ScienceWriters™

National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

Summer 2012

SCIENCE WRITING IN THE AGE OF
DENIAL

SWINY DELIVERS
BIOETHICS
BOOTCAMP

DON'T GET
BUSTED
OVER HOME-BUSINESS ZONING RULES

THE SCIENCE OF
SCIENCE
COMMUNICATION

NASW BOARD
ELECTION
CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

LOWER SELF-EMPLOYMENT
TAXES
FOR WRITERS

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From The Editor

In late April, I was among those fortunate to secure a seat for the Science Writing in the Age of Denial conference, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. From understanding organized denial and human psychology to practical advice on improving the reach, integrity, and impact of science writing—the two-day meeting was a game changer.

How does denial affect the craft of the science writer? How can science writers effectively explain disputed science? What is the big picture? Are denialists ever right? The lively discussion continues.

Within hours of the meeting's opening, a hack attack of the Twitter hashtag #sciencedenial is proof positive that science writers weren't preaching to the choir.

Select highlights from the meeting are presented starting on page one together with a rich resource of links to speaker videos, conference summaries, and numerous blogs of the meeting.

The conference also provided an opportunity to celebrate the UW-Madison Science Writer in Residence Program, now in its 25th year. A Who's Who of science writers who have participated in the program were on hand to add their penetrating questions, challenge assumptions, and move the ball forward in subsequent discussions. ■

Lynne Friedmann

In This Issue

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FRIEDMANN COURTESY OF KEN JACQUES

Science Writing in the Age of Denial

On April 23 and 24, the University of Wisconsin-Madison convened Science Writing in the Age of Denial, a conference for science writers to explore the phenomenon of denial and how to address issues of science in question. Day One examined the history of organized doubt, denial, political persuasion; journalistic insight into the trend; and an exploration of denialist themes that transcend political and topical boundaries. Day Two consisted of a half-day workshop (funded by a $10,000 NASW Idea Grant) intended to help science writers explore practical strategies and tactics for reporting on and writing about science in the crosshairs of denial.

Communicating Science in Politicized Environments

BY MOLLY SIMIS

Arthur Lupia, political science professor at the University of Michigan, kicked off the Science Writing in the Age of Denial conference with a presentation about trying to avoid conflict with diverse audiences.

The oft-adopted, knowledge-deficit model of communication—"If we tell them what we know, they will change how they think and what they do"—doesn't work, according to Lupia. Neither do a lot of other attempts, but for different reasons:

"In attempts to educate the public and policymakers about science, failure is common," he said. "Failure meaning the impact you want the presentation to have and the reality of what your audience perceives."

The problem is not "them," Lupia said. The problem is "us." Blaming the audience for not receiving the message we intended "absolves us of the responsibilities of having to think about our strategies."

In order to illustrate the perils of not knowing the audience's starting point, Lupia invited the audience to take a walk in the woods:

> Imagine that you grew up near the woods, and throughout your life developed an intimate relationship with the woods—so intimate that you can journey through it expertly. One day you're walking with your friend, and you get separated from each other. Since you know the woods so well, you get out because you are an expert in navigating through these trees. Your friend, however, is stuck in these woods, and to get your friend out, you have to know two things: 1) the woods and 2) where your friend is in the woods. If you say to your friend 'take three steps to your left' without knowing where your friend is, you might be advising your friend to walk directly into a tree.

Instead of fruitlessly trying to get the audience out of the figurative woods, communicators can turn to biology as a starting place of understanding where the audience is. Lupia explained that "biology defines the possibilities" of how people make decisions and are persuaded.

Persuasion, Lupia emphasized, is a "change in mind, not just metaphorically, but also physically." As learning occurs, brain cells, fueled by electrochemical processes, move closer to other cells, creating associations. The physical basis of associations between, for example, the word wagon and the color red, is physical relationships between brain cells. "Ultimately, if you want people to think, you're trying to grow new memories. If you can't do that, then it's game over."

Blaming the audience… absolves us of the responsibilities of having to think about our strategies.

To grow new memories, communicators face a few battles: a battle for attention, a battle for elaboration, and a battle for credibility. The audience is not going to hang on the every word, and no one is an exception to that rule. Working memory has an impressively fast decay rate for most stimuli. To overcome distractions and short attention spans, a communicator must make the message urgent and relevant to the audience, and then seize the "opportunity to leave a cognitive legacy." This requires inducing changes relevant to activation potentials and in, ultimately, long-term memory. Changes in long-term memory require elaboration.

People only remember a fraction of any event, even when remembering life-defining moments. People aren't interested in objective information; they engage in motivated reasoning. In other words, Lupia said, "people have a tendency to seek out and/or view new evidence as consistent with one's prior views, even if it's not objectively sound." To effectively fight the battle for elaboration, Lupia advises, communicators need to make the message close, concrete and immediate, and achievable.

None of this matters, though, if the communicator is not seen as credible.

Credibility is bestowed by audiences, is specific to each

MOLLY SIMIS IS A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON.

NASW Speakers

Deborah Blum, Wilson da Silva, Sharon Dunwoody, Dan Fagin, Richard Harris, George Johnson, Michael Lemonick, Maryn McKenna, Dennis Meredith, Michelle Nijhuis, Ivan Oransky, John Rennie.

