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National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

Summer 2013

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THE VIABILITY OF A SCIENCE
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CHANGING LANDSCAPE FOR SCIENCE JOURNALISM
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ONLINE NEWS START-UP WINS NATIONAL REPORTING
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ScienceWriters™
EST. 1952
Summer 2013 ■ Vol. 62, No. 3

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Deadlines
Next Issue: Fall.....September 1, 2013
Winter..... December 1, 2013
Spring..... March 1, 2014
Summer .....June 1, 2014
Nonmember subscription rate: $50/year

On The Cover
Crocus and Baby Tears © Ingram Publishing/SuperStock; Anne Neil's *Memory Markers* sculpture in Stirling Garden, Perth, Western Australia, by Lynne Friedmann

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EST. 1934

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The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing provides financial support to NASW for the production of *ScienceWriters*.

ScienceWriters is printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper.

From The Editor

This issue of ScienceWriters *welcomes a new columnist and reluctantly bids farewell to a longtime contributor.*

Medical journalist and author Lynne Lamberg brings a new format and focus to the book column which has been rechristened Advance Copy. In this space, NASW authors provide the backstory on what drew them to their book topic, how they researched it, how they found a publisher, or why they decided to self-publish. Since 2000, Lynne has edited the online New Books by NASW Members offering.

Rick Borchelt retires the Scholarly Pursuits column. His contributions will be missed.

In 2008, Rick proposed this column as a way to inform members of recent academic or technical articles on communication research directly relevant to the workaday world of science writing. And, did Rick deliver!

Scholarly Pursuits ran in 20 issues of SW, *highlighting some 60 academic research papers on science communications. I know that I speak for many in offering him profound thanks for bringing what heretofore were unfamiliar publications and important findings to the attention of NASW members and stimulating much-needed discussion of science communications research and its application.*

Lynne Friedmann

In This Issue

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FRIEDMANN COURTESY OF KEN JACQUES

Journalism and Democracy in Wisconsin

by Deborah Blum

For the past four years, I've taught an investigative reporting class at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW). Not typical, you might say, for a long-time science writer who spends most of her time telling stories about our chemical world.

But for many years, before I came to the university, I worked as an investigative newspaper reporter. And I think teaching it now is one of the most important things I do. I believe, no, I know, that a democracy cannot thrive in darkness, that we need a watchdog media to counter any government's tendency toward secretiveness, that good journalists push so that information is honestly shared with the rest of us. To quote Walter Lippmann, an early 20th century American newspaper columnist and writer: "A free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity in a great society."

I don't throw that quote around in my class but I do begin any semester by reminding my students of the importance of open inquiry in democracy. I do quote another writer, T.H. White, on the need for clear and objective work, that our aim, in White's words, is to "shed light not heat." Oh, and I say that this is the kind of journalism that can give a voice to those who cannot be heard, the kind of inquiry that can balance the scales of power.

And I tell them that not all of us will become investigative reporters but that the skills we learn in the class—being a thorough researcher, being accurate down to the last comma, being a good and fair listener, being able to both gather evidence and evaluate it—are not only good skills for any journalist but good life skills for anyone.

Why am I telling you this? Why am I writing this hymn to investigative reporting at this moment? Because my ability to teach an investigative reporting class was recently threatened—for very political reasons here in Wisconsin.

I teach my investigative reporting classes in collaboration with a small non-profit, the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism. WCIJ was founded in 2009 by Andy Hall, a long-time investigative journalist with the *Wisconsin State Journal*. There exists an agreement in which UW provides the center two small rooms (and they are walk-in closet small) and in turn the center provides training services to our students and also hires them as interns. They raise their own money for their operations. And they pay their interns, by the way.

Over the years, in my classes we have taken a public service approach to journalism, researched and reported on everything from the use of smart drugs on university campuses to employment challenges for U.S. veterans to student mental health issues to the management of Wisconsin state parks. Our plan this fall is to research and write about some of the important agricultural issues in our state. Nothing too controversial there, you might think.

But, astonishingly, the Wisconsin legislative joint finance committee inserted a motion into the proposed budget that would have ban the WCIJ from maintaining its offices on campus—and would forbid any university employee such as myself from working with the center. The exact wording in the official state budget, if you wonder, was to "prohibit UW employees from doing *any* work related to the Center for Investigative Journalism as part of their duties as a UW employee." (italics mine.)

This despite the fact that there was no apparent budget issue here except one that worked in our favor—we provide limited existing space in exchange for a remarkable benefit to our students. We heard later that a number of legislators had been irritated by stories the center had done independent of the university classes, reporting on issues ranging from school vouchers to environmental consequences of sand fracking in Wisconsin. But we heard only that the motion was in place. None of us received any warning or even a clear explanation.

…my ability to teach an investigative reporting class was recently threatened—for very political reasons…

I am proud of the instant pushback from my university. The dean of the College of Letters and Sciences publicly denounced the motion as an infringement on academic freedom. So did officials in the UW system. My department chair, Greg Downey, did countless interviews supporting the center and maintained an "action" page on our department website that provided links to information, petitions, and addresses of state officials to contact. Faculty members (including myself) wrote opinion pieces and blog posts expressing outrage and determination. Students who had worked with the center wrote to the legislature in protest.

And journalists and journalism organizations around the state and around the country rose to support us—in a chorus that finally resonated back home. In early July, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, although usually allied with the legislators who had introduced the motion, announced that he would use his line-item veto power to remove it from the budget. The story of what happened, including Walker's veto, is beautifully outlined in a report from *Columbia Journalism Review* (see page 2).

Downey, an historian, made a point about us journalists that I particularly like: "We found that the journalism community is more united by professional ethics than divided by partisan political-economic philosophy."

And it's because of that unity that I will be teaching my investigative reporting class in the fall. ■

This essay is adapted from "Journalism and Democracy in Wisconsin" which appeared on Blum's Wired *blog, Elemental, on June 10, 2013.*

Deborah Blum is a freelance writer and professor of journalism at UW. She served as NASW President from 2003-04.

How Wisconsin's Watchdogs Kept Their Home

BY ANNA CLARK

The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (WCIJ) scored a big win, as Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, vetoed a budget provision approved by GOP legislators that would have expelled the nonprofit newsroom from its offices at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The measure, passed in early June at the conclusion of a marathon overnight session, also would have prohibited university employees from doing any work related to the WCIJ (**wisconsinwatch.org**).

Policies about shared agreements at the university "should be set by the regents and…shouldn't be set specific to just this particular program," Walker said, according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Walker's decision comes after a sustained advocacy push by the center. But rather than simply sighing with relief, WCIJ is now launching a drive for its new Education Fund, which will support an existing paid internship program—one of the hallmarks of the center's collaboration with the university's School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The center is also sharing lessons from the episode that other young investigative newsrooms might take to heart. The first of these is the importance of building a network of allies. This might seem tricky for a team of journalists that specializes in aggressive accountability journalism—not necessarily the friend-making business. But Andy Hall, WCIJ executive director, said that the center's network is effectively what stayed its eviction.

In an email, Hall wrote that "the Wisconsin Legislature did a huge favor for the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism." He continued:

> By acting in secret in the dark of night, legislators galvanized public attention and generated support for the center from conservatives and liberals alike. We didn't—and still don't—know which legislator or legislators came up with this measure, or why. But the end result is that the center now has more allies, and a strengthened resolve to dig into important issues facing the state while training the next generation of investigative journalists.

Hall said that the attack forced the center to forge "tighter bonds with our existing supporters while also creating new friends among the public, journalistic, and educational worlds who care about a strong press, free speech, academic freedom, journalism education, democracy, and the Wisconsin Idea—the century-old concept that the resources of the university should extend to the borders of Wisconsin and beyond."

This wasn't a nebulous coalition. Hall said that more than 700 people, "most of them friends we didn't know we had," signed a petition supporting the WCIJ collaboration with the university's journalism school. "Prior to issuing the veto, the governor remarked that he was hearing a lot about this issue," Hall wrote.

Indeed, the anti-WCIJ motion led to a wave of media coverage: a lengthy log of news stories, opinion pieces, wire reprints, and organizational statements of support, is chronicled on WCIJ's website. Hall noted that "two potent Wisconsin voices"—conservative Milwaukee radio host Charlie Sykes and liberal John Nichols at the progressive *Capital Times*—found common ground in support of WCIJ.

Those in academia, including administrators and faculty across the UW system, viewed the measure as an attack on academic freedom and took a strong stand in support of the center's collaboration with the school. Greg Downey, director of the journalism school, was especially active in reaching out to faculty, alumni, and campus leaders, often through widely circulated emails and posts on the department's website. Hall said that Downey's "leadership, and passion for preserving the journalism school's relationship with WCIJ, was inspiring." (Downey's own take on lessons learned from the episode **bit.ly/12xR5YB**.)

"Also important were legislators—Democrats and some Republicans—who spoke out against the budget measure," Hall added. "To me, the voices of students who have worked with [WCIJ], and our young colleagues in Madison at the [teen newspaper] *Simpson Street Free Press*, carried a special resonance. They wrote passionately of the value of the center's work in their own educations and preparations for professional success. They stood with us. I still become choked up when I read those words."

By acting in secret... legislators galvanized public attention and generated support for the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism from conservatives and liberals alike.

At the Investigative Reporters and Editors conference in San Antonio in late June, Hall participated in a "hastily arranged panel" that focused on what other investigative centers should do if they find themselves targeted by lawmakers. Hall and Lauren Fuhrmann, the center's public engagement director, drew up a checklist (**bit.ly/10uODBj**) detailing how other investigative outlets can "prepare and respond" to an attack.

Before the fact, much of the advice boils down to telling your newsroom's story, accurately but assertively: develop a values statement, make 990s and other financial forms publicly available, tout the impact of your stories and the success of former interns, and put it all on a high-quality website. They also suggest that centers "nurture personal relationships" with their journalistic partners—editors, station managers, and others who use their work—by generously sharing credit and participating in conferences, parties, and ceremonies.

Should a legislative attack happen, centers must shift into red-alert emergency: "Drop everything else. This is your new life, at least for awhile," Hall and Fuhrmann attest. They advise moving

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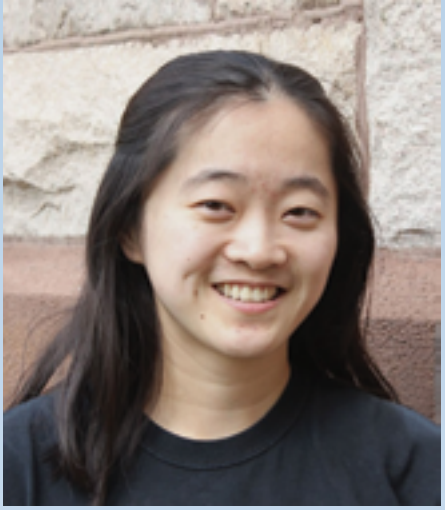
A Pulitzer Prize, but No Newsroom to Put It In

by Brian Stelter

[**Editor's Note:** Republished by permission in the print edition of *ScienceWriters*. This permission does not extend to web posting. Click **nytimes.com/2013/04/17/business/media/insideclimate-news-hopes-to-build-on-pulitzer.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0** to access the *New York Times* website using your web browser. "A Pulitzer Prize, but Without a Newsroom to Put It In" *New York Times*, April 16, 2013.] ■

Brian Stelter is a media reporter for the *New York Times*



Pulitzer Prize Winner Lisa Song

For NASW member Lisa Song, April 15 was an unusual day. Editors at InsideClimate News, the environmental news website where she works, unexpectedly called for a staff meeting in the afternoon.

"We talked about some editorial matters," Song recalled. "And before 3:00 p.m., the editor said that the list of Pulitzer winners should have come out by now."

Song didn't find the website immediately. It took her a while to open the page. And then, she saw her name. This 26-year-old, who has only been working as a full-time reporter for a little more than two years, had won a Pulitzer Prize for the series: The Dilbit Disaster: The Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard Of (**bit.ly/1392Nap**).

Song's own career in journalism is no less surprising. The Beijing-born Song moved to the U.S. with her parents when she was six. She had never thought of becoming a reporter when she was in school.

When it came time for college, she studied environmental science at MIT. But she changed her mind about this career path during her senior year. Song's search for something that would better suit her led to a one-year MIT master's program in science writing.

"Even then, I was not thinking of becoming a reporter. I just wanted to write about science for the general public," Song said. "I was thinking of maybe working in a museum after graduation."

She graduated in 2009 and she soon landed freelance opportunities. She was hired by InsideClimate News as a full-time reporter in 2011.

The InsideClimate News staff is scattered across the United States and overseas. They work from home and communicate through phone and Internet. Song had never met the two colleagues she worked with on the series—Elizabeth McGowan and David Hasemyer—until their story won the award. ■

(source: Voices of New York*)*

Science Journalism Graduate Studies Weather Tumultuous Times

BY MICHAEL BALTER

One day each spring, I receive an email message that I know is going to change my life, and the lives of quite a few other people. That's when Daniel Fagin, director of New York University's Science, Health and Environmental Journalism Program (SHERP), tells the program's faculty—of which I am one—the names of that fall's incoming students. As I look over their photos and read their bios, various thoughts pass through my mind: Will this be a fun group to teach? Will any of them have personality problems or be pains in the ass? Will I run out of ways to fill the time of a six-hour weekly workshop?

But I often ponder more serious questions: Are we doing the right thing by recruiting them into science journalism, which is undergoing all the upheavals that are hitting journalism as a whole? Will they find jobs or good freelance opportunities? Will the tens of thousands of dollars that the students and their families invest in our program, and the debts that they often pile up, eventually pay off? These questions, of course, apply to all the other science journalism graduate programs across the United States.

Although nearly two dozen universities offer various kinds of graduate training in science communication, four widely recognized programs have achieved national prominence: NYU, Boston University (BU), University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) There used to be six, but programs at Columbia and Johns Hopkins have now closed (more on that later).

Are we doing the right thing by recruiting (graduate students) into the field of science journalism…

What follows is not "objective" journalism. I have been teaching at NYU for the past four years, and I taught in the BU program before that. I also have close ties with the UCSC program. Some might suspect that I have a vested interest in putting these programs in a good light. That is probably true, even though I am a part-time adjunct professor and my primary income comes from science writing. But I hope that with full disclosure, readers will find value in this largely anecdotal overview, which is based on conversations with program directors, my former students, and other sources.

There are no reliable numbers about how well students from science journalism graduate programs are doing, and whether or not they are doing better than young people who have entered the profession via different routes. Indeed, there are few hard numbers about anything having to do with science journalism, according to Cristine Russell, a senior fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School and immediate past president of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing.

"There's just not been a systematic attempt to assess the number of science writers," says Russell, whose 2006 study of the drastic decline in newspaper science sections—one of the few attempts to quantify the trends in our field—is still widely cited, especially by science journalists prone to despair.

As both veteran and newbie science writers look for new, increasingly online venues to place their work, what are graduate program directors telling prospective students about their chances to succeed? How do they balance being realistic about the uncertain future of the profession with their desire to keep their programs going?

