair in Health and Medical Journalism, at the University of Georgia.

An award-winning author, journalist, and editor, Thomas will develop and teach undergraduate and master's courses in health and medical journalism and create an outreach program aimed at improving the flow of health news to the Southern Black Belt, a rural strip of hundreds of counties winding through 11 states.

From 1991-1997, Thomas was the first non-physician to serve as editor of the *Harvard Health Letter*, the oldest consumer health newsletter in the country. She has been a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in 1998 was awarded the Leonard Silk Journalism Fellowship for her book *Big Shot: Passion, Politics, and the Struggle for an AIDS Vaccine*, a work-in-progress at the time. She was also among the first healthy volunteers to be injected with an experimental DNA vaccine for AIDS, in a study at the National Institutes of Health.

Thomas holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of California at Berkeley and a master's in communication from Stanford University. Her work appears regularly in *Harvard Magazine*, where she is a contributing editor. In addition, she is a research fellow for the Albert B. Sabin Vaccine Institute and adviser to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Knight Science Journalism Fellowship. ■

NASW MEMBER GARETH COOK WINS PULITZER

Boston Globe reporter Gareth Cook has been awarded the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Journalism for "explaining, with clarity and humanity, the complex scientific and ethical dimensions of stem cell research."

The award is given for "a distinguished example of explanatory reporting that illuminates a significant and complex subject, demonstrating mastery of the subject, lucid writing and clear presentation."

Cook, who described himself as "thrilled and shocked," thanked his newsroom colleagues for their support and said "this newspaper gave me the chance to do this...these stories were exactly what I always believed journalism could be."

In a newsroom celebration following the announcement of the award, *Boston Globe* editor Martin Baron congratulated Cook and told him that he "took on one of the most important but most complex subjects in science. You cut through rhetoric and political posturing with the best and most reliable tool we have—real, on-the-ground reporting."

"Gareth Cook certainly deserves this recognition. He has been on the front lines in covering this hugely controversial topic in a way that helps the general public understand a very complex topic," said *Globe* publisher Richard Gilman. ■

(Source: Boston Globe news release)

IRA FLATOW HONORED WITH NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD AWARD



PHOTO BY CHRISTY BOWE IMAGECATCHER NEWS

Ira Flatow receives the National Science Board Public Service Award from Shirley Malcolm, chair of the NSB Public Service Award Committee.

Ira Flatow, host and executive producer of National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation: Science Friday*, has received the National Science Board's Public Service Award for 2005. Flatow is recognized for his long-term efforts to increase the public understanding of science. The NSB is the 24-member policy-making body of the National Science Foundation and advises the President and Congress on matters of U.S. science and engineering.

Veteran science correspondent and award-winning journalist Flatow brings radio listeners worldwide informative discussions on science, technology, health, space, and the environment through his weekly radio program. Flatow is also a founder and president of TalkingScience, a nonprofit company dedicated to creating radio, TV, and Internet projects that make science "user friendly." He describes his work as the challenge "to make science and technology a topic for discussion around the dinner table."

Flatow's numerous television credits include six years as a host and television writer for the Emmy-award-winning *Newton's Apple* on PBS and being a science reporter for CBS *This Morning* and cable's CNBC. He has discussed science on many TV talk shows, including *Merv Griffin*, *Today*, *Charlie Rose*, and *Oprah*. Flatow has also written articles for a variety of magazines ranging from *Woman's Day* to *ESPN Magazine* to *American Lawyer*. His most recent book, *They all Laughed...From Light Bulbs to Lasers: The Fascinating Stories Behind the Great Inventions*, followed on the heels of *Rainbows, Curve Balls and Other Wonders of the Natural World Explained*.

Among his many honors, Flatow recently received the Elizabeth Wood Writing Award from the American Crystallographic Association (2002), Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Journalism Award (2000), Brady Washburn Award (2000), and the Carl Sagan Award (1999). ■

OUR GANG

by Jeff Grabmeier

Wow! It seems NASWers spent the spring collecting awards, finding new jobs, and generally being fabulous. Luckily, the Beatles had a large oeuvre or I would have been in trouble. For those of you youngsters who prefer more modern music, I'll feature the songs of The White Stripes next time. Ob-la-di, ob-la-da!

All Together Now. The NASW had three—count them, three!—freelance members honored by the American Society of Journalists and Authors for their outstanding work published in 2004. NASW board member **Robin Marantz Henig** was a double winner. She received ASJA's award for a general non-fiction book for *Pandora's Baby: How the First Test Tube Babies Sparked the Reproductive Revolution* (Houghton



PHOTO BY JO MCNULTY, OHIO STATE

Jeff Grabmeier is assistant director of research communications at Ohio State University in Columbus, OH. Send news about your life to Jeff at Grabmeier@nasw.org.

Mifflin). In addition, she won the coveted June Roth Memorial Award for medical writing for her feature "The Quest to Forget," published in the April 4, 2004 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. In the service article category, the winner was **Christie Aschwanden** for her article "The Kitchen Comes Clean," published in the July/Aug. 2004 issue of *Health* magazine. **Rebecca Skloot** won the award in the category of first-person essay or personal experience for "When Pets Attack," published in the Oct. 11, 2004 issue of *New York Magazine*. The winners can be found at robinhenig@nasw.org, christie@nasw.org and skloot@nasw.org.

Ticket to Ride. Joining the exodus of science writers from the *Dallas Morning News*, **Alex Witze** took a one-way ticket to Washington, D.C., where she is now a senior news and features editor at *Nature*. Alex says she's on the lookout for good writers and story ideas in the earth, atmospheric, and ocean sciences, so send your ideas (or just say hello) to a.witze@naturedc.com.

I Want to Hold Your Award. **Dan Haney** retired last June from the Associated Press after 34 years, but even though he's gone, he hasn't been forgotten. The American Association for Cancer Research honored Dan with its 2005 AACR Public Service Award at its annual meeting in Anaheim, in April. The award recognizes significant and sustained contributions to the fight against cancer by individuals who work in the public arena.

Do You Want to Know A Secret? Shhh...don't tell anyone, but NASW board member **Jon Franklin** has something in common with news anchor Connie Chung and *Seinfeld* creator Larry David. Jon and the others were among those recently inducted into the University of Maryland Alumni Hall of Fame. Currently a professor at Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, Jon is a former *Baltimore Sun* science writer and Pulitzer Prize winner. Jon can be found at jonfrank@nasw.org.

With A Little Help from My Friends. NASW members at two universities received recognition in the 2005 Circle of Excellence Awards from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). As you would have guessed, they won in the "Research, Medicine and Science Newswriting" category. The Gold Medal went to Ohio State University's science writers **Earle Holland**, **Pam Frost Gorder**, **Holly Wagner**, and the writer of the "Our Gang" column, who wishes to remain anonymous (but who hinted "I Am the Walrus"). The University of Washington science writing team of **Rob Harrill**, **Joel Schwarz**, and **Vince Stricherz** won the Bronze Medal. There's no cash prize for these awards, so feel free to send us money.