Behind the Scenes

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Steve Ackerman, UW-Madison and Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies

Deborah Blum, UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Dominique Brossard, UW-Madison Life Sciences Communication

Sean Carroll, UW-Madison and Howard Hughes Medical Institute

Terry Devitt, UW-Madison

Sharon Dunwoody, UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication

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S.V. Medaris, UW-Madison

Susan Lampert Smith, UW-Madison

Amy Toburen, UW-Madison

(left) University of Michigan political scientist Arthur Lupia makes a point about the physiological process of learning while panelists John Hawks, Wilson da Silva, and Robert Lee Hotz look on. (right) Sean Carroll, molecular biologist, author and science educator, addresses the 200 attendees at the conference detailing, among other things, the "General Manual of Denialism."

domain, and—most importantly—is not objectively about the communicator. It's about how the audience perceives the communicator. Credibility is a function of source, message and contextual attributes, as well as audience effects. To establish credibility with a non-scientific audience, communicators have to move away from making presentations that affirm their own values (and from blaming the audience if it does not persuade) toward understanding different perspectives of different audiences.

"We can understand them, and if we do we can take our conversations to great places by understanding why they do what they do," Lupia said.

The panel, including John Hawks, science blogger and University of Wisconsin–Madison paleoanthropology professor, Wilson da Silva, editor and founder of *Cosmos* magazine, and Robert Lee Hotz, science columnist at the *Wall Street Journal*. Follow up included a discussion of the nature of uncertainty, the golden age of science ("Which we're in," according to Hotz), and the trustworthiness of science itself.

The Denial of Evolution, and the Evolution of Denial

by Emily Eggleston

Sean Carroll's discussion on the denial of evolution and other scientific concepts so piqued conference goers' interest that they were willing keep the discussion going 25 minutes into their lunch break.

Carroll, a UW-Madison geneticist and vice president for science education at Howard Hughes Medical Institute, presented six categories of argument that make up what he called "A general manual of denialism" (see sidebar, page 3). He extracted the six categories from an article describing arguments specific to anti-vaccination but that can be broadly applied to many issues of denial.

Emily Eggleston is a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Future Reading/Resources

Conference Videos

sciencedenial.wisc.edu/videos

University of Wisconsin-Madison session summaries

sciencedenial.wisc.edu/conference-session-summaries

Links to blogs

theopennotebook.com/2012/04/26/denial-conference-recaps

JOURNANATOR POWERPOINT IMAGE COURTESY OF DENNIS MEREDITH

The Denialism Manual

During his keynote talk, Sean Carroll outlined a "denialism manual in six steps," which he adapted from a history of chiropractors and vaccination (bit.ly/qmt8na).

STEP 1
Doubt the science

STEP 2
Question scientists' motives and interests

STEP 3
Magnify legitimate, normal disagreements among scientists and cite gadflies as authorities

STEP 4
Exaggerate potential harms (scare the hell out of people)

STEP 5
Appeal to personal freedom

STEP 6
Show that accepting the science would represent a repudiation of a key religious or philosophical belief

Dealing with these six categories of argument is where we are now in confronting denial of science, Carroll told the audience. The question is, he said, "where do we go?" For example, where do we go when we know that a significant percentage of the country will be completely deaf to the progress of evolutionary science? While he hesitated to offer a "cure" to denialism, he said that doing nothing is unacceptable.

Carroll, the Allan Wilson Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said the way to counter denialism is to tell the story of science in a more compelling way. Science lends itself to a narrative and people remember stories more than they remember other types of information. To support his storytelling approach, Carroll discussed narrative theory's relationship to cognitive psychology. Human thought, he said, is fundamentally structured around stories and people use narratives to understand cause and effect over time. The most powerful part of a story is that listeners become immersed in the information you are trying to tell. In a great story, they share motivations and emotions of the protagonist. He suggested writers should use the power of storytelling to convey the conclusions of science.

In his position at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Carroll helps make 10- to 12-minute videos with stories illustrating science concepts for K-12 students. He showed one of the videos, which demonstrated how a favorable genetic mutation can lead to the evolution to an animal population.

"I know how to reach under 18 (year-olds) where they are captive—in the classroom," he told the room. "Four million of them become voters each year. Within a decade that's 40 million new voters."

If you can reach a population with compelling scientific evidence at an age when they are forming opinions, Carroll thinks the political discussions among the electorate may slowly change.

Carroll's six arguments—especially the last one, which stated science challenges the fundamental ideologies of denialists—ignited a round of discussion by the panel and questions from the audience that could have lasted for hours. The panel included Robin Marantz Henig, contributing writer to *The New York Times Magazine*; Dan Fagin, director of the health science and environmental reporting program at New York University; and Cristine Russell, a contributing editor to Atlantic.com.

Journalistic Ethics in the Age of Denial

BY KATE PRENGAMAN

This panel featured Deborah Blum, journalism professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; George Johnson, freelance science journalist; Dennis Meredith, research communicator; and Dan Fagin, professor at New York University.

Deborah Blum began by admitting the journalists have been discussing the ethics of their work probably for about as long as there have been journalists. However, today, science journalists are writing more about retracted papers and the mistakes of science. Blum asked if this poses an ethical question for science journalists: If, as we cover the messy process of science, do we play an implicit role in fueling public distrust of science?

Blum argued that the responsible decision is give more coverage of the story of science. Through increased transparency on sources, links to the primary papers, and discussion of the human process, replete with natural mistakes, we can tell better, more truthful stories.

George Johnson pointed out that good journalistic work hasn't

DENIAL continued on page 32

KATE PRENGAMAN IS A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON.

