ScienceWriters™

National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

Summer 2009

BREAKING NEWS STORIES AND
SOCIAL MEDIA

ARTISTS
UNITE WITH SCIENCE WRITERS

MERCK SALES BROCHURE
MASQUERADES
AS A SCIENCE JOURNAL

SIXTH CONFERENCE ON
INNOVATIVE
JOURNALISM

JOURNALISTS' DOCUMENTS SOUGHT FOR
ARCHIVES

PONDERING
TWEET
ETIQUETTE AT SCIENCE MEETINGS

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A still from "Moist" light microscopy animation © Justine Cooper 2008. Computer mouse © PhotoAlto.

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From The Editor

This issue explores innovation. It starts with a cover image by the New York artist Justine Cooper, who works at the intersection of art and science. The image comes from a series of light microscopy images and videos entitled "Moist" in which Cooper used blood, phlegm, mucus, and tears translated out as meteorological phenomena, interstellar geographies, and studies in pattern and randomness. Cooper was one of several artists who participated in NASW's first regional meeting recapped on page 1.

Mike Ross reports on the Sixth Conference on Innovation Journalism and new business models for mainstream and new media.

There are two articles on social media. The first examines the etiquette of blogging and tweeting at scientific meetings; the second on the use of social media to gather information during a breaking news story.

Two examples of innovation gone wrong are the misuse of science prizes as a form of advertising and revelations that Merck created a marketing piece designed to look like a peer-reviewed journal.

Lynne Friedmann

In This Issue

NEWS

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FEATURES




Artists and Science Writers

FIRST NASW REGIONAL MEETING

At the 2008 NASW board meeting, a decision was made to experiment with regional meetings to add to member networking and training opportunities between our annual meetings. The first of these regional meetings took place on May 11 in New York City; the focus was science and the arts. ■ *NASW co-hosted the event with the Science and the Arts Program of the CUNY Graduate Center. Kudos to meeting co-chairs Robin Marantz Henig representing NASW and Adrienne Klein of CUNY, who also coordinated promotion efforts with the local group Science Writers in New York. Tinsley Davis, Mariette DiChristina, and Robert Lee Hotz also helped with planning aspects.* ■ *"Artists & Science Writers—Finding Common Ground" received an extensive review in The Observatory (*Columbia Journalism Review*) by Curtis Brainard, who called it "…a fascinating exploration about how journalists, a playwright, a visual artist, and a dance choreographer are trying to better understand, communicate, and 'humanize' science." (An excerpt follows.)* ■ *Based on the success of this first-time effort, NASW is considering regional events in other parts of the country keeping in mind that not all science writers live in large cities nor do they have a regional science writers group to support such programs. Locations to be announced.* — *Lynne Friedmann, SW Editor*

The Art of Science

BY CURTIS BRAINARD

In the first act, Mariette DiChristina, NASW president and acting editor-in-chief of *Scientific American*, spoke with Arthur Giron, who authored such scientifically relevant plays as *Flight*, about the Wright brothers, *Emilie's Voltaire*, about the French philosopher and his mistress, and *Moving Bodies*, about physicist Richard Feynman.

DiChristina and Giron read and discussed scenes from each. Giron's trick is to couch simple, scientific references in dramatic dialogue. "My job is to get information internalized emotionally so you remember it for the rest of your life," he told the audience. But, in order to be true to both the science and his art, he must "bathe" himself in facts. He will, for instance, read a stack of books in order to include a single line such as one in the Feynman play that criticizes René Descartes for being a theoretical, rather than experimental, scientist.

In the second act, *Wall Street Journal* science reporter Robert Lee Hotz talked with Justine Cooper, a visual artist who works with a number of different media. Cooper has used scanning electronic microscopes to "photograph" hair, skin, and other organic materials; MRI imaging to create video representations of the human body; and DNA to create sculptures. But her goal was not to illuminate science.

CURTIS BRAINARD IS EDITOR OF THE OBSERVATORY, *CJR*'S ONLINE CRITIQUE OF SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT REPORTING.

"I was trying to use the technologies in a way that scientists wouldn't," Cooper said. In fact, she thinks of her art as a foil for explanatory art projects such as the Visible Human Project.

Eventually, however, Cooper "went from using the tools of science to being interested in the institutions of science." She created a mock advertising campaign and website for a drug called "Havidol" (read: have it all), which she sees as a "constructive parody of direct-to-consumer advertising." And she is now working on a soon-to-be-released blog and photo exhibit for a family of hospital practice dummies, which she says is "about well being and the pathologizing of everyday life." Rather than detracting from medical practice, Cooper hopes both projects will call attention to issues in healthcare.

That was certainly the intent of *Ferocious Beauty: Genome*, a ballet about modern genetics. The dance is meant to evoke questions about "evolution, aging, and the nature of perfection," according to choreographer Liz Lerman. But there is an explanatory element, too. "I didn't know anything about genetics, but I thought that if I wrote a play about it, I would," Lerman told science author and *New York Times Magazine*

ART continued on page 26

(top, left to right) Regional meeting panelists Justine Cooper, Robert Lee Hotz, Liz Lerman, and Arthur Giron.

(left) Justine Cooper's DNA light sculpture "Lamina"

(left) Chief Internet Evangelist at Google Vint Cerf. (center) An international audience of journalists, publishers, scientists, and academics gather to discuss how journalism and innovative come together. (right) Conference organizer David Nordfors and human-computer interaction pioneer Douglas Engelbart.

Conference Shows Worldwide Innovations in Journalism

BY MIKE ROSS

Journalists—science writers, especially—are accustomed to reporting on innovation. Now many are living it.

Today's tumult is forcing our profession to reexamine what we're really about and realizing our roles in society. Just as musicians were not about LPs or cassette tapes, we are not about printed-on-paper publications, many of which are being undermined by accelerating losses of ad and subscription revenue to often-free Internet alternatives. Paper is merely one of today's vehicles for our true value—creators of information valued by our audiences. We are in the midst of a worldwide transformation of interpersonal communications, and professional journalism will surely be valued in the various media and content vehicles that thrive in the new paradigm.

Such was the cautiously optimistic tenor at the Sixth Conference on Innovation Journalism (IJ-6) held at Stanford University, May 18 to 20. Some 241 journalists, publishers, scientists, and academics from 15 countries heard talks from luminaries such as Vint Cerf ("Father of the Internet" now Internet Chief Evangelist at Google). Attendees participated in wide-ranging roundtable workshops chaired by 16 "InJo" Fellows: professional journalists sponsored by their governments to spend six months in the U.S. learning about innovation and the role of journalism in fostering it. The event was chaired by David Nordfors, senior researcher at Stanford and executive director of the VINNOVA Stanford Research Center of Innovation Journalism, who has a Ph.D. in physics and for several years was a science writer and editor for a Swedish computer magazine (see sidebar at right).

In its first five years, this conference has concentrated on the practice of "innovation journalism," a phrase Nordfors coined to make people aware that insightful stories about innovation usually combine elements from traditional business, politics, and science beats. This year, in view of the dire state of the journalism business, much more emphasis was placed on innovation in journalism. The conference task was "journalism succeeding with innovation."

With the current advertising-and-subscription business model for mainstream media collapsing, no single alternative seems capable of replacing it. Rather, each publication must assess its own situation and decide how it can best fill the information needs of its audience.

Three types of publications seem to have relatively clear paths to success: The largest publishers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, can leverage their well-known brand images and huge high-quality audiences into significant online advertising revenue.

Small "hyper-local" websites, on the other hand, use predominantly citizen journalists to cover community news for a neighborhood, towns, or city. They have relatively low

MIKE ROSS IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN SAN JOSE, CALIF. HE WORKED 18 YEARS AT IBM RESEARCH'S ALMADEN RESEARCHCENTER AND 12 YEARS AT LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID NORDFORS

expenses and should be able to attract loyal audiences suitable for local advertising. Many such news sites have sprung up across the country, a number of them receiving seed funding from the Knight Foundation.

Finally, tightly focused publications covering a high-value niche area can attract high ad prices. But VentureBeat founder Matt Marshall said his publication's entire potential audience of venture capitalists and associates numbers just 18,000, which is low enough that other "revenue streams," such as events and sponsorships, are needed to be profitable. Mike Kanellos said Greentech Media is also staging events, which have the additional benefits of enhancing a publication's relationship with its readers and facilitating interactions with sources for many new stories.

xConomy ("business + technology in the exponential economy") is a hybrid. Founded by veteran high-tech writer Bob Buderi, it provides intensive local coverage of high-tech news in key tech centers, currently Boston, Seattle, and San Diego. "We publish three to five stories a day—like what the *Boston Globe* does in a week," Buderi said. "Our stories are all across the innovation scene: information technology, biology, energy. We do blog-, newspaper-, or magazine-length stories … one paragraph, three to four pages … whatever it takes. We engage the comment stream, Twitter, do events, and maintain forums." They don't do video, however, as they've found it's not worth the effort for their audience.

The worldwide importance of high-tech news gives xConomy a significant audience outside its coverage zones. "Our motto is 'Local story, global impact," Buderi said.

"We set out to create a high-value audience," and Buderi claims that now only the *Wall Street Journal* has a more affluent, highly educated audience. Advertising is xConomy's fourth-ranking revenue stream. A select network of "xConomists" support the publication and also provide ideas, introductions, and write guest columns.

Of course, no media business can ignore its audience. Herman Gyr of the Enterprise Development Group described how he and colleagues helped BBC's Radio 1, in 2005, understand changes taking place in its audience and what they could do to serve them better.

Radio 1 was losing younger listeners, Gyr said. The initial response was to create new shows aimed at younger audiences. Yet ratings still fell. When Gyr and

How did a Swedish physicist turned science writer turned funding manager create an international center for innovation journalism halfway around the world at Stanford University?

"It's been quite an entrepreneurial trip," said David Nordfors, senior research scholar at Stanford and executive director of the VINNOVA Stanford Research Center of Innovation Journalism.

Even while earning a Ph.D. in physics in Uppsala and doing postdoctoral research in Germany, Nordfors said he did some science writing, penning columns for *Datateknik*, the biweekly Swedish computer magazine. His core motivation was learning "how new knowledge creates value." He believed that a popular understanding of science helped the public comprehend and accept innovations. "To introduce something new, it must be communicated," Nordfors says. "Mass communications, particularly journalism, offers a part of the solution." In 1993 he decided to pursue journalism. He was named science editor of *Datateknik* and created the magazine's first science section.

Recruited two years later to manage a foundation that funds research collaborations between universities and industry, Nordfors insisted that each proposal include a public communications plan that involved journalists. One of these programs educated Swedish reporters on how to use new technologies, such as databases and the Internet, to improve their coverage of innovation.

In 2001, he became an advisor to VINNOVA, the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems. Nordfors and ProfNet founder Dan Forbush then created a Swedish analog of that Internet-based service for connecting reporters with expert sources. Nordfors also realized that a new term would be useful to describe journalism that covers broadly the intertwined technical, business, political and cultural aspects of the innovation process. For this purpose, he coined "innovation journalism."

In 2003, Nordfors decided the best way for Swedish reporters to understand the nuances and power of the innovation process was to experience it first hand in Northern California's Silicon Valley. He turned to a person he'd once interviewed for *Datateknik*: Stig Hagstrom, a Swedish-born physicist at Stanford who once served as chancellor of the Swedish university system. Hagstrom agreed to host Nordfors at Stanford for six months as a visiting scholar. The first class of Innovation Journalism Fellows, funded by VINNOVA, were six Swedish reporters for whom Nordfors designed academic interactions and arranged newsroom internships at such high-tech media as *Technology Review* and *C|Net*. The six-month program culminated in the first Conference on Innovation Journalism, held in April 2004 with (then) *Science* magazine editor-in-chief David Kennedy as keynote speaker.

The program was immediately successful, leading to Nordfors joining the Stanford staff. VINNOVA's Director General, Per Ericsson, encouraged Nordfors to expand the program to include journalists from other countries who were interested in fostering an appreciation for the power of innovation to improve their countries' economies. The next year, the Finnish government funded an Innovation Journalism Fellowship, and in 2006 Pakistani reporters were supported through the Competitiveness Support Fund (CSF) created by the Pakistani government and the United States Agency for International Development. This year's class had 16 fellows, including journalists from Mexico and Slovenia, whose participation was funded by their governments. Additional countries are in the process of joining the program. Nordfors is also expanding his audience and influence as a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Future of Media.

One of Nordfors' goals is to stimulate the creation of an innovation system around journalism that will continually provide new business models. "Constant renewal," he said. "Just like any other business." ■

colleagues surveyed Radio 1's potential audience, they found—and gave names to—four distinct types:

- Ana (passive/reflective)—The station's existing listener.
- Andi (playful/interactive)—Assembles and arranges. Creates his own best jazz list, for example, but doesn't create content itself.
- DJ: Digital Joe (or Jane) (creative/impactful)—Creates content; seeks audience, fame and money.
- Syndi (sharing/connected)—Seeks communities and interest groups to help them connect with people.

After seeing this analysis, Radio 1's management understood why their initial efforts to attract young listeners had failed: Those shows appealed only to their existing passive, Ana-type audience. Other more interactive youth—a large and increasing fraction of today's youth—were still tuning out Radio 1. The station's management realized they had to serve their Andis, DJs, and Sydnis differently. As a result, Radio 1 incorporated new media into the core of its business, creating games (including some on science), blogs, podcasts, and message boards. Ratings increased immediately after the new features were rolled out.

The lesson, Gyr says, is that "If you become irrelevant to your audience, they will go elsewhere." That may seem obvious, but managements and even employees can often be blind to changes that require non-traditional responses.

"Journalists are some of the toughest crowds to get to think innovatively," said Corey Ford, a longtime producer for PBS' Frontline. A Stanford Business School graduate, he leads the "Redesigning Journalism" project as a lecturer at the Institute of Design at Stanford.

Co-founded five years ago by David Kelley, who helped create the iconic Silicon Valley design firm, IDEO, Stanford's "d.school" philosophy is that design "is not an aesthetic, event, or a product … but a human-centric process of "focusing and flaring; repeat." Several Knight Fellowship journalists at Stanford joined this project and helped conceive, make, test, and refine many simple "low-resolution" prototypes that quickly home in what works or doesn't. Some call this fail-early-and-often approach "the drunken walk of the entrepreneur."

