



ScienceWriters™

National Association
of Science Writers, Inc.

Fall
2018

NIEMAN FOUNDATION
SCIENCE JOURNALISM
FELLOWSHIP
ESTABLISHED

SCIENCE IN SOCIETY
JOURNALISM
AWARD WINNERS

INAUGURAL EXCELLENCE
IN INSTITUTIONAL
WRITING
AWARD

LAURA BEIL WINS
VICTOR COHN
PRIZE

REINVENTED
SCIENCE NEWS
PROSPERS

2018-20 BOARD ELECTION
RESULTS

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FROM THE EDITOR

Suddenly, it's fall. In preparation for cooler days and cozy indoor hours, I've compiled a fall reading and podcast listening list.

Doing so took no time at all given the wealth of outstanding science writing highlighted in this issue of the magazine.

First up is the Science in Society Awards, which for 46 years has been the benchmark for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society.

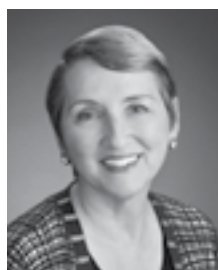
Be sure to check out the inaugural Excellence in Institutional Writing Award created to honor quality, clarity, and effectiveness in institutional science writing.

When judges describe the quality of Victor Cohn Prize winner Laura Beil's work as "grab you by the throat" you know you're in for informative and instructive reading.

The future of the craft is in good hands with this year's Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award winner Joshua Sokol.

Find out which NASW members are featured in The Best American Science and Nature Writing. And, rest assured, book titles from the Advance Copy column will be on my holiday gift wish list.

As this issue goes to press, I'm on my way to SW2018. Eager to meet the international travel fellows attending and to become acquainted with their important work. ■



Lynne Friedmann

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2018-20 Board Election Results

Congratulations to the winners of this year's board election.

As required by the NASW constitution and bylaws, a special meeting was held for the purpose of electing new officers and board members for the term ending in fall 2020. The meeting took place on Aug. 29, in the Holeman Lounge of the National Press Club, Washington, D.C.; about 40 NASW members attended.

Following a social hour, NASW President Laura Helmuth called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. and declared the polls open. Fourteen members voted via paper ballot at the meeting; 539 members had registered their choices and designated a proxy online in advance. In addition to the voting, the meeting included some Q&A discussion about NASW activities. At 7:35 p.m., Helmuth adjourned the meeting. Ballots were certified and the election results tallied in the following days.

We are grateful to all the candidates who ran for election.

Deepest thanks to those cycling off the board at the end of their term of office or are "retiring" after lengthy service to NASW. Collectively, they have given 30+ years of leadership to the organization (and many continue to serve as volunteers in other capacities). Following each name is the year in which they were first elected to the board:

Laura Helmuth, president, *Washington Post* (2012)
Brooke Borel, freelance (2016)
John Travis, *Science* (2016)
Emily Willingham, freelance (2014)
Phillip Yam, Simons Foundation (2016) ■

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Freelance and *The Open Notebook*

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Freelance

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North Carolina State University

Cassandra Willyard
Freelance

Sarah Zielinski
Science News for Students

**Re-elected to the board*

NASW and CASW
are proud to recognize
these 2018 winners.
Awards presented
Oct. 13 during
ScienceWriters2018,
in Washington, D.C.



Science in Society
Book
Maryn McKenna



Science in Society
Science Reporting–Short
Emily Anthes



Science in Society
Science Reporting–Medium
Eric Boodman



Science in Society
Science Reporting–Long
Christopher Solomon

Honoring Science Writing Excellence

Science in Society Journalism Awards

Here are the winners of this year's Science in Society Journalism Awards, sponsored by NASW. Each category carries a cash prize of \$2,500:

■ **Book:** Maryn McKenna for *Big Chicken: The Incredible Story of How Antibiotics Created Modern Agriculture and Changed the Way the World Eats* (National Geographic)

■ **Science Reporting–Short:** Emily Anthes for “The Mystery of the Wasting House-Cats” (*The New York Times Magazine*)

■ **Science Reporting–Medium:** Eric Boodman for “Accidental Therapists: For Insect Detectives, the Trickiest Cases Involve the Bugs That Aren’t Really There” (*STAT*)

■ **Science Reporting–Long:** Christopher Solomon for “The Detective of Northern Oddities” (*Outside*)

■ **Science Reporting–Series:** United States of Climate Change Reporting team for “United States of Climate Change” (The Weather Channel Digital)

■ **Science Reporting for a Local or Regional Market:** Patricia Callahan for “Doomed by Delay” (*Chicago Tribune*)

No award was made in the Commentary and Opinion category this year.



Big Chicken dives deep into the world of modern agriculture by way of chicken: from the farm where it’s raised, directly to your dinner table. Consumed more than

any other meat in the United States, chicken is emblematic of today’s mass food-processing practices and their profound influence on our lives and health. Tracing its meteoric rise from scarce treat to ubiquitous global commodity, McKenna reveals the astounding role of antibiotics in industrial farming, documenting how and why “wonder drugs” revolutionized the way the world eats—and not necessarily for the better. The judges write: *Big Chicken* is a meticulously researched and beautifully written volume. McKenna provides context for the current antibiotic resistance disaster and retraces its roots with a fascinating historical narrative. Through her colorful and responsible reporting, we meet farmers coping with relentless economic pressures to use antibiotics, while others have found sustainable ways to raise chickens that consumers—and some corporations—are now supporting. It’s a compelling tale by one of our finest public health journalists.” (bit.ly/2NlrbjM)

“The Mystery of the Wasting House-Cats” links an epidemic of hyperthyroidism in cats to flame retardants widely present in most homes and explores the question of what these chemicals might be doing to our own bodies. The judges write: “Here’s a cat story on the internet worth reading. This is a delightful look into the lives of hyperthyroid cats and the deeply curious veterinarians caring for them. Anthes writes so well and so succinctly, showing how this increasingly common condition may arise from abundant flame retardants in our homes. It’s a novel way to explore the potential human health impacts of PBDEs:

an epidemiological investigation across two species, described clearly and with irresistible detail.” (nyti.ms/2pQIUYm)

“Accidental Therapists: For Insect Detectives, the Trickiest Cases Involve the Bugs That Aren’t Really There” explores a mysterious phenomenon lurking at the intersection of entomology and psychology. The judges write: “Cases of delusional parasitosis are curiously on the rise. Boodman spins a surprising tale with sensitivity and flair about people suffering from this special kind of torment. His vivid prose and sympathetic treatment of the subject, told through the eyes of an entomologist whom the afflicted call upon for help, make for a gripping read. He has crafted a masterful profile of a Ph.D. scientist committed to gaining their trust and guiding them toward understanding their delusion in ways that medical doctors cannot.” (bit.ly/2ndbRNZ)

“The Detective of Northern Oddities” presents readers with an unforgettable portrait of an Alaskan veterinary pathologist at work. The judges commend it as “a phenomenal piece.” They write: “Solomon finds fresh angles to talk about how climate change in the high Arctic might drive the spread of new contagions through animals in Alaska and beyond. He vividly evokes the sights, sounds, and smells of his subjects, both in the field and during necropsies in the lab. The story delves into some intense science without tripping up the reader. It’s a flawless narrative, rich with wonderfully atmospheric writing and a memorable protagonist.” (bit.ly/2hWCK6j)



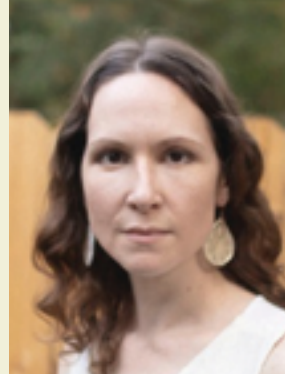
Science in Society
Science Reporting—Series

United States of Climate Change
Reporting Team



Science in Society Science
Reporting for a Local or
Regional Market

Patricia Callahan



Excellence in
Institutional Writing

Elaine Vitone



Victor Cohn Prize

Laura Beil

“United States of Climate Change” zeroes in on the tolls of climate change, state by state. “This downright addictive series enables readers to click on any state to see the impact of climate change on their lives,” the judges write. “It does so not through cold scientific facts, but with skillful storytelling that makes this global crisis truly personal. The climate is a character in each piece in this ambitious and innovative project that tackles the greatest challenge of our time. The stories provide a crystal ball to show a wide-ranging audience what the future may hold. If that doesn’t incite us to action, nothing will.” (bit.ly/2FGFyhl)

“Doomed by Delay” offers a devastating account of one little boy’s life with a progressive disease that could well have been averted. The judges write: “This is old-school investigative journalism that holds government to account for policies that are literally killing people. Callahan has produced a compulsively readable piece about an arcane disease that shows the emotional toll of ongoing bureaucratic ineptitude. We won’t soon forget the time we spent with this mother and her son, and her fight to prevent the same tragedy from striking more families. Impressive on so many levels, this moving project showcases the power of in-depth reporting at metropolitan newspapers.” (trib.in/2xcI9xb)



In addition, NASW recognized these SIS finalist entries in the competition:

Finalists in the Book category

- *Immersion: The Science and Mystery of Freshwater Mussels* by Abbie Gascho Landis (Island Press)
- *Into the Gray Zone: A Scientist Explores the Border Between Life and Death* by Adrian Owen (Scribner)

SCIENCE IN SOCIETY continued on page 4

Excellence in Institutional Writing Award

Elaine Vitone is the recipient of the inaugural Excellence in Institutional Writing Award (EIWA), established by NASW this year to recognize high-caliber, publicly accessible science writing produced on behalf of an institution or other non-media organization. She receives a cash prize of \$2,000.

The award-winning entry was “Cut Off,” published in *Pitt Medicine* (summer 2017), in which Vitone leads readers through an investigation into the root of seemingly untreatable severe depression in adolescents. (bit.ly/2MsOSYM)

The judges write: “Her compelling narrative follows both an early patient, depicted authentically with details from reports, and an M.D. leading much of the research. The writing is colorful, compassionate, and well-grounded in the science.”

Vitone is a senior editor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and writer/producer of *PittCast*, which has been featured on the National Science Foundation’s Science360 Radio and several NPR member stations.



Two additional EIWA entries were selected for honorable mention:

- Tim Gower for “Whole Again,” *Proto* magazine, Massachusetts General Hospital (bit.ly/2IJu7vc)
- Bill Retherford for “Brave New Worlds,” *Columbia Magazine*, Columbia University (bit.ly/2QxFuq7)

Judges for the EIWA competition were Eric Bender (freelance), Kathryn Jepson

(*Symmetry*, SLAC Nat’l Accelerator Lab), and Jill Schlabig Williams (Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center). ■

Victor Cohn Prize for Medical Science Reporting

Freelance medical writer Laura Beil is the recipient of the 2018 Victor Cohn Prize for Excellent in Medical Reporting, given for a body of work published or broadcast within the past five years. Beil received a \$3,000 award from the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW), which awards the prize annually.

Beil, who lives in Cedar Hill, Tex., is only the second freelance writer to be awarded the Cohn Prize since its inception in 2000.

Judges cited Beil for the often breathtaking, “grab-you-by-the-throat” quality of her writing, the “extraordinary diversity of both the subject matter she strives to illuminate and the audiences she reaches,” and the “remarkable utility of her reporting.”

