ScienceWriters™

National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

Winter 2012-13

SCIENCEWRITERS2012 MEETING
RECAP
AND PHOTOS

BIG BREAK FOR DEPRECIATION
DEDUCTIONS

COMPUTATIONAL ASTRONOMY BOOT
CAMP

NEW NASW GRANT AND FELLOWSHIP
DATABASE

SCIENCE JOURNALISM IN THE
PAMPAS

SOCIAL
MEDIA
AND THE PIO

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From The Editor

I offer warm wishes to NASW members for a personally satisfying and professionally prosperous 2013. I also present to you this issue of ScienceWriters, *chock full of articles and resources to help achieve your New Year's writing resolutions.*

Is training among your goals this year? Check out details of the new NASW Grant and Fellowship Database (page 7) which identifies 130 funders of everything from classes, workshops, tours, and seminars as well as support for longform narratives and book projects. Also offered are valuable strategies and insights on approaching funders and grant writing.

Among the recaps of ScienceWriters2012 sessions you'll find tools to help investigative reporters tame unwieldy documents and mountains of data (page 2), how to turn topics into compelling stories (page 3), and surviving a mid-career crisis (page 4).

You might rethink, enhance, or pat yourself on the back after reading NASW survey results on social media use among PIOs (page 10).

And finally, help ensure the future of science writing by giving back to the profession as a NASW volunteer. Pages 28-29 recap how hundreds of fellow members have contributed in the past year. Trust me. There is a fit for your talents among the committee and leadership opportunities highlighted.

Lynne Friedmann

In This Issue

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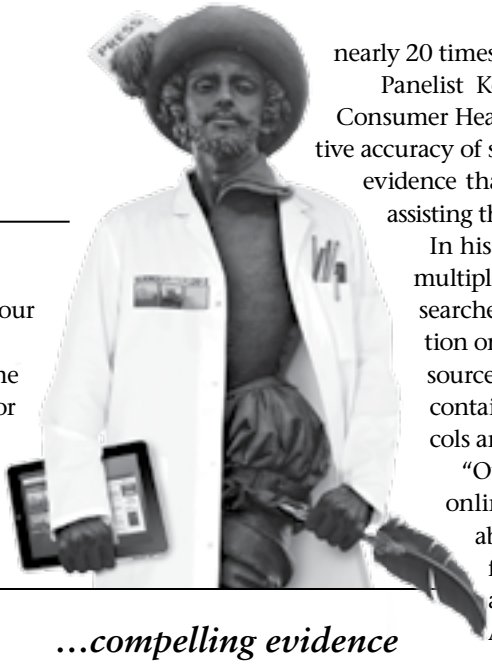
FRIEDMANN COURTESY OF KEN JACQUES; SIR WALTER RALEIGH CREDITS ON PAGE 33 "RALEIGH"

ScienceWriters2012
Meeting Recap

More than 500 science writers attended ScienceWriters2012. Held Oct. 26 to 30, in Raleigh, N.C., it encompassed the NASW annual workshops, CASW New Horizons in Science briefing, Halloween festivities, pre- and post-meeting science tours, ever-popular Lunch with a Scientist, and a gala awards reception at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. All the while, attendees cast a wary eye on the development of Hurricane Sandy whose winds whipped sponsor logos off the lab coat worn by the Sir Walter Raleigh statue outside the Raleigh Convention Center. The following are select workshop reports. Elsewhere is this issue: Hurricane Sandy's impact (page 5), New Horizons recap (page 5), and event photo spread (pages 30-31).

Our Love-Hate Relationship With Wikipedia

by Colin Weatherby



How many of you use Wikipedia in your research?

Moderator Nancy Shute began the "Wikipedia: The Best, Most Hated Resource for Science Communicators" session by posing this question. Dozens of sheepish science writers slowly raised their hands and a nervous giggle filled the room.

Wikipedia is a taboo word in the journalism community, but new data presented at this year's meeting in Raleigh shows compelling evidence that the wiki model is an useful and surprisingly accurate tool for distributing trustworthy scientific research.

The panel focused exclusively on the use of Wikipedia in the medical research community. Andrew Su, Ph.D., of The Scripps Research Institute discussed a project called Gene Wiki. The project created more than 10,000 basic "stub" articles related to human genes pulled from documents found on PubMed.

"The thought process is that people are more likely to contribute knowledge to these articles if they already exist," said Su.

After a decade analyzing the habits of volunteer Gene Wiki editors, Su has compiled a wealth of data documenting the project's accuracy and comprehensiveness. He found that pages were vandalized in only 1.1 percent of the edits, and the inaccurate information rarely persisted for more than three days. This means that three of every 10,000 users would stumble upon tainted material. The rate of misinformation for the entirety of Wikipedia is nearly 20 times higher.

Panelist Kevin Clauson, director of the Center for Consumer Health Informatics Research, believes the relative accuracy of science articles on Wikipedia is compelling evidence that the site has a growing and vital role in assisting the public with personal healthcare decisions.

In his research, Clauson compiled findings from multiple studies of online health-related web searches. He argues that pharmaceutical information on Wikipedia is more up-to-date than vetted sources like WebMD, but also more likely to contain large holes in coverage. Very few protocols are in place to fill the omission gap.

"Over half of the people that are looking online for health information make decisions about their treatment based on what they find online," said Clauson, citing data from a study conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Most health-related searches direct users towards Wikipedia, which could potentially be a positive development in medical treatment, although Clauson argues that major policy changes by international governing bodies like the WHO will be needed to ensure improved information quality.

…compelling evidence that the wiki model is an useful and surprisingly accurate tool…

The final panelist, Rick Borchelt of the National Cancer Institute, announced provocative new information policies formed in an effort to address some of the gaps discussed in Clauson's presentation. The NCI is now incorporating news releases into Wikipedia articles and plans to add information from its news archive dating back to 2010. Borchelt underlined the fact that the new procedures go largely unquestioned by the Wikipedia community because NCI research is a widely trusted resource, but he acknowledged that the same practice by a more controversial organization would probably not be accepted so readily.

The seminar was a fascinating insight into the changing influence of Wikipedia on science information and further evidence that the website may one day be embraced by science writers with open arms and a clear conscience.

SCIENCEWRITERS2012 RECAP continued on pages 2-5

Colin Weatherby is a New York-based writer and educator currently pursuing a masters degree in journalism at City University of NY.

(above) A number of NASW workshop sessions this year drew overflow crowds.

(right middle) Chris Hamby accepts the SIS science reporting award on behalf of NPR and the Center for Public Integrity, as NASW President Ron Winslow looks on.

Once You've Wrangled the Data, How Do You Tame It?

BY ALYSSA A. BOTELHO

You've submitted your public records request and finally received thousands of pages of long-sought data for your next investigative story. But through the carelessness (or perhaps the malice) of your source, you've received an "image PDF" which doesn't allow you to highlight and copy text, or search for key terms. This is what freelancer reporter Tyler Dukes of **reporterslab.org** described as an investigative reporter's "nightmare document."

The time drain and labor for investigative reporting projects can result in costs upwards of $200,000 for major new organizations, Dukes said. It's an unthinkable price for freelancers with tight deadlines and even tighter budgets.

In the workshop session Tools for Tackling Nightmare Documents and Data, Dukes presented an Internet toolkit that can make investigative stories a more feasible prospect. To this end, he presented three online resources that make handling data and documents cheaper and easier. All tools are free of charge except for the last, which Dukes said usually costs between $20 and $50 per job.

CometDocs is a website that allows you to upload PDF files—such as those difficult "image PDFs"—and convert them into Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, and other user-friendly formats. In a live test-run, Dukes uploaded a PDF of a long list of North Carolina traffic violations on to the site and punched in his email address. Within two minutes, an Excel spreadsheet of the data from the PDF had been sent to his inbox.

DocumentCloud is an "entity extraction" program that can filter through PDF files and pop out names, places, organizations, emails, and phone numbers that show up in high frequency on a page of interest or in the entire file. The program also has a "timeline function" that picks out dates from the document set and displays them in a chronological list with links to documents where the dates were found. This "extraction" capability, Dukes said, is handy when trying to find power players, key events, and contact information that would otherwise remain hidden without a thorough read. DocumentCloud was developed exclusively for journalists, and though it is free, one must provide credentials that you're a working reporter to download the program from the web. It can also be used to annotate and share documents among colleagues in a newsroom.

Mechanical Turk is a crowdsourcing website created by Amazon. The site is an Internet marketplace where a person can advertise a short task that a computer can't easily do—such as transcribing audio—to a network of Internet users who agree to a small payment set by the user. To demonstrate, Dukes described how he broke up a 47-minute recording of a North Carolina General Assembly meeting into two-minute sound bites and uploaded each

AUDIENCE AND FIELD TRIP BY LYNNE FRIEDMANN; ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY AMY WEST

ALYSSA A. BOTELHO WRITES ABOUT SCIENCE AND HEALTH WHILE CONCURRENTLY PURSUING STUDIES IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE AT HARVARD COLLEGE.

(above) Balcony overlooking the stage of the auditorium of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

(left) NASW President Ron Winslow presenting the Science in Society Awards.

(bottom) Seth Mnookin accepts the SIS book category award for *Panic Virus: A True Story of Medicine, Science, and Fear.*

as a short transcription "task" that paid one dollar. Within three hours, he said, the recording was transcribed by a cohort of 25 online workers—normal Internet users who want a quick buck or Amazon credit—at a cost of about $26. Mechanical Turk workers cannot browse interview clips before accepting a transcription job, and those who don't do a good job can be blocked from doing tasks you post the next time around.

Dukes noted that none of these tools are perfect—Excel documents from CometDocs often don't come perfectly formatted, DocumentCloud presents a large set of tools but none are of highest quality, and Mechanical Turk can be tricky to price and use with sensitive interview material.

(above) ScienceWriters2012 attendees stretch their legs and line up for a field trip.

"But it's about getting close," Dukes said. "It's about taking that haystack—that big discovery process—and making the haystack a lot smaller."

Workshops slides available at **reporterslab.org/nightmaredocs**.

Turning Topics into Compelling Stories

BY KATE SHAW

Every science writer has probably experienced this problem at one point or another: You've stumbled upon a great topic, but it isn't a story. How do you find a good angle and a narrative arc that will help you craft a story that readers won't want to put down?

Four panelists in the Unearthing Narrative session—George Johnson, Christie Aschwanden, David Quammen, and Eric Powell—discussed how they weave narrative into their stories, and how to handle the tricky situations where you just can't figure out how to make a story work. The room was packed.

Sometimes, a story's narrative just falls naturally into place. For example, two of George Johnson's book topics had obvious structures: A biography of physicist Murray Gell-Mann called for an intimate biographical approach, and for the *Ten Most Beautiful Experiments*, an ordered structure was the natural choice. But what do you do when the answer isn't so clear-cut?

Christie Aschwanden advised looking for new perspectives on a difficult topic, especially if you are particularly close to your subject matter. Keep digging, keep making phone calls, and ask yourself what your audience would want to know. Eventually you will find a character, a point of view, or a new fact that will help you see things from a fresh and different angle.

"People like to read about people," according to David Quammen. He proposed a four-point plan to get colorful, personal stories from subjects: 1) Try to transcend the conventional journalist-scientist relationship, 2) don't write about famous people, 3) get out

KATE SHAW IS A FREELANCE SCIENCE WRITER, CONTRIBUTOR TO ARS TECHNICA, AND PHOTOGRAPHER. SHE IS BASED IN BOULDER CITY, NEV.

into the field and try to experience a nonlethal disaster with your subject, and 4) experience serendipity (just don't ask him how).

If a standard narrative won't work, Eric Powell suggested that it may pay to look in nontraditional places for a creative angle. When one of his writers struggled with a narrative for a piece about the history of chocolate, Powell encouraged him to use the cacao tree as the main "character" to move the story along, and the piece quickly fell into place.

In response to an audience question, the panel discussed the use of first person. Sometimes it's essential to the story if you have an interesting relationship with a character or if including yourself in the story will help disclose important information. However, if your presence doesn't move the story along, it's best to stay out of the piece, since the bar for first-person stories is particularly high.

…get out into the field and try to experience a nonlethal disaster…

The panelists all agreed that getting interesting anecdotes and details from scientists can sometimes be difficult. They suggested just letting researchers give their talking points, if that's what they seem to want to do. Once they have finished, start asking questions; they may let their guard down once they feel that they've made their point.

Quammen added a final point to his four- (now five-) point plan: If all else fails, sharing a campfire and a bottle of scotch with a reticent scientist can work wonders.

Surviving Your Mid-Career Crisis

BY MELISSA PANDIKA

When the demand for long-form writing began to dwindle, feature writer Alan Brown faced a scary question: How would he make a living? To answer this question for other writers, Brown organized and moderated Surviving Your Mid-Career Crisis, a panel discussion with three freelance writers who shared their own experiences. In the end, building on their existing knowledge and skills and forming relationships allowed them to pay the bills while still doing what they love.

Adam Aston lost his job as a science and technology writer for *BusinessWeek* after Bloomberg purchased it in 2010. He stayed in the science writing business by building an online presence and making "a mental shift" in how he viewed his career. He slowly built up his LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter profiles, which continue to draw queries from potential clients. He's also stopped strictly pursuing feature stories, instead forging relationships with outlets, like straight news websites, that don't require him to invest the time and effort of pitching pieces that ultimately pay little.

Beth Schachter credits her success to her business savvy. "I don't call myself a freelancer," she said. "I am an independent business person." A scientist-turned-writer, Schachter hungered for more feature assignments after writing a feature article for *Nature Biotechnology*. But eventually she, too, realized that she couldn't make a living off feature writing. Now, besides writing and editing for the biomedical community, she also offers workshops and coaching. A master of LinkedIn, she uses InMail to directly contact potential clients and sources, as well as LinkedIn groups to make business contacts. She's also built leadership and meeting organization skills as a member of Toastmasters.

Cathy Dold seized every opportunity she encountered, leading her to find success in unexpected places. After getting laid off from *Audubon Magzine*, she wrote brochures and PowerPoint presentations for companies and physicians in addition to writing magazine features. Although she had never blogged or used Twitter before, she agreed to write and implement a social media plan for the American Society of Nephrology. After reading reports and talking to others, she drew up a plan to systematically attract students to the field. She then live tweeted the society's conference and used Storify to write daily wrap-ups. Recently she agreed to co-author a book with a physician about addiction, called *Recovery*, which she hopes will launch her into the next phase of her career—writing books for doctors. Science writers can organize information and interpret science and have many different skills, said Dold. "So if someone gives you something, say, 'Sure.'"

Instead of ending with the usual Q&A session, the workshop ended with audience members breaking into groups, each led by a panel member. Group members shared and received feedback about their mid-career struggles.

Even writers deciding whether they want to embark on a freelance career in the first place found the session valuable. *Science News* writer Tina Saey is considering freelancing full-time but the business aspect makes her hesitant. "It's heartening to hear that people are making a living," she said.

Writing Science E-books in the Real World

BY LAURA BEIL

On her deathbed, David Dobbs' mother asked her children to cremate her body, releasing the ashes in the Pacific so she could be with a man named Angus. The request was startling—Angus was not Dobbs' father. Dobbs could recall one other time his mother had made reference to Angus, telling her son about a World War II romance with a flight surgeon whose plane was later shot down over the Pacific.

Dobbs embarked on a search for Angus, leading him to a story of wartime love, heartbreak, forensics, and family. But no one seemed anxious to publish it. *The New Yorker* and *Wired* both rejected the idea. He had a complex tale, too long to tell in a standard magazine article and too short to carry a book. The story languished for years, until he pitched it to Evan Ratliff, editor at The Atavist, a newly launched publisher of e-books. The story became *My Mother's Lover*, a best selling Kindle Single that has earned Dobbs more than any magazine article, and become more

MELISSA PANDIKA IS A JOURNALISM STUDENT AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY.

