



ScienceWriters™

National Association
of Science Writers, Inc.

Summer
2011

STUDY REVEALS
DECLINE IN
LOCAL
REPORTING

IMAGES AND
HIGHLIGHTS FROM
WCSJ2011

TREVETT FUND
FOR THE
FUTURE
ESTABLISHED

DATELINE
TOKYO:
POST DISASTER
REPORTING

THE REALITY OF
HOME OFFICE
TAX DEDUCTIONS

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FROM THE EDITOR

In June, at the World Conference of Science Journalists, I spent time with Motoko Kakubayashi of the Science Media Center of Japan. We first met in November 2010, in Asia. She remarked that Doha was the third time we had seen one another; each time in a different country (Japan, the United States, and Qatar). This says as much about the international nature of science writing today as it does about our respective wanderlust.

In addition to preliminary coverage of the Doha meeting (pages 1, 22-23), this issue offers insight by Joe Palca on NPR's decision to dispatch reporters and producers to Tokyo in the wake of Japan's natural disasters and the ongoing Fukushima nuclear power plant crisis (pages 2-3).*

Closer to home, learn more about how the Canadian Science Writers Association is bringing pressure to bear to change current government policies that bar Canadian scientists from granting interviews about taxpayer-supported research (page 15).

Where in the world will science writing take you? ■

*The fall issue of *ScienceWriters* will be devoted to full coverage of WCSJ2011.



Lynne Friedmann

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Doha Meeting Highlights

Editor's Note: The World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2011), in Doha, Qatar, was concluding as ScienceWriters was going to press. Some highlights follow. A full conference recap will appear in the fall SW issue.

The first WCSJ to be held in an Arab country attracted more than 720 delegates from 90 countries.

Fifty percent of participants were from the developing world.

Delegate diversity: Africa (21 percent); Arab countries (20 percent); Australasia (11 percent); Canada (5 percent), Europe (27 percent); Latin America (4 percent); and the U.S. (12 percent).

A program of 180 speakers from around the world with added sessions to suit the exciting revolutionary times in the Arab world.

Conference travel support to about 100 speakers and more than 200 participants, including participants in a WFSJ program that mentors and trains journalists from Africa and the Middle East.

Dramatic moments during the session about the Arab Spring and the future of science journalism in the region. None in the audience will forget hearing Arab science writers describe how they risked arrest by writing about the uprisings and risked their lives by being personally drawn into the conflict.

Scorching 115°F outdoor temperatures and overly air-conditioned buildings.

Asking the very nice tour guide at Al Jazeera "Just who's paying for the network's news coverage?" (Answer: The Emir)

SUV dune-bashing on a tour of the desert; a thrill ride worthy of a Disneyland e-ticket.

Evenings spent wandering through the maze-like Souq Waqif where resin, cardamom, and saffron perfume the air.

Discovering lemon-mint drink, a refreshing Arab version of lemonade with a fabulous chlorophyll green hue.

Swimming in the bathtub-warm green waters of the Persian Gulf.

Eight delegates ate camel at a Moroccan restaurant; 20 delegates rode camels during a desert field trip.

Feeding carrots to the world's most beautiful Arabian horses, during a field trip to the Al Shaqab equestrian breeding program.

Announcement that the Finnish Assn. of Science Editors and Journalists (FASEJ) will host the 8th World Conference of Science Journalists, in June 2013. ■

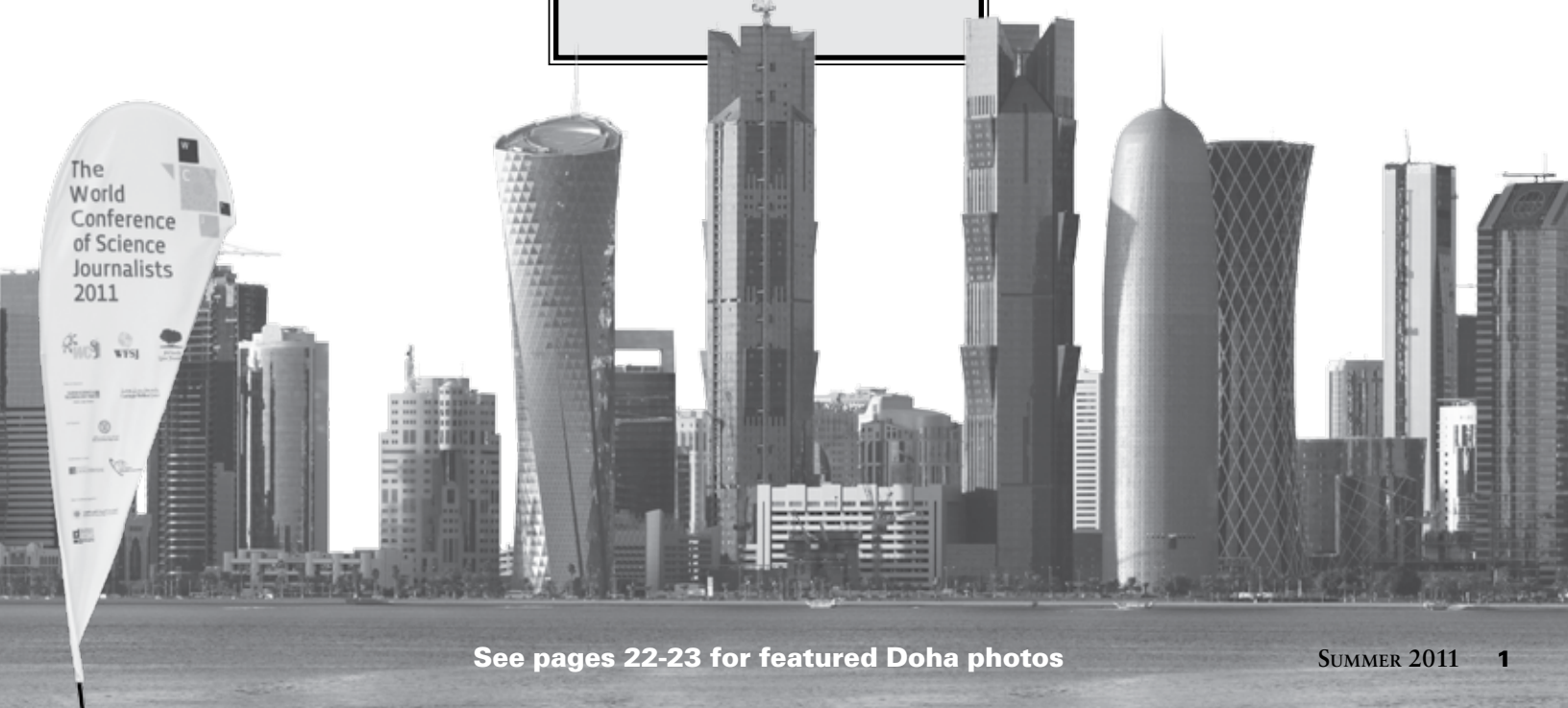
Select Links to Doha Coverage

WFSJ2011 session recaps
<http://www.wcsj2011.org/news>

Session videos on YouTube
<http://bit.ly/pYKNkl>

SciDev.Net blog
<http://bit.ly/pXA4IH>

"Arab Spring to Arab Summer,"
Columbia Journalism Review
<http://bit.ly/qO0MCc>

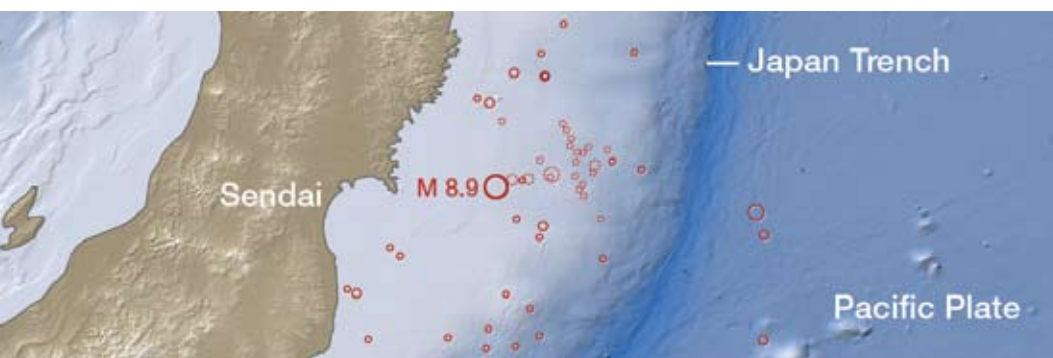


Deadline Tokyo

How NPR Covered Japan's Disasters

BY JOE PALCA

On March 11, I was in New York City because Ira Flatow had asked me to fill in for him as host of “Science Friday.” When I arrived at the NPR New York bureau around 8 in the morning, the first thing I did was check the wires. It was instantly apparent that we would have to change the show. A major earthquake and tsunami had struck northern Japan. I called senior producer Annette Heist and she agreed we should dump one of the segments we had planned, and do something about the natural disaster instead.



(left) Greg Dixon, director of “All Things Considered,” was assigned to run NPR’s Japan coverage from Tokyo. (center) Dixon and Joe Palca in action. (right) Palca speaking into a USB cable instead of a microphone during a light moment.

NASA Earth Observatory image showing the epicenter of the March 11 magnitude 9.0 earthquake 130 kilometers (80 miles) east of Sendai, Japan, which sent tsunami waves rushing into the coast of Japan and rippling out across the entire Pacific basin. The smaller circles show aftershocks (solid circles) and foreshocks (dotted) and aftershocks (solid lines) ranging from magnitudes 5 to 7.9. (sources: earthobservatory.nasa.gov and earthquake.usgs.gov)

Ross Stein, a geophysicist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park agreed to come on the program. Stein is a tsunami expert. He was the first guest when the program began that afternoon. Like most people not directly involved in the early hours of a disaster, Stein could speak only in generalities. He knew the tsunami and earthquake were large, but the scale of the destruction was not entirely clear when the show went live on the air. There was no mention of what the tsunami might have done to the nuclear power plants at Fukushima.

As I rode back to Washington the next day on the train, I wondered how the NPR science desk was going to cover this natural disaster. Richard Harris was clearly the go-to guy when it came to earthquakes. He had been on “Morning Edition Friday” and did talk about a nuclear power plant that had lost cooling water.

“We’re keeping a close eye on that,” he told host Renee Montagne.

But keeping a close eye on something half way ‘round the world is tricky. NPR no longer has a permanent base in Tokyo, and even when there was a bureau, it was small. We would have had to rely on pictures from (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) NHK and news reports from the wire services and Japanese newspapers to “keep a close eye” on what was going on in northern Japan even if the bureau had been open.

JOE PALCA IS A SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT FOR NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO.

By Saturday night, the scale of the nuclear power plant accident was becoming apparent. Coverage of the natural disaster was still the lead story, but the damage at the Fukushima plants was close behind. Guy Raz, host of “Weekend All Things Considered” told listeners that “all eyes are on that nuclear power plant in Fukushima, about 170 miles northeast of Tokyo. An explosion there earlier today destroyed at least one building. Teams of engineers are scrambling to prevent a meltdown at one of its reactors.”