The question, says Thomas Levenson, director of MIT's Graduate Program in Science Writing, has become "extremely complicated for both students and science writing instructors," especially because the pathways into the field are much more of "a mystery" today that they were for earlier generations.

SHERP's Fagin says he tries to be straight with students. "I tell them that they are entering the profession at a time of incredibly rapid change. They have to be nimble, patient, flexible, relentless, and, like the Energizer Bunny, keep going and going."

On the other hand, Fagin says, "it would be wrong and inaccurate to" tell them that they are facing really long odds. "I don't have the evidence for that, and it's not true."

But program directors also say they try to accept only students who seem clear "that this is really what they want to do with their lives," as Fagin puts it.

Robert Irion, director of UCSC's Science Communication Program—which, unique among the major programs, accepts only students who already have a science degree—says that "our students are only coming here if they are quite dedicated to this notion of changing careers." Irion adds that for the typical UCSC student, who has decided to abandon laboratory or field research for a career in science communication, "it takes them a while to reach that point in their lives." So Irion will talk to prospective students for extended periods of time, sometimes several years, before they actually come to his program.

I can personally attest to the students' motivation once they make this decision. Only one student out of about 60 I have taught at BU and NYU since 2008 has dropped out before graduating, a clear demonstration of their commitment and

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LOGOS COURTESY OF EACH UNIVERSITY

dedication. And Levenson says that dedication appears to be paying off for most students. In preparation for the 10th anniversary of the MIT program last year, he conducted a survey of all of its previous students. "We found that more than 80 percent of our graduates were still involved in science communication in some way," Levenson says.

But from the responses to an informal survey I conducted of my own past students, it seems clear that at least some of the warnings about the challenges of going into science journalism might have seemed somewhat abstract at the time.

Joseph Caputo, a graduate of BU's Graduate Program in Science Journalism, recalls that he "walked into BU from day one with the dream of someday writing for *SEED* magazine." Then the recession hit. "Suddenly journalists had to be more than writers and editors," Caputo says. "We had to be bloggers, social media experts, computer programmers, entrepreneurs, video editors, and photographers."

Caputo recalls getting "incredibly depressed" when the director of the Nieman Journalism Lab gave a guest talk "and made everyone feel hopeless about having a career in the field." The first years after leaving BU were "incredibly difficult," Caputo says. "I remember writing an article about the odds of dying in a cheerleading related accident just to get by." Today, Caputo is communications manager at the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, a job he loves.

…it's time to stop all the doom and gloom over the state of our profession…

Rachel Nuwer, a former SHERP student, says that her class was warned that things would not be easy. "None of the SHERP faculty or guests ever portrayed journalism as an easy career free from challenges." On the other hand, Nuwer, who is now a successful freelancer and blogger, says she wishes the faculty had talked more about how much (or how little) money science journalists were likely to make once they entered the job market. "The subject seemed a bit taboo at SHERP."

Joseph Bennington-Castro, another SHERP grad, agrees. Bennington-Castro, who works part-time as an editorial fellow for the online outlet io9.com and also freelances, says, "I had to pay my own way through graduate school, which means I now have a lot of debt." And while he hopes the investment will pay off eventually, he sometimes wonders whether he made the right choice. "I'm not entirely convinced that going to graduate school for science journalism was worth it."

The money issue also weighs heavily on some of the foreign students I have taught. Aspasia Daskalopoulou, another of my BU students, has returned to Greece and is now head of the press office at the Demokritos National Center for Scientific Research in Athens, that country's largest multidisciplinary research organization. Given the current economic crisis in Greece, and the already low wage scale, "this job pays surprisingly little," Daskalopoulou says, "something that I was not prepared for."

Nevertheless, most of the students who responded to my queries were positive about how well their graduate training prepared them for the real world.

Kate Yandell, an NYU grad who is currently doing an internship at *The Scientist*, says she "had no journalism experience coming out of college and had never interviewed anyone before. Journalism school gave me a safe space, and a little push, to dive in and become a journalist, which I'm not confident I would have done if I'd just taken a stab at freelancing with no journalism training."

Meanwhile, the programs are feeling the pressures of the changing landscape for science journalism. In 2009, Columbia University shut down its earth and environmental science journalism program, citing a supposedly weak job market for environmental journalists; and the latest victim is the science journalism program at Johns Hopkins University, which has just shut down after 30 years and will not be accepting students for the fall. In deep-sixing the highly respected Hopkins program, university officials cited a low number of applications relative to the size of the actual class—an indication, they claimed, that the program was not as selective as it should be. This reasoning is sharply disputed by Ann Finkbeiner, a well-known science writer who had directed the program since 1999.

"If the dean had told me she wanted me to get more applicants I would have done that," Finkbeiner says. "But I wasn't looking for huge numbers of applicants. I was looking for the right students."

Has the market for science journalists become saturated, and is that having a knock-on effect on the viability of at least some of the programs? Several program directors do report a dip in applicants the past few years, but none of them are convinced that this is a permanent trend.

"If the number of people applying is declining, then some programs are going to suffer," Fagin says. "But it's hard for me to detect an overall pattern. There is a surprising amount of gyration [in applicants] from year to year."

And Irion says he thinks that the "size of the pipeline is just about right" as things stand now. "If we had twice as many grad programs there would be way too many for the job market to handle."

But some programs are beginning to make changes so they can stay in the game and also make it easier for students to come. For example, BU has just cut its three-semester masters program down to two semesters, in keeping with the current situation at both UCSC (which offers a certificate rather than a masters) and MIT (NYU's SHERP has retained the three-semester curriculum).

"We thought long and hard about this," says Ellen Ruppel Shell, who has co-directed the BU program with Douglas Starr for more than 20 years. "We wanted to keep the cost down, and in this competitive job environment, we wanted them to graduate in the late spring rather than in January."

But Shell remains happy about how BU students seem to be doing in the job market: "They are doing pretty damn well."

As well they should, given their strong motivation and the excellent training I think these budding journalists are getting in all of the programs. And I think it's time to stop all the doom and gloom over the state of our profession, because it only demoralizes the young people who are its future.

Each fall, as I am getting to know the incoming students, I tell them not to listen to us old fogies blubbering in our beer about how journalism is going down the tubes. I tell them that they are the future, the ones who will take journalism forward and turn it into whatever it is now going to be. And I tell them that this is the most important thing they will hear me say all semester. ■

Can a Science Media Center Work in the U.S.?

BY CURTIS BRAINARD AND RON WINSLOW

With a mission to provide the press and the public with high-quality scientific information and sources, the Science Media Centers (SMC) in the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan have become influential, but controversial players in the world of journalism. While some reporters find them helpful, others believe they are biased toward government and industry scientists.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* ran a three-part series on the topic. For each installment, two different writers were asked to comment on the role that the original center plays in the U.K. (Part 1, **bit.ly/11jchS6**), the performance of the centers during the Fukushima nuclear crisis (Part 2, **bit.ly/17mqL8o**), and a proposal to launch a Science Media Center in the U.S. (Part 3, in its entirety below).

CURTIS BRAINARD, OPENING STATEMENT:

After years of worry about the dearth of science coverage in American media, a variety of new websites, blogs, and podcasts have sprung up to fill the void left by newspapers, magazines, and broadcast news.

It is unclear whether the newcomers are reaching the broad readerships and audiences to which traditional newsrooms cater, however, and there is still a need to support more, accurate and high quality coverage of science in the press, regardless of the medium. In that spirit, I agreed last year to join the exploratory committee for establishing a Science Media Center in the United States.

I'd heard from many journalists that the existing centers were helpful, but I'd also heard the concern that they function as PR outlets friendly to government and industry scientists. Indeed, no sooner had the idea for an American center emerged than reporter Colin Macilwain wrote an op-ed for the journal *Nature* detailing why he thinks the SMC model wouldn't make a good fit in the U.S.

The center would have trouble coping with the size and diversity of the American media landscape, Macilwain argued, and with politically and socially divisive issues like climate change and stem cells. Moreover, American journalists would never go for things like the packaged "rapid reaction" quotes from scientists that other centers often provide during breaking news situations.

These are valid concerns, but ones that the exploratory committee fully intends to account for, and, as my fellow committee member, Julia Moore, wrote in a reply to Macilwain:

> If established, a U.S. center would embrace a uniquely American model of operation to serve the country's journalists and public understanding of science. It would adapt to its cultural landscape, just as those of Canada or Japan have.

The question is, how? As Macilwain noted, size matters, and a U.S. SMC would need to focus its efforts where it's most needed, which seems to be traditional print and broadcast newsrooms with little to no scientific expertise on staff. That means a lot of local papers and TV and radio stations. It will also have to support those outlets, like wire services, which are providing more and more science content for both traditional and online reports. So the center will make greater use of telecommunications and digital and social media to serve its constituents.

Beyond geography, the most important consideration is the concern about PR practices. As Fiona Fox, the director of the British center, noted in the opening installment of this series, the U.K. SMC is "not set up to help journalists, but to support more scientists to engage effectively with journalists."

…a U.S. SMC would need to focus its efforts where it's most needed…traditional print and broadcast newsrooms with little to no scientific expertise on staff.

The U.S. committee generally agrees that to work, an American center would need to flip this idea on its head and be geared toward supporting journalists to engage more effectively with scientists. That means fewer or no pooled quotes based on what the SMC thinks is the big science news of the week, and more capacity to respond to journalists' requests for help with the stories they've determined to be important.

CURTIS BRAINARD AND RON WINSLOW COLLABORATED ON THIS ARTICLE. BRAINARD IS THE EDITOR THE OBSERVATORY AND A MEMBER OF U.S. SMC EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE. WINSLOW IS A SCIENCE REPORTER AT THE *WALL STREET JOURNAL* AND THE PRESIDENT OF NASW.

We've already seen proof of concept for this strategy in popular services such as the Climate Science Rapid Response Team, which has enlisted over 135 scientists and field questions from a variety of news outlets and won praise from journalists, and EurekAlert!'s "Science Sources," a searchable online directory of public information officers from research institutions around the world.

The U.S. committee is also sensitive to concerns about controversial areas of science and conflicts of interest. The current plan is to pursue funding from an array of charitable foundations rather than governmental or corporate entitles, and the SMC will need to develop a set of written guidelines to explain how it handles conflicting scientific opinions in areas like biotechnology. But the overriding ethos of a SMC is that the best available science and most rigorous application of the scientific method will rule.

Far from adding another layer of PR to reporters' work routines, the idea is to help them cut through the large volume of communications they already receive. Ultimately, though, the U.S. committee would like to hear from American journalists about what they think a SMC could do for them and how it can best establish itself as a trusted, rigorous science resource for the media.

RON WINSLOW, OPENING STATEMENT:

This is the first I've heard of the idea of a Science Media Center and while the concept is intriguing, I'm not convinced it's the way to go in the U.S. Apart from the potential contribution for deadline needs on breaking science stories, an SMC feels like a redundancy to me for U.S.-based journalists.

We have a robust if eclectic group of organizations and initiatives already in place with missions to improve the quality of science journalism. The National Association of Science Writers, the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing, the Association of Health Care Journalists, and the Society of Environmental Journalists are among journalist-run and directed organizations that offer first-rate programs featuring professional skills development, science content seminars, or source-building opportunities, or all of the above. In addition, the HealthNewsReview blog, focused on medical/clinical science coverage, and the Tracker, a blog hosted by the Knight Science Journalism Program at MIT, are among peer-review watchdog style efforts that publish regular critiques of science stories. A variety of fellowship programs provide opportunities for professional development and background reporting on science. Some of these initiatives might be competing for funds necessary to launch and operate an SMC. Where does an ambitious organization like an SMC fit in this already well-populated if unstructured space?

Improving reporting of evidence-based science is a big driver of the formation of the SMCs in the U.K. and elsewhere. What is the evidence base that the ones that have been up and running for a while are achieving that goal? How would any success translate in the U.S.?

Moreover, what is the statement of need in the U.S.? Is our journalism filled with misinformation?

I agree with the skepticism in the *Nature* piece that U.S. journalists would use canned quotes from sources provided by an SMC. One person's "independent source" may be another's agenda-driver. A database listing the economic conflicts of science researchers may be helpful, though other organizations already maintain such resources.

Reporters who might best be served by a deadline news/briefing service would be those in mid-to-low profile organizations where no one else knows anything about what they cover and who also may have a hard time getting calls returned from scientists in a timely manner.

Another missing feature in the science-journalism training infrastructure is help for general editors who need a better background/perspective/understanding of the scientific process why the instinct to play up the breakthrough or to demand a definitive lede on a story of a preliminary finding can lead to science stories that hype rather than inform.

Finally, an SMC seems to be about properly educating the public about science. Maybe it's also born of concern about science denialism in our culture. No doubt journalists play an important role in the development of a society's scientific literacy, but our role as educators is overstated and imbued with unrealistic expectations. We cover the news. Then we go on to the next story. We inform our readers, viewers, and listeners, and in the best efforts offer them insight and open doors to ideas they previously knew little about. These are far from trivial functions. But we don't educate in the conventional sense. If improving journalists' roles as educators is driving the concept of an SMC, the end will be mostly frustration.

Science journalism, like science itself, is a work-in-progress. We can certainly use more support for the efforts and programs in place to improve our craft and our profession. We don't need yet another well-meaning organization to dilute the already scarce resources dedicated to that end.

CURTIS BRAINARD, REPLY:

These are all important questions and concerns and ones that many American journalists will likely have, especially those who are unfamiliar with the SMC network.

Ron is right that the U.S. is fortunate to have an excellent support structure for science writers already in place. I'm a member of NASW and the Society of Environmental Journalists. They're invaluable, and they do provide timely help with stories for reporters on deadline, but their work is much broader, and they're not setup to do that fulltime in the way a SMC would be.

The most important function of a SMC is to help reporters "triage" major research papers using a volunteer network of top scientists. While I agree that we should avoid diluting scare resources, I don't think that a center would duplicate any services currently available, and thus the question is, as Ron notes, is there a need for the center? And if so, how much?

I don't know of any scholarly evaluations of the SMCs' influence on the media in other countries or writ large (and such info would certainly be helpful), but reporters on variety of beats, including science, have said they appreciate the centers' assistance. In fact, the centers have collected numerous testimonials from top journalists, scientists, and press officers who have worked with them.

In the U.S., misinformation is certainly part of the problem, but so is the general decline of science coverage in general-interest newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting. The mission is both to improve accuracy the accuracy of science coverage and to encourage more of it. Indeed, the U.S. exploratory committee is eager to hear from journalists how an American center could do that.

Among other things, the committee hopes to commission studies on the current

state of science media in the U.S. and on where Americans get their science news. It will also ask a small number of U.S. science journalists to volunteer to sign-up for the SMC U.K.'s email list and take advantage its services in order see what they find helpful or unhelpful.