LAURA BEIL IS AN INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST, BASED NEAR DALLAS. SHE WAS MEDICAL MEDICAL WRITER AT THE *DALLAS MORNING NEWS* FROM 1992-2005.

popular than his previous books, Dobbs said during a workshop session on e-books.

The message: E-books are a new and growing means for writers to publish work that can't be packed into a magazine. Panelist Deborah Blum's just-published 10,000-word Atavist book, *Angel Killer*, is already a best seller on Kindle Singles. Other e-publishers include Byliner and Matter, a science-and-technology-focused publisher launching soon. E-publishing has become so vital to the future of science writing that Carl Zimmer and other writers this year launched the website Download the Universe as a way to promote and review e-books.

…embedded with audio and video, maps, or other interactive features…make e-books an experience that transcends reading.

The payment structure depends on the publisher. Some writers who already have a national following can self-publish and keep the maximum per-book amount when books are sold. The Atavist uses a model journalist David Wolman described in *Nieman Reports* as a "hybrid of a magazine-book deal," paying a flat up-front fee for acceptance that usually runs lower than a usual magazine per-word rate. But once the book is published, writers split the profits of every book sold. If an e-book sells for $2.99, Amazon may take about 30 percent, with the rest divided between the author and Atavist.

E-books are growing in popularity partly because readers have an easier time committing to a $3 e-book than a $26 hard cover. Many readers also like the flexibility of the format, panelists said. These books are not simply the electronic version of their print cousins, but stories embedded with audio and video, maps, or other interactive features that make e-books an experience that transcends reading. At its heart, though, an e-book must have a compelling and well-crafted story and be published with the e-book reader in mind, said Seth Mnookin. E-books that simply recycle published print articles can fall flat, he says—the key is thinking e-book from the story pitch.

It's still too early to know what the e-book market will become, but few doubt its potential. "We're starting this evolution," Blum said. "We're not at the end of it."

An exhaustive list of links to information, publishers, and resources prepared for this session available to **bit.ly/URaL7L**.

New Horizons

by Rosalind Reid

CASW's New Horizons in Science 2012 is sure to be remembered for lab coats, lemurs, zombies, and Hurricane Sandy, the Frankenstorm that sideswiped our meeting.

There was also some remarkable new science that lit up the blogosphere. Dispatches on New Horizons 2012 science can be found at *Wired Science* (Maryn McKenna's Superbug piece on Steve Wing's session on hog production and human health), *Science News* (Tanya Lewis's coverage of Katherine Freese's proposal for using DNA to detect dark matter particles), and NBCNews.com (Alan Boyle's recap of David M. Rothschild's talk on election prediction).

University science writers shared news from talks by opening speaker Greg Wray; Linda Kah, a Mars Science Lab mission scientist; physicist Mark Kruse, who spoke about the Higgs particle, and others.

Twitter users feasted on ScienceWriters-2012 posts. In the 11-day period (between the start of New Horizons on Oct. 28 to Nov. 7) #sciwri12 saw 3,189 tweets posted. A Taghive analysis showed that 2,500 #sciwri12 tweets reached more than 6.7 million people during the period Oct. 24 to 29. A substantial number focused on these New Horizons topics:

- industrial hog production and health (also tagged #scihog)
- the Mars Science Lab mission (#scimars, #MSL)
- voter expectations, social networks, markets and election prediction
- revolutionary ideas in science
- supernovas and robot telescopes
- genetic manipulation and pests (#scipest)
- dark matter detection (#scidark) and dark stars (#scistar)
- neuroprosthetics (#scirobot)
- games for studying cognitive aging (#sciage)
- vaccines in soybeans (#scisoy) ■

■ ■ ■

More ScienceWriters2012 conference photos featured on pages 30-31

Rosalind Reid is CASW program director

Hurricane Sandy

ScienceWriters2012 is sure to be remembered for lab coats, lemurs, zombies, and Hurricane Sandy—the Frankenstorm that sideswiped the meeting.

By the time the program got under way on Oct. 27, the wind already was whipping sponsor logos off the gigantic lab coat worn by the Sir Walter Raleigh statue outside the Raleigh Convention Center.

This made Hurricane Sandy the talk of Northeaster NASW members, many of whom paced and phoned in pursuit of travel options. Some flew or drove home early to batten down the hatches in advance of the storm; others opted to extend their stay in Raleigh several more days.

The staff of *Scientific American* set up shop in Raleigh and broadcast The Science of Hurricane Sandy Liveblog from its temporary quarters answering, naturally, storm science questions.

And, the meeting's local organizing committee went above and beyond the call of duty to add extra spots on previously announced science tours and new field trips options to accommodate those whose travel plans were delayed. ■

(right) Christopher E. Henze demonstrated the analytical and visualization capabilities of the 128-screen Hyperwall of the Pleiades supercomputer.

(below) Challenges about writing for various audiences were discussed at a lively round table.

(above) Plenty of time was allotted for journalists and boot camp faculty to converse informally. At a reception, Kim Griest (professor of physics, UC San Diego) engages with Elizabeth Wilson, Earle M. Holland, and Pam Frost Gorder.

Computational Astronomy Boot Camp

BY TRUDY E. BELL

The idea was a natural. When, in June 2011, I became senior writer for the University of California High-Performance AstroComputing Center (UC-HiPACC), headquartered at UC Santa Cruz, I felt on a learning curve as steep as Mount Everest. Although for decades I had covered astronomy and the engineering of telescopes and detectors, I was still wrapping my head around the basics of supercomputing and its applications to astrophysics. Sure, high-end computation made analysis faster. I got that. But when I found that powerful computation is enabling real-time observational discovery (e.g., of supernovae exploding in other galaxies), and new theoretical insights (e.g., how the Milky Way got its spiral arms), and even turning cosmology into an experimental science (e.g., powerful enough to evolve the Universe all over again inside a supercomputer), I realized the revolutionary field of computational astronomy was a huge, under-told story that may have escaped others as well.

20 science/engineering journalists with UC-HiPACC staff gather in front of an image from the Bolshoi cosmological simulation on the 128-screen Hyperwall of the Pleiades supercomputer at NASA Ames Research Center.

I approached UC-HiPACC director Joel R. Primack with the idea for an intensive boot camp as a backgrounder in computational astronomy for science and engineering journalists in all media. Modeled loosely on the short, single-topic boot camps of the Knight Science Journalism program or the National Center for Atmospheric Research, ours would be the first on astronomy to be offered on the West Coast, and the first anywhere on computational astronomy.

Both Primack and UC-HiPACC seemed ideal as host and sponsor. Primack is distinguished professor of physics at UCSC and an architect of the cold dark matter theory now widely accepted as the standard model for the formation of the Universe. He had founded UC-HiPACC in 2010 with a five-year grant from the University of California to encourage collaborations—primarily through funding workshops, conferences, and travel grants—across UC campuses and three Department of Energy national laboratories (Lawrence Berkeley, Lawrence Livermore, and Los Alamos).

After consulting with Robert Irion, director of UCSC's Science Communications Program, and Tim Stephens, UCSC public information officer who covers the campus's scientific research, we titled the boot camp Computational Astronomy: From Planets to Cosmos. Faculty were invited from all UC campuses and the three affiliated DOE labs to serve as experts and speakers in intensive one-hour mini-courses designed convey essential background and highlight significant upcoming developments. Faculty were also asked to commit to staying at least the entire day of their presentations to give journalists informal time to establish relationships with potential sources.

Faculty included Michael Norman, director of the San Diego Supercomputer Center, who offered insights as to why and how big

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BOOT CAMP PHOTOS BY TRUDY E. BELL

supercomputers are enabling pioneering astrophysical research; James Bullock, director of the Center for Galaxy Evolution at UC Irvine, who outlined fundamental problems and approaches; and a dozen other key researchers (slides and videos of mini-courses are at **hipacc.ucsc.edu/2012CAJBC_Program.html**).

The program accepted 20 attendees (more than half were NASW members) from both general and scientific media. Journalists included staff and freelance feature writers for U.S. and international magazines, a daily newspaper reporter, new media specialists, an Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker, a radio reporter, and PIOs from two major universities; they ranged from blazing young talents to late-career veterans.

The boot camp was held June 24 to 27 and opened with a welcome reception at the home of Primack and his wife, philosopher and writer Nancy E. Abrams. Two days of formal sessions were held on the redwood-forested campus of UC Santa Cruz. Mini-courses covered current pioneering investigations in planetary science, stellar astronomy, explosive and high energy astrophysics, dark matter and dark energy, and cosmology, including discussions of instrumentation and analytical techniques.

One day included an on-campus field trip to the famous UC Observatories Instrument Laboratories and optical shops, plus an evening banquet. Another day concluded with a 90-minute journalism round-table discussion. There were also field trips to two institutions leading in astrocomputing and visualization: NASA Ames Research Center at Moffett Field in Mountain View, and the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

Participants were surveyed both at the conclusion of the boot camp and two months later in an effort to determine how useful the event had been to them. The following responses are representative:

"I did not know much about how computers are being used to produce new scientific insights and provoke searches for new phenomena. This was the probably the most important concept that I learned."

"I will definitely get story ideas out of this—hopefully lead to new stories. But the overviews are very helpful to get deeper context about the research I cover—especially the mechanics of it, how simulations are made and what assumptions underlie them."

BOOT CAMP continued on page 32

NASW Members Attending Computational Astronomy Boot Camp

- Rebecca Boyle, *Popular Science*
- Camille Carlisle, *Sky & Telescope*
- Charles Day, *Physics Today*
- Pam Frost Gorder, Research Communications, Ohio State University
- Heather Marie Goss, *Air & Space/Smithsonian*
- Lisa Grossman, *New Scientist*
- Donna Hesterman, Research Communications, University of Florida
- Earle M. Holland, Freelance writer
- Bruce Lieberman, Freelance Science & Environment Writer
- Angela Posada-Swafford, *Muy Interesante*
- Elizabeth Wilson, *Chemical & Engineering News*

The New NASW Grant and Fellowship Database

BY MADELINE BODIN

You have a great idea for a book, a long-form narrative article or an investigative piece, but the payment the publisher offers won't cover the cost of the project. I've been there, and so have many NASW members. Skimpy funding doesn't have to mean the end of the project, though. There are grants, fellowships, and other resources available to help you turn great ideas into reality. The problem is that Google doesn't offer much help finding those opportunities and neither does Bing. But a new database from NASW can get you started.

As a NASW member with both experience in looking for funding for and training in grant writing, I knew that a funding database would be a valuable resource for other members. I applied to the Ideas Fund, but what the project most needed was a capable database programmer, and NASW already has that resource in Cybrarian Russell Clemings. The NASW website guest editor program let me work with Russ for three months to create the database.

The specific information included on each grant or fellowship is based on a class on grant writing I took from Diane Silver (**dianesilver.net**), a grant writer with nearly two decades of experience who has written grants that have brought millions of dollars to the institutions that hire her.

Silver says that grant writing is not that different from science writing. "The first thing I learned as a grant writer is to take your audience into consideration, and you really have to do that as a science writer," she says. When writing a grant, your audience is the funding organization. "Each funding agency is different. They each have different needs, different quirks," Silver says.

The link to further information about the funding organization in the database is your connection to the needs and quirks of that organization. When writing your grant proposal, present your project in a way that makes sense to that organization's particular world view and needs, Silver says. If the funder's world view is incompatible with your project, don't apply, she warns. "If your project is about climate change and you have a foundation that's given money to climate change deniers, you are wasting your time."

Examining which projects have already been funded—which is also included in the database—will also help you target a likely funder. You want to see projects like yours, but not exactly like yours. Silver says that, like magazines, funders don't want to repeat themselves.

Unlike magazines though, most funders encourage you to call

DATABASE continued on page 32

MADELINE BODIN IS A SCIENCE WRITER SPECIALIZING IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

Featured Column

Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world of science writing

by Ben Carollo and Rick Borchelt

Get out the vote!

As we submit this article, the election season has just wrapped up in the United States.

During our observation of the various campaigns, we noticed a general lack of discussion about science in the political discourse. We weren't the only people who noticed, and there has been a range of calls to action. Some people called for individuals to ask politicians about these issues while others were pushing for scientific leaders to raise science topics in public discourse. With all of the competing factors in this election cycle, it is hard to know if any of these actions would have brought science to the forefront of people's minds as a voting issue (at the national level in the U.S., this has never happened), but some recently published research gives us some ideas about what level of engagement is appropriate in raising these issues and how that engagement sways public opinion.

■ ■ ■

Chilvers, Jason. Reflexive Engagement? Actors, Learning, and Reflexivity in Public Dialogue on Science and Technology. *Science Communication*. Published online 7 Sept. 2012. [Accessed 11/13/12 at bit.ly/VgFXy9]

This first article focuses on the mediators and facilitators of science-policy-society interactions, the networks they form, and institutional and individual learning in these networks as a result of public engagement. In the U.K., where the study focuses, the recent trend has been toward increased public participation about science and technology, particularly upstream in the development process. As a result, communities of practice have begun to emerge in the area of deliberative participation, which has resulted in an evolution of the science-policy-society interaction network. Though the analysis specifically focuses on U.K. public dialogue networks, the author suggests that there are significant enough similarities in these networks regardless of their location that the insights shared should be broadly applicable.

Through interviews with 21 "key actors" in the U.K. public participation arena and network analysis of the activities in which they are engaged, Chilvers constructed a map of the types of actors in relation to their roles in driving public dialogue and science-society interactions. There were four types of roles identified in relation to the public engagement process: 1) *Studying*—researching, theorizing, evaluation, and reflection; 2) *Coordinating*—networking, capacity building, and professionalization; 3) *Practicing*—designing, facilitating, and reporting; and 4) *Orchestrating*—commissioning, sponsoring, and guiding. Additionally, the following actor types were identified: academic social science, participation institutions, think tanks, scientists/science institutions, practitioners, and decision institutions (government, industry, research). The roles align pretty much as one would expect, but the map suggests that none of the actors fall simply into one role, and there is, in fact, a good deal of overlap across the actors. This is a reflection of many of the actors serving in different capacities depending on the time and the place, and highlights the fact that these interactions are generally "co-produced" by multiple actors. The implication of this is that no one group has control of the public engagement space, theoretically leading to a more balanced, realistic dialogue.

…there is still a good deal of opportunity to enhance the public engagement process.

The author analyzes how the engagement network learns from its experiences in order to improve the way in which it conducts its work and that individual actors engage each other in doing so. He finds that the actors, as individuals, are very thoughtful about their work, but they fail to engage each other in how the network can function more effectively. This is attributed to sociological phenomena associated with how policy-setting organizations imbed decision-making processes in their culture and become insular in an attempt to maintain credibility in contentious envi-

Scholarly Pursuits features articles from the social science research community in the United States and abroad. If you read an article you think would make a good candidate for this column, send it along to rickb@nasw.org.

Ben Carollo leads the issues analysis and response team at the National Cancer Institute at NIH. Rick Borchelt is special assistant for public affairs to the director at the National Cancer Institute at NIH.

ronments. Reflecting on this, we shouldn't be surprised that science discussions were generally lacking in the recent campaigns, but we should acknowledge that there were a lot of issues *not* discussed in the campaign, of which science was only one. The agenda setting and engagement processes we have are imperfect and inherently narrow, so what can be done? The author suggests that there is still a good deal of opportunity to enhance the public engagement process. In theory, a more-open learning network could result in science issues filtering more easily into public discourse. Per the author, the four keys to success for creating a more evolved network include: 1) creating spaces for learning, 2) enhancing connections between disparate actors, 3) promoting reflection by ensuring transparency, and 4) making a concerted effort to consider upstream questions about new approaches to engagement. This framework would likely be applicable well beyond the science-policy-society sphere.