Three items conceived and developed in the six-week program were shown at the conference:

- NewsZen: Immersive and empathetic video montages entice people who typically shun text stories to dig deeper and learn more.
- NewsTiles: News photos are sent as tiles to iPhones based on the user's preferences. Clicking on a tile brings up headlines and stories. Tiles and content can be shared with others.
- The Reader Meter: A screen gadget that shows writers how frequently their stories are being read.

"You can also apply this design process to story telling," said Burt Herman, *The Associated Press* bureau chief in Korea and a 2008-09 Knight Fellow. "Be open to your users and how they will receive your info."

Conference participants gave much attention—and hope—to ideas for enabling content creators and publishers, rather than aggregators like Google, to reap the benefits of advertising revenue. Publishers can't make much money selling generic ads to general readers on random content pages. Rates are typically less than $1 per thousand impressions. Advertisers would pay much more—even 10-fold or greater—if their ads could be targeted to readers who matched a certain interest or history profile or were placed on pages where the content relates to the advertised product or service. Tools are being developed to make such discriminating ad placements. But many small-to-medium-sized publishers may be in the Catch-22 situation of not having the online reader volume or overall profile quality to warrant the expense of implementing such a system.

Bill Densmore, a veteran journalist and Reynolds Fellow at the Donald W. Reynolds Institute of the Missouri School of Journalism, described the Information Valet tool he is developing to create an enhanced advertising market for news stories from many sources. Users would sign up for a variety of news "services"—some free, some could be paid—provided by publishers who use the tool. Customer profile information is pooled anonymously, allowing high-value targeted ads to be placed on appropriate pages of any of the publishers' content pages. The tool would also handle the financial transactions.

[A week after the IJ-6 conference, Densmore announced the creation of a spinoff company, CircLabs, Inc., that will develop and provide services to finance online news, such as those born in Information Valet project. CircLabs' first product is called Circulate. A few days later, it was reported that Alan Mutter (aka "Newsosaur"), an adjunct faculty member of UC-Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism and former newspaper editor and entrepreneur who also participated in an IJ-6 workshop, had briefed a large meeting of newspaper publishers on the "conceptual framework" of an industry-owned non-profit entity, which he called ViewPass, for providing what appear to be similar online news, advertising, and payment services.]

Journalism directs public attention to items of public interest with a mandate from the audience.

As Cerf noted in his conference-opening keynote: In the past, advertising has been tied to locality, a specific place on a page in a particular newspaper or magazine. That distinction disappears with the Internet and, especially, mobile phones, which are increasingly important for news and advertising. Some 25 percent (and growing) of the world's three billion mobile phones are already connected to the Internet , he said.

"The Internet never runs out of space … or time," Cerf said. "Though its viewers might!"

Indeed, that is a key aspect of an "attention economy" that seems to be emerging as first predicted by the influential psychologist Herman Simon in 1971: "What information consumes is rather obvious: It consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently … "

This is where journalism would seem to fit in—in the future as or more importantly as in the past. In this vein, Nordfors has developed a "medium-independent" definition of journalism:

Journalism directs public attention to items of public interest with a mandate from the audience.

So the journalist's ride inside in this innovation space might be rough and turbulent, especially now. But it looks to continue to be creative, interesting—and valued—profession. ■

Don't Empty That Inbox

The Collection is Seeking:

- printed material
- e-mails
- cell phone records
- CDs
- zip drives
- flash drives
- floppy disks
- digital images
- letters
- notebooks
- photos
- memos
- diaries
- memoirs
- speeches
- reports
- research files
- meeting minutes
- programs
- microfilms
- video and audio files

The National Women & Media Collection Seeks Journalists' Documents

BY LINDSAY GSELL

Think twice before you throw out that clutter on your desk or empty your computer's recycle bin. Believe it or not, somebody wants those used reporter's notebooks, old tape recordings, and marked-up copy.

The National Women & Media Collection at the University of Missouri-Columbia documents the history of women in media both as producers and as objects of coverage. Now, as the industry is swiftly transforming, the collection and its boosters, the Friends of the NWMC, have launched a drive to urge more women to donate materials to the archives.

"It's an extraordinary time in American journalism, an unbelievable time," says Jean Gaddy Wilson, co-founder of the collection. "We're in this massive shift where people are getting laid off—good people, smart people, great journalists—and we want to capture those materials because they'll be lost, totally lost. We want people to know those stories."

The upheaval also presents an opportunity, says Glenda Holste, a Friend of the NWMC and a former president of the Journalism & Women Symposium, an organization that brings together female journalists, educators, and researchers from across the country. "It's a good time for people making a segue out of newspapers to pack up that part of their life and share it with others."

Not only will the collection accept old materials, it stands ready to sort them—and even try to make sense of scribbled notes. "As long as [donors] pay to send the box to the university, somebody there will organize it and chronicle it so it can be set up, accessed, and archived, so it's not just sitting in somebody's storage locker somewhere," says Mindi Keirnan, a former Knight Ridder vice president and a member of the Friends of the NWMC.

The collection stores documents and other materials in a fireproof, temperature-controlled space. Its holdings record women's achievements and their struggle for equality in the industry. "We need to be sure that the contribution that women made is never forgotten," Keirnan says.

Writers' archives used to focus mostly on printed material, but the collection also wants e-mails, cell phone records, CDs, zip drives, flash drives, floppy disks, and digital images. It accepts letters, notebooks, photos, memos, diaries, memoirs, speeches, reports, research files, meeting minutes, programs, microfilms, and video and audio files.

The archive contains the papers of prominent women journalists including Tad Bartimus, founder of the Journalism & Women Symposium; Gloria Biggs, the first female publisher of a Gannett newspaper; Mary Paxton Keeley, the first female journalism graduate; Beverly Kees, the first female executive editor in the now-defunct Knight Ridder chain; Geneva Overholser, former *Des Moines Register* editor and director of the School of Journalism at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication; and Theo Wilson, who covered the Pentagon Papers and Patty Hearst trials for *New York's Daily News*.

The Friends of the NWMC are reaching out to fellow journalists in hopes of finding more donors. "Each of us is using our own personal Rolodexes to make people aware of the project," says Vivian Vahlberg, who was elected the first female president of the National Press Club in 1982. "We've already had some good success, and we've gotten a great response from people who think the project is very fascinating."

The collection has discovered that many women don't realize their materials are worth archiving. Wilson explains that seemingly ordinary documents and memos provide an authentic look at women and the media.

"Maybe people think only presidents have materials that are worth a library; that's just not true," Wilson says. "Women in journalism live in worlds where they help us see what the future is bringing us and help us see what the past has been like."

She hopes women of all ages will donate. This is not "a collection for people at the end of their career," she says, but a "living, breathing testimony" to women in the industry. ■

"Don't Empty that Inbox," American Journalism Review, *April/May 2009.*

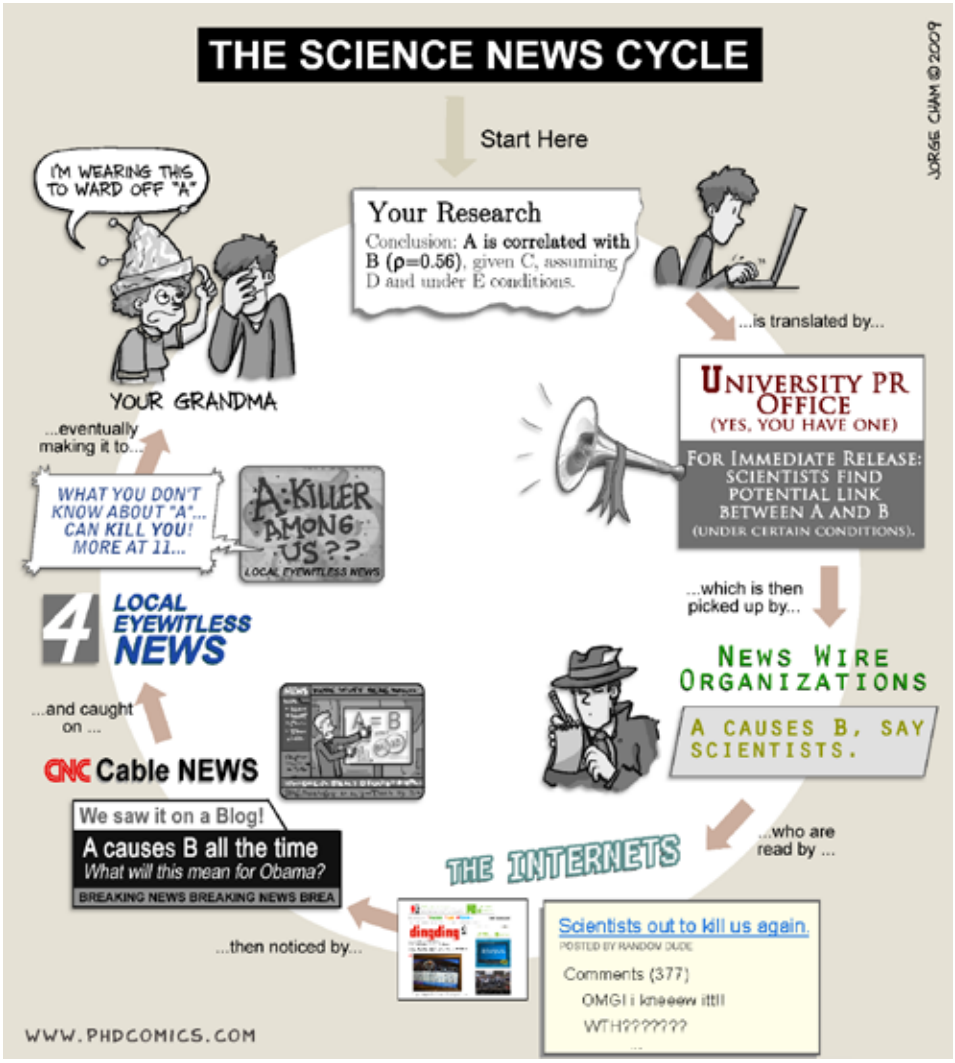
LINDSAY GSELL IS AN *AMERICAN JOURNALISM REVIEW* EDITORIAL ASSISTANT.

Facebook and Procrastination

Runaway Coverage Mistakes Correlation for Causation

BY EARLE HOLLAND

From the start, we knew that the news release we were distributing had a chance for ample news coverage. After all, it involved the ubiquitous "social media" and student grades, either of which is all-but-guaranteed to garner attention. ■ What we didn't figure was how badly most of the conventional news media would muck up the story in the process. Ultimately, the entire episode offers a good lesson in the inherent risks of reporters' cavalierly covering the social sciences, as well as the risks that young researchers can face in dealing with the news media.



It began in March when our communications office at Ohio State University spotted a poster session by one of the school's grad students titled "A Description of Facebook Use and Academic Performance Among Undergraduate and Graduate Students." It was one of hundreds of papers scheduled to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in April, and an obvious candidate for a press release.

Research on one of the most popular social media engines was a strong news hook. So was any connection with student grades. And from our perspective, as writers charged with explaining ongoing university research, the fact that it arose from education as a discipline, and that it was work by a graduate student, made it even more appealing. (Any chance to tie research by students to their ongoing education reinforces the oft-forgotten relationship between the two at major universities.) Our resulting story included these key points:

- It was a pilot study with a small, but adequate, population
- It looked at Facebook use among undergraduate and graduate students in the sample and how much they said they studied
- It looked at the representative grade point averages (GPAs) of the students
- It looked for any correlation between Facebook use and GPAs, but suggested no causality
- It strongly recommended additional research

CARTOON COURTESY OF JORGE CHAM © 2009

Our office produces a lot of stories on social science research. We're very careful to narrowly report the findings and avoid extrapolations or conjecture beyond what the data provides. After the Facebook study's author, Aryn Karpinski, reviewed the draft of our press release [written by Jeff Grabmeier] and deemed it accurate, we distributed the story through both EurekAlert! and Newswise, two of the largest distributors of research news releases to the media. It was embargoed until April 16 to coincide with Karpinski's presentation at the educational research conference.

But that weekend, the *Sunday Times* of London ran an article about the research that carried the following statements:

> *Research finds the website [Facebook] is damaging students' academic performance. … Facebook users … are more likely to perform poorly in exams, according to new research. … The majority of students who use Facebook every day are underachieving by as much as an entire grade compared with those who shun the site."*

Sadly, the research showed no such thing.

The *Times* reporter wrote that he had talked with Karpinski and she'd verified the story the newspaper published. Karpinski says she saw a version of the story, but what the *Times* printed wasn't it. And while the paper did not technically break the embargo (the reporter said he didn't get his information from any of the embargoed material), its story, printed several days before Karpinki's presentation, set in motion a frantic race among the rest of the news media to catch up, and most of them used the exaggerated *Times* story as their baseline.

By Wednesday of that week, before the research was presented, Google News was showing hundreds of news stories from media around the world on the study. Many of those reports were wrong as well. Karpinski was overwhelmed with requests for interviews, most of which she granted—but neither her explanations to reporters nor her presentation (which we posted online after the embargo was broken) seemed to make much difference.

The crux of the problem centered on reporters' apparent ignorance of the terms "correlation" and "causation," two relatively common technical research terms that are as different as night and day.

Karpinski's study showed that students who described themselves as Facebook users reported studying less and having lower GPAs than students who didn't use Facebook. The Facebook users also said they believed, in their cases, there was no connection between their poorer academic performance and the social media engine.

So the study simply pointed to an apparent relationship between students' lower grades and less time spent studying, and their Facebook use. It did not say that latter caused the former. As one writer very nicely explained, "Facebook may be a symptom of a big procrastination habit, not a cause."

Unfortunately, most of the initial news stories didn't get that.

A few writers from major media outlets did, however, point out the faulty reporting elsewhere. A couple pieces—most notably, a *Wall Street Journal* blog post in which I was quoted—even raised reasonable questions about whether or not the pilot study should have been publicized prior to peer review in the first place. An excellent piece in *Ars Technica* discussed advantages and disadvantages of releasing such exploratory science.