Ron's suggestions—like the need to provide better training for general editors about the scientific process—are incredibly helpful and exactly the kind of pointers that the committee is looking for. The committee would also like to hear concerns, such as the one Ron expressed about improving journalists' role as educators, which isn't the center's goal. The goal is to help them locate accurate scientific information and sources for their reporting, and over the coming months, the more input the committee receives, the better.

RON WINSLOW, REPLY:

So is it a dearth of science coverage in the U.S. media that is driving interest in a Science Media Center, or is it concern about the quality of science journalism?

Any SMC providing science resources for the media—however trusted and rigorous—would be of limited value if the science-writer workstations in our newsrooms are mostly empty chairs. Prospects that conventional print and broadcast outlets, even those with a prominent online presence, are poised for a science-journalist hiring binge are remote at best.

In that light, perhaps organizations such as Kaiser Health News or ProPublica would be worthwhile models to consider: independent staffs with strong editors that provide coverage where voids exist or where collaboration with other media can leverage limited reporting staffs. That could expand coverage, with a bonus of high quality, but it would be a much different resource than an SMC. And hey, if sustainable financial support could be found (no doubt a big "if"), it might even put some good science journalists back on a regular paycheck.

Another consideration is whether any effort to increase levels of science journalism is better directed at digital as opposed to conventional outlets and what form such an effort should take.

Some of my NASW colleagues wonder about the possibility of a central clearing house with links to currently available resources at various journalism organizations, blogs, etc. It wouldn't necessarily create new programs, but could serve as a one-stop shopping site for what is already available and require regular updating. It could be based at an existing organization, avoiding the need for a new infrastructure.

Are we really so different from the rest of our profession that we need a dedicated media center to improve our lot?

We currently exist in a kind of perfect storm: Scientific discovery in both life and physical sciences is exploding, demanding both smart and critical reporting. Yet the media's resources devoted to covering stories so crucial to society are depleted amid profound changes driven by the Internet's disruptive impact on conventional news organizations.

But journalists on other beats face challenges too. Are we really so different from the rest of our profession that we need a dedicated media center to improve our lot?

This is an important conversation and I hope it will lead to efforts to strengthen and expand existing resources to meet the challenges facing science journalism. ■

"Can a Science Media Center Work in the U.S.?" Columbia Journalism Review, *June 21, 2013.*

REID COURTESY OF BRIAN HAYES

Science Media Centers Worldwide

Australia (Est. 2005) ■ CEO Susannah Elliott has a Ph.D. in cell biology (Macquarie University), a graduate diploma in journalism (University of Technology, Sydney), and more than 18 years of experience in science communication with the science-media nexus as her primary focus. Before establishing the Australian SMC, she was communications director for the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), in Stockholm, Sweden; a network of scientists working on global environmental change. ■ **smc.org.au**

Canada (Est. 2008) ■ Executive Director Penny Park has extensive experience in radio and television science journalism in Canada. From 1980 to 1995, she was a producer and senior producer with "Quirks and Quarks," an award-winning weekly science program on CBC radio. Since 1995, Park has been with the Discovery Channel, where she helped develop the show "Daily Planet." She holds degrees in linguistics (University of New Brunswick) and biology (University of Guelph). ■ **sciencemediacentre.ca/smc**

Japan (Est. 2010) ■ Director Shiro Segawa is a professor of Political Science and Economics at Waseda University (Tokyo). Initial government funding expired in late 2012. New funding, commencing in August, will support operations for the next three years. During this transition period, part-time staff maintains a weekly e-newsletter for registered journalists on topical research papers. ■ **smc-japan.org/eng**

New Zealand (Est. 2008) ■ Manager Peter Griffin is founder of the NZ SMC and the founder/editor of Sciblogs. Prior to this, he was technology editor of the *New Zealand Herald* and spent nearly eight years covering business and technology for the paper as a reporter and columnist. He was the technology columnist for the *Herald on Sunday* and a commentator for TVNZ, Radio New Zealand, and Radio Live. He holds a masters degree in creative writing (Victoria University's Institute of Modern Letters). ■ **sciencemediacentre.co.nz**

United Kingdom (Est. 2002) ■ Chief Executive Fiona Fox holds a degree in journalism with many years of experience working in media relations for high-profile national organizations, such as Equal Opportunities Committee, National Council for One Parent Families, and CAFOD (a leading aid agency). In 2010, Fox was chair of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Working Group that published a report on the future of science in the media, as part of the U.K.'s Science and Society strategy. ■ **sciencemediacentre.org**

Rosalind Reid to Succeed Ben Patrusky as Executive Director of CASW

The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) has chosen NASW member Rosalind Reid to become the organization's executive director effective Sept. 1. She will succeed Ben Patrusky, who is retiring after 38 years with CASW; 25 years as executive director.

"Ros Reid has all the right stuff and all the passion to carry on the proven programs of CASW and to guide our growth in the digital age of journalism and science communications," said Alan Boyle, newly elected CASW board president and science editor at NBC News Digital.

Reid is a seasoned science writer and editor who served from 1992 to 2008 as the editor-in-chief of *American Scientist* magazine, where she developed workshops on visual communication for scientists and took the magazine online. Since 2008 she has been embedded in science and technology at Harvard University, serving as executive director first of the university's Initiative in Innovative Computing, and then of its Institute for Applied Computational Science.

Earlier in her career, she worked as a reporter at newspapers in Maine and North Carolina, and later served as a research news editor at North Carolina State University. She was the first journalist in residence at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics, in Santa Barbara. Reid is a graduate of Syracuse University and she holds a master's in public policy sciences from Duke University.

"The heart and soul of CASW is its emphasis on making the wonders and achievements of science accessible to large swaths of the public, and in giving science writers access to the newsmakers of science," said Patrusky. "We couldn't have invented a more perfect individual than Ros Reid to work with our board, and to carry on that mission."

Patrusky, a widely published freelance science journalist, and a pioneer in the development of science writers' seminars, served as New Horizons program director from 1975 to 2004, and was appointed executive director of CASW in 1988. During his tenure as program and executive director, Patrusky also organized and led month-long journalistic expeditions, funded by the Kellogg Foundation, to Central and South America and Africa. The journeys, which drew science writers from the nation's premier newspapers in 1991 and 1995, were designed to investigate how science could enhance agricultural productivity to feed growing populations in developing nations. He was a longtime member of the board of Science Service, publisher of *Science News*, and has received coveted writing awards for his work from the American Institute of Physics and the American Chemical Society. Following his retirement in the fall, he will continue as a consultant to CASW's board. (See page 18 for Ron Winslow's tribute to Ben Patrusky.)

Reid steps into a post that incorporates the administrative, fund-raising, and programmatic functions of the all-volunteer CASW board. Reid joined CASW as a board member in 2007. She took on the role of New Horizons program director in 2012 and will continue to serve in that role.

"It's an extraordinary privilege to take on this role with CASW, an organization whose remarkable reputation has endured for more than 50 years because of the quality of its programs and leadership, and in particular the extraordinary wisdom, dedication, and steady hand of Ben Patrusky over almost four decades," Reid said. "As CASW looks to the future, there are opportunities to create new relationships with science communicators, scientists, prospective partner organizations, donors, and others committed to public engagement amid the challenges facing our craft." ■

(source: CASW news release)

Rosalind Reid

CASW Officers Elected

The year 2013 marks other important transitions for CASW. In addition to Rosalind Reid's elevation to the role of executive director, the following officers were elected to its board in April.

- President **Alan Boyle**, science editor at NBC News Digital. He has been science editor at NBCNews.com and MSNBC.com since 1996.
- Vice President **Deborah Blum**, a Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer and professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Secretary **Charles Petit**, freelancer, writer for the MIT Knight Science Journalism Tracker, and former newspaper and news magazine staffer.
- Treasurer **Tom Siegfried**, an award-winning science writer, editor and author who has served as editor in chief of *Science News* and science editor of *The Dallas Morning News*.

Boyle previously served as CASW's treasurer and vice president. He succeeds Cristine Russell, who served as CASW president for seven years. Russell, a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and freelance science writer, will remain on the CASW executive committee. ■

Seven Rules For Equity

Avoid Gratuitous Gender Profiles of Female Scientists

by Curtis Brainard

There's still a gender gap in the sciences, with far fewer women than men in research jobs, and those women earning substantially less, but it doesn't help when journalists treat every female scientist they profile as an archetype of perseverance.

Such was the consensus that emerged from a discussion prompted by a March 5 post at Double X Science by freelancer Christie Aschwanden, who observed that:

> Campaigns to recognize outstanding female scientists have led to a recognizable genre of media coverage. Let's call it "A lady who…" genre. You've seen these profiles, of course you have, because they're everywhere. The hallmark of "A lady who…" profile is that it treats its subject's sex as her most defining detail. She's not just a great scientist, she's a woman! And if she's also a wife and a mother, those roles get emphasized too.

Aschwanden cited a few examples littered with phrases like, "she is married, has two children and has been able to keep up with her research," and proposed that, as a means of avoiding such gratuitous gender profiles, reporters adopt a simple, seven-part test. To pass, a story cannot mention:

- The fact that she's a woman
- Her husband's job
- Her child-care arrangements
- How she nurtures her underlings
- How she was taken aback by the competitiveness in her field
- How she's such a role model for other women
- How she's the "first woman to…"

Aschwanden dubbed her checklist, "The Finkbeiner Test," in honor of her colleague, science writer Ann Finkbeiner, who had written a post for the blog Last Word on Nothing in January about an assignment she'd received from *Nature* to write a profile of a female astronomer.

Finkbeiner, an award-winning journalist, noted that the assignment had come "just before the magazine announced publicly that it needs to redress its problem with a gender balance that favors males," and that both she and her subject were "suspiciously female."

…it doesn't help when journalists treat every female scientist they profile as an archetype of perseverance.

"I honestly don't care," Finkbeiner concluded. "What I won't do, however, is write about this astronomer as a woman."

Finkbeiner went on to explain that she'd written many gender-oriented profiles over the course of her career at various editors' behest, and learned all about sexual harassment and the challenges associated with having both a career and a family.

Some progress notwithstanding, those problems have not gone away, she continued, but she had grown "bored" with writing about them, and pledged to ignore gender in the upcoming profile.

"I'm going to pretend she's just an astronomer," she wrote.

Finkbeiner stressed in her post that she was describing a personal decision, but expressed wholehearted support for Aschwanden's test in a recent interview.

However, both she and Aschwanden, whom I also interviewed, emphasized that the test should apply mainly to the sort of general-interest scientist profiles that one might find in the *New York Times* or the front section of *Nature*, which are supposed to focus on professional accomplishments.

There is plenty of need to write about gender issues, the two agreed, but the point is to do it right. In an email, Aschwanden wrote:

> A lot of commenters have said, 'But isn't it sometimes OK to mention these things about a woman?' And my answer is, yes. In some circumstances it's perfectly fine. For instance, if you're writing a story about sexism in science or about the gender gap in leadership roles in science or you're writing about sex-related issues specifically.
>
> What's not OK is to turn a story about a scientist's professional life into one about her personal life or her gender roles. What's especially problematic is to frame the story, 'and the most remarkable thing is that she accomplished all of this while being a woman!'

Still, the virtue of some rules in Aschwanden's test is difficult to see at first. Take the rule of "no firsts." In the comments section below her post for Last Word on Nothing, Finkbeiner explained that no sooner had she taken the vow to ignore gender, than she caught herself writing that the astronomer she was profiling was the first to win a certain award. After a reader urged her to stick to her pledge, she removed it.

"The fact that she's the first woman to do that says a lot more about the prize-giving committee than it does about her," Finkbeiner explained in our interview. "So if I were going to put that into a story, it

Curtis Brainard is editor of "The Observatory," *Columbia Journalism Review*.

would be a story about prejudice in that prize committee."

Asked what reporters should do if a scientist mentions the gender gap in her field, Finkbeiner said they should use their discretion, but shouldn't feel compelled to include those comments if they're not relevant to the story.

"Women scientists tend to bring it up. They tend to be pissed off about it," she said. "It's a real issue, and it's something they have to learn to deal with, and they don't want to deal with it, so they complain about it." But that doesn't necessarily mean it's a defining part of their professional lives.

Finkbeiner offered a similar defense of Aschwanden's rule against mentioning that a scientist is a role model for other women, when I asked what reporters should do if a source pays someone that compliment.

"That comment is endemic to the field," she said. "I had to get some outside quotes for the profile of this astronomer, and every single one said, '…and she's a great role model,' and I didn't put any of that in. Scientists, male and female, tend to be role models for their students and younger colleagues, and I've just heard it too often."

A few commenters on Finkbeiner and Aschwanden's posts asked whether the solution was not to stop asking female scientists about their home lives, but rather to *start* asking their male colleagues. After all, they pointed out, reporters have long talked about the need to "humanize" scientists. But Finkbeiner argued that family matters are rarely the best way to accomplish that goal.

"I've been doing this science writing business for a long time, and I have done many profiles of both men and women scientists, and honestly, none of those things are all that unusual," she said. "They're all normal human beings and the thing that makes them so interesting is the science. So, if you want to humanize them, talk about their motivations. Talk about how they got interested in their field. Talk about the part of their life that led them to become such an interesting scientist—because childcare is not interesting."

As for examples of outlets that are covering gender issues in the right way, there's the site where Aschwanden proposed the Finkbeiner Test, Double X Science, whose goal is "to bring evidence-based science stories and angles on science specifically of interest to the female-gendered audience."

The venue might seem like an ironic choice for such a post, but when the site's reporters write about science, they tackle it head on, without regard to the gender of those who produced it, and when they write about gender issues, they take the direct approach as well, setting aside details about research and the laws of science.

There is also *Nature*, which published an incisive special report on women in science in early March, which reported that:

> Science remains institutionally sexist. Despite some progress, women scientists are still paid less, promoted less frequently, win fewer grants, and are more likely to leave research than similarly qualified men.

But as Finkbeiner mentioned in her post, the problem exists in the pages of *Nature* as well. Last November, following complaints that it featured too few female

SEVEN RULES continued on page 29

The Finkbeiner Test

To pass, a story cannot mention:

- **The fact that she's a woman**
- **Her husband's job**
- **Her child-care arrangements**
- **How she nurtures her underlings**
- **How she was taken aback by the competitiveness in her field**
- **How she's such a role model for other women**
- **How she's the "first woman to…"**

NY Times Obit Didn't Pass the Finkbeiner Test

The *New York Times* responded to a chorus of critics after it published an obituary about a famed female rocket scientist that led with her accomplishments as a wife and mother.

Yvonne Brill died on March 27, at the age of 88. President Obama awarded her with the National Medal of Technology and Innovation in 2011. Under *The Times*' headline, "Yvonne Brill, Pioneering Rocket Scientist, Dies At 88," the lede read:

> She made a mean beef stroganoff, followed her husband from job to job and took eight years off from work to raise three children. "The world's best mom," her son Matthew said.