■ ■ ■

Zorn, Theodore E., Juliet Roper, C. Kay Weaver, and Colleen Rigby. Influence in Science Dialogue: Individual Attitude Changes as a Result of Dialogue Between Laypersons and Scientists. *Public Understanding of Science* 21(7) (2012) 848-864.

This next paper looks at the impact on individuals engaged in a specific type of public engagement activity—dialogue (defined here as a collaborative, mutually constructive, critically reflective, participatory and emergent conversational process in which participants actively examine and reconstruct relationships among self, other, and world). Dialogue is not intended to resolve an issue, but rather create an opportunity for learning and shared understanding. As a consequence, collaboration is theoretically encouraged. The authors note that there is a significant lack of empirical evidence guiding those who engage in science dialogue, so they conducted an experiment to test scientist and layperson attitudinal changes as a result of dialogue.

The experiment focused specifically on issues related to human biotechnology (HBT). There were two hypotheses and two research questions identified in the study. The first hypothesis stated that participation in dialogue with scientists will produce more positive attitudes and more empathy towards scientists among laypersons. This hypothesis was supported by the experiment, though the shift in attitude was not large. The second hypothesis states that participation in dialogue will produce convergence of attitudes towards HBT. This hypothesis was also supported, generally, meaning that laypersons grew more favorable about HBT while scientists became more concerned by HBT. The first research question explored the effects of dialogue on participants' communicative self-efficacy. The data suggest that participation in the discussion increased participants' confidence and motivation for engaging in HBT discussions, but the dialogue did not have an effect on scientists' self-efficacy on the matter. Overall, this supports dialogue proponents' assertions that dialogue leads to shared understanding. This contradicts previous research that showed that scientists are biased against claims contrary to their pre-existing views. The second research question focused on how the format of the dialogue affected the dialogue participants. Not surprisingly, variables such as group size, prior knowledge, amount of time devoted to "education" of the topic in a session, and initial perceptions affected the outcomes of the dialogue.

Dialogue is not intended to resolve an issue, but rather create an opportunity for learning and shared understanding.

Assuming that these findings can be generalized to the broader topic at hand, we wonder what impact widespread dialogues on scientific topics would have in the realm of public opinion and electoral politics. If a science debate were held for presidential candidates, would they both simply move to the middle on all of the issues and hug it out at the end because the party's candidates realize that they aren't that different after all? Probably not. In a politicized environment, outside of a closely controlled dialogue, the effects of dialogue could change greatly. This is not said to discount the authors' finding, but we are left wondering how much effort should be placed into engaging the few who are able to participate in a controlled dialogue experience where shared understanding has the potential to be discovered.

■ ■ ■

Erikson, Robert E. Public Opinion at the Macro Level. *Dædalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*. Fall 2012: 35-49.

This final paper looks specifically at the dynamics of public opinion and electoral politics in the U.S. at the macro level through an analysis of micro-level political behavior. The general message here is that there is significantly more predictability and rationality in the political space when one looks at the aggregate level than would necessarily be assumed by looking at the limited awareness of the average citizen. The level of sophistication and knowledge of the "average" voter in the U.S. is considered to be fairly low at the individual level. This notion certainly pertains to science issues based on the evidence that we have seen. However, there appears to be a much greater degree of "intelligence" in public opinion at the macro level.

…small changes in opinion… become significant in the aggregate if we are looking at an environment where majority rules.

The author notes three primary reasons why this is the case. First, in a large group, opinions at the extremes will cancel each other out. Second, when public opinion shifts, it is usually the "informed" part of the electorate that is changing opinion as opposed to the larger "uninformed" segment of the population. Finally, small changes in opinion (survey data) become significant in the aggregate if we are looking at an environment where majority rules. This last point is particularly noteworthy when opinion is fairly evenly split on an issue among a group. More importantly, however, the author discusses how he and his colleagues have shown that over time, public opinion *does* drive political decision-making (even if it takes a significant amount of time for policymakers to catch up with the huddled masses).

Accordingly, it becomes increasingly important to understand how that public opinion evolves. The author suggests that

PURSUITS continued on page 33

Social Media Use Among PIOs

by Jill Sakai and Chris Barncard

Earlier this year, the Public Information Officers' committee developed a short survey to gather information about how PIOs are using social media to enhance communications goals.

The survey was distributed in September via email to the 610 NASW members who self-identified as PIOs. A call was also sent out via NASW-Announce to reach people who may do some public information work but did not check the PIO box on the NASW membership form.

Questions focused on what types of social media tools PIOs and their organizations are using, how and why they are using these tools, and who they hope to reach. We also collected some basic demographic information about the respondents and their organizations.

One hundred thirty-five (135) members completed the survey, for a response rate of 22 percent. Overall, the survey results and respondent comments indicate that social media use is complex, evolving, and frequently not well defined. This type of survey is naturally limited in its ability to capture the full range of experiences, but we can report some preliminary findings.

The most commonly used tools among communication offices are Twitter, Facebook, and video sharing sites (such as YouTube and Vimeo). LinkedIn is popular for individuals but less so for offices, which suggests it is used more for personal professional development than for organizational communication goals. The most used products also emerge as those most likely to have been in use for longer periods of time (at least three years).

Research- or science-specific accounts in general do not seem to be overwhelmingly popular, but blogs and Twitter are the most common targeted platforms, with science-specific efforts reported by more than half of respondents who use those tools. Facebook and podcasts are the next most common, reported by greater than 30 percent of users of these platforms.

The general public emerged as the number one targeted audience, selected by 92 percent of survey respondents, with news media a close second (86 percent). Internal audiences, such as students, faculty, employees, or patients, seem to form a secondary but still very important core target group for PIO social media efforts. Other designated audiences include special-interest groups, thought leaders and policymakers, funding agencies, and potential customers.

Interestingly, people want to reach the media but not necessarily with the intention of pitching stories, which was listed as a goal by just 45 percent of respondents. Instead, the primary goals of social media efforts are distributing news and information (93 percent) and building community (82 percent). Perhaps this should not be surprising—as one respondent commented in response to a question about interactions between staff and readers, "It is 'social media,' after all."

Other defined goals include education/outreach, increasing general visibility of an organization, marketing, and reaching targeted sub-audiences.

The emphasis on reaching general audiences may be indicative of shifts toward direct-to-reader communication rather than relying on news media to deliver messages to readers. Social media platforms certainly lend themselves well to direct communication, and it is interesting to speculate—though beyond the scope of our survey results—whether such trends are a natural outgrowth of using social media or are in fact driving social media adoption. (We would guess the latter.)

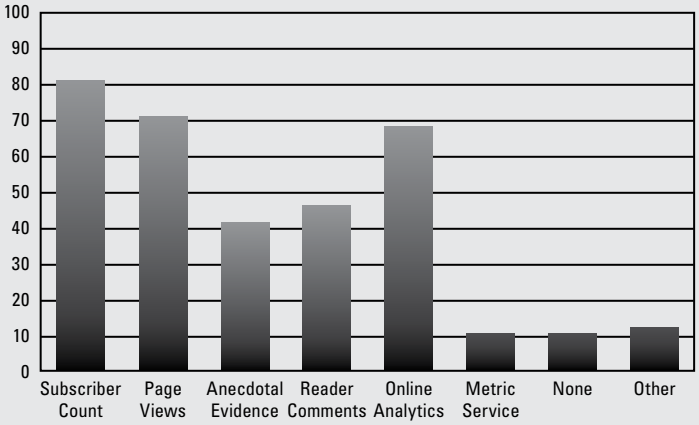
Not surprisingly, social media is just one of many PIO duties. The vast majority of respondents (93 percent) spend one-quarter or less of their time on social media, and 64 percent report spending no more than 10 percent of their time on it. However, 18 percent of those who filled out the survey report that their office includes at least one person with full-time social media responsibilities. On the flip side, 29 percent report that social media duties are not formally assigned at all in their offices.

Evaluating the effectiveness of social media efforts is a more challenging area to explore. Many respondents report tracking quantitative measures such as numbers of subscribers, re-tweets, page views, or web traffic, as well as more qualitative evidence such as reader comments. However, our survey did not delve more deeply into how these measures are used to guide social media use, which would be interesting fodder for follow-up questions.

The survey responses include representations of different age ranges and duration of PIO experience. Responses to most questions were similar between age and experience groups, with few major differences with regard to adoption and use of various social media tools.

SURVEY continued on page 33

Evaluation of Social Media Efforts



Most (but not all) respondents monitor comments in some way—some indicated active moderation of comments—and involve staff involvement with commenters.

DATA BY JILL SAKAI AND CHRIS BARNCARD, UW–MADISON FOR NASW'S PIO COMMITTEE

Jill Sakai and Chris Barncard, University of Wisconsin–Madison, are members of the NASW PIO committee.

Big Break for Depreciation Deductions

by Julian Block

Tax-savvy freelance writers and other self-employed individuals know that they have two choices on how to write off their outlays for purchases of equipment and other kinds of personal property. One is depreciation; the other is so-called first-year expensing.

But countless tax-challenged writers mistakenly believe that depreciation is the only way to deduct equipment purchases. As a result, they pay far more in taxes each year than legally required.

Writers who go the "standard route" at Form 1040 time recover what they spend on equipment through depreciation deductions over varying periods. Section 167 of the Internal Revenue Code sets out the general rules for depreciation of various kinds of personal and real property. It specifies periods that range from as low as three years to as much as 39 years—with the majority closer to three than to 39.

Writers who go the "standard route"… recover what they spend on equipment through depreciation deductions over varying periods.

Section 167 allows businesses to depreciate most of their equipment over five years or seven years. For example, it's five years for computers, copiers, cameras, tape recorders, and the like and seven years for furniture, such as desks, chairs, file cabinets, and safes. Usually, the cap on the amount allowable as a deduction for the first year is only 20 percent of the cost of five-year property and about 14 percent of the cost of seven-year property.

Section 179 authorizes first-year expensing for all kinds of businesses, whether full-time and long-established or part-time and just launched. They have the option to dispense with depreciation deductions over a period of at least three years and take advantage of first-year expensing.

Freelancers can "elect"—IRS idiom for decide—to use first-year expensing, should that prove to be more advantageous. Making the election entitles them to instantly write off the *entire* cost of the equipment in the *first* year it's "placed in service"—meaning made ready and available for a specific use, whether or not actually used—rather than the year it was purchased or paid for.

To illustrate, equipment ready to operate by Dec. 31 generates a deduction for this year, though not paid for until after the year closes. Conversely, no deduction this year for equipment bought in December, but not installed until next year.

This tax break is subject to several restrictions. One that affects many writers is the taxable income limitation.

For example, science writer Hester Dimmesdale falls into a top federal and state tax bracket of 30 percent. She needs to replace lots of equipment. Her total purchases of $15,000 include computers and peripheral equipment such as printers and monitors, as well as desks, appliances, and carpets. Hester needn't depreciate these items over five- or seven-year periods. Assuming it proves advantageous to use first-year expensing, the $15,000 expenditure will trim her taxes by $4,500.

The law allows Hester to take a first-year deduction of $15,000 only if that amount doesn't exceed the net (receipts minus expenses) taxable income from her business, calculated *before* the Section 179 write-off on Schedule C. Put another way, she can't use a first-year deduction to create a loss that offsets income from sources other than her business.

Freelancers can…use first-year expensing, should that prove to be more advantageous.

For purposes of this limit, taxable income has its own special meaning. Among other things, IRS regulations allow Hester to include wages she might receive from some job, as well as her spouse's wages, provided she files jointly. Consequently, it's possible for Hester to meet the taxable income limitation even if her writing venture is a start-up operation that shows little or no profit this year.

Suppose Hester's equipment outlays of $15,000 are for a business with net taxable income of $10,000. She has no salaried income, but her husband does. Because Hester files jointly, she needs just $5,000 of his salary to qualify the business for a Section 179 deduction of $15,000. ■

Julian Block is an attorney and author based in Larchmont, N.Y. He has been cited as: "a leading tax professional" (*New York Times*); "an accomplished writer on taxes" (*Wall Street Journal*); and "an authority on tax planning" (*Financial Planning Magazine*). For information about his books, visit julianblocktaxexpert.com.

Boston U Science Journalism Grad Program Updated

The Graduate Program in Science Journalism at Boston University, the longest running such program in the United States, has updated its curriculum to allow students to graduate in one calendar year rather than three semesters. The entering class of 2013 will complete a rigorous course in writing, reporting, and producing science and science-related content for both traditional and new media, with a focus on accuracy, analysis, and narrative excellence. In addition to the core curriculum, students will have the option to take electives in documentary production for radio, television, and film as well as multimedia production, photo journalism, and narrative non-fiction. Assistantships and internship opportunities are available, as is financial aid. ■

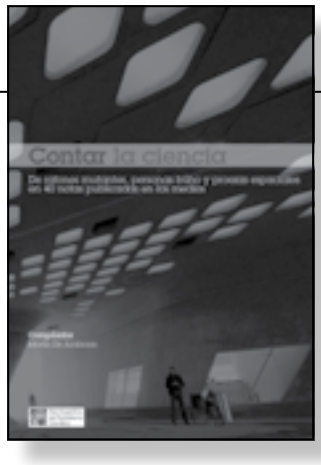
See the program website for further information:
bu.edu/com/academics/journalism/graduate/science-journalism/

■ ■ ■

Direct specific questions to:
Ellen Ruppell Shell at eshell@bu.edu
Douglas Starr at dstarr@bu.edu

Southern Exposure—Science Journalism in The Pampas

BY JAMES CORNELL



A group of 40 Argentine writers, aligned through the nonprofit Argentine Science Journalism Network (RADCAP), have pooled their resources, time, and considerable talents to produce the first-ever anthology of "the best science articles" published in national and regional media during the past year.

The volume, *Contar La Ciencia* (*Telling Science*) was formally presented to the public in a publication party at the Argentine Museum of Science, in Buenos Aires, in September. In addition to several authors, physicist and science historian Diego Hurtado as well as several other prominent Argentine scientists spoke at the ceremony.

Valeria Roman of *Clarín* newspaper, who is known to many NASW members from her leadership role as a 2009-11 board member of the World Federation of Science Journalists and a participant in the ScienceWriters2011 meeting in Flagstaff, was one of the driving forces behind this effort, the first of its kind by any Latin American science writers' association.

In addition to Roman, NASW members may also be familiar with Nora Bär, who has attended several AAAS meetings, as well as Federico Kukso, Lucas Viano, and Carla Nowak, participants in the Jack F. Ealy Science Journalism Workshops for Latin American reporters, held in La Jolla.

"All the authors are from Argentina and their stories appeared not only in various national and regional newspapers and magazines, but also in blogs," said Roman. "The whole idea was to show what science journalists are doing in the country right now. And the launch of the book at the museum was an excellent moment to discuss how scientists and journalists can improve their interaction."

The book (in Spanish, of course) is available as a free download (**bit.ly/PjiVjn**) thanks to support from the Foundation Mundo Sano, an NGO that supports neglected diseases research in Latin America. Buoyed by the enthusiastic reception for the book, Roman says: "We are planning the next edition for the coming year." ■

…the idea was to show what science journalists are doing in (Argentina) right now.

NOTE: Roman says her group would love to translate the book into English, but there is also some thought that the Spanish version itself could be valuable to Latino students in the United States and elsewhere. Anyone with clever ideas on how to make the volume more widely available should contact Roman at vroman@clarin.com.

JAMES CORNELL (CORNELLJC@EARTHLINK.NET) IS PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE WRITERS ASSOCIATION AND PENS THE "NEWS FROM AFAR" COLUMN (PAGE 23) FOR *SCIENCEWRITERS*.