But for the most part, the information about Fukushima was second or third hand. Press accounts of what was happening differed, as did accounts (such as they were) from the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), owner of the damaged plants. Japanese government sources weren’t much more help.

On Sunday morning, March 13, Richard Harris left Washington for Tokyo, followed a day later by a second NPR science correspondent, Christopher Joyce. That left me with the unenviable task of providing “the latest” for “Morning Edition Monday,” on March 14. Editor Vikki Valentine and online producer Eliza Barclay had been sifting through news reports, websites, and blogs all weekend trying to come up with as much consensus as possible about what was going on, information they fed to me that I regurgitated for a national audience. In hindsight, what I said that morning was fairly close to accurate, but it felt terrifyingly uncertain as I spoke live to America.

With Richard and Chris in Tokyo, coverage shifted there. But in truth, access to sources was not all that different from what was available in Washington. The primary advantage was that the televised news conferences were occurring during the day Tokyo time, instead of the middle of the night Washington time. With the help of translators, Chris and Richard monitored events from a room at the ANA Intercontinental Hotel, and filed stories for every show and just about every newscast. On occasion, they were able to garner information from truly knowledgeable sources, but such accurate information was frequently off-the-record, and therefore could only be used to vet the official accounts.

The biggest problem was finding something new to say for “All Things Considered.” It comes on at 4 p.m. Eastern Time, 5 a.m. in Japan. While the circumstances at the Fukushima plant were no doubt changing from moment to moment, the press briefings didn’t start until much later in the day, local Japan time. That didn’t stop “All Things Considered” from wanting “the latest news from Japan,” so a bleary Chris or Richard (and later Jon Hamilton, who relieved them) would have to come up with something they hadn’t said eight hours earlier on “Morning Edition.”

I left for Tokyo on March 31 to relieve Jon. By the time I arrived, the nuclear story had cooled down, if you’ll forgive the pun. If you had never been to Tokyo before, which was the case for me, there was little evidence by then that there had been a major natural disaster in Japan a month earlier, never mind any indication that a nuclear power plant was still not safely shut down. Yes, there were escalators that were shut off to save energy, as well as many lights that once blazed through the night. But otherwise, to the untrained eye, it was pretty much business as usual.

There were still daily briefings in Tokyo about the Fukushima plant, but they weren’t always televised, so it was a bit harder to keep up with what was going on. Every day the foreign ministry held briefings for foreign media that were either in English or included simultaneous translations, but these briefings were typically a rehash of what had been presented earlier in the day for the Japanese media. The biggest news while I was in Tokyo was a strong aftershock that shook me out of bed

... keeping
a close eye
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at around 11:30 at night. For an hour or so there were concerns about a second tsunami, but that never materialized.

There was no point in traveling to Fukushima to cover the nuclear story. No reporters were getting in to the plant. I requested a ride on one of the Department of Energy planes that were sent to Japan to help monitor airborne radiation, but my request was turned down.

Did NPR give people in the United States an accurate picture of what was happening at the Fukushima plant in Japan? I feel we did. It was a true nuclear disaster, comparable to but not as bad as Chernobyl. It was not the cataclysm some other news organizations made it out to be. But the whole experience leaves me uncomfortable. People who really knew what was going on either weren’t talking or weren’t allowed to talk, and everyone else was talking non-stop without benefit of all the facts. We’ll really know whether we did a good job when the spate of accident reports appear in the coming years. One thing I do know. We did the best we could. ■



Assessing the Space Shuttle Program

Americans paid dearly for the space shuttle. Was the investment worth it?

BY GEORGE ALEXANDER

I began covering the space shuttle project in 1972, soon after President Nixon authorized it. I had recently joined this newspaper [*Los Angeles Times*] as a science writer. And the country was enthusiastic about the idea of a reusable spacecraft, which was expected to be sturdy, economical, and reliable.

The shuttle turned out to be neither economical nor sturdy, and its reliability has been wobbly. But as I watched the shuttle *Atlantis* blast off into space on what will be the 135th and final space shuttle mission, I found myself feeling a bit nostalgic.

I was at Cape Canaveral for the shuttle *Columbia*'s first flight in April 1981, and I covered many other shuttle missions. Launches were always exhilarating, but they also meant exhausting work schedules. Afraid to miss something, we "newsies" sat up at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, where Mission Control was located, drinking terrible coffee and waiting for the intermittent crackle of an astronaut's voice from orbit.

Sometimes a report was designed for mass consumption. On the first shuttle flight, astronaut John Young spoke in a televised broadcast from *Columbia*'s cabin. "I think we really have something that's going to mean [a lot] to the nation and to the world," he said.

But most of the communications from on high were terse, cryptic comments in a lingua franca known only to astronauts

and the mission controllers: To the journalists, these fragmentary transmissions sounded something like this:

"Houston, OK, we've got the maguffin aligned and are about to activate it."

"Roger."

"But it looks like it's reading a little high."

"Copy that."

With luck, there might be a NASA public affairs person who could translate for us, but more often than not, we'd have to wait for the change-of-shift briefing to find out what a "maguffin" was and whether the high reading was newsworthy.

Even before the first shuttle launch, the program had claimed lives. Several weeks before *Columbia* took off, workers entered a nitrogen-filled shuttle chamber during a fuel test. Two of them died.

Of the 134 shuttle missions launched before this final one, two ended in tragedy: *Challenger*, which was engulfed in a fireball 73 seconds after launch in 1986; and *Columbia*, which disintegrated over Texas just 16 minutes before it was due to land at the Cape Canaveral spaceport in 2003.

There were also five missions that came gaspingly close to disaster. In each of them, during the seconds between the start of the shuttle's three liquid-fueled engines and the start of its two huge solid-propellant rocket motors, computers sensed something amiss with the engines and shut everything down, averting almost certain catastrophe.

And at least a dozen other missions could have ended badly, even fatally, because of problems that developed during flight or on takeoff or landing. There were damaged heat-shield tiles, a blown tire, brake failure, leaky chemicals.

But in the shuttle program's 30 years of flights, there were also triumphs. The Hubble Space Telescope was launched in 1990, and five later shuttles between 1993 and 2009 were successfully dispatched to repair and refurbish this wonderful instrument. Shuttles launched two planetary probes, *Magellan* and *Galileo*, which went on to Venus and Jupiter, respectively.

The five space shuttles—*Columbia*, *Challenger*, *Atlantis*, *Discovery*, and *Endeavor*—hailed hundreds of astronauts and some 3,500 tons of satellites, deep-space probes, science experiments, and prefab segments of the International Space Station into low-Earth orbit.

Indeed, over the last decade, *Atlantis*, *Discovery*, and *Endeavor* have been so given over to delivering parts, provisions and people to the station that NASA could well have been excused if it had painted the black-and-white vehicles UPS brown instead.

So, has it been worth it? The loss of 14 men and women aboard *Challenger* and *Columbia*? The \$290 billion spent building, testing, and operating the vehicles?

There aren't clear answers to these questions. Yes, the shuttles have demonstrated that humans can perform useful work in space. But they have also consumed a vast portion of NASA's budget, especially after the *Challenger* and *Columbia* disasters, when the agency had to come up with billions of dollars and several years of down time to get back on track. Some promising robotic and aeronautical programs were forced to take a back seat to the shuttle program.

In the last two decades, we've gotten markedly different returns on our investments in space: Robots have flown circles around the

GEORGE ALEXANDER WAS THE *LOS ANGELES TIMES*' SCIENCE WRITER FROM 1972 TO 1985. HE IS ALSO A PAST PRESIDENT OF NASW.

A Federal Study Finds That Local Reporting Has Waned

BY JEREMY W. PETERS AND BRIAN STELTER

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JEREMY W. PETERS AND BRIAN STELTER ARE *NEW YORK TIMES* REPORTERS.

The Information Needs of Communities

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The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age is an oft-delayed 478-page (5 MB) FCC report on the future of media. ►

Executive Summary and Overview of *The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age*

Part One—The Media Landscape

Commercial Media

1. Newspapers
2. Radio
3. TV
4. Internet
5. Mobile

Nonprofit Media

6. Public Broadcasting
7. Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access Channels
8. C-SPAN and State Public Affairs Networks
9. Satellite
10. Low Power FM
11. Religious Broadcasting
12. Nonprofit Websites
13. Foundations
14. Journalism Schools
15. The Evolving Nonprofit Media

Non-Media Players

16. Government Transparency
17. Emergency Information
18. Libraries
19. Schools

Key Cross Cutting Issues

20. News Consumption
21. Types of News
22. The Media Food Chain and the Functions of Journalism
23. Diversity
24. People with Disabilities
25. How Big is the Gap and Who Will Fill It?

Part Two—The Policy and Regulatory Landscape

26. Broadcast Radio and Television
27. Cable Television
28. Satellite Television and Radio
29. The Internet and Mobile
30. Ownership
31. Nonprofit media
32. Advertising Policy
33. Print
34. Copyright and Intellectual Property

■ ■ ■

To download the full report (5 MB) or download by chapter, visit <http://www.fcc.gov/info-needs-communities>

Barbara K. Trevett Fund for the Future Established

The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) has announced the establishment of the Barbara K. Trevett Fund for the Future, to support CASW's various educational programs, with special emphasis on new web-based initiatives.

The fund was established as a testament to its namesake's devotion to and strong advocacy on behalf of CASW as well as the science-writing community in general, during her three-plus decades as a medical and science public information/public relations specialist for non-profit institutions.

For a good portion of her career, Barbara Trevett served as head of public affairs at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine, a position that brought her into contact with many of the nation's science and medical reporters, who became beneficiaries of her untiring labors. Her dedication to reporters was most in evidence when, with an assist from longtime CASW board member Joann Rodgers, she organized and managed Press Week, a major platform for dissemination of seminal advances in mammalian genetics and molecular biology. The event is still held annually in conjunction with the Lab's Genetics Short Course. Trevett subsequently went on to manage public affairs at the Boston Medical Center with that same level of dedication and skill. In 1995 she became a founding

member of the Boston-based firm Medical Science Associates, where among other responsibilities she orchestrated press seminars for several academic institutions, including Harvard Medical School.

For CASW perhaps her greatest service

was to envision and help recruit a newly created panel of National Advisors. The National Advisors group is comprised of distinguished individuals who volunteered to raise awareness of CASW, particularly among key decision makers in the science, health, and technology sectors, and to translate that increased awareness into support for the CASW mission. Trevett is a member of the group; her husband, Kenneth P. Trevett, president and CEO of the Texas

Biomedical Research Institute, in San Antonio, serves as the panel's chair.

The Trevett Fund complements two other routes available for donors to contribute to CASW: by way of directed grants, which underwrite specific projects; and through participation in CASW's Sustaining Membership program. Sustaining members are generally large corporations, foundations, or institutions that provide substantial, long-term unrestricted support. The new fund provides a readily accessible avenue for unrestricted contributions by individual patrons.

Ben Patrusky, executive director of CASW, says the new fund will allow institutions as well as individuals to donate to CASW and at the same time pay tribute to "the extraordinary and extraordinarily selfless Ms. Trevett."