With the embargo useless, Karpinski's presentation poster and our release were made available to all. Later coverage improved. Karpinski continued giving interviews and, ultimately, was pleased with a second wave of stories that ran in *USA Today* and other outlets.

But the public and some researchers, reacting to the inaccurate reporting, blamed Karpinski for releasing her preliminary results, faulting her methodology. In the online journal *First Monday*, rival researchers published their account of why weaknesses in Karpinski's research led to the media frenzy—an interesting misunderstanding of causality in its own right! Fortunately, the journal allowed Karpinski to publish a response.

What we didn't figure was how badly most of the conventional news media would muck up the story…

In the past, I've seen respected, tenured professors retreat into their warrens when faced with half this onslaught but, surprisingly, Karpinski—while understandably miffed—is philosophical about the experience. Her parents, she said, raised her to be resolute, and the episode has since netted kudos from faculty and more invitations to publish—reasonably rare positive results for a grad student.

In the end, the frenzy to be first with the news helped the media misinform the public and betrayed the essence of the research in question.

Most science reporters, and researchers, know the consequences of pushing the data too far. It's a good lesson for other journalists to learn as well. ■

"Facebook and Procrastination," Columbia Journalism Review, *The Observatory (online), posted May 8, 2009.*

Earle Holland is director of research communications at Ohio State University.

To Tweet or Not To Tweet

Social Media and the Scientific Meeting

BY ANDREW MAYNARD

Should live tweeting and blogging from scientific meetings be controlled? Back in May, Daniel MacArthur—a researcher and blogger—wrote a number of on-the-spot blogs on the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) Biology of Genomes meeting.

By all accounts a number of people were tweeting and blogging from the meeting. But Daniel had the misfortune to come under scrutiny from GenomeWeb—a web-based news service—because of his actions. As ScienceInsider reported, GenomeWeb complained to the conference organizers that Daniel was reporting from the meeting without having to abide by the rules governing professional journalists attending the conference. As a result, the rules are being changed. According to ScienceInsider, the meeting's registration form will be revised "such that all participants will agree that if they are going to blog or twitter results, they need to let CSHL know in advance and get the presenter's okay."

Judging by discussions on the web, the story has hit a nerve. More importantly, it has raised a thorny issue that really needs to be tackled as the way people communicate changes:

What's OK and what's not when you're at a scientific meeting?

As a blogger and Twitter user, as well as a regular speaker at scientific meetings, it's a question that is directly relevant to me. Reading the discussions today and talking with people on Twitter about the issue, I was forced to think a little more carefully about how I make decisions on when to tweet or blog, and when not to.

I do have my own set of rather fuzzy internal guidelines, but I've never attempted anything as formal as writing them down. However, given the rising significance of this issue, I thought it might be worth thinking through them a little more systematically.

I'm still trying to work out what the appropriate boundaries are here, so what you are getting is more my current thought processes than any definitive answers—think of it as live -blogging from my brain. As a consequence, I could well change my mind—completely—at some future date. But this is where I am at the moment.

First off, it's worth thinking about why people blog or tweet, what the purpose of scientific meetings is, and the role of the established media at these meetings.

Blogging and tweeting: Are bloggers and tweeps citizen-journalists? I don't think we are on the whole. Certainly, some people use blogs and Twitter to report on events. But many others simply use the media as a way of communicating their own thoughts, observations and reactions to others. This is not journalism.

My own stuff is a mix of expert opinion, observations on stuff that grabs my interest, and occasionally factual information that I think others will be interested in. I don't "report"—I'm not a reporter, and I couldn't hope to do it with nearly the skill of someone having the appropriate training.

There is a potential problem though when social media commentators—which is what a lot of us are I guess—are treated as reporters, and the stuff we write is judged accordingly. However, placing the same code of ethics and restrictions on bloggers and Twitter users as professional journalists makes little sense—the problem is not one of what is being written as how it is being read. Rather, new solutions are needed to the new challenges caused by social media.

Scientific meetings: Scientific meetings come in all shapes and sizes. Some are invitation only; others are open and accessible to anyone. Some are designed to hash out areas of uncertainty between experts; others to present results to a broad audience. Some are held to expose research to rigorous peer review; others to establish scientific authority. Acceptable reporting practices will undoubtedly differ from meeting to meeting. I would be very surprised if anyone thought that live-tweeting from a private meeting was acceptable. But a running commentary on a public keynote given by established expert would be a very different matter in my eyes.

Scientific meetings and the media: Once upon a time, scientific conferences were predominantly about exchanging and examining new information with your peers—at least, they were in my field of research. Reporters just weren't a part of the equation.

Now, major conferences tend to be a media-fest—with the scientific community clamoring to have their messages and stories heard by all and sundry. There's tremendous pressure to "sell" studies to the media—to work out what might appeal to a broad readership, then dress it up so it's as attractive as possible. If you don't believe me, just take a look at the press releases and media coverage surrounding something like an American Chemical Society meeting.

As a result there is a tendency—at some conferences at least—for presentations to be less about peer-to-peer review and discussion, and more about broad dissemination and promotion. In this context, people want their work to be communicated in the media—*but on their terms*. In other words, they love the media when they feel they are on control, but get antsy if they feel that control slipping.

Trying to pull this together, it seems clear that as social media stretches and challenges the established way of doing things, there's going to have to be some adjustment on both sides. I think it's fair to say that there are probably boundaries to appropriate live-tweeting and blogging that still need to be hashed out. But conference organizers and speakers also need to adapt to changing circumstances. And I don't think that this means treating citizen commentators as journalists. But I do think that, among other things, it means shedding attitudes that treat the media—social or otherwise—as something to be controlled and used, rather

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than worked in partnership with.

Which brings me to how I approach tweeting and blogging. I've live tweeted from meetings in the past, as well as blogged on meetings. I have also made conscious decisions not to comment in any form on meetings on occasions. I don't think I have got it right in every case. But I haven't had too many complaints either. So how do I determine what I do and don't do?

Here's a first stab at trying to describe my decision-making process:

In general: Irrespective of the setting, I tend to ask whether the information being presented is confidential, whether it is sensitive in any way, and whether others would benefit from reading about it on Twitter or 2020science.org. There has been at least one occasion where I decided not to live tweet from a public meeting because I thought it would embarrass the speakers unnecessarily. There have been other occasions where I have live tweeted to provide people not at the meeting a sense of what someone is saying, as they say it.

This only applies to formal presentations and public comments. Publicly commenting on private conversations is absolutely out as far as I'm concerned, and I will only write about side conversations if the person I'm talking to knows my intentions beforehand.

Invitation-only meetings: Definitely no live tweeting, and no blogging unless express permission is given.

Meetings with clearly stated reporting limitations: Generally, no live tweeting, and abide by the rules when it comes to blogging.

Expert presentation & discussion of non-peer reviewed data. If the aim of the meeting is to seriously assess and discuss someone's unpublished research, I would hesitate to live tweet. I might blog—but only if it seemed appropriate given the state and significance of the research.

Open conferences (i.e. anyone who pays can attend) where researchers are reviewing the state of knowledge, presenting published data, or clearly think they are the bees knees and everyone should know it. These I see as fair game for live tweeting and blogging—without the permission of the speaker.

Public meetings, where anyone can attend and there is no entrance fee. Open season as far as tweeting and blogging go.

I will probably modify these with time

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Adventures *in Social Media*

BY HOWARD WOLINSKY

I won't name names, but a science writer from Los Angeles asked at a sleepy Facebook group I set up, iScream Media, "Would someone who uses Twitter as a journalistic tool please explain how its use does not constitute an exercise in narcissism?" I think she eventually will eat her own words.

Twitter (which thanks to pols, Oprah, and actor Ashton Kutcher getting on the bandwagon has been dominating headlines) and its social media kin, including Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, and the like, can seem trivial at best and time-wasters at worst. Sure, they can be about what you had for breakfast. But social media doesn't have to be about whether you put maple or blueberry syrup on your pancakes.

Social media can put you on the spot when news breaks.

The most famous case occurred back in January when US Airways flight 1549 landed on the Hudson River. Twitter had the scoop. A passenger posted a photo on TwitPic—a Twitter application to upload photos—from his iPhone and wrote as caption Twitter: "There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy."

MSNC interviewed the amateur photographer a half hour later.

While on a panel on social media recently, I heard a story-behind-a-story of a *Chicago Tribune* reporter using Twitter to find people stuck in a parking lot created by a snowstorm on an Indiana highway. The reporter asked for their numbers and called them on their mobiles.

Health and science writers also are using social media to find sources and story ideas.

You can mine Twitter and Facebook for leads. You can see what people are thinking and saying—trivial or otherwise—in real time.

I used Facebook and LinkedIn, the professional network site, to throw out a net among people I knew well or vaguely to find people who had experience buying used exercise equipment for a feature in the *Chicago Tribune*. I hit pay dirt. (Bonus: People looking for freelancers have found me through LinkedIn and Facebook. Sure, they could

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have Googled me. But Facebook and Twitter was where they looked. It's where millions of people are.)

Your searches can be more active. You can scour Facebook for local support groups that can provide people with a particular condition who would be available for an interview. My health and science writing student at Medill Graduate School of Journalism at Northwestern University routinely snag interviews this way.

The students have found support groups for people, say with food allergies or diabetes, for example, through Facebook and through them found sources. One student caught up through Facebook with a Loyola University student quarantined for the H1N1 virus.

Social media can put you on the spot when news breaks.

I remember using e-mail groups back in the mid-1990s and electronic bulletin boards before that to find these sort of sources. But it could take days to find sources as I waited for permission to join a group.

Nancy Shute, a science and medical writer and blogger for *U.S. News & World Report*, recalled using listservs as sources for people with medical conditions. "This shows just how ancient I am," said Shute.

But Shute stays young with social media. I agree with her assessment: "Twitter and Facebook seem more upfront and transparent. I'm interacting with the individuals, rather than lurking. They can see me, and hear my 'voice.' I've gotten none of the 'Why is a journalist on this listserv' comments that inevitably pop up when I post on listservs, even if I ask the moderator to post saying it's OK. Maybe I'm just seduced by the new interfaces, but it does seem to be a more interactive, personal form."

My students use Facebook to find people ready to talk in a matter of hours or minutes—these are social media after all, reaching people willing to be sociable and talk.

Even doctors are on Facebook.

Dawn Reiss, Chicago freelance, was researching a story about a new type of brain aneurysm surgery. She was unable to get the doctor to respond, having left messages on both his landline and mobile phones.

But she found surgeon Demetrius Lopes in Facebook. Lopes had a public page and—though Reiss wasn't a Facebook "friend"—she was able to send him a message, asking for more details and to arrange a photograph for an article for the *Tribune*.

She said, "Within 30 minutes Dr. Lopes had called my cell phone. I was then able to do an in-depth pre-surgery interview."

Facebook even helped Reiss report on the surgery when the manufacturer of new gear banned all reporters.

"I was able to access details by not only doing in-person interviews with the patient after the surgery, but by asking Dr. Lopes questions over Facebook," she said.

Dr. Lopes updates his Facebook site with surgery details (such as the time when an artery stent is placed.) This helped Reiss create a timeline in her story.

"When I needed to talk to Dr. Lopes in person, he sent me a message over Facebook that said 'Call me now' since he linked the site to his cell phone. This also helped since cell reception can be spotty at best in hospitals. Dr. Lopes was able to move to an area that had good cell reception so we could have a quickly expedited phone conversation."

Flickr is a hugely popular photo-sharing website. My students in a pinch pick up photos to run—legally and for free—with their stories at Flickr.

Cathy Dold, a Boulder, Colo. freelancer, recently edited a newsletter for the U.S. Forest Service. "I had no budget for photos, so I started researching online. I found some terrific photos on Flickr, and most everyone was happy to give me permission to use them for no fee," she said.

If your mother says she loves you, Google her.

But Dold worried whether species were correctly identified by the photographers, especially since she was looking for a photo of a specific beetle rather than scenics. She found just what she needed at **www.bugwood.org** and **www.forestryimages.org**, photo-sharing sites similar to Flickr frequented by natural resource professionals. "So I had a lot more faith in their ability to correctly identify species," she said. "And all photos were approved by my clients as well."

Shute, a social media tsunami, finds YouTube, the Google-owned video-sharing website, comes in handy. "Search 'autism' and you'll find many people who have posted personal videos about what it's like to live with autism. I have found that particularly useful for a story I'm working on about teenagers and young adults with autism," she said. "I also used YouTube for research in the Adderall/caffeine story, though the sources I quoted all came from Facebook and other reporting.

"And YouTube taught me how to blow up a bathtub with cesium and water (**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85Q1ahrUgm8**). What more could a girl ask?"

Some skeptics worry about the veracity of sources found through social media. How do we know with whom we are speaking? But reporters always have this problem, whether first contact is made via man/woman-on-the-street interview, a phone call, or an e-mail. You always have to check things out.

Shute said: "I verify sources by requiring that I call them and ask for an address, landline, and other information that I can use to verify their existence." She uses Google to check them out.

Can we update the old City News Bureau maxim: "If your mother says she loves you, Google her."

Shute added: "People under 30 have so much information about themselves online, it's usually pretty simple. And I have to get parental permission to quote anyone under 18, which means I call the parents myself.

"One interesting aspect is that people who brag about bad behavior online often will happily go through the interview process, but back out right before publication. I'm fine with that (she says, tearing hair at loss of boffo quote), given that no one should impugn their reputation lightly. But the same bad behavior is on the Internet for employers, parents, and friends to see. Maybe they know their parents read *U.S. News*?" ■

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF CAROL KERR GRAPHIC DESIGN

The Science Prize: *Innovation or Stealth Advertising?*

BY ROBERT LEE HOTZ

Are we impatient with NASA? Google offers $30 million in prizes for a better lunar lander. Do we like solving practical puzzles? InnoCentive Inc. has posted hundreds of lucrative research contests, offering cash prizes up to $1 million for problems in industrial chemistry, remote sensing, plant genetics, and dozens of other technical disciplines. Perhaps we crave guilt-free fried chicken. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals offers a $1 million prize for the first to create test-tube poultry tissue that can be safely served for dinner.