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BOOKS
BY AND FOR MEMBERS

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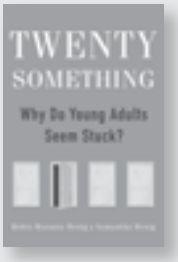
Microsoft Word files only. Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

Twentysomething: Why Do Young Adults Seem Stuck? **by Robin Marantz Henig (NASW) and Samantha Henig, published by Penguin**

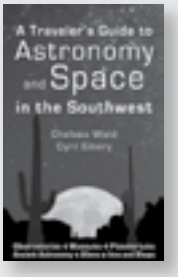


What does it mean to be young today? In the summer of 2010, Robin Marantz Henig wrote a provocative article "What Is It About 20-Somethings?" (*The New York Times Magazine*). The piece generated enormous reader response and started a conversation that included both millennials and baby boomers. Now, working with her millennial daughter, Samantha, she expands the project to give us a full portrait of what it means to be in your twenties today. Looking through many lenses, the Henigs ask whether emerging adulthood has truly become a new rite of passage. They examine the latest neuroscience and psychological research, the financial pressures young people face now, changing cultural expectations, the aftereffects of helicopter parenting, and the changes that have arisen from social media and all things Internet. Most important, they have surveyed more than 120 millennials and baby boomers to give voice to both viewpoints of a conversation that is usually one-sided. ■ *Reach Robin Marantz Henig at robinhenig.com. Publicist for the book is Courtney Nobile at courtney.nobile@us.penguingroup.com.*

Modeling Ships and Space Craft: The Science and Art of Mastering the Oceans and Sky **by Gina Hagler (NASW), published by Springer Verlag**

This book opens with examples of fluid dynamic principles in action in nature and in the works of man. It then explores the theories of Aristotle, Archimedes, and those who followed, before examining the work of early naval architects R.E. Froude and C.W. Taylor, the first aviators and the Wright Brothers, Robert H. Goddard and the other rocket men, and the computational fluid dynamic models of today. Maryland-based science writer Gina Hagler examines the ways each of these individuals used fluid dynamic principles in the design of their vessels and covers the history of fluid dynamic theory and its progression—with some very accessible science examples—including seminal theories. This book is for those who are interested in the history of the methods and science behind fluid dynamic principles and the use of scale models in the marine and aeronautical designs of our time. ■ *Contact Gina Hagler at GinaModelingShips@gmail.com. Publicist for the book is Ho Ying Fan at hoying.fan@springer.com and 212-460-1520.*

A Traveler's Guide to Astronomy and Space in the Southwest **by Chelsea Wald (NASW) and Cyril Emery, published by Planisphere Press (Kindle only)**



When it comes to astronomy and space exploration, the American Southwest is a star. Freelance science writer Chelsea Wald offers a front-row seat with this unique and comprehensive guidebook that helps readers connect to the cosmos in a number of ways: Examine the telescope that discovered Pluto and watch the world's largest telescope mirrors being made. Explore a crater where astronauts trained for landing on the moon and tour the only built-from-scratch commercial spaceport in the world. Marvel at ancient ruins perfectly aligned to the summer solstice and stay up all night to study the stars at a major observatory. The guidebook contains information on telescope tours, historical sites, universities, science museums with planetariums, as well as a resource guide to stargazing opportunities with sample itineraries. NOTE: Some of the guidebook proceeds will go toward fighting light pollution around the world, so that future generations will still be able to admire the stars. ■ *The book's website is planisphere-press.com. Reach Wald at cwald@nasw.org.*

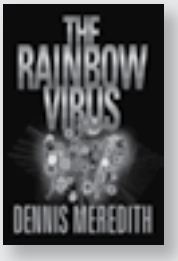
Deceived Wisdom: Why What You Thought Was Right is Wrong **by David Bradley (NASW), published by Elliott & Thompson (UK)**

David Bradley has written a book that examines the science behind many popular myths, revealing why much "received wisdom" is just plain wrong. For example: Why did your mother remind you to take off your coat when inside or you won't "feel the benefit" when you leave? Why would someone advise that when you need to cool down what you need is a nice cup of tea? And must you really let red wine breathe first to improve its taste? The book also covers why urinating on a jellyfish sting does not help, why cell phones won't give you cancer, and why recycling aluminum cans is not a waste of time. This title is the first popular science listing for London-based publisher Elliot & Thompson. Available in hardback, on Kindle, Audible, DRM-free ePub, mobi, PDF. More information at sciencebase.com/DW. Follow on Twitter: @DeceivedWisdom. UK-based David Bradley has contributed to and edited several books, including *The Bedside Book of Science*. He has also written for *New Scientist*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*. ■ *Contact him at david.bradley@gmail.com.*

Cairns: Messengers in Stone **by David B. Williams (NASW), published by The Mountaineers Books**

At the most basic level, a cairn is a pile of rocks. But this definition doesn't do justice to the myriad shapes and sizes of cairns found around the globe. Nor does it convey the many reasons that people have piled up stones for thousands of years, according to Seattle freelance David Williams. Cairns can indicate a trail, mark a grave, serve as altar or shrine, and reveal good hunting grounds and territorial boundaries. Before we all started carrying cell phones or GPS units, cairns provided a timeless means of communication. They say: "You are here. You are not alone!" Weaving together natural and cultural history, Williams' book takes a thought provoking approach to exploring the stories of cairns from around the world. He shares tips on what type of rock is best for building cairns, how one can transfer fatigue to cairns, why an orange lichen-covered cairn indicates that some animal spent quality time on a cairn, and where to find ribald poetry hidden in cairns. He concludes cairns are enduring messengers in stone. ■ *Williams can be reached at wingate@seanet.com. The book's website is geologywriter.com. Book's publicist is Emily White at emilyw@mountaineersbooks.org.*

The Rainbow Virus **by Dennis Meredith (NASW), published by Glyphus**

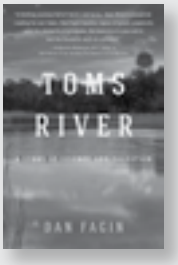


It's the weirdest bioterrorism attack ever! In Dennis Meredith's new science fiction novel *The Rainbow Virus*, someone is unleashing genetically engineered viruses that turn people a rainbow of colors. Could it be an eccentric, brilliant biologist who has vanished from a local biotech company? Pursuing the mystery is an unlikely team of disgraced FBI agent Bobby Loudon and obsessive CDC disease detective Kathleen Shinohara. Will their worst fear be realized—that the colorful infections are prelude to an unstoppable virus that the bioterrorist will unleash to devastate the world? *The Rainbow Virus* is both a thrilling adventure based on the real-life threat of new biowarfare technology and a witty commentary on the peculiar human tendency to judge people by their skin color. Meredith crafted the tale drawing on his decades of experience working at research universities such as Caltech, MIT, Cornell, and Duke. ■ *Reach Meredith at dennis@glyphus.com.*

Surviving Orbit the DIY Way: Testing the Limits Your Satellite Can and Must Match **by Sandy Antunes (NASW), published by O'Reilly Media**

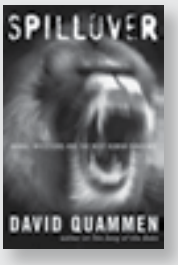
For years, schools and universities have had rocket clubs, where amateur scientists could create and fly their own homemade rockets. Now, amateurs are also building picosatellites, microsatellites of low mass and size that are made with inexpensive materials and can be launched into low-earth orbit. These picosatellites can be used for running scientific experiments, university research, art projects, or just for fun. Of course, after a picosatellite has been created, is it ready for launch? Author Alexander "Sandy" Antunes has written this do-it-yourself guide to help amateurs conduct a series of hands-on tests designed to check a satellite's readiness. Antunes writes in a down-to-earth, conversational style, while never downplaying the danger involved in some of the testing. Even if you have no desire to build a satellite, you will learn many interesting facts from this book about space and how orbits work. Antunes is a Maryland-area astronomer, author, and role-playing game designer, who holds a Ph.D. in computational astrophysics from George Mason University. He is also the author of *DIY Satellite Platforms* (reviewed in *SW* spring 2012), a primer for designing and building picosatellites). ■ *Reach Antunes at sandy.antunes@gmail.com.*

Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation
by Dan Fagin (NASW), published by Random House



Author Dan Fagin tells the true story of a small town ravaged by industrial pollution. One of New Jersey's seemingly innumerable quiet seaside towns, Toms River became the unlikely setting for a decades-long drama that culminated in 2001 with one of the largest legal settlements in the annals of toxic dumping. A town that would rather have been known for its Little League World Series champions ended up making history for an entirely different reason: A notorious cluster of childhood cancers scientifically linked to local air and water pollution. Fagin recounts the 60-year saga of rampant pollution and inadequate oversight that made Toms River a cautionary example for fast-growing industrial towns from South Jersey to South China. He tells the stories of the pioneering scientists and physicians who first identified pollutants as a cause of cancer, and brings to life the everyday heroes who struggled for justice. A gripping human drama rooted in a centuries-old scientific quest, *Toms River* is a tale of dumpers at midnight and deceptions in broad daylight, of corporate avarice and government neglect, and of a few brave individuals who refused to keep silent until the truth was exposed. Dan Fagin is an associate professor of journalism and the director of the Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting Program at New York University. ■ *Reach him at dan.fagin@nyu.edu. Book's publicist is Cindy Murray at CMurray@randomhouse.com.*

Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic
by David Quammen (NASW), published by W.W. Norton

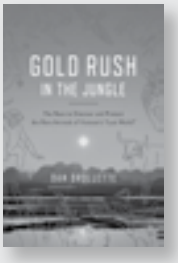


The emergence of strange new diseases is a frightening problem that seems to be getting worse. In this age of speedy travel, it threatens a worldwide pandemic. We hear news reports of Ebola, SARS, AIDS, and something called Hendra that kills horses and people in Australia, but those reports miss the big truth that such phenomena are part of a single pattern. The bugs that transmit these diseases share one thing: They originate in wild animals and pass to humans by a process called spillover. Montana-based freelance writer David Quammen spent five years tracking this subject around the world. He recounts adventures in the field—netting bats in China, trapping monkeys in Bangladesh, stalking gorillas in the Congo—with the world's leading disease scientists. In *Spillover* Quammen takes the reader along on this astonishing quest to learn how, from where, and why these diseases emerge, and he asks the terrifying questions: What might the next big one be? ■ *Reach Quammen at quammen@imt.net.*

The Half-Life of Facts: Why Everything We Know Has an Expiration Date
by Samuel Arbesman, published by Current

There are facts, and then there are facts. We expect some facts to be fluid—the population of Earth, for example—but, as it turns out, we probably shouldn't expect anything we know to remain static. Things that feel like unalterable truths, like the number of chromosomes in human cells (which was 48, until somebody noticed it wasn't), can suddenly shift. Author Samuel Arbesman, an applied mathematician, explores the nature of knowledge: Why it changes, how it changes, and why this is so vital for scientific exploration. Knowledge, like life itself, evolves. Science regularly revises its truths to include new discoveries. The book is also a history of the field of scientometrics, "the science of science," a way of quantifying the growth of ideas. The author shows, too, how the principles of scientometrics can be applied to other fields. Examination of various surviving copies of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, for instance, allowed researchers to track back to Chaucer's own original version. Fascinating, engagingly written, and just mind-bending enough to spur readers to revisit their own mental catalogs of knowledge. Samuel Arbesman is a senior scholar at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and a fellow at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science. ■ *Contact him at arbesman@gmail.com. Publicist for the book is Jacquelynn Burke at Jacquelynn.Burke@us.penguingroup.com.*

Gold Rush in the Jungle: The Race to Discover and Defend the Rarest Animals of Vietnam's "Lost World"
by Daniel Drollette, Jr. (NASW), published by Crown/Random House



Author Dan Drollette chronicles researchers' effort to discover and defend the animals of Vietnam—including some of the rarest mammal species in the world, found only in the past decade. Unexpectedly, wildlife biologists have learned that the 20th century's series of constant, low-level wars in Vietnam (against the Japanese, French, Americans, Chinese, Cambodians, and Laotians) may have actually protected the region's wildlife. *Gold Rush in the Jungle* will be published in April, in time for the 38th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, even in this post-war era, discovering rare new animals such as the Barking Deer, the Flying Frog, the Saola, and the legendary ox-like Kouprey comes at great risk. Scientists and others must dodge leftover bombs, monsoon rains, and stray bands of Khmer Rouge rebels in order to do their work. In this region, the phrase "publish or perish" is taken quite literally: One war correspondent/wildlife seeker in Indochina contracted malaria 16 times, had eight of his personal bodyguards killed, survived three assassination attempts, was taken hostage twice, and was once blown up by a land mine. But they say that the lure of doing fieldwork in Indochina is like catching malaria: Once it gets in your blood, you keep coming back. ■ *Contact Drollette at dandrollette@hotmail.com.*

NASW President
Ron Winslow
Wall Street Journal
RONWINSLOW@NASW.ORG

President's Letter

IN THIS, MY INAUGURAL LETTER AS NASW'S PRESIDENT, I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT ONCE AGAIN YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS ACHIEVED A PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO NEW LEADERSHIP. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT TWO YEARS AT THE HELM WITH BOTH HUMILITY AND EXCITEMENT.

The humility comes from clear-eyed awareness of whose shoes I'm stepping into. During her presidency, Nancy Shute's diplomatic skills helped preserve the 2011 World Conference of Science Journalists and NASW's role as content partner amid the turmoil of the Arab Spring. She also negotiated a memorandum of understanding with our ScienceWriters partner, the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing, deftly handling the sensitive but necessary task of formalizing a relationship with friends (like doing a pre-nup *after* the wedding). Most important, Nancy inspired and nourished the spirit of volunteerism that is the hallmark of how NASW members serve each other in the quest to individually and collectively improve our craft.

My excitement comes from NASW's 2,300 members and from working with an enthusiastic board of directors—comprised of rock-solid veterans and an infusion of energized newcomers—focused on advancing NASW's ongoing mission to improve science journalism and communication amid tumultuous economic and technological changes buffeting our profession. Here are a few areas the new board is already working on:

Strengthening membership. Should people who blog about science as a hobby be entitled to NASW membership as those who write for a living? That question illustrates how what defines a science writer is blurred these days and why the board grapples with the thorny issue of who qualifies for NASW membership. One change recommended by the membership committee: New membership sponsorship to go beyond a simple endorsement to writing a brief statement vouching for a candidate's commitment to science writing. Guidelines are forthcoming.

Recognition. At the suggestion of awards committee co-chairs Amber Dance and Dennis Meredith, the board approved a new category for the Science and Society Awards: Longform Journalism. The hope is to level the playing field for the kind of individual enterprise stories that often struggle to compete with ambitious long-term team projects. In addition, the board had a vigorous discussion in response to a proposal from the PIO committee and agreed to continue the conversation toward establishing an award to recognize excellence among PIO professionals.

Website ads. The board agreed to accept website advertising, akin to the practice of other journalism groups, to provide a venue for sponsors of relevant fellowships, conferences, and contests to reach out to our members and to raise some extra unrestricted funds for NASW programs.

I'm happy to report that ScienceWriters2012 in Raleigh drew more than 500 participants; the second-highest attendance after the New Haven meeting. Attendees braved then-looming Hurricane Sandy to make the trip. That's compelling evidence that the commitment of NASW members to the pursuit of excellence in science journalism and science communication is alive and well.

Special thanks to workshop committee chair Peggy Girshman for a terrific workshop line-up; to Ros Reid for an excellent New Horizons in Science briefing in her debut as CASW's program director; and to NASW executive director Tinsley Davis for making sure all the moving parts came together in seamless fashion. And one more shout-out to Karl Bates and his white-coated team in Raleigh for staging a great meeting.