Science journalists should call PIOs to task for badly written news releases and poor media policies. The goal of active criticism is to make journalists' work easier as well as improve the science communications at institutions, according to workshop presenter Dennis Meredith.

Bioethics Links and Resources

Bioethics Bootcamp Website

bootcamp.swiny.org

The SWINY Bioethics Bootcamp website remains an ongoing resource for journalists interested in bioethics with videos from each of the panels, synopses of the sessions, as well as ongoing news relating to bioethics.

Session Videos

bootcamp.swiny.org/session-videos

- Why Bioethics Matters (Keynote Session)
- Conflicts of Interest: Research and Clinical Ethics
- Bioethics at the Bedside: Genetic Testing, Personalized Medicine, Organ Transplantation and More
- From Assisted Reproduction to Advanced Illness: The Circle of Life
- Emerging Biotechnology: Enhancement, Microbiomes, Synthetic Biology and More
- The Editors Panel

Bioethics Briefing Book

thehastingscenter.org/Publications/BriefingBook

From Birth to Death and Bench to Clinic: The Hastings Center Bioethics Briefing Book for Journalists, Policymakers, and Campaigns contains 36 overviews of issues in bioethics of high public interest, such as abortion, health care reform, human and sports enhancement, organ transplantation, personalized medicine, medical error, and stem cells.

NASW Idea Grants in Action

Bioethics Bootcamp

by Joe Bonner

For the last several years, Science Writers in New York (SWINY) has organized a party in February celebrating the life of a famous February-born scientist or science-related noteworthy individual. In 2011, the honor went to George W.G. Ferris, the American engineer whose childhood fascination with a water wheel near his rural home inspired him to design and build the contraption that bears his name to carry people up into the air and back.

However unlikely it seems, a party honoring the inventor of an amusement park ride became fertile ground for the germination of an application for an NASW Idea Grant to fund a day-long workshop of bioethics for science journalists.

At the February Ferris fete, the topic of bioethics and science journalism came up in a casual conversation on the second floor of Union Square restaurant Friend of a Farmer. Previously, Mary Crowley, director of communications at The Hastings Center, a nonpartisan research institute dedicated to bioethics and the public interest, had brought up the idea with SWINY. This time, the recently announced NASW Idea Grants helped push the idea to the next level.

An ad hoc committee of SWINY board members Beth Schachter, Carol Milano, and Peggy Crane, SWINY co-chair David Levine, SWINY member Mary Crowley, and Michael Turton, communications associate at Hastings, began the task of drafting a grant application.

"It was laboriously crafted in endless back-and-forth emails among the SWINY committee, then vetted by Mary on every go-round," says Milano.

Event planning was concurrently underway, with board members including Alan Brown, Sheila Haas, and Alla Katsnelson actively involved in different phases. Top priority was the search for a location within our budget and accessible by public transportation. In New York City, the latter is easily obtained, but the former can be nearly impossible. Schachter contacted Emily Laber-Warren, director of the Health and Science Reporting Program at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. Laber-Warren, in turn, received a

SWINY co-chair Joe Bonner is director of communications and public affairs at Rockefeller University. Bonner managed the Bootcamp's website presence by creating and maintaining program updates, the registration function, and the event blog.

Additional reporting by New York freelance writer Sheila Haas.

(left) Charles Ornstein, senior reporter, *ProPublica*, moderated the session "Conflicts of Interest: Research and Clinical Ethics" featuring (right) Ivan Oransky, executive editor, *Reuters Health*; Doug Levy, executive director, communications/public affairs, Columbia University Medical Center; and Karen Maschke, research scholar, The Hastings Center.

SWINY COURTESY OF C. MARTIN BURCH

very enthusiastic response from Judith Watson, associate dean of the graduate school. Milano negotiated the rental fee with the facilities manager, specifically including A/V services. Budget requirements were met, and the agreed-ups terms put in writing.

The grant was written, approved by SWINY and The Hastings Center, and submitted to NASW in August 2011. Then we waited. Months passed. The grant specified a November 2011 event. As that date approached, SWINY asked its co-sponsor CUNY for a new date in March 2012. In late December, grant approval was received, and the committee went full throttle in securing speakers and moderators. Response to the Bootcamp announcement was overwhelming with registrations quickly coming in.

…the recently announced NASW Idea Grants helped push the idea to the next level

Meanwhile, we learned that when dealing with a large institution one needs to be prepared for the possibility of administrative glitches and obstacles which did occur in dealing with key administrative departments at CUNY. Then one week before the event, Laber-Warren discovered, purely by chance, that the A/V services that we had been told were included in our contract were not! Laber-Warren immediately stepped in to negotiate, schedule, and arrange these services from scratch.

"Without Emily, we would not have had A/V at all," says Milano.

The only other unexpected surprise along the way was the short-notice cancellation by two of the five editors for the final panel. We were unable to replace them at the last minute. Fortunately, the remaining three were excellent as reflected by highly positive audience feedback.

Overall, attendees gave high marks on the event evaluation questionnaire. So popular were the topics that the only real disappointment expressed was having to choose between the two equally compelling concurrent sessions. Others suggested an even longer event in the future.

BIOETHICS continued on page 33

Congratulations to Latest Career Grant Recipients

This spring, the National Association of Science Writers awarded a total of $15,971 to 13 enterprising science writers in the fourth round of our Career Grants program. Since its inception in 2009, the program has distributed over $84,000 to help established science writers advance their careers.