Letters from colleagues in support of her nomination noted Beil’s ability to discover and relentlessly pursue important untold stories, and to convince editors of diverse publications to publish them. “Her forte is finding issues that everyday people care about, angles that others may miss, and questioning authority and dogma,” wrote AP medical writer and Cohn Prize laureate Marilyn Marchione. Marchione also pointed out Beil’s emphasis on personal stories. “While some writers use patients as anecdotes, almost like window dressing or a mandatory ingredient,” she wrote, “Laura makes them the stars of her stories. She explains medicine through the people.” *VIC COHN PRIZE continued on page 4*

SCIENCE IN SOCIETY

continued from page 3

Finalists in the Science Reporting–Short category

- “Cruel Fusion” by Heidi Ledford (*Nature*)
- “Track Authorities Move to Again Bar Women with Naturally High Testosterone from Competing” by Catherine Caruso (*STAT*)

Finalists in the Science Reporting–Medium category

- “What the Gardasil Testing May Have Missed” by Frederik Joelving (*Slate*)
- “Why Autism Seems to Cluster in Some Immigrant Groups” by Emily Sohn (*Spectrum*)

Finalists in the Science Reporting–Long category

- “Uncertain Inheritance: Epigenetics and the Poisoning of Michigan” by Carrie Arnold (*Undark*)
- “Bullet Proof” by Lynn Peeples (*Undark*)

Finalists in the Science Reporting–Series category

- “The Hidden Toxic Threat in America’s Backyards” by Yvette Cabrera (*ThinkProgress*)
- “Conservation Effectiveness: What’s the Science Behind Policies and Programs That Affect People and the Environment?” by Shreya Dasgupta and Mike Gaworecki (*Mongabay*)

Finalists in the Science Reporting for a Local or Regional Market category

- “Peter Hotez vs. Measles and the Anti-Vaccination Movement” by Laura Beil (*Texas Monthly*)
- “Is Pain All in Your Head?” by Markian Hawryluk (*Bend Bulletin*)

■ ■ ■

The final judging committee consisted of Rob Irion (freelance), Liza Gross (freelance), and Jennifer Ouellette (freelance). The Science in Society awards committee was co-chaired by Alla

Katsnelson (freelance) and Jyoti Madhusoodanan (freelance).

NASW also thanks those who served on the preliminary screening committees: Eric Bender (freelance), Emily Monosson (Ronin Institute), David Wolman (freelance), Steve Maran (AAS), Antonia Malchik (freelance), Sarah Everts (Carleton University), Judy Foreman (freelance), Corie Lok (Xconomy), Robin Meadows (freelance), Chris Gorski (Inside Science), Rebecca Guenard (freelance), John Roche (Science View Productions), Cori Vanchieri (Science News), Esther Landhuis (freelance), Sarah Witman (freelance), Peter Friederici (Northern Arizona University), Pamela Worth (Union of Concerned Scientists), Amy Nordrum (IEEE), David Biello (TED), Bill Schulz (freelance), Heather Goldstone (WCAI), Whitney McKnight (freelance), Silke Schmidt (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Jenny Morber (freelance), Bill Funk (freelance), and Shannon Shea (U.S. Dept. of Energy).

NASW established the Science in Society Awards to provide recognition—without subsidy from any professional or commercial interest—for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society. The awards are intended to encourage critical, probing work that would not receive an award from a special interest group. Beginning with the first award in 1972, NASW has highlighted innovative reporting that goes well beyond the research findings and considers the associated ethical problems and social effects. ■

VIC COHN PRIZE

continued from page 3

experiencing it. Her style of personal storytelling is so powerful that it propels people to read to the end, science and all.”

Tom Siegfried who worked with Beil when he was editor in chief of *Science News*, wrote that she “finds stories that no one else finds, and routinely spots trends and upcoming issues before other writers.” He added that her work has provided great benefit to her readers. In one case, Siegfried recalled, a mother of a dying child read Beil’s story about a deadly form of *E. coli* and “recognized that doctors had missed the diagnosis, leading to proper treatment and the child’s survival.”

In selecting Beil, the judges drew particular attention to a story she wrote for *Men’s Health* on mental health issues in the military. To tell the powerful and tragic story of Eddie Routh, a troubled veteran who killed Navy SEAL Chris Kyle and another man after failing to get vital help from an overwhelmed Veterans Administration, she wrote repeatedly to Routh’s family and overcame a judge’s gag order on the family. Published in late 2013 while the case was fresh, “Who Killed Chris Kyle?” was later expanded into an e-book.

Other stories by Beil in *Science News*, *Reader’s Digest*, and *Texas Monthly* tackled questions about widely used surgery and drugs, vaccination hesitancy, and obesity among high school football players. The judges noted that Beil has also published medical reporting in the *New York Times* and *Cosmopolitan*. About the latter, Beil said, “few things make me happier than knowing that someone has been introduced to the complexities of medical science while getting their hair done.”

Laura Beil began her career at *The Dallas Morning News*, where she was the medical reporter from 1992 to 2006. Since leaving the world of daily journalism, she has written mostly for magazines.

VIC COHN PRIZE continued on page 25

SAVE THE DATE

Master Class:
Science Writing by Storytelling

Got a science story that you don't quite know how to tell or sell?

Join us in Washington D.C. (following the AAAS meeting) for a two-day workshop led by seasoned science editors and talented writing instructors.

Participants will leave better equipped to spot, report, structure, and polish narrative stories.

Organizers: Elizabeth Pennisi and David Malakoff
Workshop supported by a Peggy Girshman Idea Grant

To learn more, contact workshop email naswnarrativeworkshop@gmail.com

FEBRUARY 18 -19, 2019

Reinventing a 97-Year-Old Science News Organization

BY NANCY SHUTE

Four years ago, *Science News* was on the ropes. It was founded by newspaper magnate E.W. Scripps in 1921 to provide accurate news of science, technology, and medicine to the general public. But over the past decade, *Science News* had lost millions of dollars. Print circulation was shrinking, ad sales were dismal, and the organization's digital operations were starved for resources despite growing audiences.

This may sound like yet another chapter in the long, sad tale of the decline of print journalism. But our story has a surprise twist.

When social entrepreneur Maya Ajmera joined *Science News* as publisher in August 2014, she was told she had to sell the magazine, shut it down, or figure out a way to make it sustainable. She decided the solution would be to expand the publication's audiences. "Like any entrepreneur, I started with, 'Who are the audiences you want to attract?'" Ajmera says. "'Who should be reading this?'"

The answer: students and teachers. *Science News* had a proven track record in reaching students through its *Science News for Students* website, and teachers said they needed timely, well-researched materials to supplement outdated (or nonexistent) textbooks. In 2015, Ajmera launched a pilot program that mailed print copies of *Science News* to 270 high schools along with a topic-specific curriculum guide. In three years, the program has grown to reach almost 4,500 schools, including many in rural or underserved areas. Teachers have to apply to participate, increasing the likelihood that the materials will be used in the classroom.

The business model is simple: individuals, foundations, and corporations pay \$500 per school to sponsor *Science News in High Schools* at no cost to the schools. The success of the program has increased circulation by 50 percent and has drawn advertising from universities seeking to connect to students intrigued by STEM fields. And it's also supporting our efforts to engage existing and new subscribers.

Thanks to *Science News in High Schools*, in 2017 news operations was profitable for the first time in years. Suddenly we have a future. What do we do with it?

To answer that question, the organization embarked on a strategic planning process supported by Knight Foundation. But change doesn't come easy, especially to an organization that had been doing one thing very well for almost a century. Some people in the newsroom feared that *Science News* would lose its fierce focus on accurate, nuanced coverage that made it revered in the science journalism community. To ensure everyone's voice was heard we brought together the entire 28-member Science News Media Group staff to identify what we're good at, where we fall short, and where we want to go.

We quickly reached consensus on our shortcomings:

- Technical problems with our websites severely limit our ability to tell stories and turn new readers into subscribers.
- We're too slow on breaking news and lack a clear digital workflow.
- Visuals and multimedia have been a low priority; we need resources and training.
- We need to be willing to experiment, especially with new forms of storytelling and new products.

But we also realized that we're good at things that matter deeply:

- Dedication to high-quality journalism with a relentless focus on accuracy.
- Deep expertise and talent, including multiple staffers with Ph.D.s in their beats.
- The ability to put new discoveries into context, explain the complexities clearly, debunk bad science and avoid hype.

The planning process helped us accelerate our top digital priority: a new CMS and website rebuilds. In July, barely two months after wrapping up the planning process, we signed a contract with a vendor for the rebuild and are moving forward. We've crafted a business strategy with diversified revenue streams, including memberships, individual and institutional philanthropy, advertising, licensing, and events. And we've come up with big, audacious ideas for new editorial projects and a digital interface that we think will help make accurate science news accessible to people of all ages and abilities in the known universe.

In March, we launched Science News University, a staff-run training program with speakers from within the organization and beyond, including *ProPublica*, the Investigative Reporting Project, *The Open Notebook*, and SPJ/Google News Lab. Our digital director and chief of marketing just finished the Poynter "Table Stakes" online course on digital sustainability. Other staffers are honing their data visualization skills. We've also launched a newsletter showcasing reporters' and editors' voices.



Post-Its from R&D sessions that fueled *Science News*' strategic planning process.

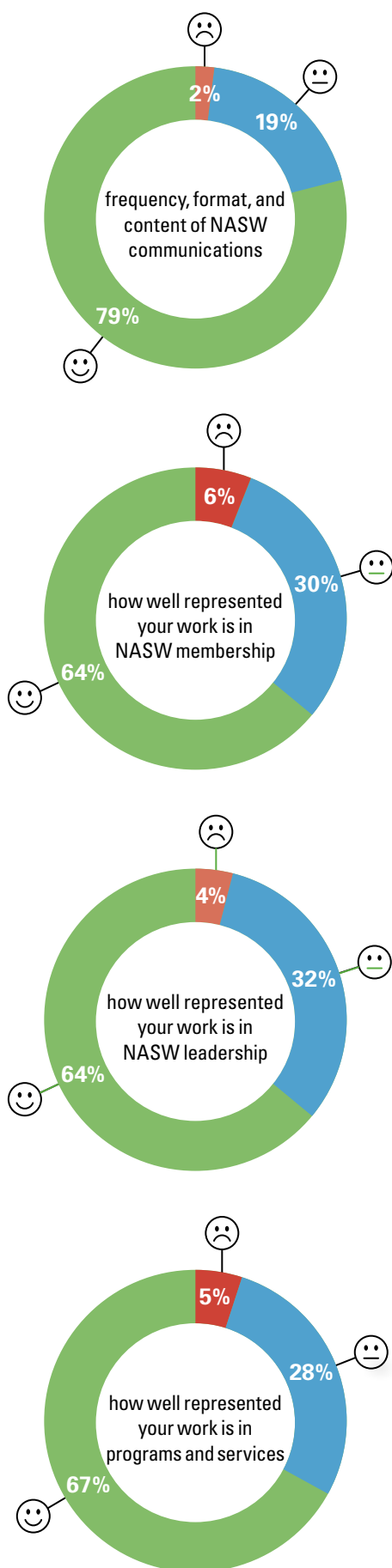
We're talking with potential funders, beta testing a project to increase diversity in our coverage, and exploring partnerships to address science news literacy in students and adults. And we're refocusing our social media efforts to meet our audiences where they live.