Some readers tweeted their dissatisfaction, making fun of *The Times*' inclusion of her cooking skills and wondering if an obituary for a male rocket scientist would lead with anything but his professional accomplishments. *The Times*' public editor Margaret Sullivan even chimed in, saying that she agreed with the criticism and linking to a *CJR* article about how news coverage of women scientists often leads to gratuitous gender profiles.

Later, *The Times* dropped the beef stroganoff reference and changed the lede of the online obituary to:

> She was a brilliant rocket scientist who followed her husband from job to job and took eight years off from work to raise three children. "The world's best mom," her son Matthew said.

The Times did not attach a note to the online article notifying readers of the change. ■

(source: Huffington Post, "NY Times *Changes Yvonne Brill Obituary After Criticism," March 31, 2013)*

Featured Column

Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world of science writing

by Rick Borchelt

Old Chestnuts

This column marks my last as a regular contributor of Scholarly Pursuits. As many of you know, the appetite for many federal agencies in supporting scholarly activity in science communication has never been particularly ravenous in the best of times. The current budget drought has meant that my office—like many others—is short-staffed already *and* under a hiring freeze. So the departure of my co-author and collaborator Ben Carollo from my staff, announced last issue, makes it especially difficult to keep the column going as a regular piece. I hope to be able to periodically share research findings online or on the NASW discussion boards as time and enthusiasm permit.

I thought I would use this last Scholarly Pursuits to share three seminal pieces of research from the dawn of history for most of you that I think every practitioner of science communication should know and be able to recite word for word. Well, not quite, but these three do—in my mind—inform the very foundation of our enterprise, and pose difficult challenges or questions that have not yet been addressed. Or, just as likely, have provided answers the community would just as soon ignore.

■ ■ ■

Carter, Roy E. Jr. 1958. Newspaper "gatekeepers" and the sources of news. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 22(2), pp. 133-144.

The first and oldest of the three is nearly as old as I am: Roy Carter's 1958 paper on newspaper gatekeepers and news sources. It wasn't the first paper on the issue; Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton had begun to plow the field of interactions between press and sources in Wilbur Schramm's opus *Mass Communications*, and others had used the term "gatekeepers" in relation to how different media actors controlled the flow of news. Carter, though, began to postulate broader theories about how these interactions take place, and on the variables that affect how satisfied reporters and sources were with those interactions. Carter treats two studies he has done in the 1958 paper, an analysis of press-physician relationships in his (then) home state of North Carolina, and a similar study of press interactions with school administrators in California.

In language that would be topical in a graduate seminar today, Carter identifies a critical element of the press-medical relationship: status conferral. For both the physicians and the school administrators, positive interactions with the press depended on the sources' belief that being quoted in the newspaper was a net gain; it would *confer status* (for the individual, in the case of administrators, or for the field, as was sometimes the case for physicians) rather than pose a *threat*. In a comment that could be considered prescient in retrospect but dispiriting because it still dogs our profession, Carter notes:

> Doctors, we have learned, have two real intra-professional problems as news sources: (1) They may be accused of seeking publicity if they are quoted in print, and (2) they may be questioned on "scientific" grounds if what is attributed to them goes into print in language which is nontechnical and shorn of ifs, ands, and other qualifiers. For the doctor, then, publicity seems to offer little status-conferral value in the community, yet is threatening insofar as his relationships with his colleagues are concerned.

Fifty years on, have we not figured out how to solve this?

…positive interactions with the press depended on the sources' belief that being quoted in the newspaper was a net gain…

■ ■ ■

McCombs, Maxwell E. and Donald L. Shaw. 1972. The agenda-setting function of mass media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (2), pp. 176-187.

Fifteen years later came the seminal 1972 paper by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw on the agenda-setting effect of mass media. As a graduate student in journalism in the early 1980s, this was still seen as a

Scholarly Pursuits features articles from the social science research community in the United States and abroad.

Rick Borchelt is special assistant for public affairs to the director at the National Cancer Institute at NIH.

sea change in mass communication and I spun out an endless stream of apparently convincing seminar papers on the topic, the gist of which was that there was little discernible evidence that mass media told people *what or how to think*, but were spectacularly successful in telling people what to *think about* (paraphrasing Bernard Cohen in his book, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, 1963). McCombs and Shaw tested this effect, again in North Carolina, this time on a variety of political/campaign issues, comparing "what Chapel Hill voters said were the key issues of the campaign with the actual content of the mass media used by the during the campaign."

…little evidence that mass media told people what or how to think, but were spectacularly successful in telling people what to think about…

With the benefit of hindsight, McCombs' and Shaw's conclusion doesn't seem nearly as transgressive as it did in 1972, when the common wisdom held that voters—especially well educated and politically active ones—attended to the major issues in the campaign derived from a variety of primary sources and made their voting judgments accordingly. But the authors demonstrated convincingly otherwise; their hypothesis seemed borne out by the evidence:

> …the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influence the salience of attitudes toward the political issues…the evidence in this study that voters tend to share the media's *composite* definition of what is important strongly suggests an agenda-setting function of the mass media.

The subsequent decades of research, in science communication and political communication, have only reinforced this relationship between what the "public" reflects as worth paying attention to and what the mass media tell them are the stories of the day. The news optimist would argue this means the media are doing a great job of meeting the "public's" interest with their story selections; the cynic (and I resemble this characterization here) would argue that mass media drive (rather than derive) the social agenda. And despite Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and a host of other "interactive" social media that purport to inject a public voice into that agenda, my own sense (and that of more contemporary research) is that people generally turn to these new media to set the social agenda just as they turned to newspaper and television coverage in the Humphrey/Nixon/Wallace campaign.

Forty years on, have we not figured out how to break the dependence on mass media to set the social agenda for science?

■ ■ ■

Ziman, John. 1991. Public understanding of science, *Science, Technology and Human Values*. January 1991. Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 99-105.

The 1991 paper, "Public understanding of science," excerpts John Ziman's remarks from three talks at the conference "*Policies and Publics for Science and Technology*" delivered in London in April 1990. The talks and this subsequent paper gave name to a new journal, *Public Understanding of Science*, still published under the Sage imprint today, as well as coining a term many of us are familiar with (in concept if not in practice): The *deficit model* of science communication.

Ziman drew on a set of surveys done in Oxford and run in conjunction with the then-nascent National Science Board surveys of science literacy. He notes that both studies illustrate a "degree of public ignorance [that] is very distressing indeed and would seem to call for a very determined effort of education and re-education, through formal schooling and the media." Paradoxically, Ziman explains, "[d]espite all the conjectures to the contrary, the great majority of respondents in the Oxford survey report themselves as 'very interested' or 'moderately interested' in news about discoveries and inventions—much more interested, in fact, than in news about sports, politics, or film," yet "they also report themselves as worse informed about science and technology than about sports or politics."

Ziman proceeds to flesh out some of the many, complex variables that stand between an interest in science and the ability to spout scientific facts and theories, among them the incoherence of the scientific narrative, the needs of the audience for a given piece of scientific information at the time they are asked the question, credibility of the source of the information, and public conflicts on social issues between

As long as the relationship between scientific literacy and knowledge availability is conceived of as direct and causal…communication models based on that causality are fundamentally flawed.

and among scientific experts (and with others). As long as the relationship between scientific literacy and knowledge availability is conceived of as direct and causal, Ziman writes, communication models based on that causality are fundamentally flawed:

> The fact is…a simple "deficit" model, which tries to interpret the situation solely in terms of public ignorance or scientific illiteracy, does not provide an adequate analytical framework for many of the results [of the Oxford and NSB results].

And yet this is still the prevailing model that drives much of the science "communication" done by government, industry, professional societies, and others, who often say they are doing more but in practice continue to deliver a steady stream of one-way, pedantic knowledge nuggets.

Twenty years on, have we not figured out how to get beyond the deficit model?

■ ■ ■

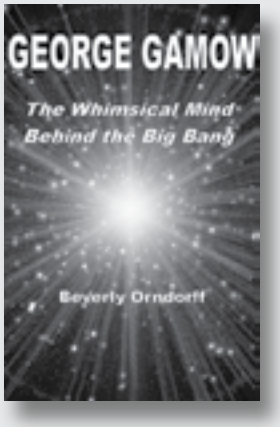
To answer my own rhetorical questions, yes we have, to a greater or lesser extent, in each of these three areas. What we lack is the institutional commitment and support of scientific community leadership to incorporate lessons learned a half-century ago. What we lack is a concerted effort on the part of funding agencies to ensure that their grantees adopt practices suggested in papers older than the graduate students they fund. And what we lack is the political will as science writers to speak research truth to practice power. ■

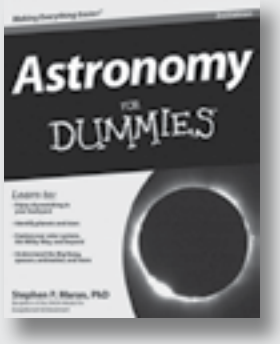
Featured Column

Advance Copy

Backstories on books by NASW members

BY LYNNE LAMBERG





In this column, NASW authors speak directly to colleagues about their new books, telling how they chose their topic, researched it, found a publisher, and more.

The Secret World of Red Wolves: The Fight To Save North America's Other Wolf, *by T. DeLene Beeland, University of North Carolina Press*

Wolves are powerfully fascinating creatures. About seven years ago when I first learned of the red wolf, I was baffled that I'd never heard of this mammal before—but I was also instantly hooked on why that was.

Red wolves nearly went extinct in the mid-1900s, but some were captive-bred and reintroduced in 1987 to coastal North Carolina. They have many fascinating twists in their history, such as the ability to hybridize with coyotes and a mysterious past where scientists aren't entirely sure how they evolved. I came up empty-handed in searches for a comprehensive and recent book on red wolves, so I decided to write the book I wanted to read. As a first-time author without a literary agent, I pitched the University of North Carolina Press directly. It felt like winning the lottery when they said "yes."

In the beginning of my research, I saw my first wild red wolf. Granted, she was being held in a captive facility for medical treatment, but it was still a transformative experience to gaze at this animal and learn about her life history from red wolf biologist Ryan Nordsven. Listening to him, I realized that the field biologists' work was a powerful vehicle for the red wolf's story.

Next, I shadowed the recovery field team across several seasons of their work, and I also interviewed local landowners, managers, and hunters about their experiences and perceptions of red wolves. That became Part I of the book.

Part II goes back in time to explore the possible origins of red wolves, their decline in the wild, the roots of their captive breeding in the 1970s, and the early years of reintroduction.

Part III looks forward to future conservation threats, such as climate change and sea level rise, which menace the red wolves' only reintroduction area. For me, the book will be successful if it is deemed useful for the conservation of this beautiful and elusive southeastern predator.

— T. DeLene Beeland

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■ ■ ■

George Gamow: The Whimsical Mind Behind the Big Bang, *by Beverly Orndorff, Amazon/Smashwords*

George Gamow (1904-1968), a fun-loving Russian-born American physicist, was a science polymath who instigated the modern version of the hot Big Bang theory, and led two colleagues to propose that the dying energy from that event should still pervade the cosmos. That signature of the Big Bang was indeed detected some years later, confirming that the universe had a definite beginning, on a "day without a yesterday," as one pioneer cosmologist put it.

But the scientists who actually detected the Big Bang energy were totally unaware of the earlier Gamow-inspired work, which was forgotten and ignored by many. Some say it may have been due partly to difficulties of taking Gamow seriously because of his constant clowning and drinking. For all of his clowning, Gamow was indeed a serious physicist who worked with many of the 20th century's most prestigious scientists, including Albert Einstein, Madame Curie, Niels Bohr, Ernest Rutherford, Edward Teller, Hans Bethe, Robert Oppenheimer, Paul Dirac, and Enrico Fermi.

Although nominated, Gamow never won a Nobel Prize. More than a half a dozen Nobel laureates have cited Gamow's pivotal role in their work, however. Gamow also wrote internationally acclaimed popular science books for lay audiences, which inspired many youngsters to follow science careers. Several later won Nobel Prizes.

Gamow, for whom a moon crater is named, also made notable contributions to nuclear physics, DNA code-breaking, and defining the processes occurring in stars. George Gamow is one of the more influential and colorful 20th century scientists that most people have never heard of.

I had been a fan of Gamow's popular writings

since my high school days. His work was a factor in my decision to major in physics in college. I had long noted the absence of a biography of Gamow. A few years into my retirement from the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, I decided to embark on a Gamow biography, which led me to many hours of poring through his published papers, and to tapping the vast resources of the American Institute of Physics' Center for History of Physics.

I also spent a few days with Gamow's son, Igor, and his wife, Elfriede, in Boulder, Col., home of the University of Colorado, where George Gamow spent the final dozen years of his life. While there, I also interviewed a former Gamow physics department colleague, Dr. Albert Bartlett, and Dr. Richard McCray, George Gamow Distinguished Professor Emeritus. Dr. Victor Alpher, son of Gamow's protégé Ralph Alpher, has been extremely helpful in sharing valuable material regarding his father and material related to the evolution of the modern Big Bang theory.

I finally went the e-book route because of difficulties in interesting agents and publishers in this project. At least two major publishers indicated that, while Gamow was a worthy subject, biographies of scientists generally don't sell well.

— Beverly Orndorff

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■ ■ ■

Astronomy for Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Stephen P. Maran, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

Astronomy for Dummies is an introduction to astronomy science and to the amateur astronomy hobby. It was suggested by my agent, who called the CEO of the original publisher, IDG Books Worldwide, and sealed the deal. It was the first science book in the *For Dummies* series. Now there are many. Wiley published a second edition in 2005. The first two editions were translated into eight languages; foreign rights for the new edition have been sold for three more.

I'm a professional astronomer, so writing the science content was easy. I haven't been a hobbyist since the 1950s, however. Meanwhile, home telescopes have been computerized, with many new kinds of accessories. I consulted friends at *Sky & Telescope* magazine for guidance on the hobby, including the right equipment for a beginning stargazer in the current era.

Breakthroughs in astronomy have occurred at an amazing rate since my first edition in 1999, when dark matter was still doubtful to some experts and exoplanets were just cropping up. The science content of each successive edition of *Astronomy for Dummies* has been greatly revised. New social trends such as the proliferation of dark-sky parks, and opportunities to aid research with personal computers and smartphones, i.e., "Citizen Science," have proliferated.

One Massachusetts astronomy professor adopted *Astronomy for Dummies* as a textbook. I've wondered how his students felt about that.

— Steve Maran

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■ ■ ■

Songs of the Two Names*, by Robert Aquinas McNally, Grayson Books*

This book began with a single, blank-verse sonnet written in the persona and voice of Carol von Linné—a.k.a. Linnaeus—that focused on the music woven into many of the Linnaean species names. As a nature writer who studied Latin for six years, I found this intersection of wild beings and language most appealing, so I set out to create a collection of blank-verse sonnets based on binomials.

Each sonnet took about a month to write (on the train in the morning, as I commuted to my day job), what with the research needed to fully grasp each name (e.g., *Crotalus horridus*, *Physeter macrocephalus*, and *Phallus impudicus*), and the dozens of drafts every poem had to pass through on its way to final polish. While I was working, I submitted individual sonnets to various literary magazines, and most were published.