Contributions should be sent to the Barbara K. Trevett Fund for the Future, CASW, P.O. Box 910, Hedgesville, W.Va. 25427. Contributions to the Trevett fund are fully tax deductible. ■
(source: CASW)



Barbara K. Trevett serves as a CASW National Advisor to raise awareness of the organization, particularly among key decision makers.



Scientific American Honored

In May, when the winners of the 2011 National Magazine Awards were announced, *Scientific American* took top honors in the Finance, Technology, and Lifestyle Magazine category. The SciAm entry included three issues (Sept., Nov., and Dec. 2010).

The preeminent awards for magazine journalism in the United States, the National Magazine Awards were established in 1966 and are sponsored by the American Society of Magazine Editors in association with the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Each winner receives a reproduction of Alexander Calder's stabile "Elephant," the symbol of the National Magazine Awards; the original is displayed at the ASME offices in New York. National Magazine Award entry fees and ticket sales fund the Osborn Elliott-National Magazine Awards Scholarship at Columbia.

Pictured (left) is Mariette DiChristina, *Scientific American* editor in chief, receiving the ASME award. ■

(source: ASME news release)

Get a Handle on Home-Office Deductions

BY JULIAN BLOCK

Thinking of taking a home office as a tax deduction? Not so fast. Just because you can walk 20 feet from your bedroom to your work area and conduct business in your bathrobe doesn't mean the nook with the computer qualifies as a bona fide office.

Home-office deductions aggravate the IRS. Audits turn up abundant evidence that lots of freelancer writers and other self-employed individuals mistakenly claim these deductions. In fact, an aggrieved agency has gone to court repeatedly, winning support for its strict stand in rejecting write-offs for spaces supposedly set aside as home offices. So whether you're sorting out home-office complexities for the first time or are an old hand at it, don't go too far.

The law allows work-at-home-writers to claim home-office deductions only if they pass a series of tests. You must use a portion of your home exclusively and on a regular basis for work in your business. It has to be your principal place of business.

Arranging things to pass the tests lets you transform otherwise nondeductible personal expenditures (a portion of everything from home-insurance premiums to repairs to utility bills to depreciation if you own your house or a percentage of your rent) into deductible business expenses.

What's "exclusive" use? You must use the entire area—whether a single desk, a room or an entire floor—only for business and nothing else. Use the home office for any personal, family, or investment activities, and you forfeit all rights to home-office deductions.

IRS auditors are at ease when scrutinizing a deduction for an office in a room that's closed off from all non-business activities. They remain at ease when the office is just a small part of a room as long as you clearly separate the business portion from the rest—by a partition, perhaps.

Because gray areas abound, IRS examiners set no arbitrary standard for how much you must use the office to pass the regular-use test. They base their decisions on the particular circumstances. Usually, working in the office a couple of hours a day, several days a week proves sufficient; a couple of hours a week probably

doesn't pass muster. While auditors allow some leeway, look forward to a disputed deduction if you use an otherwise empty room infrequently for a purpose incidental to your business.

Your endeavor doesn't have to be a full-time business. It can be part time, as when you moonlight from your home as a writer and have a full-time job elsewhere. Examiners don't care that you devote more time to moonlighting than to your job.

Your "principal place of business" means the place where you personally meet clients or customers (phone calls don't count) or the only fixed location where you conduct your business' key administrative or management activities. There can't be another fixed location outside of your home where you conduct such activities for that business. Some IRS-approved examples of administrative or management activities: arranging appointments; billing clients, customers or patients; ordering supplies; maintaining records; forwarding orders; and preparing reports.

There's an additional, even tougher requirement for employees who do office work at their homes. Most employees are unable to satisfy the requirement that they maintain the at-home office for the convenience of their employer—"convenience" meaning that otherwise their jobs disappear. Employees can't maintain the office for their own convenience—for instance, to complete reports at night or on weekends. Dubious

IRS examiners will want to see a confirming letter that says, essentially, "No home office, no job."

For more information, visit **houselogic.com**. At the site, click "Taxes & Incentives." Next, click "Home Office Tax Deductions: Tips to Get It Right" for a slide show that pairs attention-getting images with brief explanations of allowable expenses for writers operating businesses from their homes. The explanations alert viewers to opportunities to save taxes this year and get a head start for next year. ■

...lots of freelance writers and other self-employed individuals mistakenly claim these deductions.



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Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world
of science writing

BY RICK BORCHELT

Now Tweet This! Not all social media are created equal for news purposes, these studies find.

We all know that social media have become all but ubiquitous as part of our daily news content stream, especially for younger audiences. But has it changed—or is it changing—the work of the journalism and PIO enterprise? Or merely given a glitzy, high-tech edge to the same issues we’ve always dealt with?

In one very real sense, it’s hard to say—the first Tweet was sent only five years ago, and even the extremely rapid adoption of this technology, and its congeners Facebook and other social media, argues that they may represent only transient forms of communication in a world prone to adopting new technologies. It’s difficult to conceive of a new technology like Facebook or Twitter so completely reordering the news business in the short time conventional wisdom has it—and these three studies call into question whether journalists and PIOs use new and social media in ways that are really that different after all.

■ ■ ■

Cremedas, M. and S. Lysack (2011). “New Media” Skills Competency Expected of TV Reporters and Producers: A Survey. *Electronic News* 5:41.

In the first of the reports in this column, Cremedas and Lysack simply categorized the extent to which news organizations have added social media to their newsroom activities. I was prepared to see rapid adoption of social media in the news business, but this—even though it’s already outdated, relying as it did on a survey conducted in 2009—surprised me.

We know from other data sources that interactive media use is high in TV newsroom environments. The Radio and Television News Directors Association reported in 2010 that almost all (98 percent) of television stations had websites with local news. As early as 2008, some 60 percent of local television newsroom staff performed some mixture of web and

broadcast duties. Cremedas and Lysack set about documenting how this affects the working life of the TV news professional.

The authors surveyed the newsrooms of more than 500 local affiliates of ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox that present local news. Their aim was to “examine the current state of online news production at local television stations— what is being produced and who is producing it—and what emphasis news directors place on ‘new media’ skills when making hiring decisions.”

*Luddites need not
despair completely,
traditional newsroom skills
still hold sway.*

The integration of news staff in web production was virtually seamless, the authors found. Practically everyone in the newsroom these days is expected to generate web content, although a surprisingly disproportionate share of the burden falls to reporters and newscast producers rather than on low-level staff or interns. This work mix is reflected in the fact that, when asked what kind of new hires they’re looking for, newsroom executives in today’s market overwhelmingly prefer to hire people with existing web skills, although not necessarily advanced skills like HTML coding. But Luddites need not despair completely; traditional newsroom skills still hold sway: “More important for job applicants, according to numerous news managers, are fundamental journalism skills such as critical thinking, clarity of news writing, videography, and editing,” the authors report.

The kind of news content that stations are posting to their websites is also telling. In the early days of news websites, the content focus was expansion of amplifi-

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



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

cation of news stories after they'd run on air. Today, two thirds of the stations "always" post breaking news, the study found, while about a quarter of the stations report that they "often" do it. Only 8 percent of stations "sometimes" or "never" post breaking news before the regular newscast.

As the authors note: "Maintaining a station's website also means many newsroom managers have changed their thinking when it comes to breaking news. Now the priority isn't only getting the story on the air, but also, for the majority of stations, making sure breaking news is reported on the website. With the trend of increasing online news consumer use, not to mention the emergence of news delivery to mobile devices, it will be interesting to see if priorities shift again and the web becomes the priority for reporting breaking news alerts."



Armstrong, C.L. and F. Gao (2010) Now Tweet This: How News Organizations Use Twitter. *Electronic News* 4:218.

Armstrong and Gao tell the story of how, in October 2007, wildfires raged throughout San Diego and southern California. KPBS, the NPR affiliate, had been posting updates to its website when its server crashed and left station personnel posting to Twitter how quickly the fire was spreading and which areas were in imminent danger. Those 140 character updates provided some key information to those who needed to know, in a time when the quick spread of information was paramount.

... Twitter has become in a very short time a primary means of reporting the news.

"That event was one of the first examples of how journalism can use Twitter to fulfill one of its key missions, which is to provide information to citizens," the authors say—and Twitter has become in a very short time a primary means of reporting the news.

Armstrong and Gao were interested in a particular question around Twitter use: "the kinds of information and sources used in tweets from news organizations, as, to some extent, these choices might suggest some agenda on the part of the producers." To examine potential differences, they

compared how newspapers and television news organizations use Twitter—did the two differ because newspapers are often still focused on printed words, while broadcasting still places emphasis on visual communication?

The authors examined tweets from six newspapers and three television stations that were tweeted in late 2009. The nine represented different areas of the country, and included a mix of local, regional, and national outlets. All had to have started their Twitter feeds before the beginning of 2009.

Not surprisingly, crime (26 percent) was the most frequently tweeted topic, followed by public affairs (22 percent) and lifestyle (17 percent); the least tweeted topic was international news (8 percent). Science and health were included in the "lifestyle" rankings.

Crime news was most frequently tweeted by regional media (41 percent) but least frequently by national media (10 percent); local media (30 percent) were more likely to tweet lifestyle news than were national media (16 percent) or regional media (11 percent), Armstrong and Gao found. In business news, regional media tweeted a business story in 16 percent of tweets, more than double that of local or national media. Comparing newspaper and TV, they said, statistically significant difference was only found for crime news, with a higher frequency of being tweeted by TV news (38 percent) than by newspapers (21 percent).

In stark contrast to the situation Cremedas and Lysack found with websites, Armstrong and Gao found that only 5 percent of tweets by news organizations focused on breaking news. "Codors found that the goal of most tweets (86.7 percent) was to drive traffic to the news sites, with only 4.7 percent focusing on breaking news."

Perhaps, most surprising in their findings, the authors reveal, was that the focus on names and faces in the news was split in their analysis. "Most journalism and news writing instructors would say that individuals are paramount for news coverage and that people make news stories. Ironically, our findings don't support this idea"—although regional media seemed to include mentions of individuals in many of their tweets (55 percent), local (35 percent) and national (38 percent) media were more likely not to reference individuals in tweets.

"Overall, our results indicate that while these agencies are employing Twitter, they don't seem to be using it in innovative ways," the authors conclude. While Twitter allows for instantaneous updates, in a way that print newspapers desperately need to reach their public, they found that "the main use of Twitter is to drive traffic to the news site...and that very few tweets were used to provide breaking news or serve in the social responsibility role."



*As of June 2010,
there were at least 25,000
nonprofits using Twitter...*

Waters, R. D. and J. Y. Jamal (2011 in press). Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of nonprofit organizations' Twitter updates. *Public Relations Review* (2011), doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.03.002

So that's what's happening in newsrooms, but how is Twitter faring in the nonprofit world?