Help! Fenella Saunders is looking for fellow science writers in her new home of North Carolina. Fenella moved from *NYU Physician* magazine to become associate editor for *American Scientist* magazine. Fenella reports "my husband and I are excited about moving

somewhere that better supports our motorcycling and gardening habits!" But Fenella, who was active in Science Writers in New York, wants to see if anyone is responsible for a local chapter of NASW there, or is interested in starting one. If so, please contact her at fjsr@nasw.org.

Twist and Shout. The award news just keeps coming! Two NASW members were recipients of the 2005 American Institute of Biological Sciences Media Awards, which recognize outstanding reporting on biology to a general audience. **Diane Toomey**, of Belmont, MA, won in the Broadcast Journalism category for "A Little Known Planet," which was broadcast on NPR's "Living on Earth" in Dec. 2003. The story examined current attempts to discover and catalogue all the living organisms of the Earth. An honorable mention for print journalism was awarded to **Elizabeth Pennisi** of *Science* magazine for "The Secret Life of Fungi," which appeared in *Science* on June 11, 2004. Diane can be found at d_toomey@comcast.net and Elizabeth is at epennisi@aaas.org.

A Week in the Life. Freelancer **Nancy Roth** of Washington, D.C. just returned from Boulder after winning a fellowship to attend the Scripps Howard Institute on the Environment, a week-long program of intensive environmental education at the University of Colorado Center for Environmental Journalism. Nancy recommends the program for anyone who writes about energy, land use, climate studies, and environmental health issues. More information is at www.colorado.edu/journalism/cej/CEJ_institute.html. Nancy is at Neroth2000@aol.com.

The Ballad of John and Guggenheim. **John Fleischman**, a freelancer (and science writer for the American Society for Cell Biology), has been named a 2005 Fellowship winner by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, in New York City. John will take six months' leave early next year from the ASCB and the regular freelance grind to write another non-fiction science book for kids ages nine and up. The new science book will be about genomes. John's first kids' science book, *Phineas Gage, A Gruesome But True Story about Brain Science*, astounded the author and his publisher (Houghton-Mifflin Children's Books, 2002) with good reviews, a few honors, and by landing on Eric Nagourney's "highly unscientific" list of "best science books for kids" in the *New York Times* in 2003. Talk to John at fleischman@fuse.net.

Back in the UK. British science writer **David Bradley** has invaded U.S. territory. Earlier this year, David annexed the SciScoop Science News Forum (www.sciscoop.com). SciScoop is a community-driven science blog with well over 1,500 members and has science news and other items submitted on a regular basis. Members get to vote on whether a particular submission makes it to the front page, is sent straight to the appropriate section, or is spiked. NASWers are invited to visit the site and perhaps even join in the fun. Find out

more by e-mailing David at davidbradley@nasw.org.

Magical Mystery Tour to Massachusetts. Seven NASW members were awarded Science Journalism Fellowships at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass. this summer. The program offers print and broadcast journalists and editors an opportunity to "step into the shoes of the scientists they cover" by awarding them fellowships to study basic biomedical and environmental science. **Ingfei Chen**, **Helen Fields**, **Taro Mitamura**, **Lisa Rossi**, and **Sarah Zielinski** received fellowships in biomedical science. Fellowships in environmental science went to **Hannah Hoag** and **Jeff Tollefson**.

The Long and Winding Road... has led **Patricia Daukantas** to *Optics & Photonics News*, the monthly magazine of the Optical Society of America in Washington, D.C., where she is the new senior writer/editor. Previously she reported for *Government Computer News* and also did a bit of freelancing. She's a board member and current membership chair of the DC Science Writers Association, and she just returned from the latest reunion of *Daily Free Press* alumni at Boston University. You can find her at patd@nasw.org.

He Can Work it Out. After five and a half years as director of media relations for the World Resources Institute, **Adlai Amor** is changing jobs. He will organize a communications department for the Asia Pacific American Legal Consortium (www.napalc.org) and become the department's first director. NAPALC is the USA's leading Asian-American civil rights organization. This, however, does not mean *adieu* to science communications since he will still be writing and be active as a board member of the DC Science Writers Association. Adlai's new e-mail address is aamor@napalc.org.

Eight Days a Week. **Tai Viinikka**, a science journalist from Toronto, will be adding that extra day a week looking for a job. Tai is flashing a new master's degree from Boston University at anyone who'll look. In June he'll finish an internship writing about biomedical research at Harvard and—his words, not mine—"spring upon an unsuspecting job market from behind some bushes." Offer Tai a job at eastpole@gmail.com.

I Feel Fine. **Jon Palfreman**, independent documentary film producer and founder, Palfreman Film Group, has been named a Nieman Fellow for 2005-06. The Harvard-based fellowships are awarded to "working journalists of accomplishment and promise for an academic year of study in any part of the university." Jon, of Lexington, MA, will use his fellowship to explore international science, technology, and health policy in relation to issues such as global climate change and to explore the use of visual media in social science research. Congratulate Jon at jpalfreman@pfgmedia.com.

A Hard Day's Night. That's what freelancer **Simson Garfinkel** got from combining time as a full-

time student and a part-time science writer. Simson received his Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computer science this spring from MIT. Meanwhile, he has also won the Neal award from American Business Media two years in a row for his column on computer security that appears in *CSO Magazine*. You'll find Simson at simsong@csail.mit.edu.

Happiness is a New Job. After six years of freelancing, **Kelli Miller Stacy** reports that she has taken a staff job in order to get health insurance. (We'll leave the debates on the U.S. health care system for another column.) Kelli is now editorial director at A.D.A.M., Inc., a publisher of consumer health information. Kelli is also co-author of *Encyclopedia of the Human Body: The Endocrine System* (Greenwood Publishing). Contact Kelli at kellistacy@adelphia.net.

Come Together. **Janet Yagoda Shagam**, of Albuquerque, NM, taught an abbreviated medical and science writing class for neurobiology graduate students at the University of Goettingen in Goettingen, Germany, in May. Language was the big challenge, Janet reported. Students came together from China, Iran, Russia, Poland, and Germany, with English being their common language. Janet is at janetyagooda@nasw.org.

Paperback Writer. *Living with Lupus: The Complete Guide* (2nd Edition, Da Capo Press / Perseus Books Group) by Sheldon Paul Blau and NASW member **Dodi Schultz** has been awarded the Seal of Approval of the Lupus Foundation of America. The book has also been placed on the Recommended Reading list of the SLE [systemic lupus erythematosus] Foundation, which terms it "comprehensive, well-written," and the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association says the book "should be helpful to both the patients and their family members." Dodi is at dodischultz@nasw.org.