Call it crowd-sourcing; call it open innovation; call it behavioral economics and applied psychology; it's a prescription for progress that is transforming philanthropy. In fields from manned spaceflight to the genetics of aging, prizes may soon rival traditional research grants as a spur to innovation. "We see a renaissance in the use of prizes to solve problems," says Tony Goland, a partner at McKinsey & Co. which recently analyzed trends in prize philanthropy.

Critics, though, dismiss the newest trend in prize-giving as a form of advertising that masquerades as public service—and a clever ploy to attract top research talent at a discount.

Since 2000, private foundations and corporations have launched more than 60 major prizes, totaling $250 million in new award money, most of it focused on science, medicine, environment, and technology, the McKinsey study found.

"There certainly are many, many more prizes now than a decade ago," says Daniel Socolow, director of the MacArthur Foundation's Fellows Program, which every year awards $500,000 "genius" grants to about two dozen promising people in the arts, sciences, and humanities.

All told, more than 30,000 significant prizes are awarded annually, collectively worth $1 billion dollars. The prize economy has rarely been more rewarding. The total value of purses from the 219 largest prizes has tripled in the past 10 years, the McKinsey analysts reported.

Moreover, three-quarters of the new prize money is for awards designed to solve specific problems, whether it is a knotty question of protein chemistry leading to an AIDS vaccine, as in the $150,000 International Aids Vaccine Initiative Challenge, or for a more reliable way to weld plastic pipe, as in InnoCentive's $100,000 Challenge #8244892.

For private philanthropists, it's a way to use charitable giving to force a breakthrough. The Virgin Earth Challenge, for example, promises $25 million to the first among us who can cheaply remove a billion tons of greenhouse gases from the air every year. The Prize4Life contest offers up to $8.5 million for breakthroughs leading to a treatment for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

In growing numbers, corporate sponsors are embracing the prize challenge as a safe, inexpensive way to farm out product research, at a time when tight credit and business cutbacks have slowed innovation. Venture-capital investments have dropped by almost half since last year, reaching the lowest level since 1997, the National Venture Capital Association recently reported. "Here is a mechanism for off-balance-sheet risk-taking," says Peter Diamandis, founder of the X Prize Foundation. "A corporation can put up a prize that is bold and audacious with very little downside. You only pay the winner. It is a fixed-price innovation."

Netflix, for example, now offers a $1 million prize to the person who measurably improves its computerized movie recommendations. At least 34,000 people are competing. WellPoint Inc. is organizing a $10 million prize for a better health-care system.

Spending about $150 billion on research and development this year, the federal government dwarfs such efforts. It underwrites most basic science through competitive grants

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ROBERT LEE HOTZ WRITES THE SCIENCE JOURNAL COLUMN FOR THE *WALL STREET JOURNAL*.

Merck Published Fake Journal

BY BOB GRANT

Merck paid an undisclosed sum to Elsevier to produce several volumes of a publication that had the look of a peer-reviewed medical journal, but contained only reprinted or summarized articles—most of which presented favorable to Merck products—that appeared to act solely as marketing tools with no disclosure of company sponsorship.

"I've seen no shortage of creativity emanating from the marketing departments of drug companies," Peter Lurie, deputy director of the public health research group at the consumer advocacy nonprofit Public Citizen, said after reviewing two issues of the publication obtained by *The Scientist*. "But even for someone as jaded as me, this is a new wrinkle."

The *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine*, which was published by Exerpta Medica, a division of scientific publishing juggernaut Elsevier, is not indexed in the MEDLINE database and has no website (not even a defunct one). *The Scientist* obtained two issues of the journal: Volume 2, Issues 1 and 2, both dated 2003. The issues contained little in the way of advertisements apart from ads for Fosamax, a Merck drug for osteoporosis, and Vioxx.

BOB GRANT IS A STAFF WRITER FOR *THE SCIENTIST*.

The claim that Merck had created a journal out of whole cloth to serve as a marketing tool was first reported by *The Australian*. It came to light in the context of a civil suit filed by Graeme Peterson, who suffered a heart attack in 2003 while on Vioxx, against Merck and its Australian subsidiary, Merck, Sharp & Dohme Australia (MSDA).

In testimony provided at trial, which was obtained by *The Scientist*, George Jelinek, an Australian physician and long-time member of the World Association of Medical Editors, reviewed four issues of the journal that were published from 2003 to 2004. An "average reader" (presumably a doctor) could easily mistake the publication

An "average reader"…could easily mistake the publication for a "genuine" peer-reviewed medical journal…

for a "genuine" peer reviewed medical journal, he said in his testimony. "Only close inspection of the journals, along with knowledge of medical journals and publishing conventions, enabled me to determine that the journal was not, in fact, a peer-reviewed medical journal, but instead a marketing publication for MSD[A]."

He also stated that four of the 21 articles featured in the first issue he reviewed referred to Fosamax. In the second issue, nine of the 29 articles related to Vioxx and another 12 to Fosamax. All of these articles presented positive conclusions regarding the MSDA drugs. "I can understand why a pharmaceutical company would collect a number of research papers with results favorable to their products and make these available to doctors," Jelinek said at the trial. "This is straightforward marketing."

Jelinek also pointed out several "review" articles that only cited one or two references. He described one of these articles as "simply a summary of an already published article," and noted that they were authored by "B&J Editorial."

"It appears that 'B&J' (presumably *Bone and Joint*) refers to the journal, and B&J editorial presumably to the publishers or owners as there is no editor of the journal," Jelinek said in his testimony. "This is a subtle attribution, and many readers may not realize that the paper was written by the owners or publishers of the journal, presuming that is who would write under the heading of 'editorial'."

Lurie, in examining two of the issues for *The Scientist*, agreed that one particularly strange element of the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* is that it contains "review" articles that cite just one or two references. "I've never seen anything quite like this," he said. "Reviews are usually swimming in references." For example, one article on osteoporosis labeled above the title as a "meta-analysis" cites two references—one itself a meta-analysis. "To the jaundiced eye, [the journal] might be detected for what it is: marketing," he said. "Many doctors would fail to identify that and might be influenced by what they read."

Lurie noted that the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* is akin to other publishing strategies employed by drug companies; paying for supplements to existing journals or publishing compilations of original research articles that tend to lack scientific rigor (so-called "throwaways"). "It's kissing cousin to two other tricks that the [drug] companies pull."

In response to questions about the publication posed by *The Scientist*, an MSDA spokesperson wrote in an e-mail: "MSDA understood that Elsevier envisaged the complimentary publication would draw on the vast resources of Elsevier, publishers of many leading peer-reviewed journals including *The Lancet, Bone, Joint Bone Spine* and others, to deliver novel and timely full-text articles and abstracts to physicians." Many of the articles appearing in the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* were in fact reprints or summaries of studies that originally appeared in other Elsevier journals.

A spokesperson for Elsevier, however, told *The Scientist*, "I wish there was greater disclosure that it was a sponsored journal." Disclosure of Merck's funding of the journal was not mentioned anywhere in the copies of issues obtained by *The Scientist*.

Elsevier acknowledged that Merck had sponsored the publication, but did not disclose the amount the drug company paid. In a statement e-mailed to *The Scientist*, Elsevier said that the company "does not today consider a compilation of reprinted articles a 'journal'."

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E-books Piracy and Potential

BY RUTH WINTER

In the very near future, many of you will either write original E-books or have one of your print books' E-rights exploited by a publisher. An E-book is an electronic version of a traditional print book that can be read by using a personal computer, or an E-Book reader and now even an iPhone. I have mixed emotions about E-books. For my last four books, the publisher retained the digital rights. A reader's cost for my E-book versions is $9.99 compared to $14 to $27 for the paperbacks. When I was first approached for granting E-book rights—before E-books even existed—the publishers offered a 50 percent split—the same as the rights for paperbacks. Now, the publishers are offering 5 to 10 percent.

E-book rights and payments are in flux and you or your agent have to really negotiate. On the other hand, if you want to write an original E-book, you can do it with some help from a knowledgeable computer friend or a commercial company. There is, I heard, a program that will let you convert your print book to an e-book yourself. It may not be on the market yet.

You don't even need and editor or a publisher if you produce an original E-book but you do have to publicize your work. Distribution, which was always a problem for self-publishers, is no longer a barrier. There are inexpensive or free ways to sell you book on the Internet.

E-book rights and payments are in flux and you or your agent have to really negotiate.

The aspect that worries me most about E-book, however, is the copyright. There are already pirate sites available to steal your digitalized work. If you have a hot seller, they may even scan it or copy it by hand on a computer. In fact, any smart kid or evil computer interloper can hack into an e-book and distribute it for free or for a small cost. It is the same situation that happened to song writers. You, of course, will not get any money, just as the song writers royalties disappeared.

Stephen King, who is a millionaire from his many bestselling books, is one of the most digitally hacked writers. He has said he doesn't have the time to chase book pirates.

On the other hand, some very legitimate sites are offering free E-books. Wikibooks, the sister of the free Wikipedia Encyclopedia, went online July 10, 2003. Wikibooks is a collection of open-content textbooks anyone, including you, can edit by clicking on the edit the page link that appears near the top of each Wikibooks' module. Contributors maintain the property rights to their

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RUTH WINTER IS THE AUTHOR OF 34 POPULAR HEALTH BOOKS AND REGULARLY CONTRIBUTES HEALTH AND SCIENCE STORIES TO MAJOR NATIONAL MAGAZINES.

Science-less in Seattle

By Chris Mooney

To hear Tom Paulson tell it, his career in science journalism and its environs has been a long saga of "pissing people off." During the 1980s, for instance, Paulson was working in public affairs at the University of California-Berkeley, where it fell to him to publicize the work of controversial biochemist Bruce Ames, who argues that natural carcinogens can be just as dangerous as synthetic ones. Paulson thought that was "ridiculous," and therefore instructed a roomful of journalists about how they might "poke holes" in Ames' claims. And when nobody took him up on the suggestion, Paulson went one better; He wrote a freelance article for the Sierra Club's magazine debunking Ames and criticizing the journalists who'd failed to cover him with adequate skepticism. As a publicist, he had gone completely rogue.

Tom Paulson, formerly of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

"Everybody got mad at me, and they tried to fire me, but they couldn't, because I was on a fellowship," remembers Paulson. But the longtime dean of science writers, David Perlman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, loved it. "Never do PR," he advised Paulson. "Always be a journalist."

Seattle is fortunate that for 22 years, from 1987 to 2009, this irreverent troublemaker of a reporter went un-fired at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, where he covered health and science and was for many years responsible for putting out the paper's weekly science page. During that time, Paulson took the lead on a number of important stories, including raising awareness about Seattle's serious earthquake risk (now common knowledge, but barely recognized a few decades ago) and covering the 1993 Jack-in-the-Box E. coli outbreak, in which three children died in the Pacific Northwest and 450 were sickened. In the aftermath, Paulson tailed CDC investigators as they tried to figure out how the bad meat got into the system.

Seattle is a very important research hub… Yet Paulson found it harder and harder to sneak real science into the newspaper.

"I traveled all around the country, went to meatpacking plants, got chased off by guys with guns," he remembers. "It was sort of breaking-news detective science, and I was trying to explain to people how with a bug like this, we wouldn't have known about it if not for a public surveillance system." In the face of more recent food safety scares involving tomatoes and peanut products, as well as the current influenza outbreak, this sort of reporting is critical for protecting public safety and informing better health policies.

Over time, however, Paulson noticed a change at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. His editors, he says, grew less interested in stories that were "too complicated or in depth." Paulson wanted to really dig into covering the Seattle-based Gates Foundation and its work on global health, but he was instead pushed into writing what he labels "entertainment science" stories: The science of chocolate; back-in-time research. That kind of thing.

"Everything was being driven by web hits," Paulson observes. "And if they didn't think a story was going to get a lot of web hits, they didn't want me to write about it."

Seattle is a very important research hub, with scientists at the top of their fields in a number of areas, such as the study of the genome. The region is also, of course, a hub for numerous software, microchip, and biotech companies, as well the aerospace industry. Yet Paulson found it harder and harder to sneak real science into the newspaper.

Many of us know what happened next: In March of this year, Seattle went from a two paper to a one paper town as the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* put out its final print edition and went web-only. It is now the equivalent of a news aggregator site without much original journalism. Paulson lost his job, as did many other journalists. He is currently on a one-year severance as he casts about considering what to do next.

When I hung out with him recently for two days in Seattle—Paulson is head of the Northwest Science Writers' Association, one of the most active such local groups in the country, which had me out to speak—we drank "paradigm shift" martinis at the restaurant Andaluca—and he explained to me his plan—or rather, his plans. He has some intriguing ideas, not least of which is a book proposal whose contents I won't reveal. He has also thought about trying to start a U.S. "science media center," parallel to those that exist in the UK and Australia, to help put nonspecialist journalists in touch with scientific sources and stories. Meanwhile, he has of course snapped up a lot of freelance writing assignments.

But at the same time, Paulson is also going back to doing the kind of work he did long before he was a science writer or even a publicist: part-time carpentry and building contracting. When I chased him down to chat for this column, he was out procuring materials for a job. Paulson doesn't dislike the work—a visit to his home in Seattle, much of which he designed and built, shows that he's a committed tinkerer. But still, there can be little doubt that something serious has been lost

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Chris Mooney is contributing editor to *Science Progress* and author of several books, including *The Republican War on Science* and the forthcoming *Unscientific America: How Scientific Illiteracy Threatens Our Future*, co-authored by Sheril Kirshenbaum. He and Kirshenbaum blog at "The Intersection."

Tax Implication of Bartering

by Lynne Friedmann

Times being what they are, freelance writers could find themselves (as I was recently) approached by clients that propose compensation in consumer merchandise instead of cash. Or, a nonprofit willing to convey donor status for services in lieu of a financial donation.

I asked tax columnist Julian Block to shed some light on the tax implications of this kind of bartering.

"This is worthwhile only if it's worthwhile to you to have the merchandise or equipment without outlaying money," Block said. "But what you receive is reportable income and subject to self-employment tax, just the same as if you received a check."

Suppose you run a writing workshop for volunteers of a nonprofit organization in exchange for recognition as a donor.

"While you're not entitled to a charitable deduction for your time, you are entitled to any travel and/or out-of-pocket expenses incurred to do this good deed," according to Block. "Also, if you do the workshop as a way to promote yourself for possible future business you could legitimately claim this on Schedule C as an advertising/promotion expense which will reduce the amount of income for self-employment tax."