As of June 2010, there were at least 25,000 nonprofits using Twitter, Waters and Jamal note. But how they use it, and with what success, is practically unknown. To get a better sense of nonprofit Twitter use, the authors surveyed the top 200 *SCHOLARLY PURSUITS* continued on page 25

COLLABORATING

The next Scholarly Pursuits column will introduce collaborator Ben Carollo, a new NASW member who works with me at NIH. We'll be co-writing the column, so look for a more, ah, *youthful* look to the column! And as always, please let us know if you find a particularly insightful item in the research literature that our colleagues would find useful. — RB

BOOKS

BY AND FOR MEMBERS



Ruth Winter
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or email ruthwrite@aol.com

Send material about new books

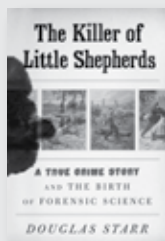
Microsoft Word files only. Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

Annoying: The Science of What Bugs Us
by Joe Palca (NASW)
and Flora Lichtman,
published by Wiley



NPR Science Correspondent Joe Palca and Flora Lichtman, multimedia editor for NPR's "Talk of the Nation: Science Friday" take readers on a scientific quest through psychology, evolutionary biology, anthropology, and other disciplines to uncover the truth about being annoyed. What is the recipe for annoyance? For starters, it should be temporary, unpleasant, and unpredictable, like a boring meeting or mosquito bites. For example, why is that guy talking on his cellphone over there so annoying? For one, it's unpleasant and distracting. Second, we don't know, and can't control, when it will end. Third, we can't *not* listen! Our brains are hardwired to pay close attention to people talking and follow the conversations. The loud chatter pulls our brains away to listen to half of something we're never going to understand. In *Annoying*, Palca and Lichtman write about annoyingness in any context: business, politics, romance, science, sports, and more. ■ *Reach Palca and Lichtman at doctorannoying@gmail.com. The book's website is www.annoyingbook.com. Publicist for the book is Matt Smollon at mmsollon@wiley.com and 201-748-6339.*

The Killer of Little Shepherds: A True Crime Story and the Birth of Forensic Science
by Douglas Starr (NASW)
published by Random House



Starr, co-director of Boston University's Center for Science and Medical Journalism, juxtaposes the crimes of French serial killer Joseph Vacher and the achievements of famed criminologist Dr. Alexandre Lacassagne during France's *belle époque*. From 1894 to 1897, Vacher is thought to have raped, killed, and mutilated at least 25 people, though he would confess to only 11 murders. Lacassagne, who headed the department of legal medicine at the university in Lyon, was a pioneer in crime-scene analysis, body decomposition, and early profiling, and investigated suspicious deaths, all in an era when rural autopsies were often performed on the victim's dinner table. Lacassagne's contributions to the burgeoning field of forensic science, as well as the persistence of investigating magistrate Emile Fourquet, who connected crimes while crisscrossing the French countryside, eventually brought Vacher to justice. Starr creates tension worthy of a thriller. In Lacassagne, he portrays a man determined to understand the "how" behind some of humanity's most depraved and perhaps take us one step closer to the "why." ■ *Starr can be reached at dstarr@bu.edu. Publicist is Lena Khidrityskaya at lkhidritskaya@randomhouse.com and 212-572-2103.*

America's Medicis: The Rockefellers and Their Astonishing Cultural Legacy
by Suzanne Loeb (NASW)
published by Harper



Science writer Loeb, a Brooklyn, N.Y. freelance, chronicles the collecting and funding exploits of oil heir John D. Rockefeller, Jr.; his wife, Abby; and their children, whose imprint on 20th-century art is indelible. Not only did Abby cofound New York's Museum of Modern Art, but the family underwrote a vast set of initiatives, including the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum, Colonial Williamsburg, influential collections, and museums of medieval art, Mexican art, African art, and American folk art. Loeb generally applauds Rockefeller tastes, downplays the dynamic of plutocratic vanity, and shrugs off urbanist criticisms of the Rockefeller-led Lincoln Center. But, how does a science writer go from writing about arthritis to writing about art? "Art was always my avocation," Loeb said. Trained as a chemist, she became a science writer and book author. While traveling for the Arthritis Foundation, she gathered material that led to the publication of a guidebook to American art museums. The title of her current book evolved from an observation by *Vogue* editor, Frank Crowninshield, that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. became "the greatest friend and patron of the arts since Lorenzo de Medici" when he commissioned art for the construction of Rockefeller Center during the midst of the Great Depression. ■ *Loeb can be reached at suzylo@aol.com and 718-875-2622. Press representative is Beth Harper at beth.harper@harpercollins.com and 212-207-7985.*

Bottled Lightning: Superbatteries, Electric Cars, and the New Lithium Economy by Seth Fletcher (NASW) published by Hill and Wang



Seth Fletcher, senior associate editor of *Popular Science*, takes us on a fascinating journey introducing us to the key players and ideas in an industry with the power to reshape the world. Electric cars are real—see the Tesla Roadster, Chevy Volt, and hybrids like the Nissan Leaf and Toyota Prius—but the drive to create safe, lightweight, and long-lasting batteries to power them has been anything but smooth. In the mid-1800s, Fletcher says, clean, cheap lead-acid batteries were developed that by the early 20th century were preferred for use in automobiles over “unreliable, complicated, loud, and dirty” gasoline-powered cars—until it came time to refuel. Thomas Edison tried to invent a safe, longer lived battery, even experimenting with small amounts of lithium, but then Charles Kettering patented an automatic starter for gas engines, and the battle was lost. Smog and 1970s gas shortages revived interest in electric cars—and lithium batteries. But obstacles remain: Bolivia, Chile, and China have less than optimal political leadership and minimal infrastructure to safely mine and process the poisonous ore. More importantly, many technical challenges must be overcome before electric cars and buses become everyday modes of transportation. But Fletcher remains optimistic. ■ *Contact Fletcher at seth.fletcher@bonniercorp.com. Book publicist is Stephen Weil at Stephen.weill@fsgbooks.com and 212-206-5338.*

First Contact: Scientific Breakthroughs in the Hunt for Life Beyond Earth by Marc Kaufman (NASW) published by Simon & Schuster



Kaufman, a *Washington Post* science reporter, states: “Before the end of this century, and perhaps much sooner than that, scientists will determine that life exists elsewhere in the universe.” It’s an arresting idea, and Kaufman delivers an entertaining look at the science supporting it. Astrobiologists, who study the possible forms that extraterrestrial life may take, are “part Carl Sagan, part Indiana Jones, part Watson and Crick, part CSI,” Kaufman notes. The work requires interlocking knowledge of physics, astrophysics, biology, chemistry, and planetary geology. Microbes we’ve found living in extreme habitats once believed to be inhospitable to life—glaciers, geysers, deep mines and caves, and volcanoes—prove that we must expand our ideas about what makes something “alive.” The only reason we haven’t found life on other planets or moons before, Kaufman says, is that we haven’t known what to look. Carbon-based life is possible elsewhere, either seeded by meteorites made of organic carbon or created by vibrant lightning-fed chemistry. But extraterrestrial life is more likely to be very different from us. Taking readers from the South Pole to the northernmost tip of Norway, from the world’s deepest mines to Mars, Kaufman explores the science that may change the human perspective more than anything that has come before. ■ *Kaufman’s website is <http://habitablezones.com>. Book publicist is Alexis Welby at alexis.welby@simonandschuster.com.*

The Universe At Your Fingertips 2.0 (Edited by) Andrew Fraknoi (NASW) published by Astronomical Society of the Pacific



This is the first DVD-ROM sent for NASW review since I’ve been writing this column. I expect a lot more in the future in some form or other. Anyway, Fraknoi is the editor of *Astronomy Education Review*. The DVD is an expanded and updated edition of its manual for teaching astronomy and space science. Among the wealth of material the DVD-ROM contains:

- 33 classroom-tested, hands-on activities
 - 43 articles setting out background information about astronomy
 - 9 articles on teaching and learning space science in the 21st century
 - 17 guides to the best published and web resources on key topics
 - 12 short video instructions for some of the key activities and ideas
 - Some modern astronomical images and a guide on how to find many more on the web.
- The DVD-ROM also presents fun activities, including “Mars Opposition Dance” and “The Top Tourist Sights in the Solar System.” ■ *Franknoi can be reached at fraknoiandrew@finda.edu and 659-949-7288.*

The New Cool: A Visionary Teacher, His FIRST Robotics Team, and the Ultimate Battle of Smarts by Neal Bascomb published by Crown.



Called “a nail-biting thrill ride for techies and armchair engineers” by *Kirkus Reviews*, *The New Cool*, by veteran journalist and bestselling author Neal Bascomb is the astonishing and inspiring story of a team of high school seniors and their mentor who come together not only to exercise their athletic prowess but to build a machine that will compete in the most heated, sophisticated robotics competition in the world. The *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition, sponsored by genius inventor Dean Kamen in hopes of jump-starting American innovation for the next generation, has become a worldwide phenomenon—and regularly spurs students and teachers to accomplishments they never dreamed possible. *The New Cool* chronicles the students’ efforts in creating their robot—overcoming their lack of experience, resources, and time (not to mention the Bad News Bears quality of their team). *The New Cool* is also a guide to what the future of education needs to be and how the United States can marshal its young in the fields of science, technology, math, and engineering. ■ *Contact Neal via his website www.nealbascomb.com. Book publicist is Jill Browning at jibrowning@randomhouse.com and 212-572-6182.*



NASW President
Nancy Shute
 Freelance
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President's Letter

I'M STILL SHAKING SAND OUT OF MY SUITCASE, HAVING JUST RETURNED FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS. I'M THRILLED TO REPORT THAT DESPITE ALL THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN MOVING A CONFERENCE OF THIS SIZE AND SCOPE FROM CAIRO TO DOHA, QATAR, THE ORGANIZERS AND SPONSORS DELIVERED AN OUTSTANDING MEETING. THE QATAR FOUNDATION DID A BANG-UP JOB ON LOGISTICS AND PROVIDED SPECTACULAR VENUES BUILT FOR SEVERAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES THAT HAVE, IN RECENT YEARS, OPENED BRANCH CAMPUSES IN QATAR.

As if the locale wasn't exotic enough, the conference opening dinner included yellow coffee and fresh dates. Field trips included visits to Al Jazeera, the Al Shaqab Arabian horse-breeding program, and state-of-the-art science and technology facilities.

Former NASW president Deb Blum put together a world-class program. And our co-hosts, the Arab Science Journalists Association, helped ensure that almost half of the 700 attendees came from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In all, more than 90 countries were represented. When it became clear that the meeting had to be relocated, NASW pushed hard to keep the conference in the Arab world, and I think the attendance figures reflect

the success of that effort. Many NASW members participated as session producers, moderators, and speakers.

As the sessions unfolded, I was struck by the difficulties that science journalists face outside the United States; not just difficulties finding sources and data, but threats to themselves and their families for covering stories unpopular with authorities, like exposes of bogus AIDS cures. I learned a lot, and look forward to learning more from these outstanding journalists in the future.

Fortunately, we've got our own annual forum for sharing big ideas and honing skills: ScienceWriters2011. This year we'll meet in Flagstaff, Ariz., from Oct. 14 to 18. We're teaming up as usual with the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing and its New Horizons in Science briefings.