Hello, Goodbye. After five-plus years with the American Chemical Society, where she has been on the editorial staffs of three magazines and a "content guru" for the society Web portal, **Nancy McGuire** has moved on. She is now a senior science writer with Jorge Scientific (www.jorge.com), located in Arlington, VA. Nancy will be working on their contract with the Office of Naval Research, helping to publicize various ONR-funded research programs. Nancy's old e-mail address is still valid nmcguire@wordchemist.com.

Golden Slumbers. Another award-winning NASW member is Baltimore-based freelancer **Lynne Lamberg**, who received the National Sleep Foundation's Communications Award in March. Lynne has reported extensively on sleep and sleep science for three decades. She is a regular contributor to *JAMA* and *Psychiatric News*, and reviews consumer books on sleep, biological rhythms, and dreams in her monthly online column, Books for Sleepless Nights, www.sleephomepages.org/books. Lynne is at llamberg@nasw.org.

Being for the Benefit of AAAS. **Kristina Anderson** of Albuquerque, NM has been hired by AAAS to take a book it published on having healthy babies and "translate" it into three smaller booklets written at a sixth-grade level for low-income mothers. The title of the book is *Having Healthy Babies: The Science Inside* and is published by AAAS for its Healthy People Library Project. AAAS received grant money from the Heinz Foundation in Pittsburgh to complete the project. Contact Kristina at kristina@easyreadcopywriting.com. ■

NOTICES FROM DIANE

by Diane McGurgan

Membership Directory

The NASW membership directory was mailed in late June. If your name is not listed it means your dues arrived too late for inclusion in this year's directory. Many thanks to Larry Krumenaker who, once again, did a marvelous job putting it all together.



PHOTO BY ANDREW SKOLNICK

Find Members Fast

In addition to the printed directory you can find members by logging onto the Membership Directory section of the NASW Web site. In addition to being fast, it's updated on a monthly basis, making it the most accurate database of member information.

Victor Cohn Prize

Deadline for the sixth annual Victor Cohn Prize for Excellence in Medical Science Reporting is July 31, 2005. The award will be presented this fall at the CASW 43rd Annual New Horizons in Science Briefing for Journalists (see below).

CASW New Horizons

The 43rd annual CASW New Horizons in Science Briefing for science writers will be held Oct. 23-26, 2005 and hosted by the Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh. For more information, see the CASW Web site (www.casw.org) or watch the mail for program and registration information. CASW offers Traveling

Fellowships, of up to \$1,000 each, to cover the costs of attending New Horizons. The fellowships are intended primarily for journalists from publications and broadcast outlets that do not routinely cover major science meetings or employ a full-time science writer. Application deadline is Sept. 1, 2005.

NASW Fall Workshop

NASW is offering a Fall Professional Development workshop. It will take place on Sat., Oct. 22, 2005 prior to the start of the CASW New Horizons meeting. Registration for the workshop will go live on July 15 at www.nasw.org. Full program information will be available on the Web site, as will links to travel and hotel information. ■

LETTERS

It is comforting that the President's science adviser stands against the pressure to accord "intelligent design" equal status with evolutionary science (SW, Spring 2005). We can't be complacent about attitudes that shift away from real science into hot-button advocacy of creationism. A prime example is the changing views of George William Hunter, the author of *A Civic Biology*, the biology textbook used by John Scopes, the Dayton, Tenn. high school teacher who was tried in 1925 for teaching evolution.

Hunter's book, written in 1916, when he was chairman of the biology department at New York City's DeWitt Clinton High School, became a national best-seller. But Hunter began trimming his sails after the Scopes trial when Tennessee's Textbook Commission dropped the book. In a 1932 revision, Hunter cut out the title of a section called "The Doctrine of Evolution" and deleted charts illustrating the evolution of species. He qualified every statement referring to Darwin with such terms as "suggested" and "believed." The phrase "[Darwin's] wonderful discovery of the doctrine of evolution" became "his interpretation of the way in which all life changes."

The ferocity with which William Jennings Bryan prosecuted the case against Scopes rested in part in his worry that Darwin's theories were being used by supporters of eugenics to justify sterilization of "inferior stock." Ironically, Hunter, the author of the offending text, embraced eugenics and advocated the segregation and sterilization of such "unfit" persons as the mentally ill, retarded, habitual criminals, and epileptics.

So let us be grateful to John Marburger for resisting

the creationism/intelligent design movement being fueled by some of his fellow occupants in the White House.

Richard Magat

Freelance

Bronxville, NY

I had to leave my office and go sit in a comfortable chair at Starbucks to finish reading your jam-packed publication. Congratulations on a well-written and well-edited issue!

I would like to put my two cents in on one subject—online versus print publications. There's nothing like the nice feel of a printed publication, be it a newsletter, newspapers, medical journals, or whatever. It may be better for your health, too. I have discovered a new disease associated with too much downloading—especially if you use a mouse. Your right thumb may become sore, and bigger than your left, if you use the mouse with your right hand. I call this condition "downloaditis."

Jean McCann

Medical News Inc.

Cleveland Heights, Ohio

I just read Chris Mooney's excellent piece (on "balanced" reporting) (SW, Fall/Winter 2003-04).

One line in the piece made me think of a rational way to approach some of these difficult topics. His piece mentioned "media coverage of contested scientific issues." So what's a "contested scientific issue"?

I think that for an issue to be considered contested there must be 1) at least one and preferably more scientists whose credentials qualify them and 2) published work on the contested topic in the mainstream scientific literature, giving evidence of the unusual view (i.e., not just an opinion piece in the news section of a journal). It seems likely that calls by reporters are in order to establish these points, but endless calls are not necessary to reach a decision.

In each case it will take someone a bit of work to find out, but by this test I suspect that creationism is not an issue contested *within* the scientific community. I suspect that the so-called ABC link (abortion/breast cancer) also may not be. Or, some part of the science may be contested, but some of the assertions of the fringe groups may be outside scientific debate.

Each news reporter and organization will have to make a decision when working on stories like this, either by doing the work on what is legitimately contested or finding that some other person has done the work that is acceptable on the point (and quotable maybe).

But once the legwork is done, this leaves the reporter free to write that evolution is *not* contested in science, but only outside science on religious or political grounds. A reporter might write (no doubt after an interesting discussion with his/her editor) that evolution is "not contested within science, but is debated with arguments made outside the experimental work of science, for example, on the basis of religious and political beliefs."