The program awards grants of up to $2,500 each to support education, training, or other activities that help established science writers continue or advance their careers in today's rapidly changing media environment. All established science writers, whether freelancers or employees of publications, universities, or other organizations, are eligible to apply. Projects proposed should primarily benefit the applicant as an individual rather than the employer. The size and number of grants in each round depends on specific proposals received. Award monies are derived from funding that NASW receives from the Authors Coalition.

CAREER GRANT RECIPIENTS SPRING 2012

- **Adrianne Appel** (freelance)
  $2,500 for the purchase of professional audio gear for expansion into radio
- **Adam Aston** (freelance)
  $1,500 for the purchase of professional digital audio and camera/video gear and related training
- **Sandi Doughton** (*Seattle Times*)
  $1,000 for travel related to a book on earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest
- **Francesco Fiondella** (International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University)
  $1,166 for attendance at the Columbia Journalism School's Introduction to Multimedia Storytelling
- **Jennifer Freeman** (freelance)
  $700 for two courses to enhance digital media skills for freelance environmental writer
- **Jayne Iafrate** (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)
  2,395 for attendance at the Columbia School of Journalism's Multimedia Storytelling Five-Day Bootcamp
- **Joely Johnson Mork** (freelance)
  $395 for attendance at a workshop in creative nonfiction
- **Naomi Lubick** (freelance)
  $2,000 for multimedia training
- **Tim Lougheed** (freelance)
  $500 for two-day trip to clinical research facility in Sherbrooke, Quebec
- **Prashant Nair** (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*)
  $2,250 for attendance at a Poynter Institute training seminar
- **Stephanie Ogburn** (freelance/*High Country News*)
  $712 for the purchase of digital video camera
- **Mary Patyten** (California Department of Fish and Game)
  $600 for attendance at an online magazine writing bootcamp and advanced writing workshop
- **Norm Sperling** (*Journal of Irreproducible Results*)
  $253 for the purchase of slide scanner and microphone

Career Grant application rounds are offered as demand and funding allows. A future round of Career Grants is not yet planned. ■

The Science of Science Communication

BY MIN-FANG HUANG

Science writing is a hard work. Science writers use their energy, passion, and talent to translate abstract science language into plain language. Science writers are proud of their work and believe their work will bring the ivory tower and the mundane world closer. Is it true that readers really get what science writers intend to deliver to them? This question can be answered by research into the science of science communication.

On May 21 and 22, the National Academy of Sciences held a colloquium "The Science of Science Communication" during which dozens of science communication researchers gathered in our nation's capital to discuss how lay audiences perceive science information. The major goal of this meeting was "to improve the understanding, relations between scientific community and the public," said NAS President Ralph J. Cicerone.

The meeting surveyed the state of the art of empirical social science research in science communication and focused on research in psychology, decision science, mass communication, risk communication, health communication, political science, sociology, and related fields on the communication dynamics surrounding issues in science, engineering, technology, and medicine. Meeting goals were to:

- Improve understanding of relations between the scientific community and the public
- Assess the scientific basis for effective communication about science
- Strengthen ties among and between communication scientists
- Promote greater integration of the disciplines and approaches pertaining to effective communication
- Foster an institutional commitment to evidence-based communication science

According to NAS Vice President Barbara A. Schaal, now it's time to "consider the application and impacts of research that impinge on the public." Advanced research areas, such as synthetic biology, neurobiology, stem cell, and astrophysics, have challenged the belief systems of the general public.

"Therefore, in order to acquire necessary skills for engaging the general public in science, physical and biological scientists need to learn from social scientists," she said.

…to acquire necessary skills for engaging the general public in science, physical and biological scientists need to learn from social scientists.

We write, because we want to convey knowledge to people, helping them solve problems or empowering them to get a better life. We want our readers to "learn something." But during this process, we often neglect the mechanism and biological constrains of learning. When people learn, they need to connect new information with something they already know. This process consumes their energy and time. In addition, memory capacity is limited and many things compete for readers' attention at the same time: online games, TV shows, celebrity news, jobs, families, to name a few. To earn readers' attention and to make sure they learn what we intend to offer, we need to change our communication strategies.

Since writing about science doesn't give us the privilege to attract readers' full attention, we should try to set foot on the same page as our audience. To get readers to take our message more seriously and to offer them incentives to learn science, we need to know their values, needs, and difficulties, and offer them scientific solutions they can achieve by themselves. To facilitate the learning process, we can also wrap up the scientific content with tangible context, allowing readers to connect the scientific information to their own experience more easily.

The Science of Science Communication was organized by:

- Ralph Cicerone, President, National Academy of Sciences
- Baruch Fischhoff, Carnegie Mellon University
- Alan Leshner, CEO, American Association for the Advancement of Science
- Barbara Schaal, VP, National Academy of Sciences
- Dietram Scheufele, University of Wisconsin, Madison

The event was offered under the auspice of the Sackler Colloquia, a series of interdisciplinary meetings offered annually, since 2001. Funded by a gift from Jill Sackler to honor her late husband, Arthur M. Sackler, the Sackler Colloquia aim to break the barriers between science, arts, and the humanities.

Next year, the Sackler Colloquia will offer a second meeting on The Science of Science Communication. ■

MIN-FANG HUANG IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND SCIENCE TRANSLATOR LIVING IN SAN DIEGO.