Here are other considerations about bartering (IRS Tax Tip 2009-58):

- **Barter Income** Barter dollars or trade dollars are identical to real dollars for tax reporting. If you conduct any direct barter—barter for another's products or services—you will have to report the fair market value of the products or services you received on your tax return.
- **Taxes** Income from bartering is taxable in the year it is performed. You may be subject to liabilities for income tax, self-employment tax, employment tax, or excise tax. Your barter activities may result in ordinary business income, capital gains or capital losses, or you may have a nondeductible personal loss.
- **Reporting** The rules for reporting barter transactions may vary depending on which form of bartering takes place. Generally, you report this type of business income on Form 1040, Schedule C Profit or Loss from Business, or other business returns such as Form 1065 for Partnerships, Form 1120 for Corporations, or Form 1120-S for Small Business Corporations.

For more information type "barter" in the search box on the IRS.gov homepage (http://www.irs.gov). ■

Lynne Friedmann is editor of *ScienceWriters*.

Educate Yourself for Tax Planning

by Julian Block

Want to lose less to the IRS? Keeping good records is the key to mapping out strategies that you can use year after year to trim taxes. But organizing that ever-growing accumulation of records in your desk drawers, closets, and other storage spaces is just the first step for effective tax planning.

Educating yourself on the current tax opportunities and pitfalls can be an important second step. Ideally, you should be equipped to weigh the tax consequences before you make decisions on whether to invest, borrow, or spend.

In these increasingly tough times, it is more vital than ever that you assume greater responsibility for your financial future. You ought not to rely exclusively on paid advisers to keep on top of tax-law changes or other legislation that might make it necessary to revise your plans. At the very least, you should be knowledgeable enough to raise good questions and evaluate answers when you deal with a professional. The informed client gets the best advice.

On a personal note, JFK was president when I first passed a bar exam. Nine presidents later, I still am constantly contacted by individuals seeking to disentangle themselves from problems created by their blind reliance on flawed advice from highly-paid professionals. That is why I recommend you sign up for low-cost adult education courses on taxes, investing, and other aspects of personal finance.

You can pick from among an array of continuing education courses tailored to your interest that are available at high schools, community colleges, and the like and are typically taught by attorneys, CPAs, and financial planners, individuals with hands-on experience who are able to provide helpful, unbiased advice.

What is particularly advantageous is that the courses make it possible for you to pick the brains of qualified instructors at a fraction of what it would otherwise cost to meet them on a one-to-one basis.

An example: In my near-New-York-City neck of the woods, the going hourly rate for tax lawyers commonly is several hundred dollars and up, whereas students generally pay about $40 at the adult ed places that offer my two-hour sessions on narrowly focused topics like how to take maximum advantage of changed rules for home sales.

Another decided advantage is that you and your fellow students get to ask questions about significant events in your financial lives. Some of the queries regularly fielded by me and my fellow instructors:

TAX continued on page 29

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

BOOKS
BY AND FOR MEMBERS

Ruth Winter
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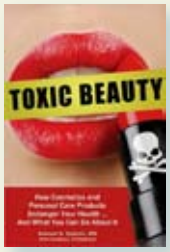
Send material about new books

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

Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Endanger Your Health—And What You Can Do About It **by Samuel S. Epstein, M.D., D. Path, D.T.M&H (NASW) co-authored by Randall Fitzgerald, published by Ben Bella Books**



Epstein is professor emeritus of environmental and occupational medicine at the School of Public Health, University of Illinois at Chicago, and chairman of the non-profit Cancer Prevention Coalition. He provides a comprehensive, documented scientific analysis of the wide range of toxic ingredients in cosmetics and personal care products which he maintains continues to be ignored by the Food & Drug Administration. These include products for infants and children, women, beauty and nail salons, sun worshippers, and youth seekers. In addition to citing these dangers, he gives recommendations for reforming the cosmetics and personal-care product industries with particular reference to products based on safe synthetic ingredients and certified organic products. "We are all playing Russian roulette with toxic-laden cosmetics and personal-care products that we apply to our skin and to the skin of our infants and children, everyday," warns the author. *Toxic Beauty* also informs readers on the growing availability of safe products. The foreword to the book is contributed by Quentin D. Young, M.D., chairman, Health and Medicine Policy Research Group, Chicago, and past president of the American Public Health Association. ■ *Press contact is Jennifer Canzoneri at jennifer@benbellabooks.com or 214-750-3600.*

The Day We Found the Universe **by Marcia Bartusiak (NASW), published by Random House**

Bartusiak, a visiting professor of writing at MIT Graduate Science Writing Program, describes how on Jan. 1, 1925, Edwin Hubble announced findings that ultimately established that our universe was a thousand trillion times larger than previously believed and filled with myriad galaxies like our own. It was a realization, Bartusiak says, that reshaped how humans understood their place in the cosmos. Raised in Missouri, in a solid middle-class household, Hubble yearned to be singular and distinct. A graduate of the University of Chicago, he went to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar where he completely reinvented himself: adopting a British accent that he maintained for the rest of his life, dressing like a dandy, and adding dubious credentials to his resume. Hubble married into a rich Los Angeles family and preferred to socialize with Hollywood actors and writers rather than astronomy colleagues. One astronomer called Hubble a stuffed shirt. The *Washington Post* said that "Bartusiak's intelligent and engaging book may well become the standard popular account of this interesting man." The timing of the book coincides with the recent dramatic repair of the Hubble Telescope. ■ *The book's publicist is Sarah Gelman at sgelman@randomhouse.com and 212-572-2799. Bartusiak can be reached at www.marciabartusiak.com or bar2siak@mit.edu.*

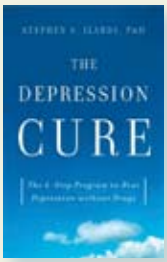
The Vegan Monologues **by Ben Shaberman (NASW), published by Apprentice House**

There's nothing funny about being vegan, unless you are science writer-humorist Shaberman. His book includes dog chases, fornicating grasshoppers, and chicken-stock sabotage. He explores the lighter side of the meat-free lifestyle. Shaberman's reflections will, he says, put a smile on the faces of vegans and omnivores alike. His essays have appeared in the *Washington Post, Chicago Tribune*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *Vegetarian Times*, *VegNews*, and a variety of other publications. His commentaries have also been carried by NPR's "Morning Edition" as well as NPR in Baltimore and Des Moines. ■ *The book's publisher, Apprentice House, is affiliated with Loyola College of Maryland. Shaberman is available at benshaberman@aol.com or 410-499-9158.*

Healing Through Exercise: A New Way to Prevent and Overcome Illness—and Lengthen Your Life **by Jorg Blech, published by Da Capo Lifelong Books**

Blech, a the U.S.-based correspondent for *Der Spiegel*, notes that 60 percent of the world's population is described as sedentary and treatment for sedentary citizens in the United States alone costs $75 billion dollars a year. He builds the case for exercise with examples ranging from President Eisenhower's heart treatment to studies conducted by NASA, dismantling old preconceptions about bed rest along the way. The core of the book points to new research in neuroscience linking exercise to brain-cell growth, Alzheimer's prevention, and the treatment of psychological mood disorders, including depression, anxiety, and ADHD. ■ *The press representative is Lissa Warren at lissa.warren@persusbooks.com or 617-252-5212.*

The Depression Cure: The 6-Step Program to Beat Depression without Drugs **by Stephen S. Ilardi, Ph.D., published by Da Capo Press Lifelong Books**



Depression rates have skyrocketed: approximately one in four Americans will suffer from major depression at some point in their lives, according to Ilardi, associate professor psychology at the University of Kansas. Inspired by the extraordinary resilience of aboriginal groups like the Kalluli of Papua New Guinea who rarely suffer from depression, Ilardi's book prescribes an easy-to-follow, clinically proven program that harks back to what our bodies were originally made for—and need. He maintains his program has delivered results in people who have failed to respond to traditional medications. ■ *The press representative is Lissa Warren at lissa.warren@persusbooks.com or 617-252-5212.*

Science Under Siege:Defending Science, Exposing Pseudoscience Edited **by Kendrick Frazier (NASW) published by Prometheus Books**

For more than 30 years, *The Skeptical Inquirer* has been the leading voice for reliable scientific examination of the paranormal and other questionable claims popularized by the media and mass culture. In this new collection of outstanding recent articles, Editor Kendrick Frazier has selected topics of current interest. Among the highlights are:

■ "A Skeptical Look at September 11th" which prompted a drove of responses (many angry) and was selected by Richard Dawkins for the Best Science and Nature Writing of 2003.
■ Carl Sagan's final question-and-answer piece on the topic of science and skeptical inquiry.
■ Ann Druyan's beautifully expressed "Science, Religion, Wonder, and Awe."
■ NASA scientist Stuart Jordan's excellent appraisal of the scientific evidence for global warming, which prompted much critical response and led to another follow-up article.
■ Five articles on the evolution vs. intelligent design controversy
■ Two physicians' articles that strongly defend the value of vaccinations and critique the anti-vaccination movement
■ *Frazier of Albuquerque, NM, can be reached at kenfrazier@cs.com or 50509 828-1958. The press contact is Jill Maxick at (800)-853-7545 or jmaxick@prometheusbooks.com*

Nutrition At Your Fingertips **by Elisa Zied, MS, RD, CDN, published by Alpha Books/Penguin**

Each day, consumers hear so much conflicting information about basic nutrition which makes it next to impossible to know what's fact and what's fiction. Zied, an award-winning registered dietitian and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, book that not only cuts through the clutter of nutrition misinformation, but provides readers with a comprehensive source for anything and everything about nutrition. She provides definitions to common and not-so-common nutrition terms including high fructose corn syrup, complex carbohydrates, and interesterified fats. Although readers can read the book cover to cover, the book is designed for those who want to quickly look up a fact or other specific information. ■ *For more information, contact at elisa@elisazied.com or go to www.elisazied.com. The press representative for the book is Gardi Wilks at gardiwilkspr.com or 708-366-8389.*

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

President's Letter

To-Do List

It's hard for me to believe that I'm halfway through my first year as president. So many things are still on my wish list to accomplish for our organization.

During our weekly phone discussions, Executive Director Tinsley Davis and I run through a task list, which helps us keep track of the status of various board and administrative projects. Here's a quick update on some of the board's recent activities and progress on new initiatives:

■ ***Regional Meetings***. You will read the details elsewhere in this issue (see page 1), but I wanted to thank tireless and creative board member Robin Marantz Henig for kicking off our experiments with regional meetings. In May, she created an innovative and fun afternoon that served to probe the interfaces of science and art in New York. Nancy Shute, who is vice president and chair of the workshops committee, is looking into a future regional meeting or meetings that will provide members with an opportunity for technology training.

...a set of guidelines (will) help future NASW leaders decide whether a particular idea or opportunity fits into our organization's mission and capabilities.

■ ***Administrative Progress***. We held a vote to address the timing of the elections for the officers and board at large (see election recap at right).

■ ***Website Functionality***. Led by Co-chairs Kelli Whitlock-Burton and Terry Devitt, the Internet committee is looking into revising and improving our **www.nasw.org** offerings. They have been brainstorming ideas and will be planning next steps.

■ ***Diversity Outreach***. Board member Vikki Valentine is leading the charge on getting representation at the 20th Annual AAJA Convention (Asian American Journalists Association), in August, in Boston.

■ ***Member Benefits***. With Tinsley Davis, board members Peggy Girshman and Beryl Benderly are creating new grants for members to get additional training. The board is also looking into other ideas, so stay tuned. Authors Coalition dollars, which Beryl and retired Executive Director Diane McGurgan have so long nurtured, serve as a source of funds. In another important area, grievance committee members Ellen Ruppell Shell, Dan Ferber, and Robin Marantz Henig continue to bring in the bucks for members from lax publishers.

■ ***Board Transparency***. Cheers to Ron Winslow, NASW secretary, and our committee and liaison correspondents, for working to provide monthly communications of board pursuits and other news to the members via the mailing list and on the website.

■ ***Operational Guidelines***. Last but not least: As I mentioned in my first president's letter at the beginning of the year, I think our organization would benefit from having a framework to help guide its future decision-making. We have been reactive rather than proactive about our planning in the past. I'm not inclined to be hard on us for not being "professional"—after all, we're a bunch of volunteers—but I'm glad we're working on this matter now.

Using the constitution as our foundation and guide, the board members have begun discussing a set of guidelines that will help future NASW leaders decide whether a particular idea or opportunity fits into our organization's mission and capabilities. The guidelines are based on brainstorming about what the constitution's paragraph defining the "purpose of the organization" means in terms of activities. I have drafted for the board's review and comment a set of statements that captures these activities in terms of operational guidelines. I will share them in the next president's letter, once the board has had a chance to mull these further to make sure I haven't missed anything or my logic isn't flawed in any way.

I'm very grateful to our wonderful volunteers, and am pleased by our progress. As you can see, we have a lot to do. If any of these projects sounds interesting to you, please don't hesitate to contact the committee heads or board liaisons to find out how to lend a hand. ■

NASW Constitutional Amendment Approved

By an electronic vote tally of 333 yes votes and three no votes, the following amendment to the NASW constitution has been approved by the membership:

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

DICHRISTINA PHOTO COURTESY OF SELINA GEROSA; DAVIS PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK D. COHEN

ScienceWriters 2009 Workshop Preview

BY NANCY SHUTE

Time for us to create the future of science writing! That's the focus of the ScienceWriters 2009 workshop agenda. NASW members proposed more than 30 sessions, and the workshop committee volunteers refined that to 12 nutrient-rich offerings that are focused on helping science writers make the most of the radical changes underway in the media while continuing longtime NASW favorites such as the pitch slam, running a science writing business, and the networking lunch.

New features this year include a morning plenary: Thriving in a Time of Change. We're in the process of recruiting a speaker with a deep understanding of new opportunities in the media landscape. Also new is "Forecasting the Future of Science Writing," a collaborative game led by David Harris and Miriam Boon, that will engage workshop participants in brainstorming on new possibilities. Also new: four hands-on sessions focusing on multimedia skills, including social media, web writing and SEO optimization, using visuals online, and a 90-minute law school for writers. Wednesday's field trip lineup will include a day-long multimedia workshop, organized by Peggy Girshman.