L.A. *Times* editor John Carroll's suggestion that a scientist who has a contrary view *must* be found suggest that Carroll is unfamiliar with the nature of the scientific enterprise (not an uncommon trait among editors). It is mistaken for the obvious reason that there may be no such person, or no scientific evidence for the critic's position, or that the search for such a scientist and his evidence would take so much effort that it would prove the opposite point—that the critic holds views that are outside of scientific debate on, for example, evolution.

Philip J. Hilts

Freelance

Brookline, Mass.

REGIONAL GROUPS

by Suzanne Clancy

New England

In April, Robin Abrahams, visiting professor of psychology at Emmanuel College in Boston, spoke to NESW members about her research on the importance of narrative forms in our interpretation of the world and why different kinds of people like different kinds of stories. Her talk, "That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It," was presented at the Harvard Club.

In May, NESW met at Harvard's Peabody Museum. The topic was our earliest human ancestors and how they began to walk upright. The speaker was Harvard anthropologist Daniel Lieberman, coauthor of recent reports in *Nature* on a hominid known as *Sahelanthropus*, who discussed these fossils and what they tell us about human origins. Also in May, NESWers gathered at the MassGeneral Institute for a cocktail reception and panel discussion on the race to cure devastating afflictions such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Lou Gehrig's diseases.

Suzanne Clancy is a science writer with The Burnham Institute in La Jolla, Calif. Send information about regional meetings and events to sclancy@burnham.org.



PHOTO BY MARC LIEBERMAN

New York

Early April saw SWINY members attending a sold-out program at NYU's Center for Biomedical Imaging, a brand new facility housing one of North America's most powerful human MRI scanners. Five different talks covered everything from imaging lung damage in 9/11 firefighters to studies of cardiac function in real time—all of it cutting edge, much of it experimental, and as yet unpublished. Afterwards, lamb shanks and hors d'oeuvres in hand, SWINY members toured the facility and had a chance to get up close and personal with a superconducting magnet that generates a field 140,000 times stronger than that of Earth.

A SWINY social, held at the Windfall Lounge (our usual hangout) on April 25, attracted an effervescent crowd of writers, editors, and science writers-to-be (defecting Ph.D.s and young writers hungering for a shot at fame and riches). Smiles abounded as members renewed old acquaintances or made new friends. Drinks were hoisted to former social director Fenella Saunders, who drew a crowd of friends and colleagues to see her off to her new position in North Carolina.

As the weather warmed up, SWINY members got the chance to enjoy a little time away from their dusty typewriters on a tour of a New Jersey winery. SWINY member Alan Brown did a yeoman's work in setting up the excursion, planning everything from a luxe tour bus to a sampling of local wines on our way to and from the Unionville Vineyards. Once we arrived, our guide Cameron Stark took us through the vineyards and into the cool basement of the winery, where members had a chance to blend their own wines. All the while, Stark fielded questions on every facet of the winemaking process, revealing just how scientific this age-old art has become.

Northwest

The NASW affiliate based in Seattle, formerly known as the Puget Sound Science Writers Association, has successfully incorporated as a nonprofit and changed its name to Northwest Science Writers Association to reflect a more regional identity. The decision to become a bona fide 501(c)3 organization is intended to avoid problems similar to those encountered in raising funds for the NASW 2004 party. The goal of NSWA now is to grow membership and seek to imitate the success of similar organizations in the Bay Area, DC, and elsewhere.

Northern California

The promise, limitations, and ethics of stem cell research were the topics of a panel discussion organized on May 4 by the Northern California Science Writers Association. Last fall, Californians voted on an unprecedented proposition to make state funds available to fund

research on stem cells. What perhaps was lost in the hype (and celebrity cries for cures NOW) was a clear-headed discussion of where stem cell research is today and where it is going. At this event, four prominent figures who are helping shape the future of stem cell research fielded questions from moderator and NCSWA board member Bruce Goldman and an audience of 60 bay area reporters and science writers in Genentech Hall, on the Mission Bay campus of the University of California, San Francisco. A report of the panel written by student member Françoise Chanut can be found on the NCSWA Web site at www.ncswa.org/archive/workshops/stem-cell_05-05.html.

Planetary scientist Jeff Cuzzi of NASA's Ames Research Center, in Mountain View, delighted his audience on March 30 with new photos and movies from the ongoing Cassini-Huygens mission to Saturn. After a Spanish meal and cheesecake at Patio Español, in San Francisco, Cuzzi—one of the world's experts on planetary rings—earned many oohs and aahs from 60 NCSWAns and their guests. His images included gossamer shadows of thousands of rings cast upon Saturn's atmosphere, a bizarre ridge on Iapetus that makes the satellite look like two halves of a walnut stuck together, and close-ups of sinuous rivers of hydrocarbons on the giant smog-shrouded moon Titan. Cuzzi closed with a spectacular mental image of marble-sized "raindrops" of methane falling onto Titan's goopy surface at the speed of snowflakes. The evening left all of us eager for more results from the four-year tour of Saturn's system.

More than two dozen NCSWAns toured the shiny world-class labs of the UCSF-affiliated J. David Gladstone Institutes, at Mission Bay. NCSWA member John Watson, senior PR/communications manager for the Gladstone, organized the event. Overlooking the Bay Bridge and SBC Park, the Gladstone's 200,000-square-foot, five-story building sits in the center of an academic and industrial research park that will eventually occupy 300 acres. After the tours, NCSWAns heard an overview from Gladstone President Robert Mahley and saw a brief video about the history of the institute, launched 25 years ago with a focus on heart disease—the number one killer of Americans. Gladstone researchers now focus on HIV/AIDS and neurodegenerative diseases, as well as cardiovascular disease.

On April 4, three NCSWAns composed 75 percent of an invited panel on "Science in the Media" at the annual Career and Research Days seminars for graduate students at the University of California, San Francisco. Doing their best to persuade students to drop their joyless research careers in favor of endlessly fascinating stories and exotic journalistic travels were Amy Adams, Stanford University Medical Center; Carl Hall, *San Francisco Chronicle*; and Rob Irion, freelance and *Science* magazine. The panelists didn't mention the bits

about tearing hair out on deadline and the frequently crushing solitude.

Thirty nature-loving NCSWAns gathered on April 23 for a naturalist-guided walk on a previously off-limits watershed south of San Francisco. Those braving the eight-mile hike enjoyed pristine stands of old growth Douglas fir, evergreen, and fragrant coastal scrub, with ridge-top vistas of watershed lands, reservoirs, the Pacific Ocean, and San Francisco Bay. The land harbors more than 165 species of birds, 800 species of plants and trees, 50 species of mammals, and 30 species of reptiles ■

IN MEMORIAM



Judith Ismach

Former reporter focused on medicine

Judy Ismach, a former San Francisco bureau chief for *Medical World News* and *Physician's Weekly*, died May 2 at her Portland home. She was 67.