Given that response, I knew the next step was turning the series—grown to 23 poems over two years of work—into a collection for publication. After figuring out the sequencing, I entered the manuscript in contests at small publishers and magazines, which provide the usual path for publishing such short collections, also called chapbooks.

New Hampshire poet laureate Patricia Fargnoli, a fellow nature writer who described the sonnets as "praise songs for a natural world filled with wonder," was judging the 2012 Grayson Books Poetry Chapbook contest, and she selected my manuscript. With that, *Songs of the Two Names* became a published reality.

— Robert McNally

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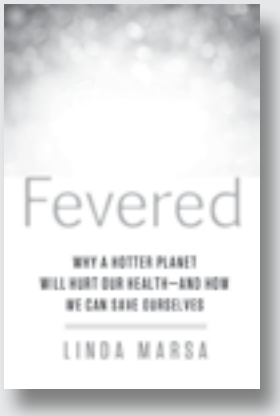
■ ■ ■

Fevered: Why a Hotter Planet Will Hurt Our Health and How We Can Save Ourselves*, by Linda Marsa, Rodale Books*

Much has already been written about climate change, which is probably the most important science story of our generation. I was struck by a recent *Lancet* report that suggested a big chunk of the story that hasn't been well reported may



Advance Copy welcomes new book announcements. Tell how you developed your idea, researched the book, and wrote it. Include a little about the book's route to publication. No press releases, please.

To submit your book, follow the backstory guidelines and image requirements at nasw.org/advance-copy-submission-guidelines

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have the most immediate and profound impact on our lives: how rising temperatures will affect our health, resulting in increasing rates of ills like asthma, allergies, infectious diseases, heart and lung disease, and cancer. Inspired, I did a piece for *Discover* that focused mainly on the spread of tropical diseases to newly warm habitats.

But there was more to the story. Beyond the science—which can be abstract to the average person—I wanted to uncover compelling narratives that drove home the fact that climate change already is affecting our health, and illuminated the harsh reality of what life will be like as the planet heats up.

When I came across research by NASA scientists that showed even minor temperature changes can have far reaching consequences—they found the 1930s Dust Bowls were caused, in part, by a one degree shift in the ocean's surface temperatures, leading to the decade-long drought that devastated the Great Plains—I knew I had a book-length tale.

I found numerous other examples that provide a glimpse into our hotter future, including the collapse of New Orleans' public health system in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and the heat waves that swept across Russia and Europe, claiming tens of thousands of lives. These enabled me to flesh out a saleable proposal. My agent shopped it around. Rodale offered the best deal.

While working on the book, I spent nearly a month driving thousands of miles around Australia to witness firsthand what severe climate change looks like in an advanced, industrialized democracy, and how demoralizing it is for even the hardy Aussies to live with fiercely erratic weather. On the bright side, I was pleasantly surprised to find that cities like Miami, Chicago, Vancouver, and New York are embracing smart conservation strategies that can smooth the way toward a cleaner, greener future.

— Linda Marsa

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10 Tips for Successful Self-Publishing

BY DENNIS MEREDITH

Self-publishing is becoming an ever more viable option for authors, given the erosion of commercial publishing, convenient print-on-demand technology, and the increasing power of Amazon and other online bookstores.

Since I've become a self-published author (**dennismeredith.com**), here are the rules I've found to be most helpful:

Ask yourself why. Your motives for self-publishing will guide how much time, effort, and money you invest. Are you only publishing a book for family and friends? Will your book be integral to your professional "brand," or will it be a sideline or hobby? Will it be a single book, or the first in a line of books that aim to build your reputation?

Choose your investment level strategically. Once you've decided on the "why" of your self-publishing, you can figure out the "how." Here is the spectrum of options to choose from:

- *E-book only, do-it-yourself cover and layout.* Choose this alternative for test-marketing a book, or for books meant only for family and friends. The most popular e-book platforms are Amazon's Kindle and Smashwords. Using their built-in design tools, you can produce your own e-book for no cost, and market it through those sites. While this alternative costs no money, you incur a considerable time cost to do it right; so be willing to learn the layout and cover design tools. Even so, the result will likely not be as high quality as having a professional do the work.
- *E-book only, professional cover and layout.* By spending in the hundreds of dollars, you can have a professional do cover and layout. Choose this alternative if you want to enhance your brand, and you expect some professional benefit from your e-book. For example, it's entirely possible to make money from an e-book, with no print counterpart.
- *Print and e-book, do-it-yourself cover, layout.* Even though e-books are on the rise, a print book is still considered the hallmark of a "real" book. Choose this alternative if you want your book to have more legitimacy in readers' eyes. You can produce a print book cheaply through CreateSpace (**createspace.com**) and Lightning Source (**lightningsource.com**). However, even if you spend considerable time to master their design tools, your print book will invariably not present the same quality as a professionally produced book.
- *Print and e-book, professional cover, layout, and proofing.* For several thousand dollars, you can commission a professional cover and interior layout and design, as well as e-book formatting. Such an investment makes sense only if you believe there is a significant market for your nonfiction book. Or in the case of novels, you plan to produce a line of books. It also makes sense if the book will be a significant part of your professional brand.

Do your homework. Prepare yourself to publish by reading the Marketing and Publishing Resource articles on the NASW website (**nasw.org/articles/marketing-publishing-resource**), and thoroughly exploring the recommended books, websites, and discussion groups.

Do a marketing plan early. Before you even write your book, develop a marketing plan that defines your audiences and how to reach them. This plan will help guide the content of your book, and of course will be essential for strategic marketing.

Don't expect to make money. There's a saying in publishing: "You don't make money *from* a book; you make money *because* of a book." You are unlikely to make significant direct income from your nonfiction book, but it can build your reputation, yield writing assignments, and enable you to make money teaching workshops and giving talks on your subject.

Avoid POD publishers. Most so-called "print on demand publishers"—for example,

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Arbor Books, AuthorHouse, iUniverse, and PublishAmerica—make their money charging (often overcharging) authors, rather than selling books. Before you consider one of these companies, read *The Fine Print of Self Publishing* (**bookpublisherscompared.com**) by Mark Levine.

Proufread, proofrede, proofreed! Strive to make your copy as perfect as possible. This means quality copyediting and obsessive proofreading over and over and *over* until you are totally sick of looking at your book. Then proof it *again*. Even the most trivial errors damage the credibility of your book, especially a self-published book. And for novels, errors pull readers right out of the story you're trying to tell. Even a professional proofreader will miss errors—not only typos, but also conceptual and structural errors.

Use Bowker. Register your book with Bowker—the publishing industry's central provider for bibliographic information and ISBNs. Bowker's self-publishing website (**selfpublishedauthor.com**) will guide you through the process.

Do free marketing first. Free or inexpensive marketing steps work best—including a website, social media, news releases, and offering the book on reader sites like GoodReads (**goodreads.com**) and LibraryThing (**librarything.com**). Conversely spending money on ads and publicity campaigns is not as cost effective.

Aim at Amazon. **Amazon.com** is so important to marketing, that it deserves its own listing in the top 10 rules. It offers the premier free marketing platform. Craft a compelling book description, list your book under all relevant search keywords, activate the Look Inside feature, build an author page, and solicit reader reviews. ■

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This article distilled from a five-part series by Dennis Meredith on self-publishing posted on ***bit.ly/1be7fK9****.*

Tax Rules for Prizes and Awards

BY JULIAN BLOCK

The IRS is unyielding when NASW members receive Science in Society Journalism Awards or other awards of money or property in recognition of their journalistic or literary achievements. Writers owe income taxes on their awards.

Some award winners qualify for tax relief. Internal Revenue Code Section 74 authorizes a tightly restricted exception for "prizes and awards made primarily in recognition of religious, charitable, scientific, educational, artistic, literary, or civic achievement." To qualify for the exclusion —meaning winners sidestep taxes—they must satisfy three requirements.

First, they were "selected without any action on their part to enter the contest or proceeding." Translation: No exclusion for winners of Science in Society Journalism Awards.

Second, they "are not required to render substantial future services as a condition to receiving the prize or award." Verboten services include teaching and writing.

Third, they must assign awards away from themselves to a charity. Specifically, winners must "designate"—that is, instruct the award-conferring organization to turn the proceeds over to one or more governmental agencies (at federal, state, or local levels) or to certain charities, such as schools or churches.

The Nobel Prizes are the best-known example of big-bucks awards that sidestep taxes when they are assigned away. Code Section 74 was no obstacle for President Obama when he won the Nobel Prize in 2009. Mr. Obama immediately announced that he would donate the full 10 million Swedish kronor (about $1.4 million) to charities. So he owed no taxes on the award.

Self-employment taxes. Suppose that, unlike Mr. Obama, you decide to skip the exclusion and report the award. You are liable for income taxes, but not for self-employment taxes, because you are not in the business of winning awards. Report your award on Line 21 ("other income") on the front of Form 1040, not on Form 1040's Schedule C. As the source of the income, specify "award" in the box to the left of where you enter the amount.

On a personal note, I appeared on "The Match Game," hosted by Gene Rayburn, and was teamed with John Forsythe, best known to television audiences as the conniving patriarch on "Dynasty." I won about $100 for my 1966 appearance, as did my wife who appeared on a later show and was teamed with Bennett Cerf, renowned as a panelist on "What's My Line?" and as a publisher. As there are no exclusions from income taxes for game show winnings, my wife and I made the required entries on Line 21, because we are not in the business of appearing on shows.

The following year, I was a "Jeopardy!" contestant for four games. Back then, the money amounted to much less. The host was Art Fleming. A check for $1,910 and a set of *Compton's Picture Encyclopedia* arrived about a week after the birth of our first child; we photographed him "holding" the check. I made sure to enter $1,910 on Line 21 and was never dunned by the IRS for self-employment taxes.

My "Jeopardy!" winnings of $1,910 were chopped liver, compared to the $2,520,700 earned in 2004 by Ken Jennings. He was victorious on 74 episodes of the show, its longest winning streak. Did that many wins compel Jennings to complete Schedule C, thereby obligating him to pay an enormous amount of self-employment taxes? Not if he had asked me. I would have told him to stick with Line 21 and not to fret about his streak being surpassed by Cal Ripken. ■

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NASW President
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President's Letter

MY FELLOW SCIENCE WRITERS, THERE'S BEEN A PERTURBATION IN THE FORCE.

Ben Petrusky is retiring in September as executive director of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing, NASW's sister organization, and that's a noteworthy event in the world of science journalism.

For nearly four decades, first as program director and for the past 25 years as executive director of CASW (serving both posts for much of that period), Ben has been the architect and guiding force behind the annual New Horizons in Science briefings. It's hard to imagine that anyone over that time has done more to bring scientists and science writers together with the mission of raising the level of science journalism and bringing the story of science to the public.

New Horizons, a program featuring top researchers from every corner of science, has been part of the annual ScienceWriters meeting that NASW and CASW have jointly produced since 2005. We're biased, of course, but the combination of NASW's first-rate professional development workshops and the CASW science seminars makes for an unparalleled education program for journalists—one designed by science writers for science writers.

Another terrific meeting is already well in the works for ScienceWriters2013 (see page 27).

But New Horizons, a true smorgasbord of scientific knowledge, began in 1963 and Ben's involvement dates back to 1975. Ben's tack in putting a meeting together has been as a kind of advance scout, focusing not so much on the science news of the day but rather scoping out topics and issues that would make news in the months and years ahead. In the process, he has found scientists whose research would not only help make the news, but who could frame their subject in clear and compelling presentations.

My first New Horizons meeting was in Boulder, in 1988. In addition to the University of Colorado, Boulder is home to NCAR, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, then in the forefront of research that was beginning to raise global warming as a public issue. I've written little about climate change in my career, but I remember this about that New Horizons: The presentations on climate change, including those by Ralph Cicerone, currently president of the National Academy of Sciences, and the late Stephen Schneider, were astonishing, providing anyone covering the topic with grounding that would serve them well for years going forward.

The following year, if memory serves, New Horizons was at Cornell, in Ithaca. There a researcher named Polly Matzinger, then of the NIH, gave a legendary presentation on the immune system: How the body distinguishes self from non-self. Her talk was so breathtaking in its clarity and insight she earned a rousing ovation from the audience—a rare tribute indeed from a group of journalists and just one example of Ben's ability to track down speakers who not only know the science but can illuminate it.

Ben's tenure on the New Horizons program obviously began well before we had Google or the Internet, and he'd spend months scouring journals and interviewing researchers to find those eventually selected for that year's program.

And as is still the case, these were often no drive-by speakers: They hung out at the meeting for a day or even longer, schmoozing with reporters at the hotel bar or at Ben's "hospitality suite" long after the dinner hour. That gave staff and free-lance science writers, veterans or first-timers unusual access to the scientists.

Two goals in particular drove Ben's search, says Cris Russell, past NASW president who just stepped down as CASW president after seven years in the post. One was to surprise—to bring to the meeting something even the most obsessive science journalists didn't know.

The other was to expose science writers to fields they weren't familiar with. Astronomy, cosmology, and paleontology were (and still are) as regular topics as molecular biology and neuroscience. The aim was not only to draw writers from coverage areas across the scientific enterprise, but to offer them the chance to expand their horizons beyond their specific beats.

"He is an impresario of science," Cris says.

Ben isn't going away—he's staying on as a consultant to CASW and he'll surely be on hand in Gainesville. Meantime, the CASW board has tapped Ros Reid, who was named program director last year, to take on the additional role as executive director (see page 9).

We at NASW look forward to working with Ros and Alan Boyle, the new CASW president, in the ongoing effort to sustain and improve the annual ScienceWriters meeting as our showcase program for NASW members.

Final preparations for the 2013 edition in Gainesville are underway. Indeed, under the leadership of Robin Marantz Henig, NASW vice president, an especially energetic workshop committee is excited about the program of 16 sessions it has lined up.

Plan to be in Gainesville, Nov. 1 to 5, and consider giving yourself this gift: Attend a New Horizons session on a topic you've never covered before. You could learn something surprising and it might be an enjoyable break from your own daily grind. In any event, it would be a worthy tip-of-the-hat to Ben. ■

WINSLOW COURTESY OF JOHN DE DIOS; DAVIS COURTESY OF MARK D. COHEN

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Cyberbeat

What kind of device do

YOU USE WHEN YOU GO ON THE INTERNET? A SMARTPHONE? A TABLET? A KINDLE-STYLE E-READER? A TRADITIONAL DESKTOP OR LAPTOP COMPUTER?

If you're like a lot of people, you may use more than one of the above, depending on the situation. For example, more than half of all cell phone users use their phones to search the Internet at least sometimes, according to the Pew Research Center.

Unfortunately, mainly websites are hard-wired for big desktop screens, which makes them difficult if not impossible to read on a tiny smartphone screen without a lot of pinching and zooming. As a result, as part of a major upgrade in underlying system software, NASW is experimenting with more flexible formats for its main site and ScienceWriters meeting sites.