Featured Column

Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world of science writing

by Ben Carollo and Rick Borchelt

Adventures in the Science of Science Communication

On May 21 and 22, the National Academy of Sciences hosted The Science of Science Communication meeting as part of the Arthur M. Sackler Colloquia series.

We were very excited when we heard that this meeting was being planned, particularly since it would be taking place in our back yard. The attendees included an interesting mix of science communication practitioners and scientists, both of the social and natural varieties. Note that if you would like any additional information on the speakers or their talks, a full program and archived webcasts can be found at **bit.ly/xR3npN**. Consider our notes below as teasers for watching the full two days!

The meeting launched with talks from two of the meeting organizers, Baruch Fischhoff and Dietram Scheufele. Fischhoff provided context about the micro view of science communication, or individual responses, while Scheufele provided context about the macro view of science communication, or the social dynamics that come into play. Science communication research often seeks to neatly focus on just one of these buckets, and the presentations reflect that researchers are often looking at one issue or the other. As you all know, however, your work as science writers and PIOs will have equally practical implications on both sides of this continuum. The panels were arranged to provide both perspectives on a topic, but we thought it would be valuable to focus on the presentations and sessions that highlight this complex line between the individual use of science information and social engagement with that information.

■ ■ ■

Why We Can't Trust our Intuitions: Communication as a Science. *Arthur Lupia, University of Michigan.*

Lupia is a political scientist whose lunchtime talk on the first day began to dissect how individuals act as social actors in response to scientific information. His research concluded that nonscientific audiences want information framed in a way that makes it close to them, that is concrete and immediate, and that makes a desired outcome or action possible to achieve. This assumes that there should be an action taken by an individual based on the information. These ideas probably won't catch you by surprise, but an issue emerges when you put this approach in the context of a political debate or discussion. Lupia's work suggests that when politicians engage each other and their constituents about scientific issues, the many competing values that overlay the facts involved in the dis-

… credibility becomes the overriding factor as opposed to the objective value of science.

cussion result in difficult to resolve conflicts. These conflicts, in a political system, can devolve into nasty rhetorical debates that where stakeholders find opportunities to manipulate the conversation. As a result, communication games begin where actors in the conversation begin to use the close-immediate-actionable framework to promote action favorable to their interests, regardless of whether the proposed action is supported by the scientific facts at hand. In these circumstances, credibility becomes the overriding factor as opposed to the objective value of science. In this situation, the credibility of a scientist as an expert is not enough. Other social factors have been injected into the debate

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

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

which means that those individuals or organizations that are seen by stakeholders as being credible on those social issues suddenly have more credibility in these debates.

The implication, of course, is that science communicators must strive to build credibility into the fabric of their work. It is worth reinforcing, as Lupia did, that a simple way to do this is to meet people where they are (intellectually, emotionally, culturally, etc.) and use science as a guide to move them in the direction of collective action. Lupia provided an example of building this short bridge related to climate change. He posited that if a religious leader were interested in engaging his or her congregation in taking action on climate change, the place to start would be not with a sermon about the evils of climate change but with the congregation's shared values, such as social justice or public health, and the ability to take collective action for the greater good. Only then, Lupia suggests, could one begin the conversation with congregants about climate change and what they can do to take action. In this case, though the focus of the talk was mostly about the complexities and social dynamics at play in a science policy debate, these debates ultimately all are driven by a collection of individuals and their perceptions.

■ ■ ■

How Science Is Presented and Understood in Modern Mass Cultures. *Matthew C. Nisbet, American University; William P. Eveland Jr., The Ohio State University; Dominique Brossard, University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

The second day kicked off with a panel of three individuals who spoke to this issue of individuals consuming science information in a social context. Nisbet spoke to the role that mass media play in shaping public debates about science. His finding, that as issues rise in the media, media consumers will view these issues as more important, won't be a surprise to readers of this column. Nisbet discussed theories about how the media frames the values associated with the issue that might inform an individual's perspective on a particular science issue. Additionally, he discussed how many issues will go unnoticed by the general public until a "focusing event" is covered by the media, heightening the public and political attention on an issue. At this juncture in the public discourse activist publics form and advocates get involved, leading to the frequent use of dramatic claims and shifting the discourse away from the technical elements of the issue. This happens, of course, because advocates are interested in creating a policy arena that favors their interests. Unfortunately, this combination of framing factors can narrow the scope of the debate in a deleterious way.

…many issues go unnoticed by the public until a "focusing event" is covered by the media.

Nisbet used the case of climate change science as an example. The media debate generally has focused on melting glaciers, ice caps, polar bears, and penguins. Though polar bears and penguins are cute and few people would wish them harm, there are other more consequential impacts from climate change. Nisbet noted, for example, that respondents in his surveys never think of climate change as a public health issue. There are serious public health implications from climate change, however, and this frame of reference is significantly closer to most individuals' value set than polar bears and penguins. The debate is taking place in a different space, though, resulting in a complex segmentation of perspectives on the urgency with which climate change needs to be addressed.

Eveland discussed the effects that the mass media have on knowledge and beliefs. He first outlined the variables that are most important to learning: (education, prior experience, and time constraints), motivation (interest, partisanship, and other social factors), and information availability (physical access and saturation across sources). It was the information availability component that was most prominent in the

presentation, in particular the changing nature of how people are accessing news. While there is a decline in the use of television, newspaper, and radio as a primary news source and growth in the use of online news sources, this trend does not hold across all demographics—there is a positive association between education and the use of print news sources and as age decreases use of print news sources decreases. This is important because the coverage and quality of science coverage varies widely across media. Additionally, online news sources allow significantly greater ability for the audience to avoid news that isn't of primary interest. Accordingly, Eveland suggests that only the most interested parties seek out this science information from electronic sources.