On a personal level, the Raleigh meeting provided a strong echo of my introduction to NASW, which came at a New Horizons meeting in 1989, just a few months after I began covering health and medicine for *The Wall Street Journal*. The late Jerry Bishop, a terrific mentor and generous *WSJ* colleague, invited me along, with the effect of immediately expanding my science journalism ambitions and welcoming me to the broader community of science writers.

As a journalist who earlier in my career wrote two books on a typewriter, these days I take advantage of the annual NASW workshops to help me learn the opportunities and pitfalls of the new digital terrain.

So I come to the presidency with a deep appreciation for the benefits of NASW membership. It's a privilege to be able to work with other NASW leaders and volunteers who are determined to help us all build the knowledge and skills necessary to better serve readers, listeners, and viewers who rely on us for information and insight about science and how it affects our lives.

Finally, Tinsley and Cybrarian Russell Clemings have hatched a cool new NASW feature: The online membership card (described fully in Cyberbeat on page 17). Suffice it to say, renewing your membership for 2013 means your membership card is instantly available on your smartphone.

It didn't take me long to realize the value of this feature. Seconds after my online renewal was accepted, it took one click to get my new card on screen. When I recently checked the paper version in my wallet, it had expired last January. ■

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

Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
CYBRARIAN@NASW.ORG

Cyberbeat

Have you ever lost your NASW membership ID card? Or discovered that you left it at home when you needed it?

If so, then you should be pleased to hear that you can now fetch a copy of your membership ID card from the ScienceWriters (**nasw.org**) website whenever you're connected to the Internet.

The new membership ID card also includes two new features designed to make it more authoritative as an identification tool for science writers—your website profile photo and a scanable QR code that can be used to provide real-time confirmation of your membership status.

Let's say you're trying to gain admission to a scientific conference that recognizes NASW membership, but you don't have your ID card with you. As long as you have some device with a web browser—a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, for example—all you have to do is go to **nasw.org** and log in. Once you've done that, you'll see a "Show ID card" link near the top right corner of the screen, above the black bar. Click that link and a PDF version of your ID card will load (assuming your Internet device is equipped with a PDF reader).

We expect most credential checkers will be satisfied with that PDF by itself. But if not, they can also scan the card's QR code for immediate confirmation of your membership status. To do so, they will need a smartphone or some other device with a QR code reader and an Internet connection. Free QR code readers are widely available for downloading for most smartphones.

One tip for using your new card: First, if you'll need to use it for identification, you will probably want to make sure it includes a photo that is recognizable as you. Otherwise, feel free to use a photo of, say, a juvenile elephant seal half-buried in the sand with a sheepish expression on its face.

You can change your photo at any time by using the "edit your profile" link

Dispatches from the Director

Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG

New Member Card

Quick! Where is your NASW membership card right now? **In your wallet, dog-eared behind old receipts? Somewhere "safe," i.e., in that file you just can't remember? Pressed underneath stacks of old mail? Now your membership credentials can be everywhere you are, without crinkling at the edges or adding more plastic to the waste stream.**

Cybrarian Russ Clemings and I have worked together to come up with an online membership card that you can access anywhere that you have an Internet connection. You can pull up your online card and flash it straight from your smartphone (think online boarding pass) or print a nice clean copy to submit with a press registration. The online card has some nifty new security and convenience features that allow you, or a press office, to verify your membership quickly and easily. Check out Russ's column at left for the details.

Access to your membership credentials is important, and the current membership card leaves a lot to be desired in terms of durability. We decided to skip right over fancy, but eminently misplaceable, plastic and ride the technology train. This year everyone will still get the printed card, with your name manually typed (yes, typed!) by yours truly, but in future years we will be using an opt-out system so that you can choose. Depending on how things go, cards will ultimately be phased out in favor of the print-on-demand/online membership card. We anticipate not only a cost and time savings (one year, in the course of typing over 2,000 cards, I watched the entire first season of McLeod's Daughters online), but a positive environmental impact as well.

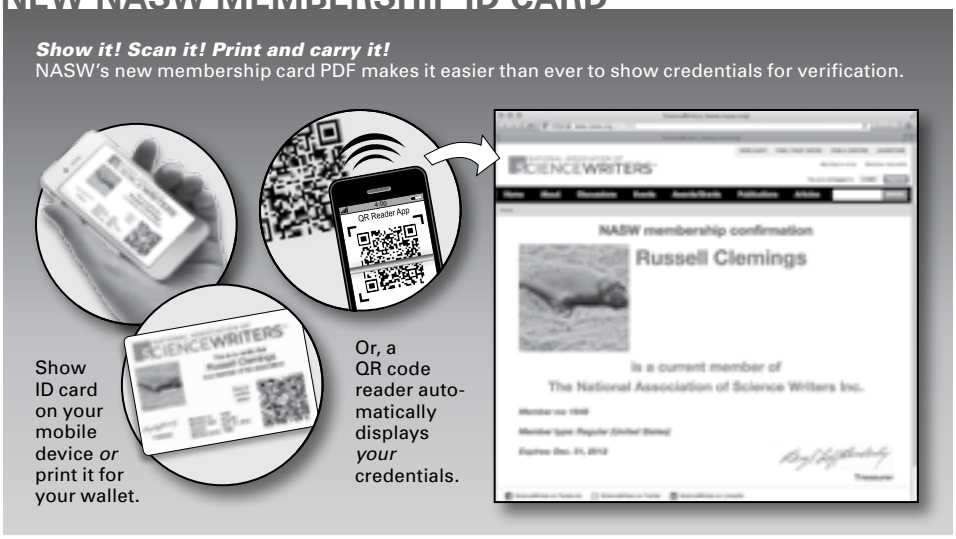
Gain easy access to credentials with online membership card.

Sample shown on page 18.

Certificate of Amendment vote passes

The vote on the Amendment of the Certificate of Incorporation passed unanimously 214 to zero, with 121 online proxies cast and 93 paper ballots cast in person at the Oct. 27 business meeting. Thank you to all who voted or cast proxies, enabling the update of the Certificate of Incorporation for the first time since it was filed in 1954. The newly filed amendment to the original Certificate of Incorporation updates the office location and syncs the number of board members to that listed in the NASW Constitution rather than listing an absolute number.

NEW NASW MEMBERSHIP ID CARD



on **nasw.org**, right next to the ID card link. (If you haven't loaded a profile photo, your card will display a default blue silhouette.) Also, because your online ID card is in PDF format, you can print it out and laminate it whenever you need a new copy.

For now, we will continue mailing ID cards to you after your membership renewal. In the future, however, we will most likely phase out those mailings and ask you to use the online version, printing it out if you need to have a hard copy. Among other things, that step will save NASW more than $1,000 per year in postage, plus paper and labor.

There's one other new feature that we've added to the website recently—small image ads on the site's front page.

We expect that sponsors of fellowships and workshops aimed at journalists will be among the principal buyers of these ads, since they have asked in the past how they can bring their offerings to the attention of our members. We will reserve the right to reject any ads that we believe are inappropriate, just as we do in *ScienceWriters* magazine.

For more information, see the "Advertise" page at **nasw.org**.

NASW-FREELANCE

Falls Church, Va., writer/editor Jack Williams posted in late September after a major book publisher asked: "Do you have an EIN and company name we can pay you under? If not, are you willing to set up a number for payment?" It was a request he'd never heard before, and he had a question about the company name part: "Can I just invent a name and use it? Or must I do something to make it 'official'?"

Williams quickly got answers which generally said he could just use his real name as a company name, with no other steps required. But from there, the discussion drifted into a debate over the pluses and minuses of various business forms, especially sole proprietorships (the usual default) and limited liability companies, or LLCs.

Reno, Nev., writer Melanie Peck got it started. "An LLC is a Limited Liability Company, and it does just that: It limits the liability of owners. In my opinion, an LLC is a much better, and safer, way to run a small business than a sole proprietorship. With a sole proprietorship, you can be sued and you could lose your house, everything. Not so with an LLC."

Not so fast, wrote Pittsburgh, Pa., writer/editor John Gever. "It will protect you in a contractual dispute with a client, but that's about all. You can still be personally sued for libel, invasion of privacy, copyright infringement, or anything else that journalists are vulnerable to, and you personally will be responsible for paying if you lose. And you'll have to pay a lawyer out of your pocket in any event, even in a contractual dispute with a client."

Granger, Ind., writer Cindy Scott Day said her lawyer saw it differently. "I was worried about liability issues, and my lawyer said that an LLC solves that."

Peck again: "My understanding is that an LLC does still protect against acts of negligence by yourself or an employee. My lawyer explained it this way: Say I or an employee of mine get drunk and hit somebody while on the job. We would still go to jail for up to 20 years in my state, but my kids wouldn't also lose the house they live in and other personal assets of mine beyond fines."

And Gever: "You should Google 'LLC alter ego' to see why an LLC provides very little liability protection to an individual sole owner. You could also look to see whether corporate officials are ever sued individually and made to pay big bucks. Answer: Yes."

For more, see the thread "Business name and EIN number" in the NASW-Freelance archives (**nasw.org/nasw-freelance-business-name-and-ein-number**). ■

Deborah Franklin
NASW Secretary

NASW Annual Business Meeting Minutes

PRESIDENT RON WINSLOW CONVENED THE NASW MEMBERSHIP MEETING AT 8:14 A.M., ON OCT. 27, 2012, IN RALEIGH, N.C., EVEN AS HURRICANE SANDY CHURNED OFF THE ATLANTIC COAST A BIT TO OUR SOUTH AND METEOROLOGISTS WARNED THAT A "FRANKENSTORM" COULD ENVELOP A THIRD OF THE EASTERN U.S. BEFORE HALLOWEEN. HARDY SCIENCE WRITERS DUG INTO BREAKFAST, FORTIFYING THEMSELVES FOR THE BUSINESS AND WEATHER AHEAD.

Winslow congratulated the 2012 workshop committee, headed by Peggy Girshman, on an especially strong program. More than 500 people registered for ScienceWriters2012—the second highest number of attendees in the history of the meetings. Winslow also thanked the local organizing committee, headed by Karl Leif Bates of Duke University, for making sure the

GRAPHIC BY CAROL KERR GRAPHIC DESIGN USING PHONE © OCEAN/CORBIS; WEBSITE IMAGE COURTESY OF NASW

large crowd had great food, excellent field trips, and every needed resource throughout the week. Among those who deserved special thanks this year: Jim Hathaway, Jenny Weston, Ashley Yeager, Jim Shamp, Russ Campbell, Marla Broadfoot, Anton Zuiker, Linda Rozet, Cathy Clabby, Whitney LJ Howell, Katie Mosher, Ros Reid, Diane McGurgan, and Lisa Bistreich-Wolfe.

Incoming finance committee chair Beryl Lieff Benderly reported that NASW's books and finances are in good shape. The organization's auditors "are very happy with us," she said. The annual budget for NASW is now more than $500,000; Benderly promised more details about income and expenditures in the next issue of *ScienceWriters*. The finance committee could use at least one more member for 2013 to replace hardworking outgoing member Mari Jensen; Benderly asked that NASW members interested in finance oversight contact her.

Membership committee chair Robert Finn also called for new volunteers. He announced three procedural changes that the NASW board recently approved in the application process for NASW membership: 1) Applicants must apply with their legal names (no pseudonyms), 2) "lay" has been changed to "non-expert," in describing the target audiences of NASW members and their publications, to more accurately include all the types of science writing that members do, and 3) NASW has long required that two current members sponsor new member applicants. A new requirement will put more onus on the sponsors to be gatekeepers in vetting the professionalism of applicants. Sponsors will be asked to write brief (one or two paragraph) statements describing the work of the applicant and his/her qualifications for membership. Finn said the membership committee will soon publish on the NASW-Talk list-serve a checklist of proposed guidelines for sponsors to use in these evaluations.

Education committee co-chair Robert Irion reported that turnout for the internship fair at the 2012 American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting, in Vancouver, was higher than ever, involving 17 recruiters and 40 students. Via that meeting alone, students were placed in internships at a variety of institutions, including CERN, *New Scientist Magazine*, the Yale School of Medicine, and a year-long program at the National Cancer Institute. Irion, Jeff Grabmeier, and their committee also oversee a mentorship program at the AAAS meeting every year, pairing students with veteran science writers. There were 23 newbie-vet pairs at the 2012 meeting, and 41 pairs at the D.C. meeting in 2011. Irion notes that student attendance at the 2013 meeting in Boston is likely to be huge, and encourages even more NASW members to sign up to be mentors. NASW also funded travel for eight undergrads to cover the Vancouver sessions; their mentors edited their stories in a newspaper fashion and posted them on the NASW website.

Irion reported that after the Vancouver meeting, the committee received this note of gratitude from one of the travel fellowship recipients: "I knew this would be a good opportunity to me as a fledgling writer, but I had no idea how good. I learned an immense amount in a short period of time about writing, networking, and the journalistic process." Irion noted that the education committee also sponsors a listing on the NASW website of syllabi for teachers of science writing and that listing has attracted nearly 3,000 readers. Anyone who would like to contribute to that project should contact the project's coordinator, education committee member Czerne Reid.

Program committee chair Robin Lloyd reported that her committee has about $25,000 remaining to distribute as Idea Grants in 2012. Since October 2011, the program committee has evaluated 25 project proposals, and funded, or is in the process of funding 10. A total of $160,510 has been awarded; most grants were for $10,000 or less. To streamline the grant process, the program committee now will make Idea Grant awards twice a year; evaluating each time the total batch of applications submitted in the previous six months.

…even as Hurricane Sandy churned off the Atlantic…. Hardy science writers dug into breakfast, fortifying themselves for the business and weather ahead.

President Winslow explained the balloting regarding the Certificate of Amendment to NASW's Certificate of Incorporation: NASW used to be based in Greenlawn, N.Y., and now is based in Berkeley, Calif., so its incorporation paperwork needs to reflect that new address. Also the current certificate says the NASW board consists of eight members, when in fact there are now 15 board members. (See "Dispatches from the Director" on page 17 for the outcome of this vote).

Winslow next presented certificates of award and many thanks to outgoing NASW President Nancy Shute, and to several outgoing board members: Terry Devitt, Dan Ferber, Adam Rogers, and Robin Lloyd.

Winslow also presented this year's Diane McGurgan Service Award to Robert Irion, Mari Jensen, and Rick Bogren. Irion, in five years as education committee co-chair, has been running the annual undergraduate mentoring programs at the AAAS meeting. "He is ensuring that new generations of science writers have the encouragement and resources they need to succeed," Winslow said. Jensen and Bogren have both been members of the finance committee since 2009. "They helped us go from informal club-style organization to well-run, well audited organization," Winslow said. (See page 27 for more information on the contributions of these award winners.)

President Winslow adjourned the meeting at 8:50 a.m. ■

Ashley Yeager
Science Writer, Duke University
and freelance writer
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The PIO Forum

2012 International Conference on Science Communication

AS A SCIENCE WRITER IN A UNIVERSITY NEWS OFFICE, I WORK CLOSELY WITH SCIENTISTS TO HELP THEM ORGANIZE THEIR THOUGHTS AND PREPARE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS, AND LIKE OTHER WRITERS, I'M ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR STORIES AND SCIENTIFIC PERSONALITIES TO ENGAGE AN AUDIENCE. BUT AFTER HEARING SEVERAL TALKS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN NANCY, FRANCE, IN SEPTEMBER, SEVERAL OTHER SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS AND I WHO ATTENDED BEGAN TO QUESTION FAMILIAR TECHNIQUES SUCH AS STORYTELLING AND EVEN THE WAY WE TRAIN SCIENTISTS TO ENGAGE WITH THE PUBLIC.