NASW Vice President Peggy Girshman and her intrepid workshop committee have put together a nutrient-rich program for our one-day professional development workshops. Topics including structuring the long-form article, how to sell a story that won't let go, handling crises at research institutions, new tools for turning data into compelling stories and graphics, balancing social media and real life, and writing for non-science publications. Every time I attend the workshops I'm rewarded with new story ideas and challenged to do my job better. Then there's the pleasure of meeting new faces as well as Twitter buddies (in real life).

Flagstaff does not have sandstorms like the one I saw drape Doha in a gauzy beige scarf. Flagstaff does have Northern Arizona University, our hosts for this meeting, and a picturesque setting in the Arizona high desert. Some terrific field trips are in the works for ScienceWriters2011, including a trip to the Grand Canyon. And as always, there will be time to network with fellow science writers from near and far. So bring your notebook (or your tablet device) and hiking boots. I'll see you in Flagstaff! ■



Flagstaff, Ariz. is a gateway to the Grand Canyon and the alpine home to Northern Arizona University, Lowell Observatory, and Route 66.



Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
CYBRARIAN@NASW.ORG

Cyberbeat

IT'S BEEN A BUSY SPRING FOR OUR ONLINE SCIENCEWRITERS WORK AS WE TRY TO DEVELOP CONTENT FOR THE WEBSITE AND EXPAND OUR PRESENCE ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER.

In late May, we surpassed 2,000 Twitter followers (<http://www.Twitter.com/ScienceWriters>) and were approaching 900 fans on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/SciWri>). And since February, we've been cross-posting all new front-page content from the website to those two services.

We're finding that those services give us an easy way to expand our outreach to members while also opening new lines of communication with non-members. According to Facebook, its average user spends 25 minutes per day on its service, and half of its users return daily. By linking to our website content from Facebook and Twitter, we hope to attract more users to our site and entice many of them, if qualified, to become members.

Our new website content includes a collection of syllabi for college science writing courses (see the "Teaching science writing" section) and updated legal advice for freelancers (in the "All about freelancing" section). We also have member Tabitha M. Powledge's "On science blogs this week" feature every Friday, and a brief post most other days with news, analysis, or advice relevant to science writing.

Here's a sampling of some of our most popular daily posts so far: "Time for change in science journalism?" (1036 reads); "Star science writer takes aim at *Nature*" (390 reads); "How John McPhee does what he does" (366 reads); and "How was Bin Laden's identity verified?" (602 reads). You can log in to add comments on either the website or Facebook, and re-tweet with your comments on Twitter.

We invite suggestions for new website content (especially if you're willing to write it!), as well as pointers to other web

Dispatches FROM THE Director



Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG

Living in the San Francisco Bay Area lulls one into keeping a jacket handy at all times. So, when I disembarked the plane at Phoenix recently, on my way to a site visit for the fall meeting, I received an intense reminder that it is almost summer. Fortunately, Flagstaff, the location of ScienceWriters2011, is routinely 20 to 30 degrees cooler than Phoenix proper. An elevation gain of some 6,000 feet will do that.

The drive north proved exceptionally straightforward with some notable inclines. A simple turn onto I-17N, which conveniently turns into the main road of Flagstaff some 140 miles later, makes it a straight shot to the High Country Conference Center. Those who want to leave the driving to someone else to better enjoy the stark change in scenery, from Saguaros to Ponderosas, can book a shuttle from the airport direct to Flagstaff. It requires advance planning, but the round-trip fare is remarkably reasonable at around \$80. Or, for the adventurous, there is a very small airport in Flagstaff served by commuter flights.

Registration for
ScienceWriters2011
opens on August 17 at
sciencewriters2011.org.

Book early to
guarantee your spot
and save money.

Flagstaff is a quintessential college town (read: plenty of great food, good bars, and good music) surrounded by the forests and mountains of the San Francisco range. Our hosts at Northern Arizona University have planned several field trips to take advantage of proximity to the Grand Canyon and surrounds and will be providing an evening reception at the Lowell Observatory. In addition to the myriad downtown food options within walking distance,

The Drury Inn, our conference hotel, will make sure you don't go hungry. Guests staying there will enjoy breakfast, and I don't mean one of those wimpy continental breakfasts. The Drury rolls out sausage, French toast, yogurt, and fruit, for a real buffet each morning. There is also a daily happy hour with complimentary drinks, hot dogs, chips, and other nibbles.

We can expect temperatures in the 70s and 80s in early October, though the desert cools off quickly in the evening. I'll be bringing a jacket again. And a sense of adventure. ■

Destination Arizona

content that we can use for our daily posts. Just send them to cybrarian@nasw.org. Or use the site's "member blogs" feature to write and publish your own posts.

Finally, an apology, coupled with an appeal.

Over Memorial Day weekend, we made more than a dozen upgrades to the software (Drupal) that runs our website. As a result of a bug in one of those upgrades, some users' browsers got confused, making them unable to log in. Please accept our apologies if you were affected.

Now the appeal: The upgrade happened on Sunday, but no one let us know about the resulting problems (which didn't affect everybody) until Thursday night. After a lot of scrambling, we put a solution into place on Saturday. But we lost Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

So in the future, when you run into problems with the site or any other NASW online function—and you're sure your connection is working—please don't hesitate to let us know. Just send email to cybrarian@nasw.org with a cc to Tinsley Davis at director@nasw.org. That will help us respond faster to any future problems.

Now to the lists:

NASW-TALK

A'ndrea Elyse Messer, your humble deputy cybrarian, being a person of elevated taste and sound judgment, was despondent in mid-May when her IT department confiscated her Windows PC and forced her to start using one of those awful Mac things.

The worst part may have been giving up her cherished WordPerfect, Paradox, and Quattro Pro. (Wait a minute: Since when are those Microsoft products?) In any case, she quickly did what any reasonable person would do and asked the list for recommended substitutes.

Several respondents suggesting using a PC emulator, such as Parallels, but that wasn't an option in the Penn State universe. Neither was bringing in her laptop and copying files back and forth via a USB drive.

Here's a roundup of other suggestions:

- **Bean** (<http://www.bean-osx.com/Bean.html>), "which has a simple interface and gives live word counts. But it's not fully Word-compatible." (Tanya Kucak)
- **Scrivener** (<http://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php>): "It's a dream to write in (and very easy to learn). It doesn't have a lot of formatting ability though." (Tabitha M. Powledge)
- **Nisus** (<http://www.nisus.com>): "I use the stripped down Nisus Writer Express, which will open old WordPerfect (Mac) files, but Pro has many more features." (Jeff Hecht)
- **Neo Office** (<http://www.neooffice.org/neojava/en/index.php>): "Neo Office is the Mac equivalent of the open-source Open Office." (Greg Lester)
- **WriteRoom** (<http://www.hogbaysoftware.com/products/writeroom>): "If you want something that looks like WordPerfect 5.1." (Lester).
- **Pages** (<http://www.apple.com/iwork/pages/>): "A joy to work with. I use it for stuff that requires graphics and serious layout, Nisus Pro for just writing." (Joel Shurkin)
- **Mellel** (<http://www.mellel.com/>): "It is a bit complicated to learn, completely solid and you can do just about anything format-wise with it. Very good with foreign languages." (Shurkin)

To read more, search the NASW-Talk archives for the thread "word processing on Mac."

NASW-PR

In an age when scientific studies can have dozens, even hundreds, of co-authors, should all of them be named in the news release? Can they? How? Those were questions posed by Buffalo State's Mary Durlak in early May. The answers suggested she's not the only one struggling with the issue.

Several respondents said they typically include all the names at the end of the release, but use a strict merit system in deciding which ones get quoted. Siobhan E. Gallagher of Tufts University elaborated on the reasoning:

"What I finally decided is that I am *not* comfortable not mentioning the other authors and their institutions. Science is usually a team sport. Someone has to be quoted but it doesn't mean we can't give some acknowledgement to the team. So, at some point, I decided to start adding a paragraph, at the end of the news release, with the other authors and their affiliations. It can be a royal pain to do so. I am working on a news release with an international team right now, and I think it took me almost as long to figure out the degrees and correct affiliations (the ones that the journals provide are usually all jumbled) as it did to draft the news release."

Greg Lester of the Wistar Institute said it's also important to remember that "the press isn't the only audience" for news releases.

"First, mentioning the grad students and postdocs who actually do all the work is just a nice thing to do ... Second, when you can point to other laboratories within your institution you demonstrate collaboration, which is also nice. And, third, acknowledging co-authors at other institutions prevents peevish emails to your scientist from said co-authors."

To read more, search the NASW-PR archives for the thread "names of researchers." ■

News from Afar

Canadian Science Writers protest Government's Muzzling of Scientists

BY EMILY CHUNG

The party leaders vying to form the next Canadian government are being urged to "take off the muzzles" from federal scientists.

A group representing 500 science journalists and communicators across Canada sent an open letter, on April 25, to Conservative leader Stephen Harper, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff, NDP leader Jack Layton and Green Party leader Elizabeth May documenting recent instances where they say federal scientists have been barred from talking about research funded by taxpayers.

"We urge you to free the scientists to speak," the letter said. "Take off the muzzles and eliminate the script writers and allow scientists—they do have Ph.D.s after all—to speak for themselves."

Kathryn O'Hara, (then) president of the association, said openness and transparency are issues that haven't come up much in the election campaign, and her group felt it was important to ask about them.

The federal government spends billions each year on

EMILY CHUNG IS A SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WRITER FOR THE CBC NEWS.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

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

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

**May 7-10, 2012 • Planet Under Pressure: New
Knowledge, New Solutions,** London, United Kingdom.
<http://www.igbp.net/page.php?pid=531>

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

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

scientific research, and taxpayers must be able to examine the results, she said, otherwise, "how can you get a real sense of ... value in money going toward science?"

The public also needs to be able to see whether government policy is based on evidence uncovered using taxpayer money, she added.

"In the last few years we've seen—under the Harper government, at least—a real concerted effort to keep controls on what the evidence is saying," O'Hara said.

The letter included examples of cases where federal scientists were the lead authors of high-profile papers on salmon and climate change, but were not permitted to give interviews. O'Hara added that when scientists can't answer questions, it is difficult for journalists to do a good job covering their research, and the public could end up misinformed.

The letter noted that all political parties "repeatedly make promises to promote government openness and accountability" and asked the party leaders to explain how they would guarantee freer channels of communication.

O'Hara said she hopes the federal leaders will acknowledge that there is a problem and that it is important to disseminate government science to the public.

The association held talks last year with senior bureaucrats in an effort to gain "timely access" to federal scientists who had published articles in journals or presented papers at conferences, O'Hara added, but afterward, "nothing changed substantially."

As of Tuesday afternoon (April 26), O'Hara had not heard back from any of the party leaders about the letter.

However, Marc Garneau, Liberal candidate for Westmount-Ville-Marie and the Liberal critic for industry, told CBC News that things would change under a Liberal government for the majority of topics that don't pose privacy or security risks.

"We would remove the gag order that's been put on our scientists," he said. "We believe that a healthy civil service should allow its scientists to speak as long as they don't get into policy."

As of late Tuesday afternoon, representatives of the Conservatives and the NDP had not responded to a request for comment.

"Canadian Science Writers Protest Government's Muzzling of Scientists," *CBC News online*, posted April 26, 2011.