Judy's writing was informed by a deep understanding of medicine and a personal acquaintance with the personalities who dominated it, particularly in the fields of infectious diseases and cardiology. Residence in San Francisco and sympathy for the gay rights movement put her in the vanguard of journalists who covered the AIDS crisis. A bout of pericarditis and marriage to a cardiologist cemented her interest in heart disease, and her reporting on that topic earned her a Blakeslee Award in the early 1980s.

Like a lot of science writers, Judy routinely combined "business" with "pleasure," especially during the 1980s—the heyday of huge medical meetings in great venues, San Francisco among them. Her Potrero Hill home, with its spectacular three-bridge view, was a mecca for visiting colleagues. Once, while whipping up an impromptu dinner for a pair of itinerant journalists, Judy took a call from an agitated researcher, who wanted to spill the beans on improprieties at his institution. Torn between the stir-fry and the story, she turned the wok over to a guest and filled six paper napkins with notes. The dinner survived; the researcher's career didn't.

Because Judy could easily talk shop with her sources, it was often assumed that she had a graduate degree. In reality, she hadn't attended college. She began her career in 1959 as a reporter for the *San Bernardino Sun*, where her husband, Arnold Ismach, was an editor. In 1970, she moved to Seattle so her husband could pursue a doctorate in journalism at the University of Washington.

She joined the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that year

and covered science and medicine until 1972. Her reporting on unneeded surgeries won her an Excellence in Journalism award.

Ismach moved to San Francisco after her divorce. In 1975, she married Dr. Willard Johnson. She went to work for McGraw-Hill, then the owner of *Medical World News*. She stayed with that publication through several changes of ownership.

She moved to Portland last year to be closer to family as her health declined.

(Contributed by Beverly Merz)

Howard Benedict

Reporter chronicled U.S. space missions

Howard Benedict, who chronicled the triumphs and tragedies of America's journey into space in three decades as the award-winning aerospace writer for the Associated Press, died of natural causes, at his Florida home, on April 25. He was 77.

In his 37-year career with the AP, Benedict covered more than 2,000 missile and rocket launches, including 65 human flights from Alan Shepard's historic "Light this candle!" ride in 1961 to the 34th shuttle mission in 1990.

"Always fair and objective, his coverage became the standard for America and indeed for the world," said John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth.

Benedict, a native of Sioux City, Iowa, joined the AP in 1953 in Salt Lake City and became head of the news cooperative's office in Cape Canaveral in 1959. Two years later, the same year Shepard became the first American in space, Benedict became the first AP reporter to be given the title "aerospace writer."

As the dean of space writing, Benedict developed terminology to explain the complex field of space travel to Americans in everyday English. For instance, he used "orbits" instead of the official "revs" or "revolutions" for circling the Earth, and introduced to the general public such early space terms as "retrofire," "multistage rockets," and "rendezvous," which referred to two spacecraft meeting in space.

It sometimes seemed that Benedict was never off duty. During a mission, he slept with a squawk box by his bed, and if Mission Control woke up the astronauts to a cowboy ballad, Benedict would show up for work whistling the tune.

With the lengthy hiatus between the Apollo and shuttle programs, Benedict transferred to Washington in 1974 and was White House correspondent for two years during Gerald Ford's presidency. He also worked as an aviation and transportation writer.

With space shuttle flights picking up, Benedict returned to Cape Canaveral in 1984 and reopened the

AP's bureau at Kennedy Space Center.

Retired AP science writer Paul Recer, who covered the Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and early shuttle missions with Benedict, said many of the techniques now used by space journalists came from his colleague.

"He recognized early on that if something serious happened, it was going to happen very, very swiftly and we had to know in advance what was important and to be able to respond," Recer said. "That reached the apex when Challenger blew up."

Benedict saw the accident on NASA video, and while others struggled to understand what had happened, his bulletin series provided a smooth, accurate account, careful to avoid speculation about such things as whether the astronauts could have survived.

The Challenger story earned Benedict the Associated Press Managing Editors award for AP deadline reporting in 1986, an honor he also had won in 1969 for his coverage of the Apollo moon flight program.

Before joining the AP, Benedict wrote for the military newspaper *Pacific Stars & Stripes* in both Tokyo and Seoul in 1951, following his recall to active Army duty for the Korean War. He returned from Asia, completed his journalism education at Northwestern University in December 1952, and began working for the AP six weeks later.

In a personal account written upon his retirement from the AP in 1990, Benedict remembered how manned rockets had been a dominant part of his life.

"It started with the first one—Alan Shepard's in 1961—and continued through all 64 others, as Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, and the space shuttle streaked across the pages of history. I have been fortunate to report on a whole new era of mankind, the Space Age, from its very onset to the present," he wrote.

He recalled that when Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to set foot on the moon, "it didn't hit me at first. I was too busy writing. But hours later, as I stepped outside the AP office, I looked up at the moon, felt a lump and said, 'By gosh, we did it.'"

"It's been a fascinating ride," he concluded in his final story for the AP.

(Source: Associated Press)

Sy Wexler

Maker of classroom science films

Sy Wexler, an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose educational movies flickered for decades in darkened classrooms around the world, died March 10, in Los Angeles. He was 88.

For a generation of baby boomers, Wexler's films were as dependable a classroom ritual as the duck-and-cover drill. Usually from 11- to 28-minutes long and shot in 16-millimeter black and white, they were as much a part of education in the postwar decades as the Internet and interactive CD-ROMs are today.

Few of the films had catchy titles. There was "High Blood Pressure," "Congestive Heart Failure," and "Career: Medical Technologist." There was "Early Marriage," "Fertilization and Birth," and "Happy Family Planning." There was "Fire Science," "Smoking and Heart Disease," and "Venereal Disease: Why Do We Still Have It?"

But in the 50's and 60's, movies like these were an essential part of how science, in particular the delicate subject of sex education, was taught. In hundreds of films, both live-action and animated, Wexler brought to life obscure processes like the metabolizing of protein ("How a Hamburger Turns Into You"), the problem-solving abilities of animals ("Squeak the Squirrel"), and the nature of human creativity ("Wondering About Things").

Simon Wexler was born in Manhattan and studied chemistry at the City College of New York. He was a cameraman with the Army Signal Corps in World War II, working with the director Frank Capra on the well-known documentary series "Why We Fight."

After the war, Wexler and a partner, Bob Churchill, started Churchill-Wexler Films, based in Hollywood. Overseeing a staff of animators, technicians and editors, Wexler worked as producer, director, and screenwriter, sometimes as cameraman and occasionally as talent scout (his son Howard appeared in several of his films).