Workshop sessions will provide expert information and resources that you can use to build your science writing practice, including starting an online magazine, successful investigative science journalism, pitching science to nonscience publications, the art of the interview, and the secret life of social media.

None of this would be possible without the initiative of the many NASW members who volunteered to propose and organize sessions. You are heroes! And thanks, too, to the committee volunteers, who put many hours into debating what mix would bring the most value to the most NASW members. That debate got heated: who knew that podcasts have passionate partisans and are also deeply loathed? Now I know. And you will, too, when you come to ScienceWriters 2009 in Austin!

A big shout-out to NASW workshop

NANCY SHUTE IS NASW VICE PRESIDENT AND CHAIR OF THE 2009 WORKSHOPS COMMITTEE.

Enhance Our Field

Dispatches FROM THE Director

Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG

Continuing Education Grants in the Works

NASW is doing its best to find creative ways to help members in this tight economy and changing profession. Be on the lookout, later this summer, for a new NASW grant program to help established writers who find themselves adjusting to new conditions. The continuing education grants, spearheaded by NASW board member Beryl Benderly and treasurer Peggy Girshman, will be funded with Authors Coalition proceeds.

Do you have ideas for ways NASW could enhance the field of science writing or specific professional development programs? Drop a note to director@nasw.org.

NASW launches a new grant program for established writers.

Embarrassing Mispellig?

Turn over this magazine and check the back cover. Are you listed as jAne sMith in New Yourk? Is there a yellow sticker from the post office's forwarding service? Then you need to log into the members' section of nasw.org and correct your address. With NASW's member database, it's WYEIWYG. What you enter is what you get.

Is Your Inbox Too Quiet?

This spring, I immersed myself in social-media detective work, tracking down members whose e-mails bounced. Thanks to Facebook, Yahoo! Search, and LinkedIn, I located over 50 people, the majority of the group. But surely you'd rather I spend time on member services like developing continuing education grants, so be sure to update your e-mail address online at nasw.org when necessary. We don't want you to miss out on grant announcements, monthly updates, or renewal notices. And remember that NASW does not sell, rent, or otherwise distribute your e-mail address, and we try not to bombard you with communications from us. ■

committee members Karl Leif Bates, Duke University; Haley Bridger, Broad Institute; Merry Bruns, Science Sites Communications; Jeanne Erdmann, freelance; Barbara Gastel, Texas A&M Journalism Program; Robin Lloyd, LiveScience; Ann Marie Menting, Harvard Medical Alumni Bulletin; A'ndrea Messer, Penn State; Adam Rogers, *WIRED*; Neal Singer, Sandia Nat'l Labs; Tammy Powledge, freelance; Emily Willingham, freelance; and Cathy Yarbrough, freelance. ■

Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
Fresno Bee
CYBRARIAN@NASW.ORG

Cyberbeat

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, it's time for another discussion of how important it is to keep your NASW membership database entry accurate and up-to-date.

(Note to readers younger than 40: A "record" was a primitive sound recording format, now found mainly in thrift shops and your humble cybrarian's hall closet.)

OK, where was I? Oh, yes, the member database. Admittedly, it's a work in progress. Like any complicated system, there will always be new features to add and bugs to fix. But we've tried, through trial and error, to make it easy for you to check your entry and update it whenever needed.

Just log into the NASW members web page using the "member area" link at the top of the main NASW.org page. If you don't have a password, there's a form to request one. If you can't remember your password, there's a form to get a reminder.

When you use the password reminder form, remember that the information you enter (first name, last name, e-mail address) must exactly match what's in our database. So if the membership directory has you as "William" and you enter "Bill," you'll never get your reminder.

Once you've logged in, you can use the "check your member data" link to see what your database entry currently looks like. This is the place to go if you change jobs, mailing address, e-mail addresses, etc.

Your "primary e-mail address" is especially important. That's where we will send important NASW news, dues notices, and password reminders, among other things.

At the top of the page is a line indicating your dues status. Elsewhere on the page are places to enter other information. Anything with an asterisk is required; everything else is optional.

Why tell you all this? This winter, for the first time, we handled all membership renewals online. It worked well—except for a few hundred members whose e-mail addresses turned out to be invalid. Our overworked executive director, Tinsley, spent many hours chasing down those members and getting their renewal notices out. But inevitably, some were missed.

In the worst case, a few people learned they were in arrears only when their website passwords and e-mail aliases suddenly stopped working because they hadn't paid their dues by the May 15 drop-dead deadline.

For that and other reasons, it's a good idea to check all of your member data periodically. It only takes a few minutes, and it ensures that the NASW office as well as your fellow members will be able to keep in touch.

NASW-talk

An analysis of the Twittersphere's real-time coverage of a near-collision between the International Space Station and some orbiting junk set off a mid-March discussion on NASW-talk about how Twitter might change news.

David J. Harris of Stanford's *symmetry* magazine started things off by pointing to an archive of Tweets on the incident, which he posted on his blog, along with some commentary.

"Watching the twitterstream today about the near incident between the International Space Station and some orbiting debris was a very interesting and instructive process," he wrote on NASW-talk. "I think there are many lessons to learn about how the nature of news is changing just from examining this particular case." (Find Harris's blog post at **http://cathemeralthinking.blogspot.com/2009/03what-does-twitter-mean-for-breaking.html**.)

Harris's post to NASW-talk was first met with a couple of comments along the lines of "Who needs one more source of chatter?" But then New Jersey freelancer Don Monroe steered the discussion back to what Twitter could mean, not just for news consumers but its producers as well.

"I can see how these real-time updates could be useful for a journalist trying to cover a breaking story," he said. Then he added, "You make a good point that Twitter might effectively supplant other types of breaking news coverage, which similarly fail to give background and context."

Harris replied that the issue goes deeper than that. Twitter and other social media, he said, may signal a major shift in the relationships between news consumers and their sources.

"The point of much new media is that it relies more on trust relationships between people as a major conduit for information rather than authority relationships of traditional publications and sources," he said. "I'm not arguing about whether this is good or bad, but just highlighting that it is real and it is happening now."

To read more, search the NASW-talk archives for "How might Twitter change breaking news?"

NASW-freelance

The swine flu pandemic, if that's what it is, came in for a thorough examination on NASW-freelance in mid-May. The discussion started when New York freelancer Jonathan D. Beard pointed to a web video contrasting swine flu's heavy news coverage with the relative silence on a much more common and deadlier disease, tuberculosis. The video's question boiled down to "Why is this (swine flu) news, when that (TB) isn't?"

Delmar, N.Y., freelancer Jill Adams offered one response: "Swine flu is new, ergo it's news. Tuberculosis is not new. It's tragic that it kills so many people still, and perhaps it deserves more media coverage—that we can't contain a disease we know a lot about."

But how new is swine flu really? Not very, said Port Angeles, Wash. freelancer Stephen Hart: "There are some features of this year's outbreak that merited news attention, but overall, the media coverage of this particular outbreak has been downright irresponsible, not least giving the impression that swine flu is new."

MedPage Today senior editor John Gever shot back with a contrary quote from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "Novel influenza A (H1N1) is a new flu virus of swine origin that was first detected in April 2009."

From there, the discussion moved into semantics, such as this from Santa Cruz, Calif. freelancer Jennie Dusheck: "I guess it kind of depends on how you define 'novel.' If swine flu is a strain of a known virus … that contains genes from avian, human, and porcine viruses, then swine flu is at least 11 years old. On the other hand, if any unique combination of DNA qualifies an organism as novel, then swine flu is novel."

To read more, including some lively attempts to define both "virus" and "pandemic," search the NASW-Freelance archives for "media coverage of swine flu". ■

The PIO Forum

BY RICK BORCHELT, DAVID JARMUL, JEFF MARCUS, AND JOANN RODGERS

Characteristics of Excellence In Science and Technology Public Affairs

FROM TIME TO TIME, MANY OF US ON THE PUBLIC INFORMATION/PUBLIC AFFAIRS SIDE OF THE HOUSE HAVE THE CHANCE TO COME INTO EACH OTHER'S SHOPS, KICK THE TIRES, OFFER SOME ADVICE, AND GENERALLY HAVE A GOOD TIME RECOMMENDING THEY DO THINGS WE WISH WE COULD DO IN OUR OWN WORK environments. Some of our best programs have come from people we've dragged in to review our shops in these peer-review sessions; conversely, some of our best ideas have come as we looked over someone else's shoulder and reviewed their communications plans. We recently conducted such a review, and after we wrote our report we wondered whether parts of it may be applicable to other organizations as well. With a little tweaking, we've come up with a set of guidelines and principles that may describe what an excellent communications and public affairs/public relations program for a science or technology organization ideally looks like these days.

As our group looked around the science and technology (S&T) public affairs universe, we saw no programs (including our own) that follow all of these guidelines and principles perfectly. But the better ones can probably check off most of them, and there's value to laying out aspirations and informing a debate on the subject. So here they are. Comments welcome.

■ Excellence in public affairs in the 21st century is characterized by the ability to help an institution communicate its values, identify strategic issues, develop and refine value-driven key messages, and identify key stakeholder audiences for which the messages will be meaningful. The excellent public affairs office helps an organization stick to its values and core messages in the face of internal and external pressures. It deploys the messages in a timely fashion across a variety of traditional and new media, and responds quickly and decisively to unexpected opportunities to deliver the messages in emerging or unanticipated ways.

■ At a rigorously science-based and knowledge-generating institution, communication (both formal and informal) is mission critical. It is not an optional exercise to be handed off to an "administrative service unit" on an *ad hoc* basis, or when the science or research job is done.

■ Excellence is maintained by a commitment to formative research in message development and audience analysis, and by evaluative research to determine the impact of the institution's messages on measurable outcomes articulated at the outset of the communication process.

■ Excellence in public affairs for science and technology organizations requires professionals who have a place at the decision-making table and are seen as an integral part of management at all levels of the institution. Senior public affairs executives are valued members of the organization's "dominant coalition" of decision makers, and are fundamentally involved in crisis management and communications, issue identification, and response planning at the highest levels. This strategic role is mirrored at all levels of the organization, and public affairs staff routinely set and manage communications priorities with scientists and others across the institution.

■ Excellent public affairs programs enjoy clear authority to manage the institution's reputation at all internal and external levels. All hands understand that public affairs activities are about more than "telling an institution's story." They recognize that public affairs also positions, builds, and maintains the institution's reputation and "brand" in both strategic and opportunistic ways, ever-mindful of the internal culture and the impact of institutional behavior on external and internal audiences. They also understand that while tactical roles such as the preparation of press releases and participation in community events are important, they pale in comparison to several other strategic roles. These include communications planning and management, crisis communications, risk assessment, leadership counseling, and communications training.

■ Such roles are understood to require a deep and broad knowledge of audiences, a keen understanding of an institution's day-to-day operations and strategic interests, rigorous information-seeking behaviors, evaluation of competitive intelligence and competing communication strategies, and an ability to set goals, achieve objectives, measure outcomes, and report them to leadership on a regular basis.

■ Excellent public affairs offices are nimble, strategic as well as opportunistic, and systematic in their approach to reputation management and institutional goals.

■ Excellent public affairs offices are, simply put, fully engaged in the life of the institution. Their managers routinely sit on top-level, institutional committees and share information needed by their staffs and others to do their work. They develop systems and programs to assure the effective integration of internal and external communications and public relations activities. They participate actively in peer-driven professional development to assure continuous improvement in their operations, learn from the activities of competing organizations, and interact regularly with management and scientists to position them as experts engaged in the work of the institution and wider communities of interest.

■ Excellent public affairs and communications programs are

monitored, measured, and formally evaluated against their institutions' goals and priorities.

■ Excellent public affairs programs carefully manage one of their most valuable assets—their brand—by educating their audiences about its value and providing the guidelines necessary to ensure consistency.

■ Excellent public affairs programs and goals are developed in conjunction with top institutional leaders. Within the public affairs program itself, assignments and management are aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. Public affairs work processes are clear and consistent to increase accountability and consonance with these goals.

■ Excellent public affairs programs identify and leverage emerging communications opportunities. The best public affairs leaders are involved in institutional benchmarking, and in the identification and implementation of work-process innovations from peer institutions. Such leaders take advantage of opportunities to engage stakeholder publics, get out in front of developing news stories, and place the organization in the forefront of developing public discussion about issues relevant to their institution's mission.

■ Excellent public affairs programs recruit, cultivate, and retain excellent staff. Their managers are committed to the professional development of their staffs, and they celebrate success appropriately and equitably. Diversity, civility, and respect characterize the effective public affairs workplace, with staff members enjoying collegial working relationships. ■

Rick Borchelt is director of communications for the Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University; David Jarmul is associate VP for News & Communications at Duke University; Jeff Marcus is creative director of Marcus Associates in San Anselmo, Calif.; and Joann Rodgers is director of media relations/public affairs at Johns Hopkins University. Send comments to rickb@nasw.org.

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Our Gang

School's out! **A'ndrea Elise Messer**, senior science and research information officer at Penn State, successfully defended her doctoral dissertation, and will graduate later this year with a Ph.D. in anthropology. When you congratulate her at aem1@psu.edu, be sure to begin with "Dear Dr. Messer…"

Lori Oliwenstein is California dreamin'. She's now senior science writer in the Caltech media relations department. She reports that the move is an NASW homecoming of sorts: she works for **Jon Weiner**, a former colleague from USC's Keck School of Medicine, and alongside **Kathy Svitil**, with whom she worked at *Discover* magazine. Write her at lorio@nasw.org.

Cassandra Willyard is flying high. She received the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' Media Orthopaedic Reporting Excellence (MORE) award in the national magazine category for her *Nature Medicine Magazine* piece, "A Sporting Chance." The MORE program honors media efforts that further public understanding of musculoskeletal health-related issues and encourage healthy behaviors in the care of bones, joints, muscles, and tendons. Write her at cwillyard@nasw.org to tell her how that old high school sports injury bothers you on rainy days.

David M. Lawrence has got a ticket to ride. He just signed the contract for his third book, *Time Detectives: Climate Change and Scientists' Quest to Know Earth's Future from Its Past*. The publisher is Rutgers University Press and the target publication date is spring or summer 2012. Write him at dave@fuzzo.com.