First in line is the ScienceWriters2013 site, which will be unveiled in early August at **sciencewriters2013.org**. The design will undoubtedly undergo further tweaks, but essentially what you should notice is that each page on the site rearranges itself as needed to accommodate different screen sizes.

Pending board budget approval, we plan to do a similar revamp of the ScienceWriters home page (**nasw.org**) over the coming year.

We're also reorganizing some parts of the site, such as the member profile and membership renewal pages, based on feedback from users. If you, like many users, have trouble finding the page where you update your **nasw.org** email alias, you may be pleased to learn that we're going to move it. It won't be hidden under the mysterious "additional information" tab any longer. Instead, it will be under a more appropriate "addresses/email" heading.

Please don't hesitate to send along any suggestions or other comments you may

Dispatches from the Director

Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG

The Choice is Yours

Members have [Opt]ions

For the past few years, the first steps of the NASW membership renewal process included a chance to review your personal information and options, but you needn't wait until the end of the year to change your profile, add a photo, or update your mailing preferences. You can change (most) anything at any time. Log in to nasw.org and click on "Edit Your Profile"

Opt out of print

Reading this magazine in print? I am, too, but if you prefer to only read* ScienceWriters *on screen via PDF, you can visit the privacy-and-subscriptions tab in your profile to opt out of quarterly print issues. Going away for a while? You can temporarily stop* ScienceWriters *mailings by opting out, and then opting in upon your return. Leave your opts unchanged to continue receiving* ScienceWriters *by mail and have full access to PDFs posted at nasw.org/publications.

Opt in for more info

All members receive NASW-Announce emails. These are updates or announcements of fellowship programs, etc., and appear in your inbox only once or twice per month. You can also opt in to a number of other discussion groups, sign up to get notices when a new Words' Worth entry is posted, or subscribe to the job postings list, which sends you an email the moment an employer posts an ad. There are approximately 175 job postings per year. Peruse the choices by logging in to nasw.org and visiting /Discussion, /words-worth, or /jobs.

"Edit Your Profile" at nasw.org

Choose a photo

To snaz up your virtual membership card and at the same time make it more secure, upload a photo of your choice under the account section of your profile. Change it as often as you like or choose to delete it.

Opt for membership card format

Speaking of membership ID, this winter, for the first time, you will be able choose whether to receive a printed membership card for your wallet or opt for QR code, availability-from-anywhere online membership verification. ■

have on the new mobile sites and their usability. Send them to cybrarian@nasw.org.

Now, some highlights from the discussion lists:

NASW-TALK

A Knight Science Journalism Tracker post about press junkets for European science writers led to a wide-ranging discussion of freebie policies for journalists, scientists, and doctors.

Chief Tracker Paul Raeburn started the discussion May 21 with a link to his post commenting on some "very different standards" in Europe, where journalism groups were championing reporting trips that came with financial underwriting from various interest groups.

"It would be disturbing merely to see that these trips were being offered to journalists, but it's double disturbing that journalism organizations are promoting them," Raeburn wrote in his Tracker post.

"Europeans seem less concerned generally about these types of influences," wrote John Gever, senior editor for *MedPage Today*. "Their medical societies, for example, are much more in bed with drug companies than those in the U.S. (which are hardly pristine) and much more relaxed about conflict of interest disclosures by study authors at their meetings."

Maybe so, but how big a deal are these freebies anyway? And does it make any difference when they're just cheap swag instead of expensive travel? Opinions on the list varied.

"Yes, companies pay the organization to sponsor the bags, abstracts on CD, internet access, program ads, etc. But this is not something new, and I don't think it's a bad thing," wrote Barbara Hyde, a communications consultant based in Arlington, Va.

"It allows the organizers to provide services to attendees and subsidizes the cost of registration for them, and I don't think a company's logo on a bag or CD is going to influence any intelligent person's view of that company. I've never known a reporter to refuse to take the meeting bag because it had a company logo on it."

But Michael S. Altus, a Baltimore freelance medical writer and editor, was less indulgent of journalists who collect swag: "I appreciate that taking a meeting bag is a convenient way to collect meeting information. However, I hope that reporters would not then use the bag for their own purposes. Doing so means that the reporter has accepted a gift."

To read more, including an extended debate on the pros and cons of patents on university research, search the NASW-Talk archives (**nasw.org/discussions**) for "junkets" and "undesirable effects of pharmaceutical company of support of medical meetings."

NASW-PIO

"Just had my first experience of a phenomenon that I knew was bound to happen but I find very funny all the same: My press release, word for word, under someone else's byline."

That April 15 post from Ken Chiacchia, senior science writer at the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center, started a wide-ranging discussion about the ethics of using content written by somebody else, whether by reporters or public information officers. Chiacchia himself was philosophical: "My take is I couldn't care less as long as it's getting our name out."

Several PIOs commiserated, including University of Oregon PIO Jim Barlow, who wrote, "A couple of years ago, I called a local newspaper to let them know one of our faculty members was to receive a National Medal of Honor from President Obama. The response was: 'Are you preparing a news release?' 'Yes,' I said. 'OK,' the editor said, and then asked: 'Could you write a longer version and give it to us?' I did. They ran it."

Veteran journalists on the list were aghast, to say the least.

"As a former journalist I think reporters who run press releases under their bylines, or even appropriate chunks of releases without attribution, should be severely disciplined or fired. This is just not acceptable. But it's been happening forever, especially at small organizations with few resources," wrote Glennda Chui, a former *San Jose Mercury News* writer and current SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory senior editor.

Does the appropriation of unedited press releases say anything meaningful about a reporter's work in other areas?

"I agree with Glennda," said Heather Dewar, a longtime writer for the *Baltimore Sun* and *Miami Herald*, now at the University of Maryland. "I have seen very good reporters fired and blacklisted, unable to get journalism jobs for several years, for 'minor' (i.e. one or two paragraphs) acts of plagiarism. I don't see why reporters should be able to plagiarize entire press releases with no consequences."

Chiacchia meanwhile raised another point: Does the appropriation of unedited press releases say anything meaningful about a reporter's work in other areas? "I think the trust issue cuts both ways; a reporter who'll use my words uncritically will use anybody's words uncritically. And that can hurt my organization as often as it helps it."

Finally, Steve Tally of Purdue University wondered if the rules are different for PIOs: "I'm curious to know if those who consider a journalist using a news release to be plagiarism also do ghostwriting at their institution. For some of our executives I write magazine articles, speeches, memos to campus, etc. I put journalists using press releases in their entirety in the same basket. Although I do consider it poor journalism, to me it's just another form of ghostwriting."

To read more, search the NASW-PIO archives (**nasw.org/discussions**) for "knew it was bound to happen" and "press release plagiarism." ■

Upcoming Meetings

September 7-12, 2013 • ***British Science Festival,*** Newcastle, UK. Press registration and information www.britishscienceassociation.org/british-science-festival/press

May 5-8, 2014 • ***13th Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) Conference,*** Salvador, Brazil. Theme: Science Communication for Social Inclusion and Political Engagement. www.pcst2014.org

June 21-26, 2014 • ***7th ESOF (EuroScience Open Forum),*** Copenhagen, Denmark. www.esof.eu

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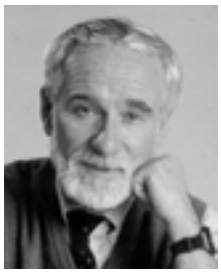

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News From Afar

GARNERING AN IMPRESSIVE 46 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN A FIELD OF FOUR STRONG CANDIDATES, NASW MEMBER CURTIS BRAINARD HAS BEEN ELECTED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS (WFSJ).

Brainard is best known in the U.S.—and, perhaps, as evidenced by the election outcome, in the wider world as well—for "The Observatory" column, in which he covers science-technology issues for the online edition of the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

This election of the WFSJ board was unusual for two reasons: It was the first since the new "charitable organization" status of the Canada-based association mandated that two Canadian residents serve on the board. Fulfilling that requirement will be Dominique Forget, a member (and past president) of the *Association des communicateurs scientifiques du Quebec* and a health columnist for *L'actualite*. She joins fellow Canadian Kathryn O'Hara, associate professor of science journalism at Carleton University (Ottawa) and current WFSJ treasurer.

This was also the first board election in which the 42 member organizations—most national or regional associations of science journalists—chose the slate of candidates themselves, picking seven individuals for the first round, with that number reduced to a final four by a preliminary electronic vote in early May.

In that second email round, concluding May 22, Brainard won over the three other finalists from Germany, Japan, and Nigeria, respectively. He is the second NASW member to serve in an elected leadership position with this international umbrella association since its founding in 2002 (the other was Deb Blum).

Brainard's political success may have been due in part to his articulate, intelligent, and imaginative campaign platform, which included a proposed expansion of the WFSJ's mentoring program to Central and South America, support for regional training workshops on area-specific problems, and establishing ways to gain better access to scientific information, both governmental and corporate, and to fight intimidation and censorship of the press, worldwide.

As part of his broader vow to improve the communication and outreach activities of the federation, Brainard also said he'd promote its linguistic diversity by expanding the website and informational resources to at least the seven languages already used in the federation's mentoring programs.

Brainard's biography and his stated goals, as well as those of the other candidates, can be found at the federation's website **bit.ly/ZmGgHy**. ■

***Editor's note**: Other NASW members who have played pivotal roles in the early days of WFSJ: Laura van Dam, program committee chair for the world conference in Montreal (2004); and James Cornell, a founding member at large (2002).*

Our Gang

In May, **Ivan Amato** kicked off the third year of his D.C. Science Café series at Busboys and Poets, a D.C. hotspot and cultural hub. The events have been a success, and Amato hopes to do even more live public engagements. "With several partners at JPL, I have embarked on an exciting and ambitious project that we hope will result in an experiential museum like no other—one that will elicit in patrons the awe and wonder that the ever-richer scientific story of our universe, and our ability to know it, ought to elicit in anyone." Find out more at ivanamato61@gmail.com.

Elia Ben-Ari's part-time freelance gig for the National Cancer Institute's Office of Communications ended in April, and she's taken another part-time position at NIH—this time with the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, which funds much of the basic research that NIH supports. She'll write and perform other tasks for the office of communications and public liaison. She's excited about returning to her roots in basic science and will continue to work part time as a writer and editor for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Write to her at eliatben@gmail.com.

Heather Buschman reports that she's left Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute, in La Jolla. "I'm moving over to the for-profit world, medical devices to be exact, at NuVasive, in Sorrento Valley (San Diego)," she says. Her new email address is hbuschman@gmail.com.

Katy Butler's first nonfiction book, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: The Path to a Better Way of Death* (Sept. 2013, Scribner) was selected by Booksellers Expo America for its influential May 2013 "buzz book" panel. A memoir of caregiving her aging parents, blended with investigative reporting on what happens when "our terror of death collides with the technological imperatives of modern medicine," the book grew out of "What Broke My Father's Heart," a 2010 *New York Times Magazine* piece that was reprinted in *Best American Essays and Best American Science Writing 2011*, and went on to win the NASW 2011 Science in Society Award. Write to her at katybutlerjournalist@gmail.com.

The Press Club of Western Pennsylvania just awarded **Ken Chiacchia** a Golden Quill for Best Editorial/Commentary, Radio, for his work at the environmental news show "The Allegheny Front." Judges said that Chiacchia's commentaries about climate change, wilderness rescue, and homesteading were "well-constructed with good writing." The Allegheny Front—which, Chiacchia points out, won a total of six Golden Quills this year—is produced at NPR affiliate WYEP-FM in Pittsburgh and broadcast on other public radio stations throughout Western and Central Pennsylvania. Listen on the web at **alleghenyfront.org**, and congratulate Chiacchia at

ASJA Awards

NASW members made a great showing in the American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA) Awards this year. Between them, the 11 science writers won 14 ASJA awards, in categories as diverse as science and technology writing, trade writing, and profile writing. Here's a rundown:

Outstanding Articles, Science/Technology/Business
Winner: **Wendee Nicole** (wendeenicole@nasw.org)
Honorable Mentions: **Rachael Moeller Gorman** (rachael.gorman@gmail.com), **Brendan Borrell** (bborrell@nasw.org), **Neil Savage** (nsavage@nasw.org)

Outstanding Articles, Profiles
Winners: **David Wolman** (david@david-wolman.com), **Laura Beil** (laura.beil@sbcglobal.net)
Honorable Mention: **Rachael Moeller Gorman** (rachael.gorman@gmail.com)

Outstanding Articles, Service
Winner: **Rachael Moeller Gorman** (rachael.gorman@gmail.com)

Outstanding Articles, Trade
Winner: **Stephen Ornes** (stephen.ornes@gmail.com)

June Roth Award For Medical Journalism
Winner: **Victoria Costello** (vcostello@plos.org)
Honorable Mention: **Linda Marsa** (lmarsa@sbcglobal.net)

Donald Robinson Award For Investigative Journalism
Honorable Mention: **Maryn McKenna** (mmckenna@mindspring.com)

June Roth Book Award For Medical Journalism
Winner: **Maryn McKenna** (mmckenna@mindspring.com)

Founder's Award For Career Achievement
Florence Isaacs (fisaacs@nyc.rr.com)

chiacchi@psc.edu.

Jennifer Cutraro says that she's ready to shoo her youngest offspring from the nest, and is starting a new gig as part-time project director in science education at WGBH, in Boston. She'll develop educational materials for a new program that teaches environmental literacy to kids. And she'll continue her other freelance work, including weekly science lesson plans for the *New York Times*' Learning Network. "I am thrilled to be going into an actual office, with actual grown-up colleagues, who won't give me the raspberries when they have mouthfuls of mashed sweet potatoes," she says. "At least, I hope they won't." Send reassurances to jenny@nasw.org.

Stuart Mason Dambrot recently started Critical Thought Media Inc., a nonprofit charitable organization "to help individuals make informed, rational decisions by promoting scientific knowledge and principles of critical thinking." His YouTube channel (**youtube.com/user/CriticalThoughtTV**) shares multidisciplinary content from the sciences, arts, and humanities. He's is seeking funding for projects in development, including a channel for kids and educational curricula. Meanwhile, Dambrot will continue his role as freelance contributing author at Phys.org's Medical Xpress division. Share your thoughts at stuart@dambrot.com.

Starting in August, **Rachel Ehrenberg** will be on leave from *Science News*, where she covers interdisciplinary sciences and chemistry, to be a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT. The fellowship allows journalists to "lay aside [their] normally narrow focus on getting 'the story,' and instead to explore science more deeply and more broadly—to follow intellectual digressions, to learn the history of a field, to understand how scientists and engineers pursue their work." Reach her throughout the academic year at rehrenbe@gmail.com.

Richard Tresch Fienberg, formerly half-time press officer and half-time education and outreach coordinator for the American Astronomical Society (AAS), has been promoted to full-time director of communications. He's still the AAS press officer, but now carries additional, broader internal and external responsibilities. He'll oversee the AAS website, social media efforts, and member communications. Share good wishes at rick.fienberg@aas.org.