■ ■ ■

Examples of Restricted Access to Canadian Researchers

In January, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) muzzled B.C.-based scientist Kristina Miller. Her research, suggesting viral infections may be compromising the health of salmon, was published in the journal *Science* on Jan. 14. According to a media advisory sent by *Science's* media office to hundreds of journalists around the world, Miller was available for interviews that could be arranged by DFO media officer Diane Lake. Journalists from such outlets as *Time* magazine and the *Globe and Mail* requested interviews with Miller. But in the end, DFO granted no interviews with Miller. When pressed for an explanation, DFO came up with the rather flimsy excuse that there might be a possible conflict of interest because Miller was to testify at the Cohen Commission into the collapse of salmon stocks in the Fraser River. Meanwhile, Miller's co-author on the *Science* report, Scott Hinch, at the University of British Columbia, had no problem being interviewed by journalists even though he too was to testify at the Cohen Commission.

Feb. 17, the British journal *Nature* published a cover story on the human contribution to more-intense precipitation extremes by Seung-Ki Min, Xuebin Zhang, Francis W. Zwiers & Gabriele C. Hegerl. Though the lead author was Environment Canada (EC) researcher Min, it was Zwiers, formerly of Environment Canada and now at the University of Victoria, who participated in a telebriefing for journalists organized by *Nature* and did the bulk of the media interviews on this subject.

On April 5, the American Geophysical Union sent out an email alerting science journalists to newsworthy papers published in *Geophysical Research Letters*. Topping the list was a study by an Environment Canada team that concludes "dangerous" 2° Celsius warming in the global temperature may be unavoidable by 2100. The study warned that "it is unlikely that warming can be limited to the 2° C target agreed to in the 2009 Copenhagen Accord" since immediate reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions are required. Several of the co-authors were in their offices and available to give interviews, but they told reporters that requests for interviews had to go through Environment Canada's media office in Ottawa. Interviews were not granted. The story—minus any expert comment from EC—appeared in *The Vancouver Sun*. ■

(source: Canadian Science Writers Association, www.sciencewriters.ca)

SCIENCEWRITERS WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Mail to:
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Pam Frost Gorder
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Our Gang

Ivan Amato is happy to announce the launch of the new D.C. Science Café at the D.C. venue Busboys and Poets. Sponsored by the D.C. Science Writers Association, with encouragement from Busboys and Poets' owner Andy Shallal, the cafe provides a regular channel for unmediated discussion between the public and members, observers, and others who pay attention to the scientific enterprise. Each event features specialty drinks apropos of the evening. At the first event in May, participants sipped Big Bang and Dark Energy cocktails as they engaged in a facilitated discussion with Nobel laureate John Mather. "It was standing room only," Amato says, "and a fine moment in the city." Suggest future speakers and cocktails at ivanamato61@gmail.com.

June 1 marked the beginning of **Kevin Begos'** tenure as Pittsburgh correspondent for the Associated Press. A former Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT, Begos was statehouse reporter for the *Tampa Tribune* and a correspondent and investigative reporter for the *Winston-Salem (N.C.) Journal*. He's also reported from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Uganda, and Mexico. Send him a note at kbegos@nasw.org to welcome him to America's heartland.

Freelancer **Elia Ben-Ari** joined the National Cancer Institute's *Cancer Bulletin*, a biweekly e-newsletter, as a contributing writer late last year. Now the National Association of Government Communicators has awarded the *Bulletin* first place in the E-Newsletter category of the 2011 Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Awards. The annual competition recognizes superior government communication products and those who produce them. Ben-Ari adds, "The *Bulletin* staff is a great group of people, and I'm delighted to be part of the team." Send congratulations to ebenari@nasw.org.

Freelancer **Beryl Lief Benderly** has won the 2011 Iris Molotsky Award for Excellence in Coverage of Higher Education, given by the American Association of University Professors, for "The Real Science Gap," which was a *Miller-McCune* cover story. The judges were "unanimous in their praise of the writing and research" in the "convincing and compelling" article and added that Beryl "should be praised for [her] investigation of a little known and unpublicized, yet very serious issue: The disconnect between the popular belief in the lack of able young scientists and the reality of the lack of jobs for them," according to the prize letter. You can read the story at <http://bit.ly/mjaKez> and congratulate Beryl at Blbink@aol.com.

David Bricker has left Indiana University—where over the course of nine years he helped transform a no-science public relations office into a robust science communications operation—to become manager of public relations for The Methodist

Hospital's DeBakey Heart and Vascular Center and Research Institute, in Houston. Write to him at brickerd@indiana.edu.

Catherine Dold is branching out from environmental and health topics to write about hiking and other outdoor activities on her new blog at GoodHiker.com. The site also features her own Certified Good Hiker Kit, which includes a fun fill-in-the-blanks "class" that teaches kids how to "have fun, stay safe, and tread lightly" while hiking, as well as a guide for parents and certificates for the kids. Share trail exploits with her at cathy@catherinedold.com.

Drexel University has welcomed **Rachel Ewing** as a news officer covering public health, nursing, biology, chemistry, and physics. "It's an exciting time to work in the sciences at Drexel," she says. "We just announced a new partnership with the Academy of Natural Sciences, in Philadelphia, the nation's oldest natural history museum and a leading center for research in environmental science." Ewing previously worked at Penn Medicine. Write to her at raewing@drexel.edu.

The Emma Willard School (Troy, NY) has appointed **Megan Galbraith** as director of strategic communications. She is the principal of Megan Galbraith & Associates, a firm she founded that specializes in strategic communications, branding, and marketing for not-for-profit organizations. Write to her at megangalbraithassociates@gmail.com.

Among this year's crop of Knight Science Journalism Fellows at MIT is **Eli Kintisch**, a policy reporter at *Science* magazine in Washington. His beat includes climate, energy, congress, and federal research, and his book *Hack the Planet: Science's Best Hope—or Worst Nightmare—for Averting Climate Catastrophe* came out last year. Send him best wishes for the year at elikint@gmail.com.

After three years at Earthwatch Institute, **Kristen M. Kusek** has been promoted to director of scientific and public outreach. As such, she's taken on a global role that focuses explicitly on science communications, and she'll spearhead the institute's foray into "brand journalism." Get the details at kkusek@earthwatch.org.

The summer issue of *American Entomologist* features a story by **Richard Levine** on the 5,000 Insect Genome Initiative. Levine is communications program manager at Entomological Society of America (ESA). While he normally edits the ESA newsletter and creates online publications, videos, and press releases for the society, this is the first time a magazine available to the general public has carried his byline. Of the insect genome initiative Levine says, "the topic is an interesting one, and it could change the field of entomology in five to 10 years." Check it out, and drop him a line at richlev@comcast.net.

Charlotte Libov is putting her proximity to Miami to good use by writing for Hispanic and bilingual publications, including *Poder*, the premier business magazine for U.S. and Latin leaders, entrepreneurs, and decision makers. So far, she's tackled topics including cancer, personalized medicine and executive physicals, with more to come. *Escriba a ella en* char@libov.com.

The American Institute of Physics has named **Stephen Maran** the 2011 recipient of the Andrew W. Gemant Award, which "recognizes the accomplishments of a person who has made significant contributions to the cultural, artistic, or humanistic dimension of physics." Maran will receive a \$5,000 cash award, designate an academic institution to receive a grant of \$3,000 to further the public communication of physics, and present an award lecture at the next American Astronomical

Society meeting—January 2012, in Austin. The award reflects his exemplary service as manager of American Astronomical Society (AAS) press relations for a quarter of a century, and his continuing role as senior advisor to the AAS Executive Officer. Meanwhile, Maran has begun contributing to Inside Science News Service. Recently, he wrote about the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's speech calling for the U.S. to send a man to the moon, and about Natalie Portman's role in the movie *Thor*, which mirrors the changing roles for women in astronomy today. Congratulate him at steve.maran@aas.org.

While **Dave Mosher** still enjoys his spot on the *Wired* science team, he's now taking on select freelance assignments. And, for the record, he never left the right coast. (He's still in New York City, thank you very much.) Write to him at davemosher@gmail.com.

Since March, freelance writer and technical editor **Rajendrani (Raj) Mukhopadhyay** has been blogging about all things polymer and plastic at the Polymer Solutions Newsblog (polymersolutions.com/blog). She's also branched out from her comfortable niche of reporting on analytical chemistry into the world of energy policy for *Chemical & Engineering News*. "A whole new learning curve," she says, "but so much fun and excitement!" Share your plastics news at raj.mukhop@gmail.com.

Sidney Perkowitz will retire from his job as Charles Howard Candler Professor in the department of physics at Emory University on Aug. 31. He'll kick off the start of his full-time freelance writing career with the publication of his new book, *Slow Light: Invisibility, Teleportation and Other Mysteries of Light*, to be released this summer. Other magazine, blog, and media work is in progress. Shoot him some electrons at perkowitzs@bellsouth.net.

Freelancer **Cheryl Platzman Weinstock** won the 2011 Outstanding Service Article Award from The American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA) for "Understanding Depression at Midlife," a feature she wrote for the November 2010 issue of *Woman's Day*. The story detailed how women ages 40 to 64 are vulnerable to developing mental health issues, including depression and bipolar disorder. "With all the changes we face at midlife—sending our kids to college, caring for ailing parents, and possibly dealing with health issues ourselves—it makes sense to experts that this is a time when depression tends to crop up," she wrote. The ASJA writing awards honor outstanding nonfiction work produced on a freelance basis during the past year. Congratulate Weinstock at cherylpw@optonline.net.

Dawn Stover worked full time as an editor at the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* until the end of June. After that, she returned to her normal freelance life and continues to accept short-term editing assignments. With all the danger and confusion surrounding Japan's earthquake- and tsunami-damaged power plants, she says, this is "certainly an interesting time to be writing about nuclear energy." Find out more at dstover@hughes.net.

Steve Tally has taken on a new title and new responsibilities at Purdue University. He's now senior marketing and media strategist for IT, science, technology, engineering, and math. He'll develop, direct, and execute marketing and media plans for the university's efforts in these areas. Write to him at tally@purdue.edu.

Lawrence Berkeley National Lab has appointed **Jon Weiner** as its new manager of communications and media relations. He'll work to elevate the lab's profile regionally and nationally

through various media relations efforts, and also support enriched internal communications. Before coming to the lab, Weiner led media relations at the California Institute of Technology, and prior to that, served as executive director of public relations for the University of Southern California's Health Sciences Campus. Congratulate him at jrweiner@lbl.gov.

Sarah C.P. Williams, who was the assistant editor of the *HHMI Bulletin* for three years and a board member of the D.C. Science Writers Association, has moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, where her fiancé landed his medical residency. She is launching her freelance career there—covering biomedical research worldwide, and digging into the wide range of science going on in the Pacific. To chat about Hawaiian research, hire her for a story, or offer advice on freelancing, contact her at sarahcpwilliams@gmail.com. ■

■ ■ ■

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



Suzanne Clancy
Freelance
SCLANCYPHD@YAHOO.COM

Regional Groups

NEW YORK

Science Writers in New York (SWINY) had a variety of events to offer its members this spring from meeting with authors to learning about the science behind diets.