The strategic planning process has taken us much further than we thought it could. Rather than being the sterile corporate exercise as many in the newsroom expected, it confirmed our value and showed us that we could act to shape the future of this beloved news organization in ways large and small. ■

"Reinventing a 97-Year-Old Science News Organization," *KnightFoundation.org*, July 11, 2018. Republished with permission.

NANCY SHUTE IS EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *SCIENCE NEWS*, BASED IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

How satisfied are you with...



During the 2018 membership renewal period 1,926 members filled out an accompanying membership survey, prepared by the NASW membership committee: co-chairs Matt Shipman and Emily Willingham, and committee members Allie Akmal, Chris Barncard, Marla Broadfoot, Raychelle Burks, Clinton Colmenares, Rebecca Guenard, Jane Hu, Bridget Kuehn, Kasha Patel, and Eleanor Spicer Rice. *ScienceWriters* here reports on the questions, a summary of responses, and committee observations:

NASW Membership Survey 2018

Question 1: Are you primarily...

Freelance	862
Staff.....	784
Staff plus significant freelance. . .	117
Student.....	107
Retired	56

A key takeaway here is that freelance work makes up at least a significant portion of the workload for more than half of the respondents. As such, NASW clearly needs to ensure it keeps the needs of the freelance community in mind, without losing sight of the needs of other members.

Question 2: What can NASW do that would improve your individual membership experience?

This was a fill-in-the-blank question, so it's not possible to break down the responses into neat categories. However, several trends could be identified.

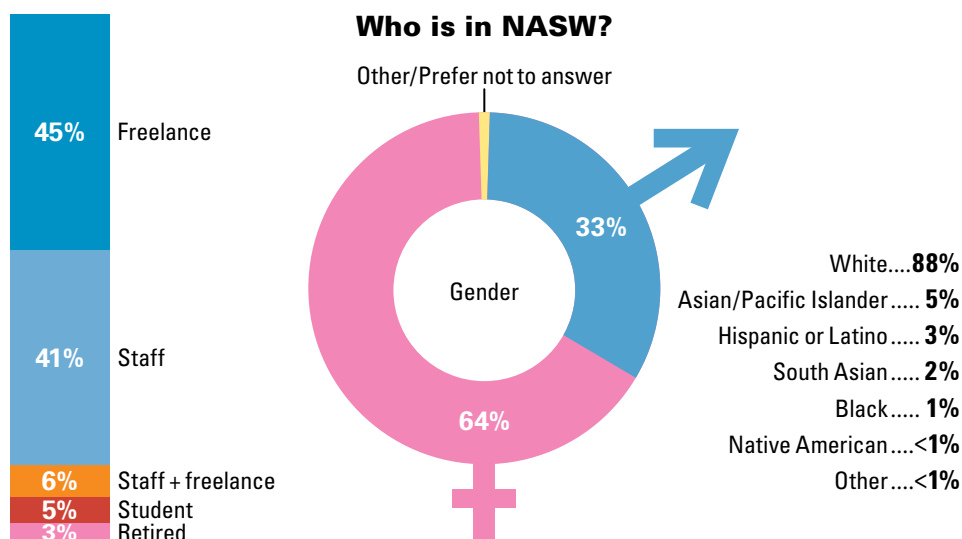
Only 24 percent of overall survey respondents (471 members) submitted answers with 115 of them (24 percent) saying they

had no suggestions or that they were happy with the services NASW already provides.

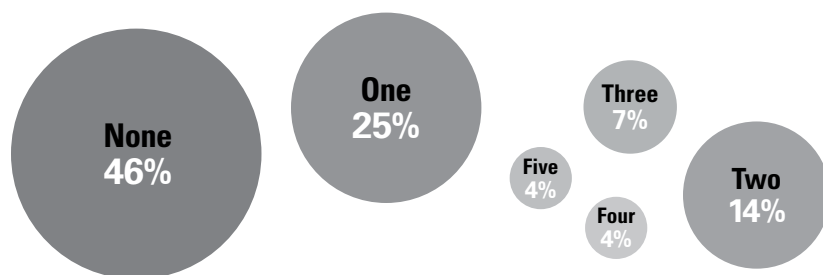
Fifteen percent of respondents focused on the needs of full- or part-time freelance writers. Requests included:

- More ways for freelance writers to connect with each other for networking, advice, and support.
- Summaries of tips from listservs related to reporting tools, such as advice regarding recording devices, time-tracking software, and taxes.
- More information on what constitute fair freelance writing rates.
- More advocacy from NASW on fair pay for freelance writers.

One additional take away from the freelance suggestions was the need for freelance training tools and opportunities to be more targeted. For example, experienced freelancers expressed some frustration over offerings that were geared toward early-career freelancers, while other members requested more offerings that were geared toward those who are just beginning in



How many ScienceWriters and/or WCSJ meetings have you attended in the last 5 years?



freelance work.

Seven percent of respondents requested more offerings for public information officers (PIOs), both at conferences and in the form of online resources. Just under three percent called for efforts to, in the words of one respondent, "Encourage respectful working relationship between editors, journalists, and PIOs. Acknowledge that we all aspire to accurately explain scientific advances to the public. Work to heal rifts and lack of respect (perceived or otherwise) between journalists and PIOs."

A handful of respondents asked that NASW make its website easier to navigate and do a better job of notifying members when *ScienceWriters* magazine is posted online.

Some respondents also expressed an interest in more regional and job-specific conferences and workshops, such as events aimed specifically at freelancers or PIOs.

A few respondents called for NASW to either provide insurance or to provide information for members on health, life, and dental insurance options available for both retirees and freelance writers.

Several respondents asked that NASW hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the AAAS meeting, to make it more cost effective for members to attend both.

Question 3: How many ScienceWriters and/or WCSJ meetings have you attended in the last 5 years?

1	479
2	270
3	145
4	81
5	71
None.....	880

A key takeaway here is that more than 45 percent of respondents have not been to an NASW or WCSJ meeting in the past five years. If you include respondents who have only been to one meeting in the past five

years, the number is more than 70 percent. It would be good to learn more about why these members aren't attending and what NASW can do to facilitate participation.

Question 4: In general, how satisfied are you with the frequency, format, and content of NASW communications?

Forty-five (45) percent of respondents said they were very satisfied, with an additional 33 percent saying they were somewhat satisfied. Nineteen percent of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, with only two percent of respondents saying they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

Question 5: What are your preferred ways of receiving information from NASW?

The most popular response was a monthly email newsletter (40 percent of respondents). The second- and third-most popular responses were a quarterly print magazine (28 percent) and a weekly email newsletter (27 percent). Because respondents could click up to three options from a list of 10 choices, it's difficult to sift meaningful information from the responses, so this is likely a question that we'll need to address again in a more targeted way.

Question 6: In the past year, how much of your science writing/communication work would you characterize as the following?

This question offered more than a dozen categories to which respondents could indicate "None, Less than half, Half, More than half, or All." The categories were:

- Classwork (student)
- Media relations
- Institutional communication for the public
- Institutional communication not for the public
- Journalism—print/online
- Journalism—video/audio production
- Nonfiction book-writing

- Textbook or curriculum writing
- Industry communication
- Event management
- Government relations
- Museum communication/exhibit development
- Public outreach
- Teaching
- Technical communication
- Other

Just over 55 percent of respondents reported doing at least some journalism work during the previous year, and just over 48 percent of respondents reported doing at least some institutional science writing during the previous year. In other words, quite a few people are doing both, and that doesn't even get into the many other types of work represented here, including public outreach, technical communication, book-writing, teaching, and writing for industry, each of which was listed by at least 10 percent of respondents.

Question 7: How satisfied are you with how well represented your work is in NASW?

This question split into three sub-categories from which respondents could indicate "Very satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, or Very dissatisfied."

7a) NASW membership overall

More than 64 percent of respondents were either very or somewhat satisfied, with more than five percent being very or somewhat dissatisfied. Thirty percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The take-away message here is that NASW is doing a good job in this regard, but has room for improvement. However, it would be easier to make progress toward improvement if we had a clearer understanding of which groups feel their work is not well represented in NASW. That may be something we can get more clarity on in the next membership survey.

7b) NASW programs and services

This question focused on satisfaction regarding representation in NASW programs and services. The responses here were similar to those in 7A, with the number of satisfied respondents rising to 67 percent, and the number of dissatisfied respondents dipping to less than five percent.

SURVEY continued on page 8

SURVEY

continued from page 7

7c) NASW leadership

Very satisfied	710
Somewhat satisfied	511
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. .	621
Somewhat dissatisfied.	70
Very dissatisfied.	14

With 63 percent of respondents stating that they are very or somewhat satisfied with NASW leadership, and four percent of respondents expressing dissatisfaction, these results indicate that leadership is doing a fair job, with some room for improvement.

This question also allowed respondents to submit written comments regarding overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with NASW. Only nine percent of survey respondents chose to do so, and while the comments are widely varied certain themes emerged repeatedly.

The largest block of comments came from people who expressed confusion over the question or wanted to express thanks for the work NASW does. However, as was the case with Question 2, quite a few commenters felt that their needs were not being adequately addressed by leadership.

However, the nature of these concerns varies widely. A handful of commenters felt that more needs to be done to serve members who are PIOs or that PIOs are not given adequate respect within the organization. Similarly, a handful of commenters felt that the organization is too focused on the needs of PIOs and staff reporters and pays insufficient attention to the needs of freelance writers. Others expressed concern that NASW focuses too much on the needs of freelancers. Other commenters requested that more attention be paid to creating training and professional development opportunities for editors.

About half a dozen commenters also expressed concern over the fact that PIOs are unable to serve as president or vice president.

Question 8: Ethnicity origin (or race)

The results highlight the fact that NASW has a long way to go before its membership begins to reflect the diversity of the U.S. as a whole (see graph on page 6).

Question 9: Do you identify as?

Almost 64 percent of respondents identify as female. ■



Harry M. Davis (second row, 4th from the left) was a science journalist in the Nieman class of 1941.

Nieman Foundation Announces Science Journalism Fellowship

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University has announced the creation of the Harry M. Davis Nieman Fellowship in Science Journalism. The fellowship is funded by a gift from an anonymous donor made on behalf of Ella (Davis) Mazel in memory of her brother, Harry M. Davis, a science journalist and a Nieman Fellow in the class of 1941.

Science journalists from both the United States and abroad are eligible for this fellowship opportunity at Harvard, which will be offered during the 2019-20 academic year. The Davis Fellow will have access to the many schools, labs, and research centers at the university, and will join a cohort of some two dozen journalists from around the world in the Nieman class of 2020.

The fellow will receive a stipend for the year and have an opportunity to take classes at other local universities, including MIT and Tufts, and to interact with the robust scientific community based in and around Greater Boston.

Journalists who cover any science topic—from climate change and technology to health and medicine, artificial intelligence, and beyond—may apply.

Harry M. Davis was a science editor at *Newsweek* magazine. He earned an engineering degree from Columbia University before serving in the Army Signal Corps during World War II. Before joining *Newsweek*, he was a Sunday feature and science writer for the *New York Times*. He wrote several army publications, among them an official history of radar development, and was the author of *Energy Unlimited: The Electron and Atom in Everyday Life*. Davis was regarded by scientists and science writers as a top authority in his field.

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard educates leaders in journalism and elevates the standards of the profession through special programs that convene scholars and experts in all fields. More than 1,500 journalists from 97 countries have been awarded Nieman Fellowships since 1938.

The application period for the class of 2020 will open in October 2018. Applications from international candidates are due Dec. 1, 2018; the deadline for U.S. applicants is Jan. 31, 2019.