Brossard wrapped up the session by discussing trends in new media usage and how people access science information in this landscape. Traditional views of science communication are redefined in this setting. People now use search engines to find news, read blogs that vary in their levels of objectivity, and share content via commenting functions and various multimedia tools. These tools also create new opportunities for scientists to have direct communication with the public, and survey results indicate that this is an increasingly popular idea with younger scientists. The new media and online news paradigm is one where there is essentially unlimited access to information from anywhere with a mobile data connection, and demographic shifts are leading to more and more people accessing science news only in online formats. So far, so good—this much is well known. Of note, however, is that survey data show that people often seek out science information on a specific topic with a specific goal for using that information. Online environments with search capabilities are ideal for this. This becomes problematic given the way that search engines present information, however. The rank of an electronic resource will be based primarily on page hits, which is thus reinforced by being high on the search result page. Unfortunately, these resources at the top of the search result could be inaccurate or propagandist in nature and most individuals lack the knowledge to truly assess the information at such a level.

Discussion following the presentations raised a very interesting point regarding the culture of online engagement and how this can affect all audiences—the tone of comments in an online forum really do matter. An individual's perspective on the perceptions of bias in a story will be swayed by the comments following the story or shared about a story in a social networking environment. However, only the most issue-polarized individuals on either end of the issue spectrum are likely to post comments or share the stories. So, this minority of the population has an outsized influence in the broader dialogue on an issue when the discussion takes place in a social media environment, further illustrating how individual information-seeking choices become enmeshed in a greater social context, ultimately influencing public debate on these issues.

■ ■ ■

Risk Communication and Risky Decision Making: From Viruses to Vaccines. ***Valerie Reyna, Cornell University.***

One of the presentations in the closing session was also particularly apropos to the topic at hand. Reyna focused on individuals' use of the "verbatim" versus the "gist" in decision making. For these purposes, verbatim was defined as precise recall and gist as fuzzy summary recall. As Reyna pointed out, our decisions about even the most complex issues and judgments are driven by the gist of an issue. Decision making is driven by concepts and intuition as opposed to considering a complicated checklist of facts outlined on, say, your standard government website. In the science landscape, this becomes very important since so many critical facts are at play—and mostly ignored. It is often seen in controversial science issues that communicators will skip facts altogether and speak directly to intuition instead. Thus, there is potentially great value in identifying how to harness "valid" intuition, as opposed to something guided by flawed logic. There is still a need to research this concept in more depth, and Reyna indicates that a good place to start would be to construct narratives about science that cue important values for one's audience. At the end of this presentation, Michael M. Crowe, president of Arizona State University and respondent for this session, noted that figuring out how to speak to intuition will only become more important as science advances, becoming more complicated and technically beyond most people.

A few things Scheufele noted in his opening remarks serve to wrap up many of the issues outlined above. Science is becoming increasingly disconnected from the public due to a collective lack of science background, failures in the infrastructure for learning about emerging technologies, and general lack of public interest in science. Additionally, as sciences issues become significantly more value-laden in the public sphere the focus of dialogue about these issues shifts away from pure science to other signifiers. Finally, the media landscape is changing in such a way that many legacy media outlets have lost the infrastructure—both people and resources—to convey complex concepts to their audiences. As a result, public debate on science issues increasingly is driven by the interaction of heuristics and media framing as opposed to information provided at face value—even by the best-written science stories. ■

…in controversial science issues…communicators will skip facts altogether and speak directly to intuition instead.


Ron Winslow


Robin Marantz Henig


Beryl Lieff Benderly


Deborah Franklin

NASW Board Election Candidate Statements

Election of the 2013-14 NASW board takes place this year, online or in-person, in early September (see back cover). In addition to four officers, the board consists of 11 members at large. The nominating committee has assembled and outstanding slate of candidates.

President Candidate

Ron Winslow (*Wall Street Journal*)

In four years as a NASW officer and board member, I have worked with the board to update our bylaws and procedures, expand initiatives that help members adapt to the dramatic changes, in journalism and broaden our connections with science writers around the world. As treasurer, I worked with an astute finance committee to strengthen our budget planning and establish an orderly process for managing the influx of Authors Coalition funds that has enabled a significant expansion of services NASW provides to science writers. I look forward to working with the board and other volunteers as we continue as an organization and as individuals to find ways to thrive amid the economic, technological, and societal forces affecting our profession. And I hope that despite the distractions we can embrace the excitement of pursuing stories on the front lines of new knowledge and the interplay between science and society. I have been a reporter and editor at the *Wall Street Journal* for 29 years, including more than two decades covering health and medicine. Last year I was awarded the Victor Cohn Prize for Excellence in Medical Science Reporting. I joined NASW in 1990 and also was a founding board member of the Association of Health Care Journalists.