On March 21, Richard Panek, author of *The 4% Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality*, discussed his new book with SWINY members. Carl Zimmer wrote in his review that Panek "succeeds because he recognizes that he's writing not just about red shifts and supernovae, but about people."

SWINY and the Science, Industry, and Business Library (SIBL) co-sponsored a public presentation and book signing of *Changing Planet, Changing Health: How the Climate Crisis Threatens Our Health and What We Can Do about It* by Dan Ferber, journalist and co-author, with Paul Epstein, M.D., associate director of the Center for Health and Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. Ferber discussed the surprising links between climate change and cholera, malaria, Lyme disease, asthma, and other maladies as well as his on-the-ground investigations of these threats in Kenya, Honduras, Harlem, Wyoming, and elsewhere. He also presented a suite of innovative policy solutions that he and Epstein propose to address these global health threats.

On May 19, SWINY and American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, presented Professor Iris Shai, a world renowned researcher at the S. Daniel Abraham International

Center for Health and Nutrition, Department of Epidemiology, who discussed the latest in nutrition research. She discussed what diets work best and why, as well as the difficulty in doing good studies on diets. The focus of Shai's research is in the field of nutrition and the epidemiology of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity. She is currently leading several long-term, large-scale dietary intervention studies using novel techniques to address the effect of different dietary strategies and moderate alcohol intake on several emerging aspects of human health. She works with a broad international collaboration that includes Harvard as well as distinguished Canadian and European universities.

Shai has published extensively on dietary strategies, weight loss, and its consequences for metabolic and cardiovascular health. Her scientific findings have received worldwide interest from the medical community and the media. She recently published "Adolescent BMI Trajectory and Risk of Diabetes vs. Coronary Disease" in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Her *NEJM* paper regarding the effectiveness of different types of diets was one of the "Top 10 Important U.S. Studies" on cardiovascular diseases in 2008.

SWINY was also able to offer its members discount tickets to the off-Broadway play "Picked" written by Pulitzer Prize finalist Christopher Shinn, which featured a post-performance discussion with the playwright, lead actor, and a neuroscientist, held at the Barnes and Noble store in Union Square.

SWINY would like to thank two of its board members, Ann Marie Cunningham (past treasurer) and Miriam Gordon, who are taking a break from their duties after years of service. The group hopes they will rejoin the board soon.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

In March, DCSWA members took an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, in Greenbelt, Md. The highlight of the trip was a peek at the clean room where the James Webb Space Telescope will be assembled. Deputy Technical Project Manager Paul Geithner and astrophysicist Amber Straughn explained how the telescope was designed and how it will allow scientists to see the earliest moments after the Big Bang, the formation of the first galaxies, and the birth of stars and planets.

DCSWAns welcomed spring with an April hike along the Potomac River upstream of Great Falls, Md. led by Stephanie Mason, senior naturalist at the Audubon Naturalist Society. DCSWA members walked among sycamore, oak, and river birch trees while keeping a look out for bald eagles and other critters that call the area home. Also in April, DCSWA gathered for a festive night of scotch and beer tasting at Union Jack's, in Bethesda, and learned about the art—and science—of brewing.

Also in April, DCSWA held its annual Professional Development Day. The highlights include a spirited discussion of how to (and whether we should) maintain high journalism standards on the web, led by Bora Zivkovic, blog editor at *Scientific American*, and Mary Knudson, author of the blog HeartSense, and a talk by John Rennie, former editor in chief of *Scientific American*, about reinventing the basis and business of science reporting. DCSWA also awarded its 2010 Newsbrief Award to Sarah Zielinski, an associate editor at *Smithsonian Magazine*, for a post she wrote about rare earth elements on her

blog Surprising Science.

In May, DCSWA sponsored the inaugural D.C. Science Café at Busboys and Poets. Nobel laureate and astrophysicist John Mather of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center chatted with DCSWAns and local science enthusiasts about the mysteries of the universe. "Big Bang" and "Dark Energy" cocktails helped keep the conversation lively.

NEW ENGLAND

Maryn McKenna started her blog Superbug as soon as she signed the contract, four years ago, for her book *Superbug: The Fatal Menace of MRSA* (Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 2010). She wanted to declare her turf (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA), demonstrate her expertise, and engage an audience.

But her blog soon became about more than her book. "It taught me how to shake free of newspaper writing," said the former reporter for the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. "I was trained to have an exquisitely even-handed third-person voice. I had to work out for myself how to develop a voice more in the first-person, even if I didn't use the "I" word, and bring my emotions to the forefront." Now part of the Wired Science Blogs network, McKenna is exploring the sins of industrial farming, among other topics (<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/superbug>).

McKenna spoke at the March 24 event, Books & Blogging: Gutenberg Meets Google (and Wordpress and Twitter...), held at Harvard University and attended by 40 members of New England Science Writers.

Panelist Yvonne Cartwright's book blog has also evolved. It started as a way to market *The Science of Heroes: The Real-life Possibilities Behind the Hit TV Show* (Berkeley Press, 2008), but it continues as a venue for cool science, nature, technology, and science fiction on screen and in print. Her blog also serves as an organizing tool for writing projects in progress. She drafts, but does not publicly post, story ideas for later follow-up (<http://scienceofheroes.wordpress.com>).

At her blog, Elizabeth Dougherty, author of *The Blind Pig: A Novel* (School Street Books, 2010), has reflected on the joys and woes of writing (and revising) fiction, self-publishing (e-book REGIONAL GROUPS continued on page 25

AP Style Changes

On March 18, the *AP Stylebook* (<http://www.apstylebook.com>) announced that it made major changes to the rules of several commonly used words, including that both "cell phone" and "smart phone" are now one word.

And the big change (aka, the dropped hyphen heard around the world): email doesn't need a hyphen: email. As for other "e-" terms, the AP says to still use a hyphen for e-book, e-business, e-commerce.

The AP folks weren't done making modifications. The following week, they changed "work force" to one word, and grouped it with workday, workout, workplace, and workweek.

These changes are reflected in the 2011 *AP Stylebook* available in print, online, and as an app for iPhone and BlackBerry. Tour the app and get more information at <http://bit.ly/rfCbyC>. ■ (source: *The Associated Press*)

In Memoriam

Odom Fanning

Writer, editor

Odom Fanning, 90, a retired federal employee who during retirement was an editor of medical publications and a syndicated column, died May 8 at Sibley Memorial Hospital, in Washington, D.C., of pneumonia. He lived in Bethesda and had been an NASW member since 1948.

From 1987 until 1996, Fanning was the Washington editor for medical trade publications, including *Internal Medicine World Report*. He later ran his own publishing firm, Fanning Features, and wrote a consumer newsletter and syndicated column.

Odom Olin Fanning, a native of Atlanta, received a bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1942 and served in the Marine Corps during World War II. When he first moved to Washington, in the mid-1960s, he worked for the Commerce Department before joining the Energy Department in 1977. He managed the Emergency Building Temperature Restrictions program until he retired in 1983.

Early in his career, he was a science reporter for what was then the *Atlanta Journal*. He authored three books during the late 1960s and early 1970s about career opportunities and the environment.

He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the National Press Club. In 1968, he helped found Bethesda Help, a nonprofit organization that provides food, shelter, and other assistance for needy people.

(source: Washington Post)



Norman H. Jacobson

Lifelong career in technical editing and publishing

Norman H. Jacobson, a resident of Northbrook, Ill., died Sept. 14, 2010, at the age of 94. He had been an NASW member since 1967.

A lifelong career of technical editing and publishing followed his graduation in 1938 from the journalism school of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Jacobson aided industry and the government in recording and explaining advances in energy technology. From 1950 to 1954, at the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, in Washington, he organized that federal agency's first technical information services for private industry.

From 1954 to 1966, in New York and Chicago, Jacobson had special editorial assignments on several national business magazines, including *Electric Light & Power*, *Power Engineering*, and *Atomics*. In 1966, he joined the staff of Argonne National Laboratory as assistant director/publisher of a program office that prepared the U.S. Department of Energy national plan to develop a nuclear breeder reactor.

In 1970, Jacobson joined the staff of the American Nuclear Society, the international professional organization for engineers and scientists, in LaGrange Park, Ill. He served as the society's manager of publications and communications until his retirement in 1980. ■

(source: the Jacobson family)

Lindau Travel Fellows for 2011

NASW has selected the following members for 2011 travel fellowships to attend the annual Nobel laureate Meeting in Lindau (Germany). This is the fourth year that the Council for the Lindau Nobel laureate Meetings has provided funding to NASW for this purpose.

The recipients are:

- Kathleen McGowan, contributing editor, *Discover*
- Grace Patuwo, Kaiser Media Fellow, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* (Summer 2011), and health policy beat reporter for the *Yale Daily News*
- Laura Sanders, writer, *Science News*

The Lindau Nobel laureate Meetings provide a globally recognized forum for the exchange of knowledge between Nobel laureates and young researchers. The scientific program comprises interdisciplinary platform discussions, lectures presented by the laureates, and seminar talks spread over several days.

It reflects current scientific topics and deals with developments covering different fields and addresses questions relating to basic research and application-orientated themes. A social program component forms an integral element designed to provide as many opportunities for personal interaction as possible between laureates, young researchers, and journalists.

This year marked the 61st meeting of Nobel laureates and was dedicated to physiology or medicine. The meeting took place from June 26 to July 1. Participating were 23 Nobel laureates and 566 young researchers from 77 countries. ■

Laura van Dam Fellowships to WCSJ2011 Announced

NASW is pleased to announce the following members as recipients of Laura van Dam Travel Fellowships. Each received \$3,125 toward their attendance at the 2011 World Conference of Science Journalists, in Doha, Qatar.

Congratulations to:

- Lindsay Borthwick, Freelance
- Sarah Curry, *NCI Cancer Bulletin*
- Carolyn Gramling, *EARTH* magazine
- Meghan Miner, *National Geographic Traveler* magazine
- Angela Posada-Swofford, *MUY INTERESANTE* magazine
- Lisa Rossi, Microbicide Trials Network, University of Pittsburgh
- Brian Vastag, *Washington Post*

These fellowships are awarded in memory of past NASW President Laura van Dam, who died in 2006. Laura was a strong supporter of this organization's commitment to international science writing and played a large role in helping organize the World Federation of Science Journalists first meeting, in Montreal in 2004.

In awarding the fellowships, NASW's goal is two-fold: To encourage ties between NASW and the World Federation as a way of helping the development of our craft around the world; and to give the selected van Dam fellows a chance to pursue story opportunities in Qatar and the region, especially at a time when travel budgets are tight for many writers. ■

The PIO Forum

PR BLOTTER

According to a study released on May 9 by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, aggregators like Google are still the most popular way that users find news online, but social media are rapidly becoming a competing driver of traffic. The survey found that Facebook is emerging as a powerful news referring source. At five of the top sites, Facebook is the second or third most important driver of traffic. In the same vein, when users leave a site, "share" tools that appear alongside most news stories rank among the most clicked-on links.