More information at nieman.harvard.edu/fellowships/how-to-apply. ■
(source: news release)

Lending Money to Relatives or Friends

BY JULIAN BLOCK

These being the times they are, I frequently field queries from clients who are asked for loans by relatives or friends. These would-be borrowers plead their inability to come up with the down payments for homes or who want to launch “can’t fail” business ventures. Suppose, as so often happens, the loans go sour and the borrowers’ last messages mention their entry into witness protection programs.

I remind wannabe lenders who intend to stake friends or relatives to familiarize themselves beforehand with long-standing tax rules. The rules make it difficult to take deductions for bad debts. While the IRS allows deductions for worthless loans if there’s no likelihood of recovery in the future, it prohibits write-offs for outright gifts.

Lenders should expect the agency to look closely at their deductions for bad debts when they’re related by blood or marriage, or have other ties, to the borrowers. The burden is on the lenders to prove that what they characterize as “loans” weren’t really gifts.

There are steps lenders can take before making loans that will help in case the IRS questions their write-offs. The key to success: Set up the transactions with the same care as any loan made for business reasons.

Lenders should ask borrowers to sign notes or agreements that, among other things, do the following: specify how much they’re borrowing; explain when and in what amounts they’re supposed to make repayments; and require them to pay realistic interest charges—say, the rates lenders would receive from savings accounts if their funds weren’t loaned. Lenders also should arrange for witnesses to sign the notes if that’s a legal requirement in their state.

Some clients voice their concerns that imposing interest charges and other requirements are a rough way to deal with their friends or relatives. I remind them that it’s the only way if they want to deduct bad debts later. IRS examiners routinely

throw out deductions for handshake deals.

When can lenders deduct unpaid loans? Only in the year in which the debt becomes worthless. The IRS doesn’t require lenders to wait until the loans are past due to determine whether or not they’re worthless; loans become worthless when there’s no longer any chance that they’ll be repaid.

The IRS will want good evidence that the loans are actually worthless and will remain so in the future. While the IRS expects lenders to take reasonable steps to collect loans, it doesn’t require them to hound debtors into courts, provided they can show that judgments, if obtained, would be uncollectible. Still, lenders should at least send letters asking for repayment. Generally, if debtors declare bankruptcy, that’s a good indication that the debts are at least partially worthless.

Assuming IRS requirements can be met, here’s how the rules work for a lender I’ll call Sue.

Sue’s deduction for a worthless loan comes under the restrictive rules for investors who suffer short-term (investment owned for less than one year) capital losses. What does Sue show on her 1040 for the year the loan proves to be uncollectible? The law allows her to use the loss to offset any capital gains from sales of investments and then use as much as \$3,000 of the remaining loss as an offset against ordinary income from, for instance, book royalties, payments for articles, or other kinds of compensation.

This means it might take years for her to deduct the entire amount. What becomes of any unused loss? Sue then can carry forward the remaining loss and claim it in an identical way on her returns for subsequent years until she uses it up. ■

Lenders should expect the agency to look closely at their deductions for bad debts when they’re related by blood or marriage, or have other ties, to the borrowers.

The burden is on the lenders to prove that what they characterize as “loans” weren’t really gifts.

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*). INFORMATION ABOUT HIS BOOKS IS AT JULIANBLOCKTAXEXPERT.COM.

Advance Copy

Backstories on books by NASW members

BY LYNNE LAMBERG



For this column, NASW authors are asked to tell how they came up with their book idea, developed a proposal, found an agent and publisher, funded and conducted research, and put the book together. They are also asked what they wish they had known before they began working on their book, what they might do differently the next time, and for tips for aspiring authors. Submitted copy is edited for space.

***Weather: An Illustrated History: From Cloud Atlases to Climate Change*, by Andrew Revkin (NASW member) with Lisa Mechaley, Sterling Publishing**

The genesis of this book says much about the merits of maintaining relationships with publishers even when things don't work out at first. The format—short, illustrated items connected by broad themes—shows the value of thinking beyond conventional approaches in conceiving books for readers with online attention spans.

Back in 2012, an editor at Sterling Publishing asked if I'd be interested in writing a new title in a series of illustrated histories of science and disciplines: *The Medicine Book*, *The Physics Book*, etc.

Did I want to do *The Earth Book*? I liked the idea but these were big projects each consisting of 250 milestones, each 300 words. That seemed impossible to fit into my work life along with teaching full time and blogging for the *New York Times*. I politely declined.

Three years later, the editor called back proposing a book on weather for a more modest line of illustrated histories, each 100 items.

I signed on with a twist. I shaped it as a history of humanity's evolving relationship with weather and climate: mythology to meteorology; invention of air conditioning to global warming.

I hadn't had an agent since 2006 and chose to stay independent, using a lawyer specializing in publishing to negotiate the contract. With my heavy workload, I recruited an experienced environmental educator to help. My co-author, Lisa Mechaley, happens to be my wife, and we're still happily married.

To share work, we created a set of Google documents (a master working list and subsidiary documents for the drafts of each milestone and links to background). We did much of the art search ourselves.

I relied on my dozens of contacts in relevant sciences both for ideas and fact checking, and invited half a dozen to be guest contributors for milestones outside my area of greatest expertise.

If I had published independently, I probably would have done the whole book that way; curating insights by others and with a great on-line version to reflect that networked approach.

—Andrew Revkin

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■ ■ ■

***Space Exploration: Past, Present, Future*, by Carolyn Collins Petersen, Amberley Books**

This book came from a conversation I had with an acquisitions editor from Amberley Books who tracked me down after seeing my books on Amazon. The company publishes books on aircraft, trains, and ships, and wanted to expand into space vehicles and exploration.

I suggested the book answer the question, "What does it take to create a space-faring species?" To examine not only science and technology advances, but also to focus on the people who did the work to build and run the spacecraft, devise the science, and guide the missions. Their ideas and their paychecks benefit society in many ways, from purchasing power to taxes, education, and so on. In other words, resources spent on space exploration benefit people and institutions here on Earth. I developed an outline, which the publisher accepted.

A large part of the "human story" also comprises the laws; educational structures required to create a technological basis for the space age; and the effects of space exploration on art, music, and entertainment. My book rolls it all into 11 chapters with a peek into the future.

About 90 percent of my research did not end up in the book, but I needed it to write what is there. I read numerous background books, did extensive online research, and talked to key people. The book took about a year to write, which, for the length of the book, 110,000 words, was a good amount of time. I knew some of the material quite well, but other areas, such as the Chinese space program, were a bit of a

black hole to explore.

The result is an executive summary or “quick look” at a complex topic, written for the reader who wants to know more about space age issues. Because space is a dynamic subject, I will periodically send the publisher corrections and updates to include in subsequent printings.

—Carolyn Collins Petersen

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■ ■ ■

***Dispatches from Planet 3: Thirty-Two (Brief) Tales on the Solar System, the Milky Way, and Beyond*, by Marcia Bartusiak, Yale University Press**

For the last several years, I’ve written a column for *Natural History* magazine that combined my love for both the cutting edge of astrophysics and the history of astronomy. I’d take a current discovery and dip into the archives to provide its backstory. The controversial demotion of Pluto, for example, reminded me of when another solar-system member was similarly downgraded in the 19th century.

My armchair investigations whisked me off in spirit to exotic locales: from ancient Mars, when liquid water once flowed freely on its surface, to the tiniest speck of cosmic real estate, where space and time allegedly come unglued and start to wink in and out of existence in a probabilistic froth. *Dispatches from Planet 3* now puts all these stories in one place, each chapter standing alone to allow the reader to wander from our solar system out to the Big Bang.

My biggest thrill while assembling the book was finding the appreciable number of women I had portrayed over the years. It was not a conscious effort. I always let the latest news set my agenda and, lo and behold, there they were: Vera Rubin brings dark matter to the forefront of astronomical concerns; Jocelyn Bell keenly spots a bizarre new star; Henrietta Leavitt ingeniously devises a revolutionary cosmic yardstick; Jane Luu co-discovers the first solar-system object beyond Neptune and Pluto; Beatrice Tinsley proves that galaxies evolve; Cecilia Payne tries to reveal the universe’s major elemental ingredient (until told to ignore it); and Margaret Burbidge

ADVANCE COPY continued on page 25

—Marcia Bartusiak

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■ ■ ■

***Poached: Inside the Dark World of Wildlife Trafficking*, by Rachel Nuwer, Da Capo Press**

Illegal wildlife trade is a primary reason I became a science journalist. While researching poaching in Vietnam for my ecology master’s degree, I realized I would probably be more effective at telling people about it than I would be at producing scientific data.

Immediately after graduating from NYU’s Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program, I knew I wanted to write a book about illegal wildlife trade. The agents and editors I approached, however, said the topic was too dark. Then a former professor’s agent came back from a trip to Kenya determined to find an author to write about what she had witnessed.

After landing a publishing contract, I had just a year and a half to write. I knew early on that I’d have to find a way to avoid the text being overly depressing and bogged down in mind-numbing statistics, and also that I’d need to create some continuity in what otherwise could read as a disjointed laundry list of issues.

I decided to put myself in the book, with each chapter a different adventure around the world. Reporting took me to a dozen countries, and I wound up completely emptying my bank account in the process, but I’m convinced the field work was integral for both storytelling and for getting a fuller picture of the illegal wildlife trade.

If I could do it again, I would be more stringent about limiting the scope of what I set out to do (I wound up having to cut around 40,000 words—whoops!) and also be more realistic about the steep costs of travel and of stopping freelance work for months. That said, I am happy for the experience. It made me a better reporter and writer, and the depth of knowledge I acquired is orders of magnitude greater than it was before I set off on this journey. I would encourage aspiring writers to take the plunge if they find a topic they are truly passionate about and can afford to dedicate months or years of their life to seeing it through.

—Rachel Nuwer

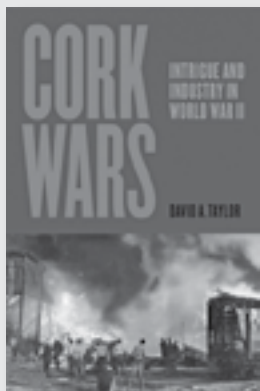
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■ ■ ■

***U.S. Route 1: Rediscovering the New World*, by Mark A. Marchand, Amazon**

While I teach in the journalism program at the University at Albany and freelance science articles, I longed to explore the country the East Coast through the lens of the first real U.S.





highway, Route 1, established in 1926. The 2,440 mile north/south highway is as long as the more famous Route 66, but unlike Route 66, it's still in use. Yet, little has been written about it.

I wondered why the highway, which started with footpaths and stagecoach trails for pioneers struggling to start a new country, was laid out where it was. The answer lies in the geographical feature known as the fall line, the farthest areas inland a boat could reach via waterway. Terminating points for rivers and streams became communities linked by north/south paths that eventually became Route 1.

I started out thinking of a magazine article and ended up with a book. I spent hours experimenting with how I could frame the story so it wasn't just a daily narrative of my road trip.

I traveled the entire length of the East Coast on Route 1, posting accounts on Facebook, and occasionally being interviewed by news outlets serving areas on my route. One of the many fascinating sights along the way was the eastern-most location in the 48 states; Quoddy Head, Maine, where one can be the first in the country to see the sun rise.

I wish I'd spent more time pitching agents. I made some initial forays, but receiving little response, decided to move ahead with the two-year writing process and to self-publish the book.