Storytelling, the "gold-standard" of science communication, has a "tacit, long-term impact" that shapes science, scientists and society, said Ulrike Felt, a trained physicist and professor of social science at the University of Vienna, who spoke at the conference. The Sept. 4-6 meeting at the University of Lorraine in Nancy sparked discussion among more than 600 attendees from 67 countries about perspectives, issues, and strategies for communicating science.

"Stories about science are a human construction," argued Catherine Franche, director of the European Network of Science Centers and Museums. "They are not exact reflections" of science, but rather "moments and methods" of dialogue that generate open minds about discovery.

Felt agreed that stories can encourage dialogue, but suggested that they often leave gaps between the images of science and its reality. She also said that as science communicators and scientists learn and use specific storytelling strategies, they are "tacitly framing funding decisions" andthereforemightnotnecessarilybeimproving the intersection of science and society.

That intersection is exactly what launched the first International Conference on Science Communication in 2005. Called the Hubert Curien Days, or the *Journées Hubert Curien de la Culture Scientifique et Technique*, the meeting honors Curien, who was formerly president of CERN, the first chairman of the European Space Agency, and the second president of the Academy of Europe, and who died in 2005. Because of Curien's role in science and politics, his colleagues at Henri Poincaré University organized a meeting in his memory to bring together scientists, politicians, journalists, and communicators to discuss the mediators and mediation of scientific knowledge.

The delegation met in 2008, 2010, and again in 2012, where speakers and attendees focused on two themes: The changing roles of the "actors" communicating science and the rapid expansion of digital technology, which has added more information producers from diverse backgrounds. Representatives from China's Research Institute for Science Popularization, for instance, spoke about changing the role of "actors" communicating science in the country and said they were aiming to increase the number of "science popularizers" from 1.75 to 4 million by 2020. Professors from Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev University talked about developing a science communication program at the undergraduate and eventually the graduate level within the university's School of Science and Technology. There were also presentations, coffee-break discussions, and a two-day workshop on training Ph.D. students to talk to the public about their work.

But, like Felt, not every speaker championed unchecked science communication and training scientists to partake in it. Martin Bauer of the London School of Economics and Political Science questioned whether researchers and their institutions were beginning to brand and market knowledge. He also suggested scientists might be returning to their pre-World War II role in science communication, where information about science came from the scientists themselves, with assistance from public information, public relations and marketing specialists, and social media.

In a breakout session immediately after Bauer's talk, I gave a workshop on the death of the press release, and, admittedly, felt a little intimidated to speak because of what Bauer and Felt had said. At Duke, we highlight scientific information in stories and help researchers share their expertise. However, we also work hard

(above) Students in the Ph.D. workshop on design and illustration.

(left) Mark Littmann discusses University of Tennessee-Knoxville's Science Communication Center, which trains biology Ph.D. students to work with the media and write about their work for a lay audience.

STUDENTS AND HAIGNERÉ BY AURÉLIE BORDENAVE, ILLUSTRASCIENCES.COM; LITTMANN BY MATHIEU ROUAULT, DOCTEO.NET; GORDER COURTESY OF JO McCULTY

Links:

International Conference on Science Communication
www.jhc2012.eu/index.php/en/

China Research Institute for Science Popularization
crsp.org.cn/en/index.htm

Science Communication Center
UT-Knoxville
web.utk.edu/~peer/science.htm

Presenter Claudie Haigneré, president of Universcience, stated to be accepted science needs to be relevant to individuals and their culture.

ILLUSTRATION TRANSLATION: YOU ARE CREATORS OF KNOWLEDGE—LET US BE TRANSLATORS AS WELL.

not to oversell science or market or brand it, preferring to let the work stand on its own, with a little help from techniques such as storytelling and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Still, Felt's call for "storytelling ethics" and Bauer's demand for better "bullshit filters" gave all of us at the conference a lot to think about as we continue to construct stories about science. We likely won't resolve these issues with storytelling and new media tomorrow, next month, next year, or maybe ever, but it will be interesting to see how they continue to evolve by the time the next International Conference on Science Communication rolls around in 2014. ■

Pam Frost Gorder
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Our Gang

After 10 years as a freelance writer, **Siri Carpenter** has taken a job as senior editor at *Discover Magazine*. She is also co-founder of *The Open Notebook* (**theopennotebook.com**), which promotes outstanding science journalism by providing journalists of all experience levels with tools and resources to hone their craft. Congratulate her at siri.carpenter@gmail.com.

Whitney Clavin, media relations specialist for Earth- and space-based astronomy and astrophysics at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, is among those who earned a 2012 Exceptional Service Medal from the space agency "for sustained performance that embodies multiple contributions which contribute to NASA projects, programs, or initiatives." NASA Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr. said that the winners' achievements "have helped renew [NASA's] commitment to keeping America the leader in space exploration." Launch good wishes to whitney.clavin@jpl.nasa.gov.

Catherine Dold has launched a social media experiment to build an audience for *The Recovery Book*. She just signed a contract with Workman Publishing to write a new edition of this 20-year-old book, which covers "what a recovering addict and his or her family will face during every stage of living clean and sober." She and coauthors Al J. Mooney and Howard Eisenberg will share their progress on Twitter (**@TheRecoveryBook**), Facebook (**facebook.com/TheRecoveryBook**), and a blog (**therecoverybook.com**) and even seek feedback from readers as they revise the book. Dold wants the project to be "a textbook example of how to use social media from the start." Follow her online and write her directly at cathydold@gmail.com.

Freelancer **Charlotte Huff** enjoyed several stats-filled days in October while attending the National Institute of Health's Medicine in the Media conference. She highly recommends it to

journalists who want to better understand not only p-values and other statistical language, but also the biases that can permeate both studies and the reporting of them. Request further analysis at charlotte@charlottehuff.com.

Larry Krumenaker has received an honor not often granted to people "unless they are, well, dead," he says. Through January 2013, the London Museum of Science will feature him (or rather, his likeness) in an exhibition highlighting an unusual celestial object called SS433, the only known microquasar in the Milky Way galaxy. Krumenaker discovered the microquasar 40 years ago, a feat that earned him a spot in an interactive display alongside Stephen Hawking, who is being honored for his work with black holes. The exhibit also introduces a citizen science project called Global Jet Watch (**antenna.sciencemuseum.org.uk/global-jet-watch**) for which observatories around the world will contribute data and images of SS433 via the Internet. Interact with the real Krumenaker at larrykga@mindspring.com.

Kristen M. Kusek has left the Earthwatch Institute, where she was director of scientific and public outreach, for Harvard University. She's now associate director of communications for the Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering. "It sure is a mouthful, and thankfully an incredibly exciting place to work," she adds. There, Kusek is responsible for developing a communications strategy and will also serve on the executive team. Write to her at Kristen.Kusek@wyss.harvard.edu

After 14 years at the University of Arkansas, **Melissa Lutz Blouin** has traded in her hog hat for gator gear. She's the new director of news and publications for UF&Shands, the University of Florida's Academic Health Center. UF&Shands is comprised of six colleges, six institutes, and several hospitals, so she's going to be awfully busy! Reach her at melissa.blouin@ufl.edu.

Following an 18-month hiatus, freelancer **Larry O'Hanlon** reports that he's been "sucked back into the *Discovery News* vortex as a writer and blogger… I guess the previous 13 years just wasn't enough." He's a social media specialist and blogosphere manager for the American Geophysical Union and is also working on a fun project for the Universities Space Research Association in which science fiction stories form the context for an astronomy curriculum. Help him calculate an orbit around the *Discovery* singularity at larryo@larryo.net.

Two NASW members are on the rise at Caltech: **Lori Oliwenstein** was just promoted to editor in chief in the marketing and communications office, where she is also editor of Caltech's *Engineering & Science* magazine. Meanwhile, **Whitney Barlow** has joined the division of chemistry and chemical engineering as scientific editor and coordinator. She remains a freelance science and nature writer. Congratulate them at lorio@caltech.edu and whitney.a.barlow@gmail.com.

After four years of part-time freelancing, **Becky Oskin** is back to full time as a staff writer for **OurAmazingPlanet.com**. She's working remotely from Davis, Calif., and has already filed a host of stories on subjects as diverse as Hurricane Sandy, glacial melt, and carnivorous sponges. Get in touch at boskin@techmedianetwork.com.

Thanks to a NASW Ideas Grant, **Kim Schuske** and **Julie Kiefer** founded and launched *Explore Utah Science* (**exploreutahscience.org**), a local science news, information, and events website. In its first three weeks, it drew more than 2,100 visitors and 7,500 page views and garnered coverage in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "We are well on our way of fulfilling our goals of enhancing science literacy, providing work to freelance writers, and training new writers," Kiefer says. So far, they have commissioned articles to 14 freelancers, including NASW members. Contact them at schuskester@gmail.com and jkiefer@neuro.utah.edu.

Johns Hopkins Medicine has a new communications manager, **Shawna Williams**, who returns to the university after three years of freelance writing on science in China for publications such as *Chemical & Engineering News* and *Science*. Before that, she was a science writer at Hopkins' Genetics & Public Policy Center. She'll cover basic research at the university. Write to her at shawna@jhmi.edu.

Sarah Zielinski just joined National Public Radio as an associate producer on the science desk. The new job caps a year of freelancing for **NPR.com**, *Science*, *Science News*, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, among others. She was previously an associate editor at *Smithsonian Magazine*. Set your dial to sciwriter.sarah@gmail.com to wish her well. ■

■ ■ ■

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

Upcoming Meetings

February 21-23, 2013 • ***International Symposium on Disasters: Communicating in the Crisis and Aftermath,*** Christchurch, New Zealand [Co-hosted by PCST and the Science Communicators Association of New Zealand]. scanz.co.nz/index.html

May 20 -24, 2013 • ***Science and Technology Popularization Network in Latin America and the Caribbean (RedPOP) meeting with the Mexican National Congress on Science and Technology Popularization,*** Zacatecas, Mexico (official languages will be Spanish and Portuguese). redpop.uaz.edu.mx

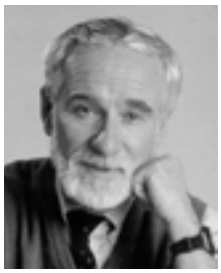
June 24-28, 2013 • ***8th World Conference of Science Journalists,*** Helsinki, Finland. wcsj2013.org

September 7-12, 2013 • ***British Science Festival,*** Newcastle, UK. Press registration and information: 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. pcst2014.org

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

June 6-8, 2013 • ***Ecsite Annual Conference on Science Communication,*** Gothenburg, Sweden. ecsite.eu



James Cornell
International Science
Writers Association
CORNELLJC@EARTHLINK.NET

News From Afar

Confering Amidst the Conifirs

BE FOREWARNED. THE FINNS HAVE A FIXATION ON FORESTS. NOT SURPRISING, PERHAPS, FOR A PEOPLE LIVING IN THE MOST FORESTED COUNTRY IN EUROPE. FINLAND IS NEARLY 86 PERCENT COVERED IN TREES, AND THE FINNS NATURALLY ASSOCIATE ALL THIS TIMBER WITH WEALTH, WARMTH, AND WELL BEING.

In short, if you attend the 8th World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2013), in Helsinki in June, be prepared, even if not to hug some trees, at least to go into the woods for some scientific—and social—interactions with your lumber-loving hosts.

Indeed, a sure conference highlight will be "science at midnight," a seminar on the development of innovative and renewable wood-based materials for the future, held in the heart of a coniferous boreal forest.

Before you feel compelled to pack double-bladed axes and tree-climbing crampons be assured that the forest seminar is optional and offsite. Most of the conference will be held in downtown Helsinki and will deal with the continuing (and considerable) problems of science journalism's future.

The WCSJ organizers received nearly 200 proposals from journalists in 42 countries on topics ranging from understanding data sourcing to coping with digital media and from publishing e-books to psyching out pseudo experts. The final program (which, at press time, was still a work in progress) has been culled to about 70 sessions—seminars, panels, workshops, and plenary lectures—crammed into four days, June 24 to 28. Luckily, this is also a time of almost 24-hour sunshine, so there is no excuse for sleeping through sessions.

As has been the case at past conferences, U.S. science journalists make a fine showing, with some 40 Americans scheduled to speak. An unusual number of those are NASW members—Deb Blum, Tabitha Powledge, Carl Zimmer, and NASW Executive Director Tinsley Davis, to name just a few.

The final list of speakers and sessions should be online by the time this issue reaches your mailbox. Go to **wcsj2013.org** and be sure to check out the "Social Programme," too. It includes another unique arboreal event: an open-air dance night at Lammassaari, an urban wooded isle where one can do the *letkajenkka*, a Finnish version of the "Bunny Hop" for lumberjacks. ■

After a decade of supporting the travel of young German science writers to the annual AAAS gathering as well as that of international reporters, including (as Beryl Benderly noted in the fall issue of *SW*) many U.S. journalists, to the biennial ESOF meetings, the **Robert Bosch Foundation** will shift focus to train "general-assignment reporters" at German news media on how to cover science and technology issues. The new effort responds to an environment in which traditional media—even in Europe—can no longer afford to support specialty writers, i.e. science reporters, and generalists must cover all topics, from local crime to global warming.

■ ■ ■

Nick Ishmael Perkins, a journalist, media trainer, and project manager who worked in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean, has succeeded David Dickson as director of SciDev.Net, the online news service providing sci-tech information for and about the developing world. Dickson, the founding director, will continue on as a contributing editor. The service's 2011 annual report, as well as current news, can be seen at **scidev.net**.

■ ■ ■

The World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) held a special general assembly in Dublin last July to present member organizations with both a new mission statement, more clearly defining its role and goals, and a new set of bylaws. The latter includes a provision—prompted by quirky Canadian rules concerning the status of "charitable organizations"—requiring that at least two Canadian residents be members of the executive board. Luckily, Canada has two science journalists' organizations—one national, the other Quebecois—so finding the mandatory two representatives should be easy. Not so easy was the vote in the general assembly, where most measures usually pass unanimously. This time, there was one notable abstention—EUSJA, the European umbrella group representing some 2,000 journalists in 24 countries and not that happy with a Canadian overload on the WFSJ board.

WFSJ's Executive Director Danielle Vinette left the federation shortly after the Dublin meeting, having seen through both the general assembly preparation and its charitable-status application, both unquestionably tough and tiring assignments. Until a new executive director is found, Jean-Marc Fleury will continue to serve in the position he originated. ■

In Memoriam

ScienceWriters *has learned belatedly of the following deaths.*

Edward Sherburne
Television pioneer; former president of Science Service

Edward 'Ted' Sherburne, 91, died Nov. 22, 2010, in Charlotte, N.C., of complications from Parkinson's disease. He had been a NASW member since 1962.

Born in Washington, D.C. to a military family, he graduated from MIT in 1941 and served in the U.S. Army during WWII. Throughout his civilian career, Sherburne was on the cutting edge of leadership in innovation and program development to communicate science to the public. In 1946, at the Naval Special Devices Center, he led a project to test whether the new medium of television could be used in instruction. In 1949 he was producer for Manhattan Spotlight, one of New York City's earliest shows. In 1955, when WGBH-TV, Boston went on air, Sherburne was program manager, influencing national standards of educational TV. He was also a program manager for the Public Broadcasting Service, and coordinated an educational TV network for the University of California campuses. In 1959, he was appointed by AAAS to head a new effort to increase public understanding of science; a challenge he met by organizing science seminars for Congressmen and their staffs, managing the (then) AAAS Westinghouse Science Writing Awards, and a host of efforts to inform the public about science through television. His influence grew when in 1966 he became president of Science Service, (now Society for Science and the Public), became publisher of *Science News*, and director of the Westinghouse Talent Services for Young Scientists (now Intel Talent Search).
(source: Charlotte Observer*)*

■ ■ ■

Grace Urrows
Wrote about atomic energy; PR in health care

Grace Urrows, 84, died Aug. 16, 2008, in Danbury, Conn., after a short illness. She had been a NASW member since 1953.