Twitter, on the other hand, barely registers as a referring source. Despite its growth and the amount of attention it receives, the micro-blogging service Twitter appears at this point to play a relatively small role in sharing of links to news sources. Of the top 21 sites for which there were data, Twitter showed up as referring links to just nine. And for all but one of those nine, Twitter sent only about 1 percent of total traffic.

While these Twitter numbers are clearly small, it is important to note that they reflect traffic coming directly from the website twitter.com. Third-party applications, such as Tweetdeck, are not included in the study. There are two reasons for this: First these applications are not browser-based programs. Second, most of these types of applications do not route traffic through Twitter.com. Dozens of such third party applications exist. Many offer the same functions for other social networks such as Facebook, as well as for Twitter, though most of the usage tends to be tied to Twitter. The amount of traffic these applications account for is not clear but third-party estimates put the figure somewhere around 40 percent of all the traffic that goes through a Twitter server.

The Pew Research Center study can be found at <http://bit.ly/iNEWmv>.

STATE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

People sometimes don't get all the news coverage they want to see on an issue, and PIOs can help bring them more information through their experts. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism's 2011 *State of the News Media* report suggests that most of the stories where public interest exceeded press coverage involved science in some way. The study suggests that people have long attention spans for certain stories, such as the Haiti earthquake, the BP oil spill and the healthcare debate, even after media coverage dwindles, offering PIOs an opportunity to get information from scientists out there to fill the gap.

Pew Research Center's Project for Excellent in Journalism 2011 State of the News Media. (<http://bit.ly/mebXXT>.)

MULTIMEDIA UPS STORY SHARING

Do you want people to read and share your news releases? Then you need to include more than just text. According to research conducted by PR Newswire,

readers are 3.5 times more likely to share multimedia news releases than text-only versions. The more multimedia elements that a press release contains, the more page views it draws.

Adding a photo to a news release garners 1.4 percent more views, using video boosts that number to 20 percent and including both photo and video elements pushes views up by 48 percent. The study, released on May 2, also found that people view traditional text releases for about 9.5 days after being issued, whereas multimedia releases stay alive for nearly 20 days.

SKYPE IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

With Microsoft's \$8.5 billion purchase of Skype in May, expect to see more business applications of the Internet phone service—including long-distance interviews. A CNN Money article offered tips for projecting the right persona during virtual interviews. Besides the standard procedures of selecting a professional username and an interruption-free setting, interviewees are advised to practice talking through their computers. As with in-person interviews, eye contact is key, and switching your gaze from camera to computer screen comes off as shifty.

"Job interviews on Skype: A survival guide," CNN Money, posted May 12, 2011, at <http://bit.ly/m7AbJ1>.

WATCH THE ADJECTIVES

Apple introduced the new iMac on May 3. As *Fortune* magazine noted, the company's one-page news release contained 80 adjectives to describe the computer. Here are a few of the worst offenders, as well as how many times they appear in the release:

New	13
Innovative	4
All-in-one	4
Powerful	3
High-performance	3
Next generation	3
Gorgeous	2
Groundbreaking	2

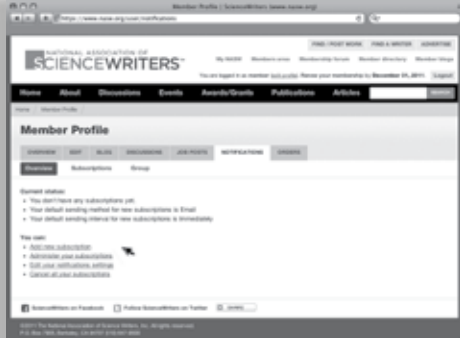
Apple Announces New iMac (news release) at <http://bit.ly/jjOSQU>. ■

(sources: Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism; and Tactics, June 2011, Public Relations Society of America)

When Public Interest Exceeded Press Coverage

	Newshole	Followed Most Closely
BP Oil Spill (August 12-15)	3%	44%
Health Care Debate (April 9-12)	3%	33%
Haiti Earthquake (February 5-8)	8%	38%
Iceland Volcano (April 16-19)	7%	21%
Cold Winter Weather (January 8-11)	4%	18%
Immigration Debate (May 7-10)	2%	16%
Egg Recall (August 26-29)	4%	16%

(source: PEJ's News Coverage Index and People & the Press News Interest Index)



Are You Missing Something?

We've heard from a few members who have been wondering why they aren't seeing ads from the NASW-jobs list. Sure, the economy is still slow, but there must be something out there, right?

There is, and if you missed it, it may mean your NASW-jobs subscription didn't survive last fall's website redesign. In most cases, this happened to people who got their job notices at a different address from the one they use for their NASW membership.

The good news: It's easy to fix. Just log into the site and go to the "notifications" *JOBS LIST continued on page 25*

Public Policy Matters Report Now Free For Journalists

The Institute for Public Policy Reporting is offering its PublicPolicyMatters.com report—now used by 1,200 news editors and reporters in newsrooms throughout the country—free of charge to journalists.

The daily email report pulls together into a single web page public policy-related news items from federal government agencies, congressional offices, and a broad array of think tanks and watchdog groups of every imaginable purpose and persuasion.

"We monitor nearly 2,300 websites at least once every day," said PPM's editor, Edward Zuckerman. "Our daily report has earned a reputation among our users as a valuable and reliable news-gathering resource."

Until recently, PPM was a paid subscription report owned by Amward Publications Inc. The company donated PPM's assets to the institute, a tax-exempt organization that plans to finance the report with voluntary contributions and foundation grants.

Zuckerman and his editorial team conduct a nightly examination of the websites, and select news items—press releases, reports, transcripts, statements, and databases—that involve a public policy issue. They make their selections without applying a litmus test—partisan, ideological, theological, or otherwise—to assure the fullest possible exposition of competing ideas.

"Oftentimes, information from freshly collected news items can be plugged directly into a story," Zuckerman said. "But, just as frequently, the PPM report introduces editors and reporters to ideas not yet *PPM continued on page 25*

*Public Policy Matters
monitors nearly
2,300 websites at least
once every day.*

EurekAlert!, your online source for science news

EurekAlert! has several topic-specific portals created as a central location for information.

Visit our portals to get the most current news releases and resources from over 1,400 institutions around the world on the following topics:

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- Nanotechnology
- Disease in the Developing World
- Bioinformatics

Access to the portals is free.

Eligible reporters and public information officers can register to receive customizable alerts about the topics above or other science-related news at www.EurekAlert.org



Questions? Email webmaster@eurekalert.org or call 1-202-326-6716.



Welcome to Qatar

World Conference of Science



WCSJ2011 Leadership:
Dalia Abdel-Salam, WCSJ2011
co-director (Middle East);
Nadia El-Awady, president, WFSJ;
Nancy Shute, NASW President;
and Deborah Blum,
WCSJ2011 program chair.



The World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2011) was concluding just as ScienceWriters was going to press. The three-day meeting provided opportunities to discuss issues unique to the profession of science journalism, to network with peers from around the world, and to experience rich cultural attractions such as the I.M. Pei designed Museum of Islamic Art (opposite page, far left).

اهلاً بكم في قطر

Journalists 2011



Qatar Foundation
President
Dr. Mohamed
Fathy Saoud



This page clockwise Alan H. Lesner, AAAS CEO delivers a keynote address; more than 700 science journalists in attendance; Georgetown (Qatar) Liberal Arts and Science Building; state-of-the-art facilities throughout Education City, and Dr. Mohamed Fathy Saoud, president, Qatar Foundation, welcomes delegates to the Middle East.

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*Student member

SPACE SHUTTLE

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planets Jupiter and Saturn; rovers have traversed Mars' rusty-red plains; and the Hubble telescope has seen extraordinary objects and processes deep in space. Conversely, the space station, only now being completed, years late and tens of billions of dollars over budget, has yet to show any appreciable results. The shuttle has also had a mixed bag of accomplishments.

Looking back on the shuttle program, I think it's clear that there are valid roles for humans in space, but it's hard not to conclude that some shuttle missions have felt like make-work projects undertaken more to keep astronauts in orbit rather than because they were essential. With the shuttle program's retirement (space station-bound astronauts will ride Russian rockets for the next few years), let's take the time to analyze our goals in space, and then to ask ourselves if sending more humans aloft is really necessary to accomplish them. ■
"Assessing the space shuttle program," Los Angeles Times Op-Ed, July 10, 2011.

SCHOLARLY PURSUITS

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nonprofits listed in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (which means they also raise or accept money); 81 of those 200 actively used Twitter. The researchers randomly selected a third (27) of those, captured their tweets for the month of March 2010, and performed content analysis on a variety of characteristics of the tweets.

The organizations surveyed represented the broad spectrum of nonprofits, including public/society benefit (44 percent), health (26 percent), and human services (15 percent). They averaged about 4,500 followers each (there was a big range here, from 91 to 19,000), and each tweeted an average of about 30 messages a month.

What did they tweet about? Well, 5 percent or so were way off topic—Final Four basketball, for example, so clearly sometimes nobody is minding the store. But the vast majority—almost 80 percent—referred users back to a non-Twitter website using a hyperlink. Of those, about a fifth were re-tweets of something from another source, and another fifth carried a hash tag that indicated they were part of a larger, searchable conversation online.

Surprisingly, given the much-touted value of social media in promoting dialogue and building relationships, nonprofits used their tweets over-

whelmingly for one-way communication rather than for two-way communication or dialogue. "The prevalence of one-way messages in the present sample runs counter to consultants' advice that stresses the community-building strength of social media," the authors note. "Rather than capitalizing on the interactive nature and dialogic capabilities of the social media service, nonprofit organizations are primarily using Twitter as a means of sharing information instead of relationship building. Overall, their Twitter updates sent messages that directed their followers to a variety of information subsidies on their websites. The provision of information certainly could help the nonprofits' followers feel that they could trust the organization; however, the one-sided approach of the tweets certainly results in a lopsided relationship."

"While the provision of information demonstrates a willingness to share information, a follower of these nonprofit organizations' Twitter accounts might sense an unwillingness to answer questions or respond to others' comments," the paper concludes. ■

REGIONAL GROUPS

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and print-on-demand), and book publicity (<http://addverses.com>).

Douglas Starr, author of *The Killer of Little Shepherds: A True Crime Story and the Birth of Forensic Science* (Knopf, 2010), blogged after his book was published, but reworked those posts for traditional news media, such as the *Boston Globe*, with more satisfaction (<http://douglasstarr.com/blog>).

The session was moderated by Stefanie Friedhoff, freelance journalist and special projects manager at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism, and organized by Carol Cruzan Morton, freelance journalist and science writer in residence at Harvard Medical School systems biology. ■

JOBS LIST

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tab. If you're already logged in, click on your username at the top right of the page, then go to the notifications tab.

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PPM

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imagined, issues not yet confronted, and viewpoints not yet expressed."

Zuckerman has spent his entire working life in journalism. He worked as a correspondent in the Washington bureau of the Ridder Newspaper Group (later Knight-Ridder Newspapers) from 1970 to 1980, and he was editor and publisher of the *PACs & Lobbies* newsletter from 1980 to 2005.

To register to receive PPM at no cost, visit <http://publicpolicymatters.com/register.html>. ■
(source: PPM news release)

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