After returning from my trip, I spoke several times with the official historian of the Federal Highway Administration, in Washington, D.C., who also sent me historical documents. I tracked down a former *National Geographic* photographer who published a 1984 photo essay of his travels along Route 1. Finally, I hired a copy editor to go over the manuscript. I'm still learning about book marketing.

—Mark Marchand

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Cork Wars: Intrigue and Industry in World War II, by David A. Taylor, Johns Hopkins University Press

Cork Wars tells what happened when a 1940 factory fire set off events that caught three families up in World War II in dangerous ways. The fire consumed a half-million dollars of cork at a time when, before plastics, many U.S. businesses and the defense industry relied heavily on cork from oak forests in Spain and Portugal as a crucial sealant. An FBI investigation of Nazi sabotage put the cork industry and its workers in a national security searchlight.

I came across the story while researching something else. I thought it might lead to a story where natural products got caught up in

national security. I looked into the company, Crown Cork and Seal, and interviewed Charles McManus, Jr., who worked there during the war and was the son of the CEO. He was in his mid-90s when we talked, but recalled vividly the Baltimore factory fire. In 2008 I wrote about the episode for Chesapeake Bay magazine. The story was picked up by NPR.

I pursued two more threads of the wartime cork story through interviews and declassified OSS records at the National Archives, where I found cork industry connections. I developed the book proposal. I received many rejections. My agent at the time dropped me.

I approached Johns Hopkins University Press, knowing its commitment to Mid-Atlantic stories, American history, and technology. An editor there was interested, and I found a new agent, whom I'd known since he was a magazine editor. He helped with contract negotiation and strategic planning, getting better conditions than I would have, and helped retain audio rights. Some may ask: Once you get a publisher interested, why do you need an agent to take a commission? That's a juncture when bringing in an agent can be fruitful and easier to do.

Using an article as a springboard for a book proposal served me in selling several previous books. This time, creating a character-based narrative took longer. Besides finding an agent, my main advice to aspiring writers is to test narrative structures early with a few trusted readers.

—David A. Taylor

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Genetics 101: From Chromosomes and the Double Helix to Cloning and DNA Tests, Everything You Need to Know about Genes (Series: Adams 101), by Beth Skwarecki, Adams Media

Two years ago, I wrote a book about disease epidemics through history (*Outbreak!*) and not long ago my editor from that project asked if I could write a book about genetics for the lay reader. That's how *Genetics 101* was born.

Even though I majored in biology in college, and use a working knowledge of genetics and molecular biology in my day-to-day reporting (writing about health at *Lifehacker*), to do this topic justice, I had to get my hands on up-to-date text-books and find out what's going on in the world of personal genomics. I worked through an online course by 23andMe on genetics, which not only helped me brush up, but also provided food for thought on how to organize a

genetics course when one doesn't have to meet any particular school's syllabus requirements.

I've taught biology before, so I have plenty of opinions on what material is most confusing and most useful. I started with the difference between atoms and molecules, talked about DNA's shape and function, and toured cell biology (including transcription and translation) while using as many real-life examples as I could. Mendel didn't get his shout-out until about halfway through the book, by which point readers understand what must have been going on inside those pea plants to give him the results that he saw.

I then moved on to more exciting, modern, and controversial topics: race, ethnicity, ancestry, evolution, cancer genetics, genetically modified crops, and gene editing, to name a few. It's essentially a textbook with all the boring parts removed or glossed over, with a goal of helping readers understand things they read about in the news or a personal genomics test report.

This book was done on a tight deadline, and I'm glad I learned from previous projects how important it is to budget my time. I gave myself mini deadlines for each group of chapters and carved out writing time every evening. I did that calculation before I signed the book contract and made sure to negotiate more room in the deadlines.

—Beth Skwarecki

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■ ■ ■

***The Poison Squad: One Chemist's Single-Minded Crusade for Food Safety at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, by Deborah Blum, Penguin Press**

I am fascinated by early 20th century toxicology, which grew out of my earlier book, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, so my attention was caught when I read about this very strange experiment from 1902 in which an agriculture department chemist fed poisonous food preservatives to young government employees.

It turned out that the experiment, nicknamed "The Poison Squad" by journalists, was part of a crusade by the chemist Harvey Washington Wiley to persuade the government to test and regulate food and drink. It also turned out that Wiley and his colleagues had been doing their own tests, proving that unregulated food was really risky, full of unlabeled additives ranging from formaldehyde to burnt rope to ground stone.

Now I thought I had something that mattered: the invention of food safety at the turn of

the 20th century, the beginning of consumer protection by the government. At my agent's advice, I wrote a long letter, about eight pages, to my editor and she bought the book.

Then the work really started. I read all of the food inspection reports. Copies of them are now stacked up all over my home office. I spent weeks in the Library of Congress archives. Wiley's wife, a librarian, donated all of his papers, including department memos, diaries, telegrams, and newspaper clippings. I even found his wallet in one file. I also read through cookbooks, trade journals, and scholarly publications about Wiley and his work. It really was a kind of mental whiplash to emerge from 19th century papers and jump onto a Metro train back to my hotel.

What I hadn't realized was how much basic U.S. history I would need to brush up on given that Wiley worked for the federal government. I now know more about President Grover Cleveland than most science writers, but it took me longer than I thought to get there. My advice is always to remember that a book is going to take more time and more mental energy than you realize, and you should plan for that much better than I did!

—Deborah Blum

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More About

The Science Writers' Investigative Reporting Handbook*

When I started writing about science, nearly 20 years ago, I focused on how powerful interests exploit science in pursuing profits at the expense of environmental and public health. I didn't realize then that science journalists had long been knocked for preferring hagiography to exposé. Once attuned to the "science writer as stenographer" trope, I seemed to hear it everywhere.

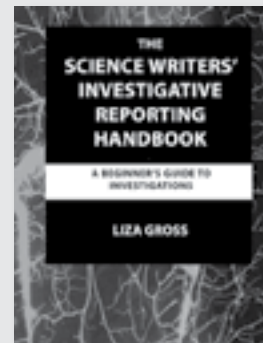
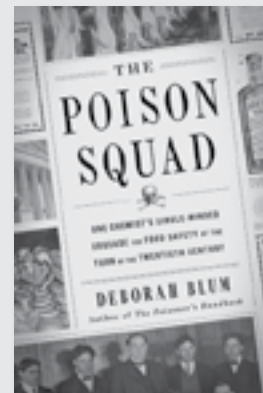
I certainly believe science should be scrutinized like any other subject, which is why I wrote this book. I think the reasons science writers don't do more investigations are complicated. Investigations are hard. They're time

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—Liza Gross

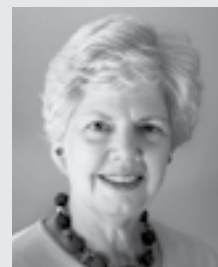
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*Release of *The Science Writers' Investigative Reporting Handbook* covered in Demystifying Investigative Reporting (SW, summer 2018).



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President's Letter

THIS IS MY LAST LETTER AS PRESIDENT OF NASW. THE ORGANIZATION HAS GROWN STRONGER IN THE PAST TWO YEARS AND TAKEN ON SOME OF ITS MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECTS, and it's been a pleasure (and at times a challenge) to serve.

To address the biggest challenge first, we faced a divisive vote in 2016 over a proposed amendment to the bylaws that would have changed the requirements for holding an officer position on the board. That amendment was voted down, but as I write, we're facing the issue again. As you read, you know the outcome. To anyone disappointed by the vote, I urge you to stay in NASW, help repair any damage, and make it a better professional home for all science writers.

That's what the board and committee members and other volunteers throughout the organization strive to do. Here are highlights of what's been accomplished in the past two years:

- Created a governance committee to recommend best practices and give members a new channel to suggest improvements in running this fabulous but complex group.

- Established a code of conduct for meetings to protect people from harassment and enforce our community standard that everyone should be treated with respect. We established guidance with board members and committee chairs for how to respond to cases of possible harassment or other mistreatment.

- Assembled a working group to come up with conflict of interest guidance, a project that, as you can imagine, will be ongoing, since COI is so slippery.

- Established an Excellence in Institutional Writing Award and expanded the categories for the Science and Society Awards.

- Supported regional workshops and events in North Carolina, Texas, New York, Illinois, Washington state, two in California, and three in Washington, D.C.

- Established a diversity fellowship program to support minority science writers during student or early-career internships.

The most significant accomplishment was hosting the World Conference of Science Journalists, in San Francisco, in 2017, in partnership with the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing. It was a screaming success, with more than 1,300 people from more than 70 countries attending. We built a number of networks and programs that will last beyond the WCSJ meeting, including the David Perlman Travel Fellowships. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this fund! With CASW and the World Federation of Science Journalists, we launched an International Program Fund to continue supporting programs that build relationships between U.S. and international science writers. The WCSJ social media campaign that got the word out to the world taught us a lot of lessons we're applying to a new communications strategy.

In the past two years, NASW has been more aggressive in sticking up for its members. The board and freelance committee sent a letter to a publisher that was delinquent in paying several NASW members, and a payment strategy was worked out. The board and information access committee objected to the EPA excluding journalists from an event. And we signed on to a statement by the American Society of News Editors and the National Coalition Against Censorship endorsing press freedom.

It's been a tough two years for science writers. We've seen a rise in conspiracy theories and disdain for evidence and truth; basically the opposite of what we value as science writers. We as a community call out crackpot theories, insist on honesty and transparency, transmit knowledge, and we are all about the evidence. Whether we're PIOs, educators, journalists, or people who mix their means of science communication, our work has never been more important.

Fundamentally, NASW is here to help everybody do their jobs better. In *ScienceWriters* articles, in our workshops, and through tips on listservs members generously share useful information with one another: how to use new publishing platforms, fact-check, pitch, spot predatory journals, cover and call out harassment, communicate on social media, file FOIA requests, and work more effectively from home. Thanks to everyone who shares their knowledge and mentors new members.

And, finally, if you don't already know, one of the main reasons NASW has been so successful is executive director Tinsley Davis. Come to her with a problem—and that's usually when people come to her—and you'll find she is brilliant, effective, and diplomatic. She helps each new board understand the history and potential of NASW, think strategically, and extract the big-picture principles when making decisions. She helps NASW form coalitions with other organizations and finds new opportunities to serve our members. She saves us money, makes us money, and helps us prioritize how to spend it. As I step off the board, I thank her for her management and care of NASW. She is our institutional knowledge and our institutional wisdom. ■



Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
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Cyberbeat

IT'S LABOR DAY AS I WRITE

THIS, SO I MAY END UP EATING THESE WORDS, BUT BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, THE long-awaited redesign of the ScienceWriters (nasw.org) website should finally have been unveiled.

The underlying technical architecture of the site, built on the Drupal 7 platform, is mostly unchanged, but its look and feel has been completely updated, with new fonts, a colorful and more modular design, and reorganized navigation.

Guided by our designers at Kalamuna in Oakland, Calif., we've used the revamp to focus the site more directly on our organization. The front page now has lots of space to promote important NASW initiatives like the annual ScienceWriters meeting and our awards programs for journalism and institutional writing.

Logged-in members will see a front page that looks considerably different from the public version, with direct links to members-only features like the Words' Worth market database and the member directory. So if you are a current NASW member, make sure you log in when you visit the site.