Bob Finn shares the following update: He left WebMD's Medscape in May to take a job as executive editor of the Multiple Sclerosis Discovery Forum (**msdiscovery.org**), a news site for MS researchers. MSDF is part of the Accelerated Cure Project, a Boston-based nonprofit, but he'll continue to work from his Pleasant Hill, Calif. home. Send cheers to finn@nasw.org.

John Gever was promoted to deputy managing editor at MedPage Today, where he says he'll "get to work longer hours and spend less time writing, in exchange for filthy lucre." Congratulate him at jgever@gmail.com.

Susan Gilbert was promoted to public and communications manager of The Hastings Center, a bioethics research institute in Garrison, N.Y. Previously, she was public affairs editor there. Congratulate her at s.gilb@verizon.net.

Liza Gross recently won a second place reporting award from the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute of New York University. This is the first time the committee has given a runner-up award to support coverage of "an under-reported topic in the public interest." The winning story was a follow-up to Gross' "*No beba el agua*," part of Environmental Health News' "Pollution, Poverty, People of Color" series, which won honorable mention from the Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism. Write to her at lizagross@gmail.com.

Writer and game designer **Lorraine Hopping Egan** has moved to Washington, D.C., for the summer to work an editorial contract at Smithsonian Enterprises and, in addition to having joined DCSWA, welcomes opportunities to connect with fellow science writers, editors, and content creators in media and game design. "The project that lured me here is under wraps until September, when I will return to Michigan and full-time freelancing, specializing in cross-platform content for the tween, teen, and informal education markets," she says. Beg for details at mail@hoppingfun.com.

Two NASW members have earned Independent Publisher Book Awards, or "IPPYs." In the Writing/Publishing category, **Phill Jones** won a Silver Medal for *Forensic Science for Writers*, which he self-published, and in the Children's Interactive category, **John Williams** won a Bronze Medal for *Hubble Star Cards*, published by TerraZoom. The publishing services company Jenkins Group awards the IPPYs to "bring increased

recognition to the deserving but often unsung titles published by independent authors and publishers… Independent spirit and expertise comes from publishers of all sizes and budgets, and books are judged with that in mind." Congratulate the winners at philljones@nasw.org and john@terrazoom.com.

Sandra Katzman won second prize in the first-ever "Untold Story in Innovation" Awards from the Japan-U.S. Innovation Award Program. She told the behind-the-scenes story of HondaJet, an innovation that may coalesce small aircraft travel. "Honda had been ready to throw in the towel after 20 years of research," she explained, "but the chief engineer argued." The award program is produced by the Japan Society of Northern California in cooperation with Stanford University's U.S.-Asia Technology Management Center. Katzman won participation in a panel discussion at the Innovation Awards Day Symposium at Stanford in July. Fly a good word to her at s.katzman@stanfordalumni.org.

Marissa Miley is now a global health correspondent at international news site GlobalPost. Most recently, she was a Kaiser Family Foundation Fellow in global health reporting, also at GlobalPost. She says, "If you're working in the global health space or live in the Boston area (where I now live), I'd love to hear from you." Say hello at marissa.miley@gmail.com.

Julie Miller has taken a job as senior editor at the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), which was authorized by Congress with the Affordable Care Act. PCORI is intended to "give patients and those who care for them with a better understanding of the prevention, treatment and care options available, and the science that supports those options." Wish her well at juliemiller.email@gmail.com.

Since October, *Eating Well* magazine has boasted a new news editor: **Gretel Schueller**. She's now settled in her role and would love to receive any food or nutrition pitches from freelancers and public information officers alike. Pitch away to Gretel.Schueller@eatingwell.com.

Leah Stetson recently started a new job as editor of the *National Wetlands Newsletter*, a long-running publication of the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) in Washington, D.C. She'll solicit and work with authors who contribute *pro bono* articles about topics including wetland science, wetland management and mitigation, conservation, wetlands-related law and policy issues, and wetlands and climate change. She'll eventually create and write a new blog for ELI, but for now, she's busy creating a new website for the newsletter and editing issues of the bi-monthly magazine. Write to stetson@eli.org to contribute a piece to the newsletter.

Noelle Swan picked up a first-prize award for Excellence in Science and Technology Communication from the Delaware Press Association for two stories she did for NPR News Station WDDE, in 2012: "Fort Delaware Joins Battle to Protect Bat Population" and "UD Apiary Research Aims to Take Sting Out of Nationwide Bee Colony Collapse." "As a freelancer who covers local science news from afar," Swan says, "I am frequently hard-pressed to find stories that specifically appeal to a remote local community. Both of these stories held opportunities to explore issues of national significance through a local

lens." Congratulate her at noelleswan@gmail.com.

USA TODAY's **Dan Vergano** just completed his first year as an adjunct professor at New York University's Washington, D.C., campus. There, he teaches journalism with a science reporting emphasis, and is looking forward to leading a feature writing class in the fall. Ask him to sign your permission slip at dvergano@usatoday.com.

Freelancer **Florence Williams** captured a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize in April, when *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History* won in the science and technology category. Called "a warning of the environmental threats to the female body" by the *LA Times*, the book covers the history of breasts, from their ancient origins to modern plastic surgery, and all the medical, environmental, and psychological issues in between. Williams said that the book was inspired by her discovery that there were toxic chemicals in the breast milk that she fed to her daughter, adding, "It seemed to me that breasts were living a life that they had never lived before." Write to her at willflo1@gmail.com.

Kathleen M. Wong, coauthor of *Natural History of San Francisco Bay* (University of California Press, 2011), received the 2013 Harold Gilliam Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism from The Bay Institute in San Francisco. The book "not only explores the natural history of San Francisco Bay, but also looks at its human history and how each affects the other," lauded the Institute. The Harold Gilliam Award recognizes "knowledgeable and skilled reporting on complex environmental issues affecting the Bay-Delta Estuary and its tributary waterways." Congratulate her at katwong@nasw.org.

Ben Young Landis and **Becky Oskin** are excited to announce that they've started a new science communicators' network for professionals and students in California's state capitol region. Capital Science Communicators (CapSciComm) hopes to connect science journalists, PIOs, educators, librarians, artists, web developers and others in Sacramento, Davis, and surrounding cities, complementing the resources of the Northern California Science Writers Association and NASW. CapSciComm takes its name from the pepper plant genus *Capsicum*—a nod to the California Central Valley's horticultural heritage and the theme of science writers' networks with organism mascots (SCONC, SWINY, DCSWA). Membership is currently free. Follow CapSciComm on Twitter at @CapSciComm, and email Landis and Oskin at capscicomm@gmail.com if you are interested in joining or helping to grow the network. ■

ScienceWriters Welcomes Letters to the Editor

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

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

E-mail to:
editor@nasw.org

In Memoriam

Harold M. Schmeck, Jr.
New York Times Science Writer

Harold M. Schmeck Jr., a science writer for the *New York Times* for more than 30 years who specialized in covering medical research, from the space age to the era of genetic medicine, died after a heart attack on April 1, in Hyannis, Mass. He was 89 and had been an NASW member since 1959.

Schmeck, who worked at *The Times* from 1957 to 1989, filed exclusive articles on the health of some of the first American astronauts in the 1960s as well as on the beginning of the effort to map the human genome in the 1980s. He wrote extensively about organ transplants, AIDS, and the federal agencies involved with public health.

Schmeck wrote with conversational clarity on complicated subjects.

"Two American astronauts are expected to come back to Earth tomorrow tired and badly in need of shaves and showers but carrying with them the answer to one of the most important questions facing the whole United States program of space exploration," he wrote in a 1965 article about the Gemini 5 space mission, at the time the longest manned spaceflight. "The question is: What are the effects on a man of a spaceflight long enough to have taken him to the moon and back?"

The answer: Probably nothing serious.

In 1987, he described advances in identifying genetic markers on human chromosomes: "Before the discovery of markers, chromosomes were like unnumbered avenues; the markers are like cross streets that enable a gene to be placed, say, between 15th Street and 16th Street along the avenue of the chromosome."

Harold Marshall Schmeck, Jr. was born on Sept. 29, 1923, in Tonawanda, N.Y., near Buffalo. After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, he graduated with a degree in English from Cornell in 1948 and quickly found work as an editor with the university's *Alumni News*. He then worked briefly for a small paper in Illinois before joining *The Rochester Times-Union*. It was there that he began his science writing career. Just three years later, he won a Nieman fellowship to Harvard. He joined *The Times* in 1957.

Schmeck was the author of *The Semi-Artificial Man: A Dawning Revolution in Medicine*, which was published in 1965 and explored the use of artificial organs in humans, and *Immunology: The Many-Edged Sword* (1974) which focused on immunology research.
(source: New York Times*)*

■ ■ ■

ScienceWriters *has learned belatedly of the following deaths.*

Martin Mann, 92, of Parsippany, N.J., died Dec. 12, 2012. He had been an NASW member since 1950. Mann was born in 1920, in Norwich, N.Y. A graduate of MIT in 1941, he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II as an officer in the First Motion Picture Unit with then Captain Ronald Reagan, writing training films for the troops. After the war, he worked as associate managing editor at Time Life Books, New York City. Mann retired in 1982 after a 40-year career in publishing. Mann was involved in the founding of the Council for the Advancement of Science

Writing (CASW) in 1959 and was a member for several years of the first CASW board of directors. Mann served as NASW president from 1964 to 1965.

Donald J. Frederick, 81, a retired science writer for the news service of the National Geographic Society, died Nov. 18, 2012. He was an NASW member since 1973. Frederick joined the National Geographic Society news service in 1965 and retired in 1995. Frederick started his *National Geographic* career as a generalist but when the science beat opened up, he took it on as a personal challenge. Born in Detroit, he came to Washington where he earned a degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He then attended the University of Oslo and later received a language certificate from the University of Madrid. His early jobs included staff positions with American Aviation Publications (Washington) and McGraw-Hill (New York), as well as freelance writing in Spain, before joining *National Geographic*. In retirement, Frederick did freelance writing for several publications, including *Popular Science* and *Chemistry*.

Myron T. Noar, 79, died on Feb. 14, 2011, in Baltimore. Prior to retiring in 1989, he was the director of creative services for Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N.J., where he worked for 26 years. He was an NASW member since 1962.

Julie Ann Olser, 56, died Sept. 3, 2003, in Chicago, from the effects of a stroke she suffered nearly five years prior. Osler was the former director of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science. ■

2013 Lindau Travel Fellows Selected

Since 2008, the Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings has provided National Association of Science Writers' members who are working journalists or freelancers attending on assignment from a media outlet the opportunity to apply for the travel grants to its annual Meeting of Nobel Laureates in Lindau, Germany.

This year NASW leadership selected two NASW members to receive this travel funding. The funding covers airfare to Germany, accommodation, and the conference fee. Congratulations to:

David Bjerklie, *TIME* magazine and *TIME for Kids*

Lisa Winter, Evolution and IFLS

The 63rd Meeting of Nobel Laureates (**www.lindau-nobel.org**), which is dedicated to chemistry this year, took place June 30 to July 5. The meeting brought together upwards of 35 Nobel laureate scientists with hundreds of young researchers from 70 countries. ■

Correction

The cover photo credit (*SW*, spring 2013) indicates the Titan Missile Museum is located in Benson, Ariz. It is not. The museum is located 38 miles away in the community of Sahuarita, due south of Tucson. [Thanks to Jim Cornell for setting the record straight.] ■

2013 Laura Van Dam Fellows Selected

Congratulations to the four recipients of the Laura van Dam Travel Fellowships to this summer's meeting of the World Conference of Science Journalists in Helsinki, Finland.

- **Estrella Burgos**, National Autonomous University of Mexico
- **Dan Keller**, Keller Broadcasting, Inc.
- **Phil McKenna**, freelance
- **Eric Niiler**, freelance

The fellowships are awarded in memory of past NASW President Laura van Dam, who died in 2006. Laura was a strong supporter of NASW's commitment to international science writing and helped organize the first meeting of the World Federation of Science Journalists in Montreal in 2004. The fellowships encourage ties between NASW and the World Federation with the goal of further developing the craft of science writing around the world. They also give the selected van Dam fellows a chance to pursue story opportunities in Finland and the region, especially at a time when travel budgets are tight for many writers. ■

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Regional Groups

CHICAGO

The Chicago Science Writers gathered for lunch on May 23 at DePaul University's Loop Campus, for a talk by fellow science writer Ted Anton, who teaches science writing at DePaul. He gave members an inside look at his work researching a book on the science of extending life and the largely unsuccessful commercial efforts to use this research. He explained how research that showed the benefits of red wine, for instance, led to a huge financial loss for a drug company. His book *The Longevity Seekers; Science, Business, and the Fountain of Youth* also describe the lives of the scientists involved in the research, how they got interested in tiny worms, and sought to figure out how extending the life of these animals could provide a blueprint for extending human life. Writing the book took more than 10 years, he said, and required keeping up with an ever-changing field as he worked to complete the project.

His talked followed an April gathering at which Chicago Science Writers got ready for the summer baseball season with a talk at a Greektown restaurant by retired professor Porter Johnson from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He went over some of the finer points of baseball, including the judgment players must make at bat when a fast ball is headed their way

What's the Buzz: Boston-area science writers gathered at the Beehive in June. From left (page 26): Richard Saltus and Siobhan Gallagher; Mark Zastrow and Genevieve Wanucha; Erin Podolak (top); and Daniel Hudon. From left (page 27) Marc Abrahams, Haley Bridger and Melissa Thurman (top); Carol Cruzan Morton and Kristy Manuel; Tom Ulrich; and Phil McKenna.

and they determine the gravity and speed involved in making the bat crack a ball to the stands.

NEW ENGLAND

The Boston/Cambridge area hosts a thriving science communications meet-up scene. This spring, local-area writers could find at least one gathering a week on average and sometimes attend a different event several nights running. The longstanding New England Science Writers (NESW) has been joined by two other science communications groups with regular and frequent meet-ups.

March 11 marked the inaugural "tweetup" for #Sciobeantown, the new Boston and Cambridge chapter of North Carolina-based ScienceOnline®. Since then, organizers Alberta Chu, Haley Bridger, Erin Podolak, and Melissa Thurman have served up a lively discussion about the new U.K. open access journal F1000Research (April 17), a visual storytelling talk showcasing featuring Alaskan shore birds (May 8), and a joint social meet-up with NESW (June 5).

Since it was born in a steamy bar in February 2012, Science Writers In And Around Cambridge, Mass. (SWINACAMA) has met monthly in local watering holes selected by organizer Tim De Chant. The May 2 get-together celebrated Lisa Song, who with her colleagues at Inside Climate News won a Pulitzer for national reporting.

On April 16, the Cambridge Science Festival hosted the annual reception for science writers and communicators, organized by Cristine Russell and festival director P.A. d'Arbeloff at the MIT Museum. This year's function provided midweek relief after the Monday Boston Marathon bombing and before the Thursday/Friday pursuit of the suspects.