Born in New York City, she worked for many years in health-care administration in New York, most notably at Montefiore Hospital. She also worked previously for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission where she was the author of *Nuclear Energy for Desalting* and *Food Preservation by Irradiation* as part of the commission's Understanding the Atom series of pamphlets. She later was president of Urrows Associates, a marketing and public relations consulting firm in the health-care field, with offices in New York and Palm Beach, Fla.
(source: Florida Today*)*

■ ■ ■

Barbara J. Tufty
Environmental writer

Barbara J. Tufty, 84, an author, environmentalist and science journalist who in books and countless articles sought to give voice to nature, died following a heart attack July 30, 2008. She had been a NASW member since 1964.

The author of five books, including a guide to local wildflowers, Tufty had a decades-long association with the *Science Newsletter*, a Scripps Howard News Service publication that supplied science stories to daily newspapers nationwide. For more than a decade, she also was conservation editor for the Audubon Naturalist Society and an editor and writer with the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences. For 20 years, Tufty and her husband owned a cabin on the Cacapon River in West Virginia. In the early 1990s, she helped form the conservation
IN MEMORIAM continued on page 33

Letters to the Editor

For a nonprofit society like the American Society of Animal Science, paying to be part of EurekAlert! is a big investment. The summer 2012 issue of *ScienceWriters* helped me show my boss that being on EurekAlert! would pay off. In that issue's "PIO Forum," Pam Frost Gorder presented stats showing that posting on EurekAlert! had helped communications at Ohio State University. I brought the article to the next staff meeting, and my boss was very eager to get us signed up. We are now on EurekAlert! and getting good feedback. Overall, *ScienceWriters* has been a very good resource as I establish the communications department in my office. Thank you.

Madeline McCurry-Schmidt
American Society of Animal Science
Champaign, Ill.

■ ■ ■

I had to chuckle upon reading outgoing President Nancy Shute's column crediting playing poker with Jerry Bishop as enticing her into joining NASW. I became a NASW convert after Jerry invited me to do the two-step at an AHA conference in New Orleans several years ago. I wonder how many NASW members have Jerry Bishop as the common denominator?

Charlotte Libov
Miami Beach, Fla.

■ ■ ■

I just read the obituaries in the Fall 2012 issue of *ScienceWriters*. I noted with interest that the average age at death of the 11 deaths reported therein was 89.6 years. While realizing that this group of long-lived science writers may simply be another example of randomness being clumpy, I am nonetheless hoping that it reflects the life expectancy of people in our profession.

David C. Holzman
Lexington, Mass.

ScienceWriters Welcomes Letters to the Editor

A letter must include a daytime telephone number and email address. Letters submitted may be used in print or digital form by NASW, and may be edited. **Mail to:** Editor, *ScienceWriters,* P.O. Box 1725, Solana Beach, CA 92075, **or email:** editor@nasw.org.

Suzanne Clancy, Ph.D.
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Regional Groups

CHICAGO

In September, the Chicago science writers group kicked off its program year in a big way—taking a close look at the universe at the Adler Planetarium, in a private tour of the Space Visualization Laboratory. Doug Roberts, Ph.D., astronomer and chief technology officer gave a talk and answered questions about the lab which helps scientists and the public access portals to vast databases of scientific information from observatories and numerical simulations of astrophysical phenomena. The visit included lunch at the planetarium's Galileo café. The clear afternoon weather provided a spectacular view of Chicago's famed downtown buildings across Lake Michigan.

On Nov. 8, the group met at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum for a specially arranged evening to see its latest exhibition on birds in ancient Egypt. Exhibit curator Rozenn Bailleul-LeSuer showed the members statues and artifacts of birds, such as falcons, that were common in Egypt and are also part of Chicago's environment. They also saw bird mummies, including one of an eagle that was gilded in gold and subjected to a CT scan, which was displayed nearby. Members learned about the role birds played in ancient Egyptian culture and saw some magnificent art work based on Egyptian's perception of the beauty of birds. Afterwards they visited the museum's Persian Gallery for wine and cheese and a chance to see some of the splendors of Persepolis, the capital of the ancient Persian empire.

NEW YORK

Science Writers of New York had a busy several months. In September, the group enjoyed a great evening with author Jeffrey P. Kahn, M.D., clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell School of Medicine, who discussed his new book *Angst: Origins of Anxiety and Depression*. Dr. Kahn proposes the novel evolutionary theory that common anxiety and depressive disorders are actually primeval sociobiological instincts now out of context in modern civilization.

After winning Mayor Bloomberg's bid to create a new technical campus for New York City, Cornell University will build its first building on Roosevelt Island—expected to open in 2017. Until then, Cornell has begun to create a tech campus, currently in temporary space in Chelsea. In an October program, designed especially for SWINY, members learned from Dan Huttenlocher, new dean of the Cornell NYC Tech campus, and Greg Pass, the new chief entrepreneurial officer (and formerly Twitter's chief technical officer), what this new campus brings to New York City.

Also in October, an event on how to leverage LinkedIn drew a large crowd. The primary speaker was Krista Canfield, LinkedIn's senior manager of corporate communications and journalist trainer. Canfield's team has helped train more than 13,000 journalists to use LinkedIn to get scoops, story ideas, sources, and assignments. Former SWINY board member Beth Schachter shared her own creative approach to LinkedIn and the significant benefits this has had for her work.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

A riveting look at cyber crime—how it's done, the damage it causes, and how to report on it—was offered to Northern California Science Writers Association (NCSWA) members at a dinner meeting, in October. Kevin Poulsen, news editor at Wired.com and a longtime reporter on cyber crime, security, and digital privacy, told the story of one of the highest-value cyber criminals ever brought down by the FBI. Poulsen knows his topic first-hand, having been a hacker in the 1980s and having served time for his cyber antics in the 1990s. He reinvented himself as a leading technology journalist. Poulsen's talk was co-sponsored by and hosted at the San Francisco location of Swissnex, a Swiss public-private enterprise devoted to promoting education, research, and innovation in science and the arts.

NORTH CAROLINA

The rush and whirl of ScienceWriters2012 has passed, but Science Communicators of North Carolina (SCONC) report that they are still spinning a little bit.

In other news, the group's partnership with Sigma Xi continues with monthly pizza lunches in the Research Triangle Park, where noted researchers share their findings with local science communicators. Using SciWri12 as a guide, they are looking to spin off some professional development activities in the new year.

NORTHWEST

From Morton gneiss to miscreants to microbes, the Northwest Science Writers Association had a fun late summer and autumn. In July, David Williams led two walks in downtown Seattle exploring the cultural and natural history of building stones. Highlights included Italian travertine extracted from the same quarries that produced rock for the Coliseum; fossils the size of cinnamon rolls; and the 3.5-billion-year old Morton gneiss, which Williams called the "oldest rock any of you will ever see."

The following month, writer Cathy McDonald led a group to Discovery Park, where they explored the former Army base turned city park. McDonald discussed the geology and ecology, as well as military history, including the fate of miscreants, who were jailed in what one participant described as "completely dark and icky solitary confinement cells."

Finally, in September, members participated in one of the group's regular "meet the author" events. David Quammen gave a fascinating yet somewhat disturbing talk about his new book *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*. Fortunately, after-event beers with Quammen at a nearby pub helped alleviate science writers' concerns about the nasty microbes he writes about.

NEW MEXICO

The dormant New Mexico Science Writers Association is being jumpstarted under the leadership of Larry O'Hanlon. If you are interested in helping in the effort, contact him at larryohanlon@gmail.com. ■

NASW Members Among AAAS Kavli Award Winners

NASW members Carl Zimmer, Michelle Nijhuis, and Kirsten Weir, all freelance science writers, are among a select group of science journalists honored with the 2012 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards for distinguished reporting for a general audience. An independent panel of science journalists pick the winners, who will receive $3,000 and a plaque at the 2013 AAAS Annual Meeting, in Boston.

Carl Zimmer won the award for the large newspaper category (circulation of 100,000 or more) for three stories published in the *New York Times*:

"Evolution Right Under Our Noses" (July 26, 2011)
"A Sharp Rise in Retractions Prompts a Call for Reform" (April 17, 2012)
"Tending the Body's Microbial Garden" (June 19, 2012)

The judges praised Zimmer's entry as an example of sustained excellence in reporting on a range of science topics. His story about evolution at work on organisms living in and around New York City—from white-footed mice in an urban park to native ants to fish in the Hudson River—was a "surprising, intriguing, and amusing look at science in unexpected places," said contest judge Laura Helmuth, science editor for the online magazine Slate. Robert Lee Hotz, a science writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, said Zimmer's reporting on urban evolution and on the microbes that exist on and in the human body "makes us see the world with new eyes." At the same time, Hotz added, Zimmer "does not shy from exposing the shortcomings and frauds of science, as retractions and examples of misconduct become more numerous." Zimmer previously won this award in the large newspaper category in 2009 and in the online category in 2004.

Michelle Nijhuis won in the magazine category for "Crisis in the Caves," published in *Smithsonian* magazine (July/Aug 2011). For this piece, Nijhuis donned a protective suit and went underground to observe both bats and biologists as she reported on white-nose syndrome, a fast-moving fungal disease that has killed more than a million cave-dwelling bats in the northeastern United States and is threatening to spread across the continent.

The judges noted the scope of the Nijhuis story, which provided an in-depth look at an issue that has been emerging since 2007 when the disease was first discovered in bats behaving oddly in upstate New York. Andrew Revkin, a senior fellow at Pace University and Dot Earth blogger for the *New York Times*, called the story a "deep, detailed, and disturbing dive into the mysterious outbreak devastating bats in North America." Nancy Shute, a freelance science writer and immediate past president of NASW, said the piece showed "terrific field reporting, lyrical writing, and compassion for the struggles of scientists in the face of the unknown." Nijhuis, a previous winner in 2006 in the small newspaper category, noted that bats are "about as far from 'charismatic megafauna' as you can get." The challenge of the story, she said, was to demystify the creatures and make their "very real plight interesting and appealing" to a general audience. "The scientists in the story, who were passionate about bats and about solving the problems at hand, helped me to do that," she said.

Kirsten Weir is the winner in the children's science news category for "Uninvited Guests," published in *Current Health Kids* (April/May 2012). Weir described for her young readers the parasites, microbes, and creepy-crawlies that live in (and on) the human body. In her lively tour of our hitchhiking microbial community, Weir noted: "There are more of them than there are of us." She cautioned her readers not to be freaked out by the trillions of microbial stowaways, noting that most of them are essential and help prevent other, more harmful bacteria from moving in. Catherine Hughes, senior editor for science at *National Geographic Kids*, said Weir used humor, analogy, and a great opening paragraph "to pull in and keep her readers." She said Weir's "well-placed use of figures and numbers added more 'wow' factors to the topic." Weir noted, for example, that when researchers stuck cotton swabs into the navels of 90 people, they found about 1,400 species of microbes, many of which

KAVLI AWARD continued on page 33

IRION BY COLT HANGEN; JENSEN BY DIANA DOHERTY

Andy Boyles Named AAAS Fellow

NASW member Andy Boyles, science editor at *Highlights for Children*, has been elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Boyles is honored "for having introduced millions of children to nature's wonders and the process of science."

As science editor at *Highlights*, Boyles faces a unique challenge: Find engaging topics for children that convey, at times, difficult concepts while showing science as an ongoing, self-correcting process. Boyles does this masterfully showing considerable respect for the magazine's young readers. At no time does he allow authors to dumb down material because "it's just for kids."

Highlights was launched in 1946. Boyles is only the publication's second science editor, following his friend and mentor, the late Jack Myers. The magazine's mission is to help children improve their reading skills and stimulate their curiosity about the world around them. With a monthly circulation of one million, *Highlights* is the most widely read children's magazine in the general-interest category and has left an indelible imprint on the hearts and minds on millions of children. For many young readers, it is among their earliest exposure to science ideas.

Boyles started out in science writing 30 years ago writing about psychiatry and molecular science at medical centers in Pittsburgh, Pa., and Galveston, Tex. He joined *Highlights* in 1994, and for the past 18 years has edited the science content of the company's flagship magazine (audience ages 6 to 9) as well as consulting on science content for *Highlights High Five* (ages 3 to 6), *Highlights Hello* (ages zero to 2), Boyds Mills Press (the corporation's trade-book division), and digital content. From 2005 to 2012, he worked as an acquiring editor for Boyds Mills Press. Boyles recently gave up the latter role to work part time for *Highlights* and take on freelance projects.

Through the not-for-profit Highlights Foundation, Boyles has lectured on science writing in a variety of workshops and, in 2005, launched an annual workshop for science and nature writers, which boasts a growing number of published alumni. As a workshop leader, Boyles has worked to improve the state of science writing for children, promoting the standards of journalism among children's writers, and recruiting new talent.

In both magazine and book publishing, Boyles has acquired and edited the first published works of award-winning talents such as Sarah C. Campbell, who received a Theodor Seuss Geisel Award for *Wolfsnail: A Backyard Predator*, and Vicki Oransky Wittenstein, who received the American Institute of Physics Science Communication Award for *Planet Hunter: Geoff Marcy and the Search for Other Earths*.

Boyles is a member of AAAS Section Y (General Interest in Science and Engineering). He will receive formal recognition of this Fellows honor at a ceremony during the 2013 AAAS annual meeting, in Boston. ■

Andy Boyles

Mighty Threesome Share Diane McGurgan Award

Each year, NASW presents the Diane McGurgan Service Award to a member or members whose volunteer efforts go far beyond the call of duty. This year, the award honors three individuals who have put in countless hours and made lasting contributions to the organization.

Robert Irion

Rick Bogren

Mari Jensen

Robert Irion has co-chaired the education committee for five years. This committee is in charge of running the student internship fair, NASW's popular mentoring program at the annual AAAS meeting, and the undergraduate travel fellowships. Together Irion and co-chair Jeff Grabmeier, who was honored with the McGurgan Award in 2009, have mobilized a small army of volunteers and made sure that every detail of the program is taken care of. The committee has added new elements to an already successful slate of activities and continues to refine current programs. Through Irion's leadership and his deep interest in students, he is ensuring that new generations of science writers have the resources and encouragement they need to succeed.

In 2009, **Rick Bogren** and **Mari Jensen** each independently responded to a call for members to join the fledgling finance committee. Over the past three years, they have taken the committee from its infancy to a smoothly functioning group that, in addition to monthly and annual tasks of financial oversight, has achieved a number of important benchmarks for the organization, including implementation of a refined, on-time budgeting process, policies and procedures for handling the fluctuations in Authors Coalition income, and engagement of an

McGURGAN continued on page 33

Volunteers Make a Difference

In fiscal year 2011-2012, the following individuals generously volunteered their time and talent to NASW governance, standing committees,* ScienceWriters *magazine, annual workshop, student mentoring, and special projects in support of NASW's mission. Thank you!

Annual Meeting Committee

Steve Benowitz
Merry Bruns
Emily Caldwell
Amber Dance
Peggy Girshman, *chair*
Anne Frances Johnson
Jenni Laidman
Phillip Manning
Carol Milano
Michael Newman
Jeffrey Perkel
Andrew Porterfield
Czerne Reid
Cori Vanchieri
Emily Willingham
Ron Winslow
Ashley Yeager

AAAS Meeting Mentors

Melissa Lutz Blouin
Alan Brown
Emily Caldwell
Terry Devitt
Rachel Ehrenberg
Josh Fischman
Lynne Friedmann
Virginia Gewin
Roberta Kwok
David Levine
Carl Marziali
Molly McElroy
A'ndrea Elyse Messer
Jessica Marshall
Steve Miller
John Moir
Mark Schrope
Kate Travis
William Schulz
Erik Vance
Karen Weintraub
Alex Witze
Corinna Wu

(l to r) NASW officers Nancy Shute, Ron Winslow, and Beryl Benderly.