After Churchill left the company in 1961, Wexler started Wexler Film Productions. From the late 60's on, he concentrated on medical films, including "Complete Dentures," "Clinical Applications of Microporous Tape," and "The Case of a Persian Student with Painless Hemoptysis."

The films were one way that news of medical advances was disseminated: in the days before PowerPoint, doctors often commissioned movies from Wexler to accompany their presentations at professional meetings. To illuminate medical subjects visually, Wexler might photograph the behavior of cells through the lens of a microscope or take his camera into the operating room to film surgery in progress.

Many of Wexler's films won awards, including prizes from the Biological Photographers Association and the International Scientific Film Festival. He received a blue ribbon from the American Film Festival for "Varicose Veins."

(Source: New York Times News Service)

[SCIENCEWRITERS HAS LEARNED BELATEDLY OF THIS DEATH]



Rob Gannon

Popular Science Contributing Editor

Writers are told to mine what they know. Rob Gannon took the opposite tack. Gannon, a Penn State associate professor emeritus of English, dove below the sea, ventured to the South

Pole, jumped into a wind tunnel, and researched torpedoes. His relentless curiosity led to 117 feature articles, including numerous cover stories, for *Popular Science* magazine. He died Nov. 3, 2003 after a long illness. He was 72.

Dawn Stover, science editor for the magazine, said of Gannon: "He really specialized in first-person adventure stories. That's what he did so well."

Born in White Plains, N.Y., Gannon spent most of his childhood in Minneapolis. He attended Miami University of Ohio, but left just short of a broadcasting degree. A brief stint in public relations followed.

Fired and living in Greenwich Village, Gannon turned to freelance writing. He quickly rose in stature, his work appearing in national publications like *Reader's Digest*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Family Circle*, and *Glamour*.

In 1975, after his upstate New York home—a remodeled church—burned, Gannon sought a new start. On his way to Belize, he stopped at Penn State for an interview. He retired from the university in 1999.

He wrote for *Popular Science* for 44 years and authored several books, including ones on gliding and an effort in Suriname to rescue animals threatened by a dam. His latest article, "Hellions of the Deep," chronicled Penn State's role in producing torpedoes during World War II.

Throughout his career, Gannon displayed a zeal for what his former editor Stover calls "immersion journalism"—sampling LSD, diving in a tiny submarine, even plunging into a vertical wind tunnel for his last piece, about a woman's attempt to set a high-altitude skydive record.

"He really took a lot of time to do all this great reporting, then labored over his copy until he had a work of art," Stover said. "He really was a master craftsman."

[And speaking of craftsmen, this photo was provided by Rob's friend Fredric Weber. Rob held an interest in Fredric's photographic artwork. The two met at an art show and he asked Fred to do this portrait as he prepared for retirement.] ■

(Source: Centre City Times, Bellefonte, Penn.)

BOOKS BY AND FOR MEMBERS

by Ruth Winter

Archives of the Universe: A Treasury of Astronomy's Historic Works of Discovery by Marcia Bartusiak (NASW), published by Pantheon Books.

For her fourth book, Marcia Bartusiak, a visiting professor in the MIT Graduate Program in Science Writing, chronicles the history of astronomy through excerpts of 100 primary documents, from Aristotle's proof that the Earth is round to the papers that revealed that cosmic expansion is accelerating. *Publishers Weekly* wrote, "Among the many famous authors presented here—Galileo, Einstein, Kepler, Newton, Copernicus, etc.—no voice shines through as accessibly as that of Bartusiak herself. The author...has sewn together this collection of historical reprints with an admirable number of original, explanatory essays that situate each document within a larger scientific history....This book will surely become a well-loved resource." *Sky & Telescope* said that "Bartusiak's wit and eye for the humanity of her subjects sparkles throughout the book," while AAAS Science Books & Films called it "a must read for all students of astronomy and of the history of science." Bartusiak can be reached at bar2siak@mit.edu. The press representative is Katherine Freeman at 212-572-2685 or kfreeman@randomhouse.com. Further information can also be found at www.marciabartusiak.com.

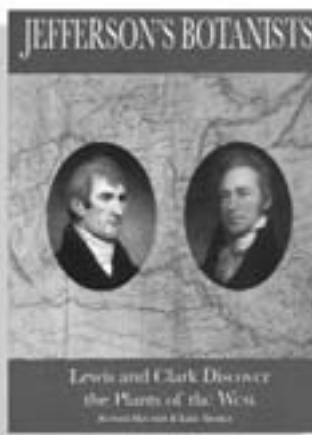


The Drug Trial: Nancy Olivieri and the Science Scandal that Rocked the Hospital for Sick Children by Miriam Shuchman (NASW), published by Random House.

In August 1998, a story about a doctor named Nancy Olivieri grabbed headlines in Toronto. The articles stated that Olivieri had discovered serious problems with an experimental drug manufactured by Canada's largest pharmaceutical company, a Toronto-based generics manufacturer called Apotex. The drug at the center of the scandal is a white tablet called L1, or deferiprone, intended for use by patients with the inherited blood disorder thalassemia. Olivieri planned to tell patients about the problems, as required by her hospital. But Apotex ejected her from its research program, canceling the study she was running to test the drug, and threatening her with court action if she went public. The scandal was in the news for months. And for four years, legal charges and personal accusations flew back and forth between Olivieri, the company, and Toronto's Hospital

for Sick Children, where Olivieri worked. "It was the biggest science scandal to hit Canada in decades and I had been in the right place at the right time to cover it and even to break the story," Schuchman wrote. She says the story chronicled in her book was a disaster for Canada's largest children's hospital and for Canadians and Americans born with thalassemia. It was also disastrous for several of the scientists involved. "Many of the people I interviewed advised me not to write it. One of the people who advised me most strongly not to write it was and is the head of Canada's equivalent of the NIH (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research). Another person who advised me to reconsider was a journalist who was (and still is) being sued for having covered the story on the TV news. So writing it got to be a scary thing." Shuchman can be reached at: shuchman@buffalo.edu. The press representative is Cathy Paine at 416-957-1571, cell 416-433-6546, or cpaine@randomhouse.com.

Jefferson's Botanists: Lewis and Clark Discover the Plants of the West by Richard McCourt (NASW) and Earle Spamer, published by Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.