Siri Carpenter is traveling the awards circuit. Her December 2008 *Prevention* magazine article, "Is Your Parent Over-Medicated?" was nominated for the National Magazine Award. Congratulate her at siri@tds.net, and see below for more news.

They're goin' to Disneyland! The American Society of Journalists and Authors honored five NASW members with its 2009 writing awards. **Robin Marantz Henig** won the Founders' Award for Career Achievement.… **Siri Carpenter**'s April/May 2008 *Scientific American Mind* article "Buried Prejudice" won the Outstanding Article Award for Reporting on a Significant Topic. **Michelle Nijhuis** received an honorable mention in that same category for "The Doubt Makers," published in *Miller-McCune*… **Tina Adler** shared an honorable mention in the service/self-help category of the Outstanding Book Awards for her *Alzheimer's Action Plan*… And **Douglas Fox** won an honorable mention for the June Roth Memorial Award for Medical Journalism. Write them at robinhenig@nasw.org, siri@tds.net, michelle@nasw.org, tmadler2@verizon.net, and dsfox@earthlink.net.

They'll have fun in the sun. Among the fifteen science writers and editors who have been awarded prestigious Logan Science Journalism Fellowships from the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL), in Woods Hole, Mass., are three NASW members: **Alisa Opar** of *Audubon Magazine*, **Bina Venkataraman** of the *Boston Globe*, and **Angela Posada-Swafford** of *Muy Interesante*. The program allows established science journalists to "step into the shoes of the scientists they cover" by immersing themselves in basic biomedical and environmental research. Opar will travel to MBL field stations in Alaska, Venkataraman will go to Woods Hole, and Posada-Swafford will trek to Antarctica. Write them at alisaopar@gmail.com, binajv@gmail.com, and aswafford@the-beach.net, respectively, to ask them to send postcards.

Irene S. Levine's new book will arrive after a short layover. In September, her self-help/psychology title, *Best Friends Forever: Surviving a Break-Up With Your Best Friend*, will be published by Overlook Press. Write her at Irene@IreneLevine.com.

Cruisin' along. An article in *Prism* magazine by contributing editor **Beryl Lieff Benderly** was a finalist for the 2009 Iris Molotsky Award for Excellence in Coverage of Higher Education, given by the American Association of University Professors. Her piece, "Premium Prices," took a look at the growing number of universities charging extra for engineering majors. Write her at blbink@aol.com.

Marie Zhuikov has taken a road trip. She was communications coordinator for the University of Minnesota Sea

GORDER PHOTO COURTESY OF JO McCULTY; CLANCY PHOTO COURTESY OF MARC LIEBERMAN

Grant Program in Duluth. She's now in Rochester, working as a public affairs consultant for the Mayo Clinic Center for Translational Science Activities. She says that the switch from writing about water and fish to writing about medicine has been interesting and worthwhile. Write to her at zhuikov.marie@mayo.edu to ask how it feels to move from Superior's shores to one of only four counties in the entire state that doesn't have a natural lake.

Thrill ride. This spring, **Dave Mosher** parachuted from an airplane at 14,000 feet, and then boldly took a new job. He's is now web editor for the Simons Foundation, which funds basic research (most particularly, autism). Dave is still freelancing on the side for former employers LiveScience.com and Discovery.com. Write him at davemosher@gmail.com to ask if this sequence of events is just a coincidence.

Nancy Shute has earned a vacation. After 12 years as a senior writer and assistant managing editor for *U.S. News & World Report*, she took a buyout. She'll still be a contributing writer in print and on the web, but is looking forward to new adventures. They include creating a course for Johns Hopkins University on how writers can make the most of social media and other technology, lecturing on social media and journalism, and exploring "entrepreneurial journalism." That last one grew out of a one-week Knight Digital Media Center fellowship. "I am interested in starting community-centered journalistic ventures that might generate a living wage for myself and others," she says. "I welcome all thoughts on this." Share your thoughts at nancy@nancyshute.com. ■

Suzanne Clancy
Editor
Clinical Lab Products
SCLANCYPHD@YAHOO.COM

Regional Groups

CHICAGO

Although the topic was loneliness, the Chicago Science Writers felt anything but disconnected when they met May 13 to listen to a lecture on the subject by famed neuroscientist John Cacioppo, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago. Cacioppo reviewed his groundbreaking research on loneliness in the talk "Connected Minds," which is part of an annual lecture series presented by distinguished scholars at the university. Cacioppo's work has shown that loneliness is a clue that encourages people to become more engaged. It probably has its evolutionary origins in hunter-gather societies in which people had to work together in order to get food. A lack of a healthy social life can undermine health to the same extent that obesity and smoking can shorten the lifespan, his research has shown. The Chicago science writers made their way to the bar at the reception following the lecture to do their own work at fighting

the potentially damaging effects of loneliness.

NEW ENGLAND

Most science writers are interested in writing books, but only some of us follow through to the point of writing one and getting it published. On April 1, the New England Science Writers gathered at the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation, in Waltham, to hear four writers talk about their adventures in book publishing.

Courtney Humphries talked about her history of the urban pigeon, *Superdove: How the Pigeon Took Manhattan and the World* (Smithsonian Books, Harper-Collins, 2008); Alison Bass discussed her medical expose, *Side Effects: A Prosecutor, a Whistleblower, and A Bestselling Antidepressant on Trial* (Algonquin Books, 2008);Barbara Moran talked about her book on a chilling episode from the 1960s *The Day We Lost the H-Bomb: Cold War, Hot Nukes, and the Worst Nuclear Weapons Disaster in History* (Random House, 2009); and Eugenie Samuel Reich described her detective work in tracking an epic scientific fraud and writing about it in *Plastic Fantastic: How the Biggest Fraud in Physics Shook the Scientific World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Sardine-sized grunion, found only off the coast of California and Baja California, Mexico, are known for their unusual mating ritual that involves coming up on sandy beaches during high tide to lay their eggs.

A large and hungry crowd devoured all but a couple of slices of pizza and enjoyed drinks, then asked the speakers and moderator Jeff Hecht about picking topics, researching, writing, and publishing. They also explored the museum, housed in an 1814 textile mill build by the Boston Manufacturing Company on the banks of the Charles River. In addition to artifacts from the dawn of industrial America, it displays old machine tools and a few of the more than 40 million watches mass-produced a short distance upstream by the Waltham Watch Company.

NEW YORK

After a strong and rousing start to SWINY's annual programming in 2009, the group held several well attended social and professional events. On March 12, thanks to Sheila Haas, SWINY's hard-working recording secretary, the group was treated to a presentation by prominent NYC nutritionist/professor Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D., who "dished out the facts" on "Healthy Bones: Facts, Myths and the Science Behind It All." Later in March, SWINY board member Alan Brown organized a presentation by Rick Weddle, president & CEO of the Research Triangle Park, and Luis Sanz, director general of the International Association of Science Parks, who discussed the future role of innovation and science and technology in global development. In May, SWINY board member Carol Milano brought the group an indispensable, well attended and received program by none other than Denise Graveline of "Don't Get Caught" blog fame, entitled "Me.com: Branding Yourself—and Your Outlet—in the Digital Age." Also in May, Robin Marantz Henig coordinated a program for the NASW NYC Regional Science Writers Meeting, in collaboration with the Science & the Arts Program of the CUNY Graduate Center, entitled "Artists and Science Writers: Finding Common Ground." NASW member Curtis Brainard's review of the event appears at **http://www.cjr.org/the_observatory/the_science_of_art.php**.

Co-President Joe Bonner has taken on the job of keeping SWINY up to date with the latest social media tools. The revamped website (**www.swiny.org**) has links to videos of social media panelists from the January event, as well as links to SWINY on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

SAN DIEGO

On April 20, SANDSWA members attended a workshop on the mechanics of vision. Hosted by the Salk Institute, the program began with a basic introduction to the visual system, followed by presentations by vision researchers from Salk and UC San Diego. Speakers included Thomas D. Albright, Ph.D., director of the Salk Vision Center Laboratory, whose research focuses on how "associative memories" allow us to make sense of incoming visual information. Ed Callaway, Ph.D., described development of a transsynaptic tracer (based on modified rabies virus) to examine neuronal connectivity and elucidate single connections between neurons. Karen Dobkins, Ph.D., director of the Infant Vision Lab, at UC San Diego, described her work with autistic children and their siblings with the goal to better understand brain and behavioral development in autism and related developmental disorders.

On May 9, SANDSWA members went on a grunion hunt led by naturalists at the Birch Aquarium at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Grunion are 5- to 6-inch, torpedo-shaped fish found offshore along the California coast and Baja California, Mexico, that are known for their unusual mating ritual. From March through August grunion leave the water to spawn on the beach for four consecutive nights during full- and new-moon cycles. At very high tides, females come up on sandy beaches and dig their tails into the sand to lay their eggs. Males then wrap themselves around females to deposit sperm after which the adults return to the ocean. For the next 10 days the grunion eggs remain hidden in the sand, but at the next set of high tides the eggs hatch and the young grunion are washed out to sea. While it's easy to predict the dates when grunion will run, it's impossible to pinpoint on which beaches they will appear. The night of the SANDSWA field trip the grunion avoided the sands near the aquarium. ■

GRUNION PHOTOS COURTESY OF J. SCOTT KILBORN; AINSWORTH PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AINSWORTH FAMILY.

In Memoriam

Diane Ainsworth

Covered technology and innovation at four major universities

Diane Ainsworth, a science writer for the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering, died March 29 of a brain aneurysm. She was 56 and had been an NASW member since 2000.

Ainsworth had more than 25 years of experience covering science and technology at four major California universities.

She joined USC in 2003, where she became a prolific writer and editor, contributing hundreds of stories to USC media, including the *Viterbi Engineer* magazine (which she edited), the Viterbi news website, the *USC Chronicle*, and *Trojan Family* magazine.

She also aided faculty and engineering administration in the preparation of fact sheets, mailers, brochures, and other material. A skilled photographer, she illustrated many of her own stories.

Before coming to USC Ainsworth worked as a science writer for the *Berkeleyan*, the faculty-staff newspaper at UC Berkeley, in the school's public affairs office. Before that she had spent 12 years as a media relations specialist at the Caltech Jet Propulsion laboratory, in Pasadena, covering such landmark events as NASA Mars missions, earth observation satellites, and arranging media access to shuttle missions. Previously, she was a senior staff writer in the UCLA public affairs office.

Earlier, she had worked as a reporter for media, including The Associated Press, and as a public information officer at the RAND Corporation. Ainsworth received her B.A. degree from UCLA, and an M.A. from California State University, Northridge, both in cultural anthropology.

(source: USC Viterbi School of Engineering)

■ ■ ■

Stephen A. Kezerian

Former director of Yale University news bureau

Stephen A. Kezerian, former director of the Yale University News Bureau, died on March 9 of natural causes at age 87. He had been an NASW member since 1952.

Kezerian was the press and public information officer for Yale for 37 years. He retired in 1985, and was science editor for the Yale Alumni Magazine for two years. In addition to his administrative work, he had an adjunct appointment to the faculty in 1969 and 1971 as lecturer in English, teaching creative writing in Yale's undergraduate residential colleges.

He was a member of Yale President Kingman Brewster's committee that established and administered the Poynter Visiting Fellowship in Journalism. He was on the advisory committee of two student organizations, the *Yale Scientific Magazine*, and the Yale Broadcasting Company.

He served as chair of the Ivy League Public Relations Group in 1958-1959 and in 1966-1967. In addition to NASW, he was a member of the American College Public Relations Association.

(source: Yale University Office of Public Affairs)

■ ■ ■

Clyde Ball

Journalist and space-program writer

***ScienceWriters* has learned, belatedly, of the death of retired science writer Clyde Ball, who died in January 2008 at the age 86.**

He was born in Jeffrey, W.Va., and attended Marshall University on a journalism scholarship. Ball served in the Navy during World War II after which he began his journalism career spending 16 years with *The Associated Press* as a reporter and editor. He then became a public relations representative for the Philco-Ford Corp. in the 1960s during the time the company built Mission Control in Houston for the Gemini and Apollo Space programs. He came to Washington, D.C. in 1970, where he worked with the Interior and Commerce departments, the Federal Energy Administration and the Maritime Administration, from which he retired in 1986. Ball had been an NASW member since 1964.

(source: The Ball Family)

■ ■ ■

John Maddox

Transformed *Nature* into influential journal

John Maddox, a former physics lecturer and science journalist whose 22 years as editor of *Nature* transformed the moss-covered journal into one of the world's leading sources of science information, died April 12, at the age of 83.

Founded in 1869, *Nature* is one of the oldest scientific journals still around and one of the few to publish papers across the full range of scientific disciplines. But when Maddox was recruited as editor in 1966, the journal had fallen on hard times.

Most of the papers it published were pedestrian, its News and Views section mostly ran notices about birthdays and retirements, and a massive pile of submitted manuscripts had built up, many of them yellowing with age. The staff was small and overworked.

Maddox began recruiting a staff of intelligent young people, giving them unprecedented responsibility.

A formal reviewing system for manuscripts was established to replace the existing one in which papers were distributed to the editor's cronies. A style manual was created and submissions were extensively copy edited to improve their cogency and readability.

Even as the editors worked their way through the accumulated manuscripts, Maddox was soliciting more, particularly those embodying high-quality, breakthrough research.

Recognizing the increasingly global nature of science, he established the journal's first overseas office in Washington, following it up with others in New York, Tokyo, and elsewhere.

As the volume of submissions grew, so too did the rate of rejections. To ease the problem, Maddox in the early 1970s started a pair of sister journals, *Nature New Biology* and *Nature Physical Science*. That effort proved overly ambitious, and the new journals were killed off after he left the journal in 1973. After Maddox returned in 1980, however, he reestablished them, and *Nature* now publishes

IN MEMORIAM continued on page 29

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange performing in Ferocious Beauty: Genome

ART

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contributor Robin Marantz Henig in the third act of Tuesday's event. In fact, Lerman had read a book of Henig's about Gregor Mendel, one of the field's pioneers, while doing research for the performance.