Vice President Candidate

Robin Marantz Henig (freelance)

After serving on the NASW board for 12 years (1998-2010), I'm eager to return to the organization as VP. Science writing is at a crossroads, and we need to figure out how journalists can make their mark in a bloggy world. The grievance committee work I began with Dan Ferber and Ellen Ruppel Shell is even more urgent now. I'd like to re-establish the committee to provide writers the ammunition and clout they need to avoid problems before they arise. I'd also like to focus on communicating science beyond traditional print and broadcasting by reinstituting the Science Cabaret for the Raleigh meeting, and by building relationships with art-meets-science events already going on around the country, such as festivals, science cafes, and the Imagination Film Festival. I've been a freelance for more than 30 years, a contributing writer at *The New York Times Magazine* for the past seven, and I just finished my ninth book *Twentysomething*, co-authored with my younger daughter Samantha Henig (the co-authorship was the best part). My previous book, *Pandora's Baby*, won NASW's Science in Society Award and ASJA's Best Book Award. In 2009, I received an ASJA Career Achievement Award and a Guggenheim fellowship.

Treasurer Candidate

Beryl Lieff Benderly (freelance)

Recent years have been challenging for professional science writers, with employers and clients vanishing and available opportunities often requiring unfamiliar skills. Fortunately, this upheaval coincided with NASW's growing ability to help members cope. Thanks to income from the Authors Coalition, which NASW joined through my efforts in 2002, members have access to an expanding range of services, including greatly enhanced market information; travel, career and idea grants; and much more. NASW has also developed an increasingly strategic approach to handling funds. Having served as liaison to the coalition since the beginning, as treasurer I will work with the finance committee to better use coalition and dues income for members' benefit. I know NASW's workings from serving as a board members and secretary and on many committees. Decades of freelancing for a wide range of print and online clients make me keenly aware of the conditions science writers face today. With nine national writing prizes, eight books, plus hundreds of articles, contributing editor status at *Prism*, and a monthly column and regular blogging on *Science* magazine's website, I look forward to helping make NASW an even better information source, support, and advocate for all our members.

Secretary Candidate

Deborah Franklin (freelance)

I'm a freelance science writer and editor based in San Francisco, but have lived and covered science and medicine up

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CANDIDATES


Jill Adams


Melissa Lutz Blouin


Bob Finn


Robert Frederick

and down both coasts in print, online, and public radio. I started out in magazines, first interning at *Science News*, then worked as a staff reporter and/or editor at *Science News*, *Science '86*, *Hippocrates*, *Health*, and *Fortune* magazines. I'm a contributing editor (writer) at *Scientific American*, and also contribute regularly to the *New York Times*' personal health column "The Consumer." I've freelanced feature stories for numerous magazines, including the *New York Times Magazine*, *Discover*, and *Smithsonian*. Since 2006, I've spent much of every year working for National Public Radio in Washington, D.C., as a correspondent, editor, and blogger on NPR's Science Desk. As NASW's membership chair the past two years, I've worked to find new ways to strengthen ties and the sharing of skills and perspective between new and long-time science writers across media. As NASW secretary, I'll continue to help talented local science writers connect to national and international networks and audiences, and help ensure any member or regional group with creative energy and a great idea gets the nurturance and support they need. We're all in this together.

Member-at-Large Candidates

Jill Adams (freelance)

With an ever-shifting media landscape, science writers must work ever harder to justify what it is we do. I think one of the great benefits of our organization is the opportunity to share stories and strategies for success. If elected to the board, I'd want to shepherd burgeoning efforts at community building within NASW. Many of my closest science writer friends are people I first met at annual meetings, including the members of Scilance, an online group of freelance science writers now working on an NASW grant-supported book about science writing in the new era. I'm inspired by some of the creative regional meetings members have organized, often with grant help from NASW. I'd like to further promote smaller group ventures because I think they're crucial for individuals, but I also think they inspire loyalty to the larger organization. A long-term freelancer, I write about health, medicine, and the environment for the *Los Angeles Times*, *WebMD*, *Nature*, *Discover*, and *Plenty*. I've been a member of NASW since 2004 and have organized workshops and served on committees, including the freelance, awards, and annual meeting committees.

Melissa Lutz Blouin (Univ. of Arkansas)

Science writers must always learn new things, whether they are writing about the latest research findings or taking on a changing work environment. If elected to the board, I will address this need by helping NASW grow new and innovative projects for its members through education and financial support of member projects. After receiving a science communication degree from UC Santa Cruz, I worked in journalism for six years in Arkansas. For the past 14 years, I have worked as director of science and research communications at the University of Arkansas. In addition to my university work, I have written freelance pieces for *Science*, *Science World*, and *ZooGoer Magazine*. As a NASW volunteer, over the past two decades, I have worked with the education committee, co-chaired the PIO committee, and served on the program committee, which helps to distribute Authors Coalition funds for member projects. I have organized workshops at several NASW meetings and helped craft language for the NASW constitution. I currently president of the University Research Magazine Association. Through these and other NASW projects, I have demonstrated my ability to work with teams of people with diverse interests and to help them move forward to create positive change.

Bob Finn (*Medscape Medical News*)

I'm running for my fifth term on the board. I spent most of my previous terms as chair of the Science in Society Award committee, but I'm now turning my attention to the membership committee where I hope to address some of NASW's membership challenges. A recent analysis revealed that many new members never renew for a second year, but new members who renew once are likely to stay members for years. I think some relatively simple tactics will encourage new members to renew. Also, there are whole areas of science writing from which we derive very few members. For example, NASW is under-represented among technology writers, and we also have relatively few professional scientists who write about science for the general public. I think we can find ways to convince those groups that NASW has something to offer. The last time I sought re-election I noted that I have worked as a PIO, as a freelancer, and as a staff journalist. Since then I've gone over to the dark side. Yes, I'm now an editor. I hope you won't hold that against me, since it means I can represent four of NASW's main constituencies on the varied issues requiring board discussion.