They were looking for a water route to the Pacific Ocean. They survived grizzly bears, freezing weather, and near starvation. They didn't find the water route, but they did make dozens of scientific discoveries and brought back hundreds of plant specimens that are still studied by scientists today. Lewis and Clark are famous for their remarkable 8,000-mile

journey across western North America. Less well known is their scientific legacy, in the form of written observations and plant specimens that they took great pains to collect and preserve. This full-color, 25-page publication tells the story of the explorer-botanists and their discoveries. A tale of adventure, scientific discovery, and intrigue, it is written for the general public, students, and anyone interested in the 18th century explorers' enduring legacy. The Lewis and Clark Herbarium, a collection of 222 dried, pressed plants was scattered and dispersed, some crossing the ocean to London and back, many more stored unnoticed in a cabinet in Philadelphia for nearly a century. Through a fortuitous series of events, the collection came together at the Academy of Natural History in the late 1800s. A freelance science reporter for National Public Radio in the 1980s and 90s, McCourt co-edited the book, *The New*

Science Writers, with Ted Anton. Spamer has written and edited a number of books and articles about the Grand Canyon and about historical museum collections. He is on the editorial board the *Annals of Improbable Research*. McCourt can be reached at mccourt@acnatsci.org or 215-299-1157.

***RFID Applications, Security and Privacy* by Simson Garfinkel (NASW) and Beth Rosenberg, published by Addison Wesley.**

Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology is rapidly becoming ubiquitous as businesses seek to streamline supply chains and respond to mandates from key customers. But RFID and other new wireless ID technologies raise unprecedented privacy issues. Garfinkel, a computer security researcher, brings together contributions from the stakeholder community—from RFID suppliers to privacy advocates. His contributors introduce today's leading wireless ID technologies, trace their evolution, explain their promise, assess their privacy risks, and evaluate proposed solutions—technical, business, and political. Beyond RFID, they also review the privacy implications of Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, smartcards, biometrics, new cell-phone networks, and the ever-evolving Internet. A columnist for *Technology Review* and *CSO* magazine, Garfinkel's *CSO* columns earned the 2004 Jesse H. Neal National Business Journalism Award. He is a doctoral candidate at MIT's Computer Science and AI Laboratory. He says he wrote the book because he wanted to see a single volume out there with information from across the spectrum—RFID advocates, developers, privacy activists, and hackers. Garfinkel can be reached 617-489-9722 or simsong@mit.edu. The press representative is Eric Garulay at Eric.Garulay@awl.com.

***A.D.A.M. Illustrated Family Health Guide, 1st Ed.*, by Alan Greene, MD, Jacqueline A. Hart, MD, Greg Juhn, and Meredith A. Nienkamp, published by A.D.A.M., Inc.**

The *A.D.A.M. Illustrated Family Health Guide* offers detailed information on hundreds of medical problems, including step-by-step first aid instructions and self care steps for the most common symptoms. The visually engaging book contains more than 400 color images and a 24-page gallery of professional anatomy illustrations. All information is written and reviewed by physicians. For information contact Kelli Miller Stacy (NASW), Editorial Director, ADAM, Inc., at 770-541-5056 or kstacy@adamcorp.com.

***Stargazer: The Life and Times of the Telescope* by Dr. Fred Watson, published by DaCapo Press.**

Watson is astronomer-in-charge of the Anglo-Australian Observatory in central New South Wales. His book traces the history of the telescope, from its ori-

gins with Tycho Brahe, whose king gave him an island on which he could pursue his scientific investigations, to NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, which has shown new galaxies. It also describes the recent bumper-crop of telescopes designed to do a wide variety of tasks from monitoring the Sun in X-rays to mapping the remnants of the Big Bang itself. It also gives a glimpse into the future when telescopes might save us from Earth-killing asteroids and acquaint us with extraterrestrial brethren. The press representative is Lissa Warren at 617-252-5212 or liissa.warren@perseusbooks.com.

***Covering Pollution: An Investigative Reporter's Guide* by Lori Luechtefeld, published by Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.**



Ever wonder how they got that prize-winning environmental story? Where she found that perfect set of data? Who he called for that crucial piece of information? Now there's a book that can show you how veteran environmental journalists practice their craft. Published by IRE, in cooperation with the Society of Environmental Journalists, *Covering Pollution* is a practical, easy-to-use guide

to pursue stories about environmental health, jam-packed with tips from some of the most experienced environmental reporters in the U.S., including NASW members Russell Clemings, Dan Fagin, and Robert McClure. There are chapters on air pollution, water pollution, the Toxic Release Inventory, hazardous waste issues beyond TRI, dealing with advocacy groups, reporting and writing local environmental stories, and mapping environmental data. Five appendices are a treasure trove of names, telephone numbers, and databases you'll need to successfully navigate the bureaucracies at EPA and a horde of other federal and state agencies that deal with environmental issues. Available through IRE (www.ire.org/store/books/pollution.html) or SEJ (www.sej.org/resource/Covering_Pollution.htm).

***Parkinson's Disease and the Family: A New Guide* by Nutan Sharma, M.D. and Elaine Richman, Ph.D. (NASW), published by Harvard University Press.**

Richman, president of Richman Associates, LLC, in Baltimore, M.D. and her co author, Dr. Sharma, an assistant in neurology, Massachusetts General Hospital, and an instructor at Harvard Medical School, have written about a movement disorder that is diagnosed in

500,000 people in the United States. They have written not only for those with the diagnosis, they say, but also for their loved ones. "The goal of this book is to provide straightforward information to the general public about what is known about Parkinson's disease and its treatment...We hope that the information in this book will help make people less fearful about Parkinson's disease and more likely to become actively involved in their own treatment or that of a loved one." Richman can be reached at 410-664-4485 or erichman@erols.com.

***Just A Little Too Thin: How to Pull Your Child Back from the Brink of an Eating Disorder* by Dr. Michael Strober and Meg Schneider, published by Da Capo Press.**

Strober is director of both the Eating Disorders Program and the Adolescent Mood Disorders Program at UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute, as well as editor-in-chief of *The International Journal of Eating Disorders*. Schneider is a counselor at a therapy center in Westchester, N.Y., specializing in treating adolescents and their families. The aim of the book is to help parents recognize if their teenager's desire to be thin is a simple quest for a smaller skirt size or something that is mutating into a struggle to feel good. It is not a book about anorexia, but rather about those who have a problem with food because of deep emotional battles. The press representative is Lissa Warren at 617-252-5212 or lissa.warren@perseusbooks.com.