Lerman spoke eloquently about the similarities between journalism and choreography. Both are works of art that help "reveal gaps in your knowledge," and for which it is often difficult to choose what information to include and exclude. She also explained the narrative necessity of having small frames, which hold people's interest in a story, as well as big ones, which give the story meaning. And finally, she described how her audiences get "excited about their capacity to understand something," and that it is OK for them to struggle with difficult concepts, so long as there is a "cue from the stage that that struggle is expected." ■

"The Art of Science," The Observatory, Columbia Journalism Review, *posted May 13, 2009 (**http://www.cjr.org/the_observatory/the_science_of_art.php**).*

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN KENNEFICK

Lindau Meeting Fellows

Congratulations to NASW members Karen Hopkin, Robert Frederick, Jeffrey Kluger, and Tom Paulson, who received travel funds to attend the 59th Meeting on Nobel Laureates, in Lindau, Germany.

For the second year, The Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings invited NASW to select four members to attend this meeting in which Nobel Laureate scientists meet with hundreds of young researchers. This summer, the meeting was dedicated to chemistry and was held June 28-July 3. ■

Health Communications Scholarship Available

Washington University in St. Louis is offering full-tuition scholarships to its new Master of Public Health program at Washington University's George Warren Brown School of Social Work.

The merit-based scholarship supports students interested in using their skills and interests in communications, journalism, marketing, public policy, psychology, sociology, and related fields to improve the health of communities and populations locally, nationally, and internationally. There is no set deadline to apply, but the earlier the applications are submitted, the better. More information at **http://news-info.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/14197.html?emailID=24233.** ■
(source: news release)

Van Dam Fellowships Awarded

Victoria Costello and Sharon Guynup are recipients of Laura Van Dam Travel Fellowships to attend the World Conference of Science Journalists (WSCJ) meeting in London. Named in the memory of past NASW president Laura Van Dam, who died in 2006, each fellowship is $2,500.

Victoria Costello is a San Francisco-based, Emmy Award-winning science writer and author of nonfiction trade books in psychology and self-help. With her trip to WSCJ she'll be doing research for her work in progress, titled *Give Up the Ghost*, a science memoir looking at four generations of mental illness in her family in light of what the latest genetic brain science can tell us about the intergenerational transmission of mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Victoria's website is **www.victoriacostello.net**.

Sharon Guynup is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Scientific American Mind*, *Popular Science*, *Audubon*, *The Boston Globe*, nationalgeographic.com and other publications. Her stories have also been distributed through the *New York Times* Syndicate. Her first book is *State of the Wild 2006: A Global Portrait of Wildlife, Wildlands and Oceans*. She lives in Hoboken, N.J. and is an adjunct professor in New York University's graduate Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting Program. ■

Correction

Coimbra Sirica's last name was misspelled in a photo caption in the last issue (*SW*, Spring 2009, page 27). ■

Upcoming Meetings

Oct. 16-20, 2009
ScienceWriters 2009, Austin, Tex.
www.sciencewriters2009.org

Feb. 18-22, 2010
AAAS Annual Meeting, San Diego, Calif.
www.aaas.org/meetings

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

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

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Complete contact information available at **www.nasw.org**

NEW MEMBERS

ARIZONA: Alaina Levine, freelance, Tucson. **CALIFORNIA**: Heather Buschman, Consortium for Functional Genomics/The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla; Denise Chen*, Stanford U.; Kira O'Day Heller, freelance, Oakland; Andrew Hellman*, Stanford U.; Eric Mankin, USC Public Information Office; Janelle Weaver, freelance, Berkeley. **COLORADO**: Laurie J. Schmidt, freelance, Fort Collins. **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**: Melissa Summers, AAAS Policy Fellow/NSF. **FLORIDA**: Peter Gray*, U. of Florida, Gainesville. **GEORGIA**: Marianne English*, U. of Georgia. **ILLINOIS**: Spencer Fullam*, U. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; David Jakubiak, freelance, Brookfield; Kari Lydersen, *Washington Post* (Midwest Bureau), Chicago; Chinonye Nnakwe*, U. of Chicago; Melissa Suran*, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern U. **INDIANA**: Robin Underwood*, Purdue U. **KENTUCKY**: Billy Woodward, freelance, Lexington. **MASSACHUSETTS**: Amanda Martinez*, MIT Graduate Program in Science Writing; Karen Rowan, freelance, Allston. **MARYLAND**: Alex Antunes, freelance, Laurel; Betsy Anne Riley, Dept. of Energy, Germantown; Maryalice Yakutchik, Johns Hopkins Medicine science writer, Baltimore. **MAINE**: Murray Carpenter, freelance, Belfast. **MICHIGAN**: Kimberlee Roth, Outword, LLC, Ann Arbor. **MINNESOTA**: Gary Leatherman, freelance, St. Paul. **MISSOURI**: Gwen Ericson, asst. dir. of res. comm., Washington U., St. Louis; Katherine Harmon*, U. of Missouri; Kristen Minogue*, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern U; Jo Louise Seltzer, freelance, St. Louis. **NEW JERSEY**: Nancy Walsh D'Epiro, International Medical News Group (NY bureau chief). **NEW YORK**: Chris Bentley*, Cornell U; Rondi Davies, Evidence Design, NYC; Randi Hutter Epstein, adjunct professor, Columbia U. Graduate School of Journalism; Miriam Gordon, freelance, Mount Vernon; Kathryn Wilcox*, NYU. **OHIO**: Mary Silva, senior associate, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati. **PENNSYLVANIA**: Emily Shafer, science writer, Thomas Jefferson U., Philadelphia. **TEXAS**: John Borchardt, freelance, Houston; Melissa Gaskill, freelance, Austin; David Pittman, health reporter, *Amarillo Globe-News*, Amarillo. **VIRGINIA**: Jacquelyn Beals, freelance, Staunton. **WISCONSIN**: Bill Andrews*, U. of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison; Kathleen Schmitt Kline, science writer/Sea Grant Institute, U. of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison **CANADA**: Timothy Hornyak, freelance, Montreal, Quebec. ■

**Student member*

TWEET

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and experience—it's a first stab after all. But I think it's a necessary one. Widespread communication through social media is a reality, it is challenging how things are done, and a new equilibrium needs to be found between those providing information and those using and distributing it. The danger is that without some honest soul-searching by everyone involved, the new equilibrium could be more detrimental than beneficial.

And on a final note, Daniel MacArthur wrote a very gracious yet insightful response to GenomeWeb's concerns—evidence (if you needed it) that serious commentations are committed to getting this right, for everyone's benefit. ■

SCIENCE PRIZE

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and other more traditional funding channels. The National Academy of Sciences, though, is urging the federal research agencies to endow incentive prizes of up to $30 million each. Congress has toyed with the idea too.

By itself, prize money isn't enough, though; nor is imagination or ambition. "There is an art and a science to designing a prize," says Dr. Diamandis. Ineffective organization or a poorly conceived goal can undermine good intentions.

Consider the fate of the largest research incentive prize in recent memory. With considerable fanfare in 2004, Las Vegas-based Bigelow Aerospace announced the $50 million America Space Prize to foster private U.S. manned space flight. It quietly folded recently after it failed to attract enough contestants.

Earlier this year, the Gotham Cancer Prize Foundation suspended its annual $1 million cancer prize, which sought to foster innovative ideas for cancer treatment, after awarding it only once. "The project wasn't working the way we had hoped and we only wanted to continue funding an effort that was going to be effective and have a big impact," said Gary Curhan at the Harvard School of Public Health, who helps administer it. They hope to resume it next year

Done properly, though, a prestigious award like the Nobel Prize can transform an unassuming scientist into intellectual royalty with a fairy-princess kiss of publicity and cash. "Awards shine a light on areas of research," says Maria Freire, president of the Lasker Foundation, which has given annual awards for basic and clinical medical research discoveries since 1946. Last year, each of its prizes included a $300,000 honorarium.

New fields are generating new prizes. Last year, the Kavli Foundation endowed three $1 million prizes to recognize basic discoveries in astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience. The first Kavli awards highlighted insights into quasars, quantum dots, and embryonic neurons.

Awards also can warp what they honor, skewing personal and professional priorities, says sociologist Joel Best at the University of Delaware. In a broader sense, awards help shape the public's perception of science. For better or worse, they affect the conduct of science itself, by prizing some efforts at the expense of others.

"I hate these inducement prizes and their language of social benefit," says University of Pennsylvania prize scholar James F. English, author of "The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and

The Circulation of Cultural Value." "It's a cover for what they are really about, which is getting attention. I don't think that kind of small-scale frantic prize-chasing investment is the best way for us to solve big problems."

All in all, those who prize renown are engaged in a quest for recognition that has not changed very much since Achilles and Beowulf sought a warrior's lasting fame. Reputation is still the ultimate prize in modern intellectual combat.

In the Grove Street Cemetery at Yale University, the competition for prestige has a life after death. There, two chemistry professors—John Kirkwood and Lars Onsager—are buried side by side. The tombstones of these former colleagues vie for academic superiority.

Dr. Kirkwood's tall grave marker attests to a lifetime of accomplishment with a list of a dozen awards, appointments, medals, degrees and titles. Dr. Onsager's more modest monument, erected 17 years later, notes his name, birth, marriage, and death. It summarizes his life in two words: "Nobel Laureate."

That's followed by an asterisk that draws the visitor's attention to the lower right hand corner of the grave stone.

There, the chiseled footnote reads: "*Etc." ■

"The Science Prize: Innovation or Stealth Advertising?" Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2009.*

E-BOOKS

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contributions, while the GNU Free Documentation License makes sure that the submitted version and its derivative works will always remain freely distributable and reproducible. There are more than 127 free Wikipedia textbooks. I downloaded one which I believe is accurate and very useful —*Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience*. All contributors to the book have extensive references for their contribution. The book is copyrighted but "permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document." Among the chapters: "Cognitive Psychology and the Brain"; "Problem Solving from an Evolutionary Perspective"; and "Motivation and Emotion and Decision Making and Reasoning." The writing, definitions and illustrations I think are very well done. Why did the authors contribute to the book for free? What does it mean for the future of text books and consumer books?

We would like your thoughts about the changes in the production and sale of books. If you write them, how will your readers read them and how will you make a living? If you wish to look at and even download Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, here's the URL: **http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cognitive_Psychology_and Cognitive_Neuroscience**. ■

MERCK

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"Elsevier acknowledges the concern that the journals in question didn't have the appropriate disclosures," the statement continued. "It is worth noting that project in question was produced six years ago and disclosure protocols have evolved since 2003. Elsevier's current disclosure policies meet the rigor and requirements of the current publishing environment."

The Elsevier spokesperson said the company wasn't aware of how many copies of the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* were produced or how the publication was distributed in Australia, but noted that "the common practice for sponsored journals is that doctors receive them complimentary." The spokesperson added that Elsevier had no plans to look further into the matter.

One of the members of *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine*'s "Honorary Editorial Board," Peter Brooks, a rheumatologist in Australia, said he didn't recall who asked him to serve on the board, but noted that he was on Merck's Asian Pacific and international advisory boards from the mid-1990s until about 2004, as well as the advisory boards of other pharmaceutical companies, including Pfizer and Amgen. "You get involved in a whole bunch of things at this level," Brooks said, adding that he had put his name on "a few advertorials" for pharmaceutical companies about 10 years ago.

As for the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine*, he said, "If it would have been put to me that [the journal] was just sort of a throwaway, then I would have said 'no'" to serving on its editorial board. He said he was never paid for his role, adding that he "didn't ever get [manuscripts] to review or anything like that," while on the board, because the journal did not accept original manuscripts for review.

"Having looked at one issue, it actually had some marketing studies," Brooks said. "It also had papers that were excerpted from other peer-reviewed journals. I don't think it's fair to say it was totally a marketing journal." ■

"Merck published fake journal," The Scientist*, posted online April 30, 2009. Reprinted with permission from* The Scientist.

PAULSON

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in Seattle with the decrease in its number of staff science journalists. In Paulson's words:

> *I'd say the media in general here is more subject to spin. Fewer stories are being told through the mainstream media, and if you talk to the press officers at the institutions, they're very frustrated with the fact that they will send out releases, and they'll have something that's a pretty big deal, and it won't even show up in Seattle media. Because if the* Seattle Times *science reporter is already busy, it isn't even going to get out there. So it sounds self-serving, but I think there's less science news getting out now in Seattle.*

Paulson emphasizes that what he has experienced isn't unique—it's "the same thing other people are going through too." But that's precisely the point. In a science-centered age, we're becoming a society that lacks a professional and impartial means of informing its citizenry about science—and it's happening one journalist at a time. ■

Posted By Chris Mooney On May 20, 2009 @ 12:51 p.m. In Article, Cultivating Science, Science Communication.

TAX

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the tax-right way for freelancers and other self-employed individuals to open, operate or close their business ventures, the tax and other legal consequences of getting hitched or unhitched, when and how much to remove from traditional IRAs or other tax-deferred retirement plans, and whether to make lifetime gifts of money and other kinds of property to family members or to leave the assets to them.

Also, you learn money-saving techniques that you can apply yourself or, should you decide to seek professional help, test out on your advisers. And, conceivably, those advisers might turn out to be your instructors, whom you've had an excellent chance to evaluate.

Are there some kinds of courses that should be shunned? Unquestionably, in my experience, the adage that there is no free lunch is particularly apt when it comes to no-charge seminars sponsored by brokerage houses, insurance companies, etc. Far too often, these outfits use the talks mainly as marketing tools to promote (1) themselves, (2) dubious investment vehicles and other products designed to generate lucrative commissions for themselves and dismal returns for their clients, or (3) all of the above. ■

IN MEMORIAM

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about 20 weekly and monthly journals.

John Royden Maddox was born Nov. 27, 1925, in Penllergaer, Swansea, Wales. He received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Oxford University in 1947 and a graduate degree in physics from the same school in 1952, and lectured in theoretical physics for six years at the University of Manchester. In 1955, he became a science writer for the *Manchester Guardian*. From 1964 to 1966, he was director of the Nuffield Science Teaching Project, which looked for better ways to teach science.

On his retirement from *Nature* in 1995, he was knighted. Five years later, he was named the first honorary member of the Royal Society. ■

(source: Los Angeles Times *obituary)*

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