AAAS Undergraduate Fellow Story Editors

Melissa Lutz Blouin
Terry Devitt
Steve Miller
Czerne Reid

Authors Coalition Liaison

Beryl Benderly

Education Committee

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Steven Benowitz
Melissa Lutz Blouin
Jennifer Cutraro
Terry Devitt
Jeff Grabmeier, *co-chair*
James Hathaway
Robert Irion, *co-chair*
Pamela Marean
Steve Miller
Czerne Reid
Ashley Yeager

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Richard Bogren
Fae Dremock
Robert Frederick
Mari Jensen
Nancy Shute
Ron Winslow, *chair* (2010-12)

Freelance Committee

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Beryl Benderly
T. Delene Beeland
Siri Carpenter, *co-chair*
Catherine Dold
Jennie Dusheck
Jeanne Erdmann, *co-chair*
Dan Ferber
Jeff Hecht
Charlotte Huff
Lynne Lamberg
Steve Miller
Jeffrey Perkel
Tabitha Powledge
Kendall Powell
Richard Robinson
Rabiya Tuma
Cori Vanchieri
Cheryl Weinstock
Jennifer Wettlaufer

Information Access Committee

Rick Borchelt, *chair*

Internet Committee

A'ndrea Elyse Messer
Terry Devitt
Catherine Dold
Pam Frost Gorder
Earle Holland
Laura Newman
Tammy Powledge
Adam Rogers, *co-chair*
Mitch Waldrop, *co-chair*

International Liaison

Nancy Shute

Internship Fair

Melissa Lutz Blouin
Jennifer Cutraro, *coordinator*
Terry Devitt
Jeff Grabmeier
Robert Irion

LinkedIn Coordinator

Sally James

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Deborah Franklin, *chair* (2010-12)
Robert Finn, *chair* (2012-)
Lynne Friedmann
Michael Lemonick
Alaina Levine
Judith Randal
Cori Vanchieri
Bora Zivkovic

Nominating Committee

Karl Leif Bates
Mariette DiChristina
Robert Lee Hotz
Maryn McKenna
Nancy Shute, *chair*
Carl Zimmer

PIO Committee

Chris Barncard
Melissa Lutz Blouin, *co-chair*
Rick Borchelt
Richard Bogren
Lynne Friedmann
Jeff Grabmeier
Mari Jensen
Earle Holland, *co-chair*
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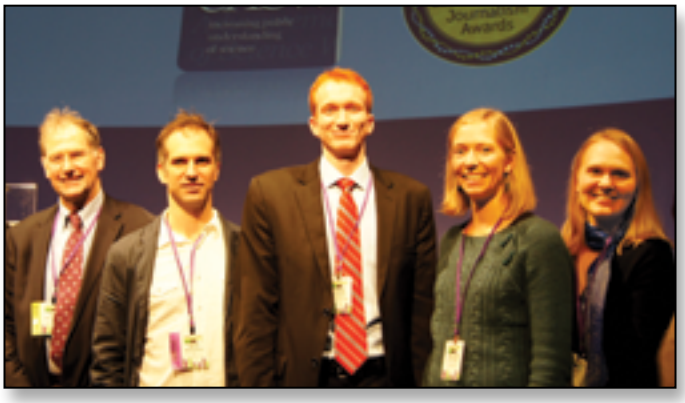
ScienceWriters2012—Raleigh, North Carolina

(right) (l to r) Ron Winslow flanks SIS award winners Seth Mnookin, Chris Hamby, and Emilene Ostlind. SIS co-chair Amber Dance is far right.

(far right) Gayathri Validyanathan accepts the Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award for outstanding science reporting by a journalist under age 30.

(below) David Dobbs and David Quammen share a light moment and a wealth of book-writing tips.

(below middle) Jon Cohen (Victor Cohn Prize recipient) congratulated by CASW president Cristine Russell.



(above) Karl Leif Bates, local host committee supreme leader.

(left and below) ScienceWriters2012 provided opportunities to engage with colleagues, hunker down with new ideas, and enjoy Southern cuisine.

(above) Lunch with a scientist. The topic is cholera. The researcher is Ece Karatan of Appalachian State University.

(right) Perrin Ireland is an illustrator/science storyteller who draws her way around laboratory research, presenting it in uniquely consumable ways. She attended the Raleigh meeting as a CASW Travel Fellow and captured, in real time, several New Horizons presentations.

AWARDS AND CANDIDS BY AMY WEST, BATES, KARATAN, IRELAND, AND HALLOWEEN BY LYNNE FRIEDMANN

A SciWri Halloween

(above right) This trio of science cliches—"pair-o'-dime shift" Jeanne Erdmann, "breakthrough" Tina Hesman Saey, and "revolutionary" Laura Beil were a big hit at the party.

(far left) Newsie Laura Petersen and commercial astronaut Alan Boyle.

(middle) You know you're at a Research Triangle party when you dance with lemurs. And so effective is this zombie transformation that *SW* is unable to identity this reveler.

PIN COURTESY OF SCONC; MAP BY CAROL KERR GRAPHIC DESIGN USING IMAGES FROM GRAPHI-OGRE © 1997

SCONC Thank You

Science Writers of North Carolina thanks everyone who attended ScienceWriters2012, hoping all left inspired by North Carolina science and its thriving community of science communicators. Special recognition goes to the local host commitee who brought tremendous creativity and energy to the planning, marketing, fundraising, gala preparation, tour arranging, SWAG bagging, transportation, and execution of the event. Karl Leif Bates, Thania Benios, Lisa Bistreich-Wolfe, Marla Broadfoot, Natalie Brown, Russ Campbell, Kate Carroll, Helen Chappell, Cathy Clabby, Darren Danko, Carla Davis, Robin Deacle, Nate DeGraff, Skip Elsheimer, Amanda Frystock, Bob Geolas, Patrick Gibbons, Linda Hall, James Hathaway, Lori Hedrick, Ernie Hood, Whitney Howell, Zoe Hoyle, Scott Huler, Cynthia Istook, Ellen James, David Jarmul, Ed Kang, John Knox, David Kroll, Patric Lane, Sakiya Lockett, Robin Mackar, Mike McFarland, Brent McCraven, Debra McLendon, Marty Martin, Brian Mallow, Holly Meninger, Katie Mosher, Jaine Place, Liz Rooks, Linda Rozet, Jim Shamp, Chris Smith, Robin Smith, Steve Townsend, Karyn Traphagen, Candice Wallace, Becky Westbrooks, Jenny Weston, Dr. Ira Wiggins, Michael Windelspecht, Ashley Yeager, Bora Zivkovic, and Anton Zuiker.

Mark Your Calendar

Our friends and colleagues at the University of Florida are already hard at work on ScienceWriters2013, November 1-5, in Gainesville. This meeting has it all: Professional development workshops crafted by NASW members, CASW's New Horizons in Science briefings on the latest research, extensive networking opportunities, and field trips to explore the region's unique setting. Make this the year you volunteer as a session organizer. Visit **sciencewriters2013.org** for information on submitting a session proposal (due March 1), updates throughout the year, as well as registration and program information (available in August).

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**student member*

BOOT CAMP

continued fron page 7

"The workshop gave me rare and valuable time hanging out with astronomers informally, in small groups, and in a non-interview setting. I wish that could happen more often. It also gave me a good sense of some of the broad trends and big questions in astrocomputing."

The faculty also found the boot camp eye-opening. One remarked: "To a scientist, the boot camp felt very different from a scientific meeting. First, the journalists actually ask questions. Second, some of the questions are scary to a scientist, such as 'Why are you doing this experiment?' Third, even though that's the case, it is very important for scientists to hear their questions, especially since our work is publicly funded. Something like this boot camp should be held at the end of every scientific meeting!"

UC-HiPACC is evaluating the pros and cons of future boot camps on computational astronomy, including whether events should be tailored to other audiences such as education directors of science museums and planetariums, K-12 master teachers, or lower-division astronomy professors.

Meantime, journalists had no doubt there should be future boot camps in computational astronomy. As one remarked: "I think it is extremely useful to learn about the process, and how these scientists come about their findings." Another declared: "Most definitely. This needs to go on. It is the best way to help journalists and scientists learn about so very different worlds and communicate science effectively." ■

DATABASE

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or email a program representative to discuss your project before you write the proposal. These conversations can provide valuable insight into how your project stacks up in the eyes of the funder, plus provide additional information, including updates to what's on the website, Silver says.

The database also includes the names of past awardees. If someone you know has won a grant that you are interested in, they can be another source of inside information, or, if you see the names of writers who are completely out of your league, that may be a hint that the funding opportunity may be as well.

Some funders are quirky about deadlines. They only post the deadline on their website a few weeks ahead of time. Personally, I need more time than that. And if I'm planning a book project, I'm

thinking in terms of years, not weeks. The deadline in the database may be last year's, but it is a good cue to when the next deadline will be.

The database has over 130 entries, and they take a fairly liberal definition of science writing. The database includes funding for radio, documentary film, and website creation. There is information about state arts council grants which often fund non-fiction projects only once in a several-year grant cycle and generally fund some seriously arty stuff. But every state arts council literature program manager that I called practically swooned over the idea of funding a project like *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, so they may be worth a try.

There are all sorts of fellowships included in the database. Some, like the Alicia Patterson Fellowship, give you money to work on a single project for six months or a year. Most, however, involve funders who want to teach you something and are offering training of some sort—a class, workshop, tour, seminar—that lasts anywhere from a weekend to several months.

The database also includes some grants and fellowships that are no longer offered. To save you time, for some particularly good opportunities, I've included information about what the opportunity used to offer, plus a few words about its status—whether the program has ended, is on hiatus, or its future is completely uncertain. The program websites sometimes don't have this information.

One of several helpful features Russell Clemings was able to program into the database is a sort feature that lets you click on "Deadline" any time you are on a page with entry summaries, and those summaries will be sorted by deadline. This lets you see what deadlines are coming up and which you just missed.

You can also sort those summary lists by stipend amount or alphabetically by name.

Another valuable feature is the ability to search by grant or fellowship name, or by a keyword found in summaries and descriptions. For example, if you want to go to Antarctica and are wondering how to get there, type "Antarctica" in the search box on the right-hand side of the database's home page. Hit the "Apply" button, and the three Antarctic programs in the database will be listed.

When you access the full entry for a grant or fellowship, you will find a "comment" link at the very bottom of the page. That wasn't left there by accident. My hope is that as members use the database, they will add information to it. The best way to keep the database up to date is for members to add and correct information as they research their own projects. You are also welcome to leave tips and opinions. Funders have access to the database to update their entries, so keep that in mind. Otherwise, the database is only available to members, which I hope will protect the comments from random trolls.

Each of those 130-odd funding entries should be a source of hope for that important but underfunded project—even if you don't succeed in getting the funding or training the first time through.

Silver says, "When I talk to funders, they all say, 'Don't give up.' So many people apply; you never know how close you've gotten." ■

■ ■ ■

For more about Diane Silver's grant writing classes, visit ***dianesilver.net***

PURSUITS

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people form opinions based on what they think will happen in the future. However, people will build their prediction of the future based on past experience. As a consequence, informed experts end up driving the direction on particular issues (at least on the economic issues discussed in this paper) since their analysis will reach the "informed" individuals, thus swaying them to one side or another. Moreover, the author discusses how policy changes come in conservative and liberal cycles (tied to political leadership majorities), which result in corrective elections as policies sway beyond the comfort level of the informed voters.

So, did it really matter that science was not a priority in the recent elections? This is probably not the right formulation for this question. Rather, we should ask what consequence science and technology's absence in the election dialogue will have over the long haul. By not being placed on the agenda by the major parties, science and technology are inherently relegated to second-string issues for the next legislative cycle. A few science and technology issues may be addressed as the result of significant interest group action, but the rhetoric of the 2012 campaign (or lack thereof as the case may be) signals that there is a lack of collective desire among politicians to address science and technology issues at a broad level. Is there something that can be done about this? We believe that, yes, science communicators of all types contribute to supporting science as a cultural value, and that the farther this value spreads, the more science issues will come to the forefront of political discourse. ■

SURVEY

continued from page 10

The most notable differences relate to the respondents' own social media activities. Sixty-six percent of PIOs with more than 10 years of experience (n=58) reported social media duties among their own work responsibilities, compared to 82 percent of PIOs with fewer than 10 years of experience (n=74). Similarly, 72 percent of the former group spend less than 10 percent of their time on social media, and none spend more than 50 percent of their time. Among the group with fewer than 10 years of experience, just 57 percent report spending less than 10 percent of their time on social media, and four percent devote at least half their time to these efforts.

At least some of these distinctions may be correlated with age. Ninety percent of the more experienced PIO group reported being more than 40 years old, and comparisons of PIOs 40 and younger versus those 41 and up revealed similar patterns as those described above: 64 percent of the older group (n=75) have social media duties at work compared to 89 percent of the younger group (n=54). In the older group, 72 percent spend less than 10 percent of their time on social media and none spend more than half their time. In the younger group, 49 percent spend less than 10 percent of their time on social media and six percent devote at least half their time.

Other reported duties are more evenly distributed between the age and experience groups, although older and more experienced PIOs are slightly more likely to be responsible for managing staff and younger PIOs are slightly more likely to maintain their organization's website. Stated goals and target audiences are also generally similar except that more older and more experienced PIOs listed alumni and donors as key social media audiences. Curiously, PIOs with fewer than 10 years of experience were somewhat less likely to identify news media as a key audience (82 vs. 91 percent), but both targeting media (92 vs. 85 percent) and pitching stories (56 vs. 37 percent) were important for more PIOs 40 and under when compared to the older group.

Nearly half of the respondents are at educational institutions, with the remainder split among medical centers or hospitals, government agencies, non-profits, companies, and other. Because of this, some of the trends noted here may be more applicable to colleges and universities than to other types of organizations, although no clear differences in social media use or goals emerged from a preliminary comparison of responses from those at schools versus other organizations.

We are still delving into other ways to look at the data. If you have suggestions or particular subanalyses you'd like to see, please let us know. The survey results are easy to export in a variety of formats to look at different subsets of respondents. ■

■ ■ ■

A complete version of the survey questions can be seen at ***bit.ly/Te5ynu***

IN MEMORIAM

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group Friends of the Cacapon River to protect the waterway, which is threatened by mining and development. At the time of her death, she was studying the environmental impact of proposed oil-shale mining operations near the river and helping to complete a University of West Virginia survey of local residents and their views on conservation. She was also writing *A Book of All Seasons: The Cacapon River Book* about plants and wildlife. ■ *(source:* Washington Post*)*

KAVLI AWARD

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had never been seen before. "This piece was beautifully written, broke down a complex subject, and included excellent reporting," said Lisa Friedman, deputy editor of ClimateWire. "I learned something from it, and I think kids will too."

The awards, since their inception in 1945, have been administered by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The Kavli Foundation provided an endowment in 2009 that ensures the future of the awards program. A full list of winners of the 2012 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards can be found at **bit.ly/XaAJo7**. ■ *(source: AAAS news release)*

McGURGAN

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audit firm that specializes in nonprofits. Bogren and Jensen's diligence and attention to detail is unflagging, and their willingness to dig into work that is crucial, though not often recognized, is deeply appreciated.

Established in 2001, the Diane McGurgan Service Award was conceived and initially funded by NASW member the late Louis Lerner and is now part of the annual budget. Awardees this year received a custom certificate and $250 each. View previous winners at **nasw.org/mcgurgan-award**. ■

RALEIGH

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