New Edition

***Burn Unit: Saving lives After the Flames* by Barbara Ravage (NASW), published in paperback by DaCapo Press.**

Ravage tells the stories of those who work at Bigelow 13, the Mass General Hospital's burn unit. She weaves the stories of burn victims and those who care for them with the most recent developments in care. Both the *New York Times* and *New England Journal of Medicine* reviewers praised the hardback edition. ■

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

NEW MEMBERS

CALIFORNIA: Susan D. Brown, freelance, Santa Cruz; Suzanne Leigh, freelance, San Francisco; Katherine Leitzell*, USC; John Moir, Nat'l Science Teachers Assn., Santa Cruz; Shawne A. Neeper, Pharsight Corp., Mt. View; Carol G. Parker*, UC San Diego; Melinda

Simmons*, Scripps Institution; Lori S. Tamura, Lawrence Berkeley Nat'l Lab.; Michael M. Torrice*, Caltech; Kristen Viramontes*, Cal State LA. **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:** Lisa Esposito, Ctr. for the Advancement of Health. **FLORIDA:** Phil Davis, *St. Petersburg Times*. **GEORGIA:** Susan M. Varlamoff, U of Georgia; Harriet J. Zoller, American Cancer Society. **ILLINOIS:** Barry S. Aprison, Museum of Science, Chicago; Kelly Rae Fugo*, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Paula Kamen, freelance, Chicago. **INDIANA:** Jeremy Shere, freelance & Indiana Univ, Bloomington. **KANSAS:** Frederic Heeren, freelance, Olathe. **KENTUCKY:** David Bissonnette, Morehead State U; K. John Morrow, Jr., Newport Biotechnology Consultants, Newport; Beth Nolte*, Spalding U., Louisville. **MARYLAND:** Sarah Ingrid Ade*, Johns Hopkins U; Stephen Berberich, Berberich Communications, Waldorf; Cheryl Ann Kassed, Masi Max Resources, Inc./NIDA, Bethesda. **MASSACHUSETTS:** Nitasha Manchanda*, Harvard; Celeste Biever, *New Scientist*, Newton; Aimee Swartz*, UMass; Tai Viinikka*, Harvard Med. School. **MICHIGAN:** Laura Bailey, U of Michigan; Jennifer Fuller*, U of Michigan. **MISSOURI:** Kristin Bullok*, Washington U. **NEW JERSEY:** Lisa Saunders Baugh, freelance, Ringoes; Bob Schapiro, Frontline News Service, Montclair; Prachi Patel Predd, freelance, Jersey City. **NEW MEXICO:** Connie Peceny*, U of New Mexico. **NEW YORK:** Mary Kathleen Flynn, freelance, NYC; Linda Geppert, *IEEE Spectrum*; David Gilden, freelance, NYC; Ira Lu*, Sarah Lawrence College. **NORTH CAROLINA:** Misha Angrist, Duke Institute for Genome Sciences & Policy; Roger Harris, freelance, Cary. **OREGON:** Megan McKenzie, McKenzie Science Writing, Corvallis; Alisa P. Ramakrishnan*, Portland State U; Laurel Standlee, Watershed Solutions, LLC, Beaverton; David Worzman, Portland. **PENNSYLVANIA:** Kenneth Chiacchia, U of Pittsburgh Med. Center; Megan Grogan*, Jefferson Med. College; **SOUTH CAROLINA:** Jessica Hankinson Harwood, freelance, Piedmont. **TEXAS:** Juhi Yajnik*, U of Texas, Austin; Susan Feldkamp, Susan Feldkamp, LLC, Manchaca. **UTAH:** Julie Kiefer, Developmental Dynamics, Salt Lake City. **VIRGINIA:** Laura J. Stafford, American Geological Institute. **WASHINGTON:** Stephanie Cartier*, U of Washington; Andrea S. Turner, Pacific Northwest Nat'l Lab.; Melissa Lee Phillips, freelance, Seattle; Desiree Willis*, U of Washington. **WEST VIRGINIA:** Leslie Anne J. Lopez*, WV U. **WISCONSIN:** Paroma Basu, U of Wisconsin; Kathleen Richter*, U of Wisconsin. **CANADA:** Richard Sutherland, Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario. **SWITZERLAND:** Eileen Rojo, Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research, Novartis, Ag, Basel. **UNITED KINGDOM:** Ala Sharif, Albany Med. Center, Kent. ■

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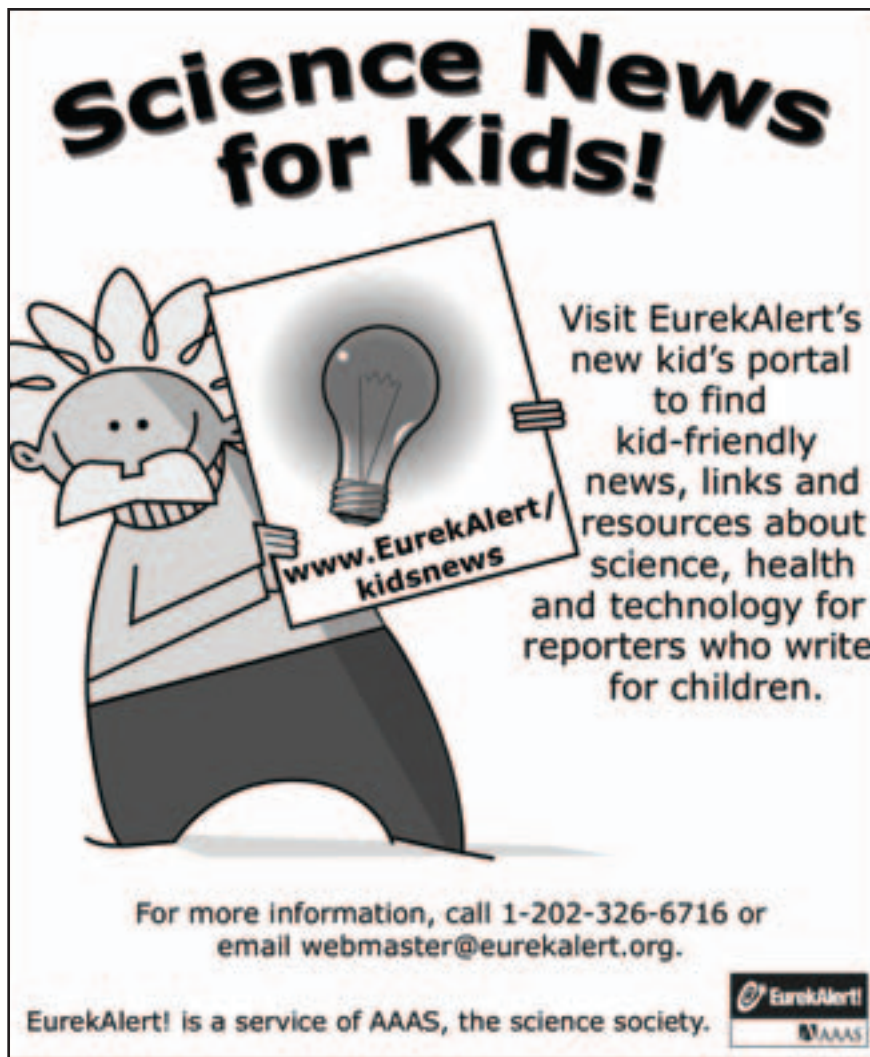
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To place a listing in *ScienceWriters* or on the NASW Web site, contact Diane McGurgan at NASW, 304-754-5077 or diane@nasw.org.