Users who visit the site on a smart-phone will see perhaps the most dramatic change. The new modular design is intended to present mobile device users with a nearly complete version of the desktop site instead of a slimmed-down substitute. Just swipe your way down the front page and you'll see everything that desktop users can see. Use the "hamburger" menu near the top left and the footer at the bottom of the page for menus of other site content.

Thanks to Kalamuna, the NASW internet committee chaired by Kathryn Jepsen, Siri Carpenter, other members of the NASW board, and Executive Director Tinsley Davis for their participation in many conference calls and other consul-

Dispatches FROM THE Director



Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG



In July, I traveled to Toulouse, France, for the European Conference of Science Journalists (ECSJ). Similar to our annual workshops, ECSJ began as a satellite event of a scientific meeting (European Open Science Forum). Just four years after its first meeting, this year's ECSJ attracted 285 attendees from 42 countries.

In his opening remarks, Yves Sciama, president of host organization the French Association of Science Journalists, stated: "Even in these depressing times, there are two great privileges of journalism: We love our jobs, and we have an audience. With this privilege comes a duty to maintain independence and minimize the pressures that seek to obscure reality."

Like our own annual meeting, ECSJ crammed thoughtful programming into every minute of the day: opening plenary, breakout sessions, skill-building workshops, and awards reception. I found it hard to choose between simultaneous sessions covering everything from fact-checking to philanthropic funding models. Also on the program were several NASW members as invited speakers. I consider that a tangible outcome of the connections NASW helped foster by hosting WCSJ2017.

The most powerful session—Rise of Authoritarian States and Media Censorship—included writers from Turkey, Russia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The presentations were frank and highly personal. Consider that speaker Olga Dobrovidova, senior science correspondent at TASS, left her job rather than alter her ECSJ presentation to the agency's liking.

Catch videos from
ECSJ2018 sessions
at ecsj2018.eu

Immediately following ECSJ, the World Federation of Science Journalists convened a board meeting at which Ros Reid, Ron Winslow, and I presented a report on WCSJ2017 offering advice on ways the federation can create efficiencies and

divide, among itself and host countries, the immense workload of future conferences. We also met with the WCSJ2019 program committee, continuing the tradition of previous host countries sharing their accumulated wisdom. NOTE: If 200 or more U.S. writers register for WCSJ2019, organizers promise a special fireworks display in Lausanne on July 4. Save the dates: July 1-5, 2019. ■

Vive la France

tations since we began this process in January.

As with any major project, there are undoubtedly a few bugs and other things that we've missed. Please send your reports and suggestions to me at cybrarian@nasw.org.

NASW-FREELANCE

If you get an assignment via a referral from a fellow writer, or anyone else for that matter, should you have to pay a referral fee? Oak Park, Ill., freelancer Jane Marie Andrew just got asked, for the first time in her experience, to pay a 15 percent fee on a referral.

"I'm pretty uncomfortable with this," Andrew wrote. "And 15 percent seems high. It is not how business has worked in my corner of the world, which has admittedly been rather narrow. If it is common practice, should I just pass it on in what I charge the client?"

Other list members were uncomfortable with it, too, and with the size of the fee.

"The situation you describe does not fit the standard model for business referrals. Typically, the business rewards the person who makes the referral," wrote Boulder Creek, Calif., writer Leslie Willoughby. "Also, the rate is more than double what some real estate agents charge to sell a house, at six or five percent."

"I can't think of a case where I received or was asked for a referral fee for writing projects in my 30+ years of freelancing," wrote Auburndale, Mass., writer Jeff Hecht. "I understand they may be common in certain types of consulting arrangements where 'venture' investors offer to pay a finder's fee to consultants who introduce them to companies looking for investment (or people trying to sell a company offer a finder's fee to consultants who find a buyer). I don't have any evidence that they pay off very often."

None of which means that a writer should reject the idea out of hand, said Washington, D.C., freelancer Bob Roehr.

"What it comes down to is, do the financials make sense for you? Is the pay good enough even after paying the fee? Is it just a one-time thing or might it lead to future work without the fee? Will it keep you from working for your regular clients and risk damaging those relationships?"

In the end, Andrew said, she decided to punt: "I told the referrer that I didn't have enough information to decide whether the project fit any of the circumstances in which a referral fee might be appropriate and, thus, I declined the project as described. Now in her court to decide how much she wants to keep the end client happy."

For more, see the NASW-Freelance thread "Practices Around Referral Fees?" at bit.ly/2Q28k1A.

NASW-TALK

When you ask sources to spend their time being interviewed for something you're writing, do you owe them a copy of the finished work? The consensus of NASW-Talk subscribers appears to be yes.

The discussion was prompted by Alexander Hellemans, a science writer in Belgium, who asked: "Is it correct/custom to send links upon publication to all the people you have interviewed and quoted? Is it a good idea?"

"It's a very good practice to send links to all sources, whether quoted or not," replied Columbia, Mo., freelancer and journalism professor Sara Shipley Hiles. "Most sources never hear from

journalists again. When you reach out to sources to say 'Thank you for your time; here's a link to the story,' it builds trust and transparency. You may interview them again someday or they may provide you a tip, but even if that doesn't happen, you are building goodwill."

Freelance writer Michael Balter: "Over the years, I have landed dozens of new assignments by sending the story to sources and asking them to let me know when they have an interesting paper coming out. Some sources remember that exchange even years later."

For more, see the NASW-Talk thread "Question About Etiquette" at bit.ly/2N5yfq5.

OTHER RECENT LIST DISCUSSIONS

NASW-Freelance: Fatiha Mali is hoping to break into freelancing but has a problem. As a technical writer in the pharmaceutical industry, she can't share much of her past work because of confidentiality rules. List members offered advice on alternatives. See the June thread "Writer's Help Needed!" at bit.ly/2owSdfY.

Also on NASW-Freelance, Karin Matchett was approached by an economist who wanted a collaborator for a book. List members offered advice on how to make sure she gets paid fairly. See the July thread "Funding the Development of a Book" at bit.ly/2osHm6q. ■

Lost

A recent check of the *ScienceWriters* archives, maintained by Cornell University, has revealed the following issues are AWOL. Asking NASW members who are inveterate paper savers to kindly check files drawers, garages, and attics for the following:

1976, Volume 24, Issue #3

1983, Volume 31, Issue #3

If you find one or both, please email editor@nasw.org. Thanking you in advance.

Yours For The Asking

The NASW/CASW archives housed in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collection of the Cornell University Library, provide a unique record of the history of U.S. science writing (1934-present). It consists of 29 cubic feet of correspondence, membership records, financial records, working papers for seminars and workshops, winning entries for the Science in Society Award and Victor Cohn Prize, video and audiocassettes, *ScienceWriters* newsletters/magazines, and much more. For a complete listing of the contents of this valuable resource and how to access, visit bit.ly/2CTVj7H. ■

ScienceWriters2018 Travel Fellows

The following received travel fellowships to attend ScienceWriters2018 in Washington, D.C. Worthy of note is the significant number of NASW travel grants awarded this year to science writers outside of the U.S. This reflects the large number of international applications submitted as a result of the interest and enthusiasm generated by the 2017 World Conference of Science Journalists, in San Francisco.

CASW NEW HORIZONS TRAVEL FELLOWS

Carol Lawrence, *Los Angeles Business Journal*, California

Jacqueline Rocheleau, freelance, New York

Greer Russell, Argonne National Laboratory, Illinois

NASW GRADUATE TRAVEL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Gaius Augustus, University of Arizona

Larisa Bennett, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dani Levis, New York University

Anuradha Varanasi, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism

NASW TRAVEL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Matthew Blois, freelance, Tennessee

Jake Buehler, freelance, Washington

Tere Castro-Saldana, University of Texas at El Paso

Sudarsha De Silva, Earthlanka News Network, Sri Lanka

Patricia Fernandez, freelance, California

Liza Gross, freelance, California

Mirjam Guesgen, freelance, Canada

Avren Keating, *PLOS*, California

Elizabeth Suk-Hang Lam, freelance, Australia

Katherine Mast, freelance, New Mexico

Andrei Mihai, ZME Science, UK

Stephanie Parker, freelance, Switzerland

Emma Penrod, freelance, Utah

Ozge Okaya, BioNews Services, Turkey

Rosalía Omungo, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, Kenya

Myriam Vidal Valero, *Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico*, Mexico ■

Inaugural Regional Travel Fellowships Support Latin American Science Writers

Twelve science writers from eight Latin American countries were selected to receive the first Regional Travel Fellowships made possible by the International Program Fund that is a legacy of the 10th World Conference of Science Journalists, organized in 2017 by NASW, CASW, and the World Federation of Science Journalists.

Nora Bär (Argentina) is science and health editor of the major daily *La Nación* and producer of the radio program “*El Arcón*” on science, health, and technology.

Mónica Baró Sanchez (Cuba) is a reporter and editorial board member of *Periodismo de Barrio* who covers stories about the environment, gender violence, and public health.

Pablo Correa (Colombia) is science, health, and environment reporter and editor for the newspaper *El Espectador*. He also created *Infoamazonia Colombia*, a data journalism initiative to disseminate information about the Colombian Amazon rainforest.

Eduardo Franco Berton (Bolivia) writes for *Mongabay Latam* and the Earth Journalism Network and is the founder of the Environmental Information Network, a digital news and information service about the environment, science, and conservation.

Henrique Kugler (Brazil) is a freelance journalist who has written for *Physics World*, *SciDev.net*, and *Folha de São Paulo*, Brazil's largest daily newspaper. He has a special interest in sustainable agriculture and is currently a fellow with the *Paraná Reference Centre for Agroecology*.

Jessica Maes (Brazil), former writer and editor for the Federal University of Paraná, writes for *HypeScience.com* and contributes magazine pieces to *Gazeta do Povo*, Brazil's fourth largest newspaper.

Helen Mendes Lima (Brazil) is editor of the Ideas section of *Gazeta do Povo* and presents the newspaper's weekly podcast.

Rodrigo Pérez Ortega (Mexico) is a student in the science communication program at UC Santa Cruz. As a freelance writer, he who has worked for *Nature* and *Medscape en Español* and has been an Early Career Fellow with The Open Notebook.

Sebastián Rodríguez (Costa Rica), a staff journalist at the national newspaper *Semanario Universidad*, reporting for the *Ojo al Clima* section, also does freelance reporting on climate, biodiversity, and sustainability issues for *SciDev.net* and other outlets.

Michelle Soto Mendez (Costa Rica) is a freelance writer with varied experience, including staff positions with the national publications *Perfil* and *La Nación*. She currently writes on the environment and on geology.

Laura Vargas-Parada (Mexico) is the founding director of the science communication office of the Center for Complexity Sciences at UNAM, Mexico's national university, and also teaches science journalism at UNAM and contributes to the newspaper *El Economista* and *Medscape en Español*.

Alexa Vélez Zuazo (Peru) is an investigative journalist with 15 years of experience, and is senior editor for *Mongabay Latam*. She has also worked in television and founded a production company.