To discuss the online-driven coverage of the marathon bombing, the Nieman Foundation at Harvard held a May 1 roundtable discussion that included Seth Mnookin, co-director of MIT's science writing graduate program, who had rushed to the scene and tweeted live overnight coverage of the chase leading to the capture of the bombing suspects. Three days later, a citizen journalism forum at the Cambridge Public Library covered similar ground in one of its panels, which including Taylor Dobbs, a Northeastern journalism student, who live-tweeted the manhunt with Mnookin. The Cambridge forum was dedicated to the memory of science writer Karen Klinger, who died of cancer in December.

Those on the health and medicine research beats joined 750 of their colleagues for the annual meeting of the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ) March 14 to 17, in Boston, to listen to and participate in skill-building workshops and panel discussions. The local AHCJ chapter followed up with a May 17 talk by Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary John Polanowicz. The event was organized and hosted by Gideon Gil, at the *Boston Globe*.

NEW YORK

SWINY's March 6 event was "Pinterest: What Could A Science Writer Possibly Do With It?" Nearly 20 attendees learned all the reasons and ways to make Pinterest another communications tool for science and their own work. Denise Graveline, Washington D.C.-based communications and social media consultant (**dontgetcaught.biz**) and member of both NASW and SWINY, presented the program. Allie Wilkinson, a freelance science journalist and multimedia professional, provided examples of her innovative Pinterest uses.

On April 11, "Grab Your Reader" grabbed a lot of writers—about 35 people turned out for the evening program, co-sponsored with the Editorial Freelancers Association (EFA). Lively, innovative exercises were designed to help make prose sharper and more compelling, with widely varied sentence lengths. Beth Schachter, a former SWINY chair, and EFA's Emily Albarillo planned and presented the activities. Response was extremely enthusiastic, and participants asked for more programs along the "Grab Your Reader" theme.

"Adventures in Science Writing: How to Build a Sustainable and Sane Science Writing Career" drew a standing-room-only crowd of well over 60 people on May 6 to hear four of the more than 30 freelance science writers of SciLance and authors of the just-published *The Science Writers' Handbook*. Panelists Sarah Webb (also a SWINY member and past chair), Andreas von Bubnoff (a SWINY board member), Emily Gertz, and Adam Aston shared personal stories from the trenches of science writing—tales of frustration, inspiration, victory, danger, and more. This was followed by advice and perspectives on a broad range of how-to issues involved in building a sustainable and sane science writing career. A lively and extensive Q&A session rounded out the evening.

On May 21, the EFA teamed up with SWINY to present "The Making of Trade Science Books: Best Practices From a Distinguished Imprint." Nearly 30 participants got a behind-the-scenes look at science-book publishing. The evening opened

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALBERTA CHU




with an informative talk by two editors of the new *Scientific American*/Farrar, Straus and Giroux imprint. Fred Guterl, executive editor of *Scientific American* and Amanda Moon, senior editor at *Scientific American/FSG*, discussed the motivation for creating their joint venture, their appeal to a broader than usual readership, what makes a good book, and topic trends (neuroscience, for example, has become a very crowded field). Two of their authors who are now on the bookshelves were also panelists: Caleb Scharf (*Gravity's Engines: How Bubble-Blowing Black Holes Rule Galaxies, Stars, and Life in the Cosmos* and the forthcoming *The Copernicus Complex)* and Emily Anthes (*Frankenstein's Cat: Cuddling Up to Biotech's Brave New Beasts*). They spoke enthusiastically about their experiences with *Scientific American/FSG*, talked about their book-writing experiences, and discussed literary agents, their book tours, and social media.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

In April, the San Francisco tapas bar Thirsty Bear was the site of a talk on "Fracking's Future," the thirsty technology of hydraulic fracturing or fracking. Stanford geophysicist Mark Zoback told NCSWAers that he believes fracking can be done safely to extract shale gas. In the U.S., he said, the target shale lies below a mile-thick layer of rock, which provides a buffer between deep toxic fluids and near-surface aquifer water. He stressed that appropriate well construction is the key to safe hydraulic fracturing. Zoback served on the federal task force assembled by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu to examine the potential environmental impact of the process.

It was standing room only at San Francisco's Bazaar Café for the Bay Area launch of *The Science Writers' Handbook*. NCSWA members Monya Baker, Doug Fox, Liza Gross, Thomas Hayden (who also co-edited the book), and Robin Mejia contributed chapters to the book. Fox shared his personal habit of sleeping with his laptop in Antarctica to make sure it would boot up. Baker recalled her heroic run backwards up an escalator to land her first assignment with *The Economist*. The May 3 event was part of San Francisco's "Ask a Scientist" science cafe series.

NORTHWEST

After many years of setting up periodic events, the Northwest Science Writers decided to go with a monthly program schedule for 2013. In March, Dana Lewis, who manages the digital marketing and internal communications team at Seattle's

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SCIENCEWRITERS2013

Gainesville, Florida

The NASW workshop committee has lined up an impressive slate of sessions with an emphasis on craft, how-to, and business strategies. Among the speakers and topics are:

- **Roy Peter Clark**, of the Poynter Institute, with a session on short-form writing.
- **John Allen Paulos**, author of *Inummeracy* and *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*, joins a panel discussion on statistics-based reporting.
- **Bora Zivkovic**, of *Scientific American* and the co-organizer of SciOnline, introducing some of science writing's savviest, webbiest practitioners.
- **"The XX Question"** in which author Deb Blum leads a panel discussion about women in science writing.
- **"Science Goes Hollywood"** features leaders in the television and film industry on how to incorporate science into screenplays.
- **"Show Me The Money"** in which successful freelancers reveal their biggest secrets—what they actually get paid.

There are also sessions on how to work with editors, how to anticipate the next new thing in media, and how to handle work flow. And, the ever-popular "Pitch Slam" is back!

Meanwhile, the local host committee has lined up a dazzling array of tours, networking, and recreational activities.

Mix and mingle:

- Welcome reception hosted by the Florida Museum of Natural History.
- Science in Society Awards Gala at UF's magnificent Harn Museum of Art.
- Happy hour at the Florida Innovation Hub, home to more than a dozen high-tech startups.

Open-houses and tours:

- Behind the scenes at the Florida Museum of Natural History.
- Intro to the science of keeping athletes healthy at the UF Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine Institute.
- Get up close and personal with Florida's creepy crawlies at the UF Department of Entomology; one of the nation's largest.
- See what happens when structures meet Mother Nature in one of the world's largest hurricane simulators.
- Researchers creating plants in an array of shapes and colors for the annual poinsettia and coleus field trials.
- McKnight Brain Institute; one of the nation's leading centers of neuroscience research.

Post-meeting excursions:

- Kayaking trip down the Ichetucknee River.
- Five centuries of history in St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States.
- Fossil hunt at Thomas Farms, one of the nation's most productive fossil sites.

Registration Opens August 15
ScienceWriters2013.org

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

NEW MEMBERS

ARIZONA: Lisa Winter, LabX Media Group, Goodyear; Courtney L'Ecuyer*, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson; Emily Litvack*, Northern Arizona Univ., Flagstaff; Susan Swanberg, freelance, Tucson; Kay Miller Temple*, Arizona State Univ., Phoenix. **CALIFORNIA**: Kim Fulton-Bennett, Monterey Bay Aquarium Res. Inst., Moss Landing; Laleh Esmaili*, UC Berkeley Extension; Jennifer Huber, freelance, Lawrence Berkeley Nat'l Lab, Berkeley; Kevin Measor*, UC Riverside; Jan Null, freelance, Saratoga; Mallory Pickett*, UCSD; Rod Pyle, freelance, Pasadena; Juliet Preston*, La Jolla Inst. for Allergy and Immunology; Ling Wong*, UC Davis. **COLORADO**: Leah Raffaeli*, Univ. of Denver, Littleton; Zach Zorich, freelance, Fort Collins. **CONNECTICUT**: John Curtis, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven. **DELAWARE**: Jessica Schulz*, Univ. of Delaware, Maple Shade. **DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**: Marcia Clemmitt, *CQ Researcher*; Yali Friedman, *Journal of Commercial Biotechnology*; Eric Hand, *Nature*; Regina Nuzzo, freelance; Brittany Steff, freelance, Bara Vaida, freelance. **FLORIDA**: Megan Van Rysdam*, Univ. of Florida. **GEORGIA**: Bethanne Black*, A.D.A.M. Health Solutions, Dacula; Bryan Wiltgen*, Georgia Inst. of Technology, Atlanta. **ILLINOIS**: Amy Coombs*, Univ. of Chicago; Jennifer Flynn, Veritas Health, Oak Park; Randy Schueller, Brains Publishing, Inc, Park Ridge. **IOWA**: Heidi McKinley*, Univ. of Iowa. **KANSAS**: Nastassja Noell*, The Evergreen State College, Kansas City. **MAINE**: Ret Talbot, freelance, Rockland. **MARYLAND**: Ginger Butcher, Sigma Space Corp., Beltsville; James Fahn, Internews, Takoma Park; David Hutto, freelance, Rockville; Wendy Meyeroff, freelance, Pikesville; Holli Riebeek, Sigma Space, Rockville. **MASSACHUSETTS**: Chris Berdik, freelance, Dorchester; Judy Foreman, Oxford Univ. Press, Cambridge; Henry Hodson, *New Scientist*, Somerville; Ann MacDonald, Informed Medical Decisions Foundation, Boston; Phil McKenna, freelance, Cambridge; Alex Schwartz*, UMass, Amherst; Anne-Marie Singh (Boyer), The Chedd-Angier Production Company, Brookline. **MICHIGAN**: Stephanie Onderchanin*, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing; Michael Schofield*, Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Erin Spanier, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy / Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor. **MISSOURI**: Beth Miller, Washington Univ. in St. Louis. **MISSISSIPPI**: Nilde Maggie Dannreuther, Mississippi State Univ. **MONTANA**: Shawn Lake, freelance, Missoula. **NEBRASKA**: Poornima Suresh*, Univ. of Nebraska Medical Center. **NEW YORK**: Wendy Aron, freelance, Oceanside; Joyanna Hansen, Cornell Univ.; Shruti Ravindran*, Columbia Journalism School, NYC; Naveena Sadasivam*, New York Univ.; Allie Wilkinson, freelance, Manhasset. **NORTH CAROLINA**: Jessica Blackburn*, Wake Forest Univ., Winston-Salem. **OKLAHOMA**: Sandra Moore-Furneaux*, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman; Mariah Harnish*, Northeastern State Univ., Tulsa. **OREGON**: Julian Smith, freelance, Portland; Karla Starr, freelance, Portland. **PENNSYLVANIA**: Allison Curley, freelance, Pittsburgh; Deborah Makin*, Carnegie Mellon Univ., Pittsburgh; Kelly Schroter*, UMUC, Tobyhanna; Lauren Hinkel*, Bucks County Community College, Washington Crossing. **RHODE ISLAND**: Elena Suglia*, Brown Univ. **TEXAS**: Jeff Bounds, freelance, Garland; Kaine Korzekwa*, Univ. of Texas at Austin; Cindie Powell, Texas A&M Univ. **UTAH**: David Estes*, Univ. of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City. **VIRGINIA**: Barbara Brennan*, Johns Hopkins Univ.; Bethany Brookshire, freelance, Alexandria; Jim Dawson, Int'l Inst. for Applied Systems Analysis, Falls Church; Tiffany Trent, Virginia Bioinformatics Inst., Newport. **WISCONSIN**: Greg Calhoun, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Breanna Draxler, *Discover Magazine*, Milwaukee; Becky Lang, *Discover Magazine*, Milwaukee; Princess Ojiaku, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison. **CANADA**: Lygia Navarro, freelance, Toronto. Ontario. **UNITED KINGDOM**: Dana Smith*, Univ. of Cambridge, Cambridge; Davide Castelvecchi, Nature Publishing Group, London; Shirley Wang, *The Wall Street Journal*, London. ■
**student member*

WISCONSIN

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swiftly to post a statement, even if it has to be revised later, and assigning an employee to handle media requests on the issue. They recommend telling your story to anyone who will listen, including those who may seem "hostile to your newsroom—you may find that by speaking with them, you may develop some surprising allies." To that point, they link to the *Wisconsin Reporter*, published by the conservative Franklin Center for Public Integrity, which posted a lengthy article (**bit.ly/14jOwK9**) that was sympathetic to WCIJ's fight.

The fact that the four-year-old WCIJ could activate a diverse network of allies to respond to an unexpected and time-sensitive crisis attests to the respect it has earned. That support may have been pivotal in winning Walker's veto—and it wasn't conditional. Had the provision gone through, and WCIJ been homeless, its allies would have come through all the same: About 10 days ago, Hall told *Capital Times* that he had received "multiple generous offers" from across the state to house the center's staff. Now, that won't be necessary. ■

"How Wisconsin's Watchdogs Kept Their Home" Columbia Journalism Review, *July 1, 2013.*

SEVEN RULES

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authors, the journal published the results of an internal review that revealed that only 14 percent of its reviewers and 19 percent of its invited Comment and World View authors were female. In addition, of the 34 researchers profiled by journalists in 2011 and up to that point in 2012, only six—a mere 18 percent—were women.

"We vowed to improve, and have asked our editors to try harder to engage with women," read the editorial in this month's special report. "In time, we will make our progress public."

Finkbeiner's profile of UCLA astronomer Andrea Ghez, which ran on March 20, is evidence of that progress. It's a beautifully written piece about Ghez's fascination with telescopes and her pioneering work with speckle imaging, which led to proof that a supermassive black hole lies at the center of the Milky Way—and it has nothing to do with her gender. ■

"Seven Rules to Avoid Gratuitous Gender Profiles of Female Scientists," Columbia Journalism Review, *March 22, 2013.*

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Swedish Hospital, and Liz Neeley, assistant director at COMPASS at the University of Washington, led a thought-provoking discussion of social media and how science journalists could manage time, content, and the constant flow of information. Freelance public radio reporter Joanne Silberner addressed the group's April meeting. She gave background on making, funding, selling, and editing her five-part series on cancer for Public Radio International. And in May, Thom Kephart of Amazon's self-publishing arms CreateSpace and Kindle Direct Publishing provided an overview of the publishing market, how science writers can utilize self-publishing, and a review of the software tools to make work available to potential readers. ■

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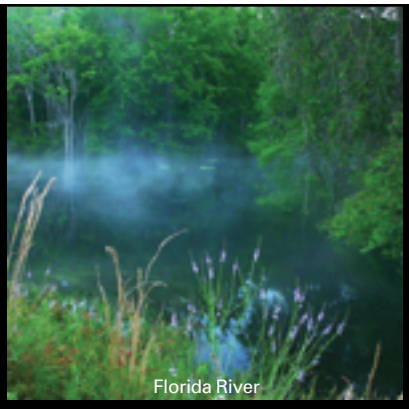
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