Judges for the 2018 Regional Travel Fellowships were Iván Carrillo, a Mexican science journalist who anchors the national television program *Los Observadores-TV Azteca*; Robin Lloyd, a New York freelance journalist who is vice president of CASW and chaired the WCSJ2017 fellowships committee; Debbie Ponchner, a Costa Rican freelance journalist and consultant, CASW board member, and former editor of *Scientific American en Español*; Angela Posada-Swafford, a Miami-based freelance science writer, documentary producer and author; Valeria Román, an Argentinian science journalist and former board member of the World Federation of Science Journalists; and Emily Willingham, a California scientist, journalist, blogger, and member of the NASW board. ■

(source: CASW)



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Regional Groups

NEW YORK

On June 13, SWINY co-chair David Levine interviewed Carl Zimmer on his new book *She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity*. The event was held at the home of Charles and Susan Fisher, which has a room that can seat 45 people and offers a view of Central Park. After the interview, Carl answered questions from the audience and autographed his book.

SWINY's 7th annual Central Park tour (always timed to the summer solstice) drew an enthusiastic crowd on June 21. This year's focus: construction innovations and political deal-making that created one of America's first great urban parks. The custom-designed program offered a fresh, detailed look at rarely noticed, delicately engineered bridges and arches throughout the park. Tour guide David Karabell, an attorney and amateur historian, shared a treasure trove of facts amid spectacular scenery. SWINY board member Carol Milano organized the evening.

SWINY presented its first-ever private tour of New York's renowned elevated park, the High Line, on Aug. 21. An eager group of 17 explored over a mile of the greenway's paths, including one not open to the public. Led by horticulture coordinator Eric Rodriguez, the 100-minute tour covered the innovative biological and environmental planning that created the unique gardens on the abandoned railroad tracks. Constant questions from SWINY members kept a focus on incessant shifts in microclimates of different sections of plantings. Another outstanding event organized by Carol Milano.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

May 23-25, 2019 • Science Writers and Communicators of Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. sciencewriters.ca

July 1-5, 2019 • 11th World Conference of Science Journalists, Lausanne, Switzerland. wcsj2019.eu

Oct. 25-29, 2019 • ScienceWriters2019, Penn State University. nasw.org

May 26-28, 2020 • 16th PCST (Public Communication of Science and Technology) Conference, Aberdeen, Scotland. pcst2020.org

July 4-10, 2020 • 9th ESOE (Euroscience Open Forum), Trieste, Italy. euroscience.org

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

This summer, the Northern California group learned some grim and some hopeful news about the fate of California wildlife in a changing climate. UC Berkeley scientists have repeated an ambitious early 1900s survey of wildlife throughout California and analyzed how animals' ranges, abundance, and breeding behavior have changed over the past 70 to 100 years. Among findings reported by Steve Beissinger, director of the Grinnell Resurvey Project: most birds breeding in California mountain ranges appear to be adapting to rising temperatures by nesting about a week earlier than in the past, counterbalancing the 2°F temperature increase over the past decades.

San Francisco is likely the hilliest city in the U.S. The seismic forces and upheavals that have shaped its distinctive topography for more than 100 million years were scrutinized on a NCSWA tour this summer. Led by former NCSWA president and founder of Discovery Street Tours, Robin Marks, the outing explored rock formations and the local geology, that draws researchers from around the world, and how it shapes the city's landscape.

NCSWA is launching a new mentoring program. This summer, veteran NCSWA members have signed on to meet with students and new science communicators to offer career guidance and facilitate professional connections.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

In June, the Northwest Science Writers got together with colleagues from the Seattle chapter of the Solutions Journalism Network for a happy hour at Pono Ranch. In addition to talking shop and making connections, two NSWA members won travel stipends to SJN's first West Coast Solutions Journalism Regional Conference, in Portland.

In July, NSWA partnered with The People's Science to put on Share Your Science, an interactive workshop and write-a-thon focused on communicating science to the public. Scientists and researchers learned how to translate their work for a lay audience, and NSWA members coached writers through polishing their science writing.

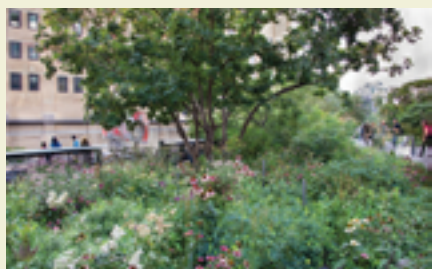
SAN DIEGO

In July, more than 50 science writers, journalists, communicators, and students came together for a boisterous evening of networking (one connection shortly thereafter led to a job offer) at the official relaunch of the San Diego Science Writers Association (SANDSWA). The location was Farmer & The Seahorse on Torrey Pines Mesa, a stone's throw from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego, The Scripps Research Institute, and Salk Institute.

SANDSWA combined beer and science at a mid-August happy hour at AleSmith Brewery Co., followed by a September tour of White Labs Brewing Co., founded 23 years ago by biochemists searching for higher quality yeast for their own home brewing.

SANDSWA has a nine-member board headed by President Ramin Skibba, a freelance science writer, and Vice President Tiffany Fox, communications manager at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Medical.

To find out more about upcoming events, membership, field trips, and workshops in the works visit sandswa.org or email sandswa.info@gmail.com. ■



Regional Groups

Writers in the Cities



New York

Two outdoor events (top two images) Private tour of NYC's renowned elevated park, the High Line, and (left and above) SWINY's 7th annual private tour of Central Park.

Meet the author (below) Carl Zimmer, author of *She Has Her Mother's Laugh*, with SWINY board co-chair David Levine.



San Diego Regional group relaunched (top left) July mixer. (left) SANDSWA President Ramin Skibba. (above) 2018 board: Katherine Leitzell, Allie Akmal, Ramin Skibba, Heather Buschman, Josh Baxt, and (advisor) Lynne Friedmann. Not pictured: Tiffany Fox, Bruce Lieberman, and Steve Murray.



Joshua Sokol Wins Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award

The winner of the 2018 Evert Clark/Seth Payne Award, an annual prize for young science journalists, is freelance writer Joshua Sokol. He was selected as the winner from a record number of submissions—56 in total. He received the award and its \$1,000 prize for four stories:

- “Why Self-Taught Artificial Intelligence Has Trouble With the Real World,” *Quanta* (bit.ly/2HC2qzT)
- “Something in the Water: Life After Mercury Poisoning,” *Mosaic* (bit.ly/2x3yisO)
- “What Do We Lose If We lose Wild Axolotls?” *Nova Next* (to.pbs.org/2CFuKCZ)
- “Visiting the Mysterious Fairy Circles of the Namib Desert,” *The Atlantic* (bit.ly/2O7KtvM)

The panel of judges cited Sokol for his compelling storytelling; his deep reporting from such far-flung locations as Japan, Mexico, and Namibia; his impressive diversity of topics; and his ability to clearly convey how science is done.

Growing up in Raleigh, N.C., Joshua had an early exposure to science. “My mom always took me fossil hunting and out to see meteor showers,” he recalls. “By the time I was in school, I was already sold on doing something in science—it just took me a while to figure out what that might be.” He earned a bachelor’s degree in astronomy and in English literature from Swarthmore College, then worked as a data

analyst for the Hubble Space Telescope's Advanced Camera for Surveys before moving on to get a master's degree in science writing at MIT, where he was a CASW Taylor/Blakeslee Fellow.

Judges for the 2018 award were:

- Warren Leary, retired science correspondent for the *New York Times*, former science writer for the *Associated Press*, and CASW board member emeritus
- Laura Helmuth, health, science, and environment editor at the *Washington Post*
- Liz Marshall, editorial and project manager at the Society for Public Health Education, and a former editor at *The Scientist*
- Richard Harris, science correspondent at *National Public Radio*, CASW board member, and author of *Rigor Mortis: How Sloppy Science Creates Worthless Cures, Crushes Hope, and Wastes Billions*
- Gene Russo, editor of the Front Matter section of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*

The Clark/Payne Award was created to encourage young science writers by recognizing outstanding reporting in all fields of science. It is given each year in honor of journalist Ev Clark, who offered friendship and advice to a generation of young reporters. The annual judging is organized by John Carey, former long-time senior correspondent for *Business Week* and colleague of Seth Payne, who raised money for the award in memory of Ev Clark. CASW now administers the fund and manages the submission process and presentation of the award. This is the 30th year of the award.

Entrants must be age 30 or younger. The deadline for submissions is the end of June each year. For more information, visit the Evert Clark page at casw.org. ■

(source: CASW news release)

NASW MEMBERS IN 2018 EDITION

The Best American Science and Nature Writing

The latest edition of this yearly anthology once again features the work of NASW members.

Rebecca Boyle for "Two Stars Slammed into Each Other and Solved Half of Astronomy's Problems. What Comes Next?" from *FiveThirtyEight*, Nov. 14, 2017 (53eig.ht/2zEpMmN).

Douglas Fox for "Inside the Firestorm: New Technology Allows Scientists to See the Forces Behind the Flames," from *High Country News*, April 3, 2017 (bit.ly/2QkL7b6).

The following also cited as notable science and nature writers of the year: **Christie Aschwanden**, **Michael Balter**, **Kate Becker**, **Timothy Ferris**, **Sharon Guynup**, **Robin Marantz Henig**, **Maggie Koerth-Baker**, **Steve Nadis**, **John Upton**, **Gretchen Vogel**, and **Paul Voosen**.

The Best American Science and Nature Writing is open to submissions from publishers, editors, and writers (nominate your own work). Pieces must have been published, online or in print, by an American or Canadian publication in 2018. They must be about science, nature, or the environment. There are no length restrictions or requirements. Essays are eligible, poetry is not. Submission guidelines at bit.ly/2oXL7Ry. Submissions will be open through Dec. 31, 2018. ■



Michael Balter
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Our Gang

IT'S BEEN A LONG, HOT SUMMER, AND NASW'S TALENTED SCIENCE WRITERS COULD BE FORGIVEN IF THEY TOOK IT EASY FOR A WHILE. BUT FROM THE NUMBER OF AWARDS our members have received over the past months, it looks like they have been busy winning laurels rather than resting on them.

For starters, three NASW members won prestigious Society of Environmental Journalists awards:

■ **Rachel Nuwer** (rachelnuwer@gmail.com) landed first place in the Outstanding Beat Reporting, Large Market category for five articles appearing in the *New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and BBC Future. The series, entitled "Complexities of the Wildlife Trade," earned enthusiastic praise from the judges, who noted her "balance between fearless reporting and graceful writing" as she covered a range of topics from the slaughter of tigers and other exotic animals to the use of drones to nab poaches to the corruption of diplomats linked to smuggling.

■ **Michelle Nijhuis** (michelle@nasw.org) won third place in the Outstanding Feature Story category for "The Valve Turners" in *The New York Times Magazine*, which the judges said took readers into "the life and partially into the head" of Michael Foster, an environmental activist arrested for turning off the valve on an underground petroleum pipeline. This deeply personal portrait of Foster shows us "what can happen to a person's life when he follows his beliefs to an extreme endpoint," the judges said.

■ **Florence Williams** (willflo1@gmail.com) received third place, in the Rachel Carson Environmental Book Award, for *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*. The book explores psychoanalyst Eric Fromm's "biophilia" theory, E.O. Wilson's hypotheses about the evolutionary adaptiveness of humans being emotionally attached to other living species and the natural world, and other topics in a volume the judges deemed "deftly and confidently written" with "clean sentences, clear thinking, and a friendly tone."

The judges included NASW members **Murray Carpenter**, **Dan Fagin**, **Ben Goldfarb**, **Heather Goldstone**, and **David Steinkraus**.

Environmental writing was also a winner for **Kelly Lenox**, editor in chief of *Environmental Factor*, the flagship newsletter of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Kelly reports that the newsletter won the 2018 first prize in the e-newsletter category from the National Association of Government Communicators. Meanwhile, Kelly's first book of poetry, *The Brightest Rock*, received an honorable mention in the 2018 Brockman Campbell Book Award contest, sponsored by the North Carolina Poetry Society. [This book was featured in *Advance Copy*, SW, fall 2017.] Contact Kelly at kelly.lenox@nih.gov.

While environmental writing might be helping to save the

Earth, member **Rick Fienberg** will be recognized for helping eclipse watchers save their eyes. Rick, the press officer of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), received a NASA Exceptional Public Achievement Award in October for his work on promoting eye safety during last year's solar eclipse viewed across the USA. Rick's "safety messaging" (eclipse.aas.org/eye-safety), which was endorsed by the U.S. and Canadian ophthalmological and optometric societies as well as AAS, NASA, and the National Solar Observatory, helped ensure that the public heard the same information from all credible sources about what types of solar viewers and filters are safe and when and how to use them. Any questions? Ask Rick at rick.fienberg@aas.org.

Why win just one award when you can win four at once? That's what happened to **Kathiann Kowalski** when the Ohio state chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists announced its 2018 Ohio's Best Journalism awards: first place in best feature writing in the freelance digital media category for "Science Works to Save a Salty World Treasure" for *Science News for Students*; first place in the digital category for best medical/science story for "Could the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Leak Happen in Ohio" for *Midwest Energy News*; first place in the digital category for best business/tech story for "Secrecy Surrounds Pro-coal Group Eyeing Ohio Wind Cases" in *Midwest Energy News*; and second place in the digital media category for best medical/science story for "Heartbeat Can Affect Racial Perception of Threat" in *Science News for Students*. If you want to know Kathiann's secrets of success: kowalskikm@yahoo.com.

One of the perks of being a journalist is that sometimes you get to travel. **David Levine** received two travel grants to attend conferences in Germany in September and October. The first was from the Heidelberg Laureate Foundation (HLF) to attend the foundation's 2018 forum, where laureates in mathematics and computer science (winners of the Fields Medal, Turing Award, or Abel Award) meet the next generation of young researchers. The HLF chooses 15 journalists each year to attend, and this is the second time David has been selected. The second travel grant, from the German Academic Exchange Service to attend Science Year 2018—Working Life of the Future, had Levine joining yet another delegation of journalists who met researchers and developers in Dusseldorf and Nuremberg. Contact David at davidlevine51@gmail.com.

Travel to Rwanda was in the cards in September for NASW members **Joanna McWilliams** of Colorado State University and her student intern, **Shelby Condit**. They traveled with CSU's Energy Institute to document and report on microgrid projects in the country. In 2016, Joanna explains, the World Bank approved 24 African Centers of Excellence, and four of them are in based at the University of Rwanda, including the African Center for Excellence in Energy for Sustainable Development. CSU is helping build a mirror microgrid lab at the latter center, and is also helping Rwanda to meet its goal of electrifying the entire country by 2024. Joanna and Shelby filmed in HD and virtual reality and wrote science stories about the project. Joanna can be reached at jomcwill@rams.colostate.edu.

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran has taken a journey of another kind, one that many NASW members have also ventured on: the transition from being a scientist to writing about research. Lakshmi originally got her Ph.D. in applied mathematics from the New Jersey Institute of Technology and then worked as a

postdoc in both math and biology. She soon learned that math and biology have different ways of talking to each other. To try to bridge that gap, she started doing science writing on the side, at first "just as a hobby." Long story short, she made a career switch, got her masters in science journalism at Northwestern University, and is now a writer for the Alzheimer's Association. Lakshmi says she wants to thank NASW for helping her make the career leap, especially when it awarded her a New Horizons Travel Fellowship to attend the 2015 annual meeting. Lakshmi.tme@gmail.com.

Short takes: **Kimberly McCoy** (kimberly.mccoy@westernalum.org) recently got her Ph.D. in biochemistry and is now freelancing for the PBS Digital Studio Youtube channel "It's Okay to Be Smart;" **Deborah Wormser** (deborah.wormser@utsouthwestern.edu) wants to thank all the NASW members and international science writers with whom she discussed creation of *In Pursuit—Research at UT Southwestern* (bit.ly/2QAP8It); and **Melissa Blouin** (scigal35@yahoo.com) announced she is "leaving the world of freelancing in gator-infested Gainesville, Florida" to become director of news and media relations at the University of California, Davis.

As this issue was going to press, word was received that **David Quammen's** book *The Tangled Tree: A Radical New History of Life* (Simon & Schuster), is one of 10 works on the 2018 National Book Award Longlist in nonfiction. A *New York Times* reviewer called David "our greatest living chronicler of the natural world" and the book is receiving a lot of well deserved attention. Wish him good luck at dq@davidquammen.com. ■

In Memoriam

ScienceWriters has learned belatedly of the death of the following members:

M. Frederick Arkus, 94, died Oct. 20, 2003. After completing a major in pre-med and comparative literature, he spent his career in PR serving for 27 years as the director of the Public Relations Council for the American Heart Association where he was the first layperson to receive the Gold Heart Award, usually reserved for physicians. Arkus was an NASW member for 49 years.

Ann L. Farren died Jan. 3, 2011. She was an NASW member for 48 years.

Carl Goldstein, 82, died Oct. 1, 2010. He was an NASW member for 40 years.

George M. Mulhern, 93, died April 12, 2017. He started his career in the 1950s as a news reporter and later switched to corporate public relations eventually holding director-level positions in public information for Bell Laboratories, AT&T, and Lockheed Missiles & Space Company. Mulhern had been an NASW member for 55 years.

Milton Liebman, a medical writer and publisher, died Dec. 10, 2003. He was an NASW member for 41 years.

Josephine (Jo) Robertson, 90, died Oct. 19, 1990. In 1923, she was hired as the only woman reporter on the staff of *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland). She later became Cleveland's first full-time medical reporter and was an NASW member for 42 years. ■

Request for Submissions

Be Recognized for

**Excellence in Institutional Writing Award—
Recognizing high-caliber, publicly accessible
science writing produced on behalf of an
institution or other non-media organization**

The Purpose

Established by NASW in 2018, the Excellence in Institutional Writing Award recognizes high-caliber, publicly accessible science writing produced on behalf of an institution or other non-media organization. Entries will be judged on the quality of the writing and the effectiveness with which the work conveys accurate science to a public audience.

The Award

NASW will award a cash prize for the winning entry. Award presentation will take place during the ScienceWriters2019 meeting hosted by Penn State, State College, PA.

Submissions

- Any individual (staff or freelance) who produces science writing on behalf of an institution is eligible to submit one entry.
- An entry consists of a single piece or story package up to a total word count of 5,000 words.
- Non-bylined pieces are eligible but subject to independent review for confirmation of authorship.
- Work must be written in English, intended for the non-specialist, and first published or broadcast in North America between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2018.

**Complete rules and submission requirements at
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2019 Excellence in Institutional Writing Award

Complete rules and submission requirements at
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Entries Open:
December 2018

Entries Close:
February 1, 2019
11:59 PM EST

Your Work

Science in Society Journalism Awards—
Honoring and encouraging outstanding
investigative and interpretive reporting about
the sciences and their impact on society

The Purpose

NASW established the Science in Society Awards to provide recognition, without subsidy from any professional or commercial interest, for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on modern society. NASW especially encourages entries of critical, probing pieces that would not receive an award from a special interest group. Beginning with the first award in 1972, winners have demonstrated innovative reporting that goes well beyond the science itself and into ethical problems and social implications.

The Awards

NASW recognizes science reporting at the local, national, and international levels, as well as books and opinion pieces.

Each award includes a cash prize. Award presentation will take place during the ScienceWriters2019 meeting hosted by Penn State, State College, PA.

Submissions

- Any writer (or team) is eligible to submit one entry in each category. Publications/media outlets may enter, or be represented by, multiple entries in any category.
- Written, audio, and video pieces are eligible.
- Entries should exhibit clear relevance to society as a whole. Pure science articles, without that reference, will not be considered.
- Work must be written or spoken in English, intended for a lay adult audience. Publications based outside North America are eligible if their readership is international.

Complete rules and submission requirements at
nasw.org/scienceinsociety

Entries Open:
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2019
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(*student)

VIC COHN PRIZE

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Most recently, she released a six-part podcast about a neurosurgeon in Dallas who left most of his patients in pain, paralyzed, or dead. (At the time of this announcement, "Dr. Death" was #1 on the podcast charts and had received almost 7,000 five-star reviews.)

This year's Cohn Prize entries were judged by Christie Aschwanden, Ben Patrusky, Joann Rodgers, and Cristine Russell.

The award honors the late *Washington Post* medical writer and health columnist Victor Cohn, who distinguished himself by the clarity and effectiveness of his reporting during a 50-year career. Late in his career, Cohn authored *News & Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Other Fields*. Cohn was a co-founder in 1959 of CASW. ■
(source: CASW news release)

ScienceWriters Welcomes Letters to the Editor

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Dispatches from Planet 3: Thirty-Two (Brief) Tales on the Solar System, the Milky Way, and Beyond

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contributes the observational proof that the calcium in our bones, the iron in our blood, and the oxygen we breathe came from the ashes of ancient stars. Many of these names are not found in textbooks, so it was gratifying to bring them into the spotlight with my seventh book, but first collection of essays.

This book almost was not published; both agents and editors told me at first that anthologies were passé. I have to thank Neil deGrasse Tyson's wildly successful *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (also a collection of *Natural History* columns) for re-energizing the genre.

The Science Writers' Investigative Reporting Handbook

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consuming, costly, and often tedious. I knew that many of my colleagues would try investigative reporting if they knew how to start. I wrote this guide to help them do just that.

Toward that end, I applied for and received an NASW Peggy Girshman Idea Grant. I didn't seek an agent and publisher, but decided to self-publish. The grant covered much of the time I spent researching and writing the book, and the costs of self-publishing were minimal.

Producing the book, however, turned out to be more challenging than I'd expected. I had to learn enough *Illustrator* to design my cover, which involved a steep learning curve. Though I found a Word template designed for self-publishers, Word is notoriously ill-equipped for design. Changes in one section had a maddening habit of generating errors elsewhere. If I self-publish again, I'll take the time to learn a professional design software program like InDesign.

Having total control over the book, from conception to production, was a rich learning experience. I wish I'd given more thought to finding an agent and publisher so I could have spent more time writing. Like any first-time author, I found the prospect of writing that first chapter daunting and had a hard time getting started. I wish I'd followed the advice of sage writing coaches: go for walks, clean the house, take naps, then sit down and put words, any words, on the page. It's amazing how sentences start to flow once you stop staring at a blank screen. ■

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SANDSWA page 19

JULY MIXER AND BOARD OFFICERS COURTESY OF LYNNE FRIEDMANN ■

American Association for Cancer Research
Presents

AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM



The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) announces the call for entries for the 2019 June L. Biedler Prize for Cancer Journalism to raise awareness of the critical role the media play in educating the public about cancer and cancer research.

The AACR Biedler Prize is a \$5,000 cash award that recognizes journalists who have produced accurate, informative, and compelling stories about cancer and cancer research. It is open to print, broadcast, and online professional journalists whose stories appear in media that target the lay public.

The deadline for submission is Wednesday, December 12, 2018.

The AACR Biedler Prize will be presented during the AACR Annual Meeting, March 30-April 3, 2019, in Atlanta, Georgia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

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