Robert Frederick (freelance)

Science may be communicated now more than ever before thanks to the democratization of the web. But in keeping with our charter to "foster and

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Peggy Girshman


Jeff Grabmeier


Laura Helmuth


Michael Lemonick

Member-at-Large Candidates

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promote the *professional* interests of science writers" (emphasis added), I think NASW can do more to help members adapt to the rapidly changing media landscape and to do so while earning professional rates. As an NASW board member, I will work to enhance member services and professional development programs. Through NASW I have benefitted from contacts, mentoring, fellowships, and grants. In turn, I have given back by organizing NASW workshops on podcasting and rhetoric, serving on the workshop committee, participating on panels, mentoring students, speaking before mentor-program participants, and helping host two events for science writers at AAAS meetings in St. Louis and D.C. I want to do more and am prepared to do so having served as a board member and treasurer of DCSWA. I am again a freelance writer after spending four years at *Science* magazine as multimedia producer and weekly podcast host. I am chapter author on multimedia freelancing for the forthcoming NASW-sponsored field guide for science writers, know well both traditional and new media, and am keenly aware of constraints that limit the efforts of staffers and freelancers alike to adapt to our changing media landscape.

Peggy Girshman (Kaiser Health News)

As the executive editor of Kaiser Health News, I am part of a new wave of (deliberately) nonprofit journalistic ventures. We are an editorially independent program of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a health policy research organization unaffiliated with Kaiser Permanente. We cover health policy, comparative effectiveness research, health care financing, hospitals, doctors, nurses, etc. Prior to this, I was executive editor of consumer publishing for *Congressional Quarterly*. Some of our stories covered environment, technology, health care, and science policy. The first 32 years of my career were spent in broadcasting. I was a managing editor at NPR News, coordinated the radio newsroom expansion into multimedia for npr.org, helped initiate the year-long "Climate Connections" series, and oversaw the science desk. Among other jobs in my eclectic career: stints as medical/science producer for the CBS-TV affiliate in Washington, D.C., deputy senior science editor at NPR, a producer for "Innovation," and a senior producer for "Against All Odds: Inside Statistics," "Scientific American Frontiers," and "Discover: The World of Science," all PBS science programs. In the late 1990's, I was senior medical producer for Dateline NBC. I was an MBL fellow in 1987 and a Knight Fellow at MIT in 1991. I have previously served as NASW vice president and treasurer.

Jeff Grabmeier (Ohio State University)

My focus on the NASW board has been to help the organization grow by attracting young people, both to science writing and to NASW itself. That's one of the main reasons I have been co-chair of the education committee since 2004. One of my proudest accomplishments was helping develop a travel stipend program that has allowed top science-writing students to attend the AAAS meeting each year with their expenses paid. I have also helped manage the ever-growing mentorship program and internship fair at the AAAS meeting. But not all my work has been with the education committee; I spent five years as the "Our Gang" columnist for *ScienceWriters*. I will continue to bring to the board a perspective from several sides of science writing. I am currently senior director of research and innovation communications at Ohio State University, and write extensively about social science research. But I have also done freelance writing for consumer and college magazines and have written chapters for several books, including *Soul of the Sky*. I started my career as a newspaper reporter. All of these experiences help inform my work on the board.

Laura Helmuth (*Slate*)

NASW has been on fire lately—the conferences are better than ever, the website is useful and entertaining, and the grants program has made some inspired choices. But there are a few things we could be doing better or more of as an organization. If elected to the board, I would push to have more of a presence at the AAAS meeting. The NASW-run internship fair does a great job of serving students, but there aren't a lot of offerings for members who have already started their careers, and many people can't afford to attend both the AAAS and the NASW meetings. I would also focus on improving communication between freelancers and editors. The annual meeting has had some great sessions that aim to demystify the pitch process and give freelancers tips on how to sell their ideas. I think this is one of the most important services NASW provides, and I'd like to make sure we do even more of it throughout the year. I'm the science and health editor for *Slate* magazine, and until recently the science editor for *Smithsonian* magazine. Before that I was a writer and editor for *Science* magazine's news department. I served for three years on the D.C. Science Writers Association board and am on the board of advisers for The Open Notebook.


David Levine


Rosie Mestel


A'ndrea Elyse Messer


Steve Miller

Michael Lemonick (Climate Central)

I'll hardly be the only candidate to comment on how quickly science writing is changing, and how little anyone really knows about where it's headed. I'm convinced, however, that science writing will thrive and that experienced science journalists have an obligation to help the profession navigate the transition. I began writing for *Science Digest* in 1983, and then spent 21 years on the staff of *TIME*. I've also done a lot of freelance work and written four books. In 1998, I began teaching science journalism, mostly to Princeton undergraduates, as well as a handful of graduate and professional courses at Columbia, NYU, Johns Hopkins, and the Santa Fe Science Writing Workshop. After taking a package in 2007, I'm on the staff of Climate Central, a nonprofit-journalism organization exploring one possible direction science writing could follow. I've done plenty of blogging, and am now exploring radio and short video. I also, crucially, have ongoing contact with many of the young science writers who are actively reinventing the profession. As a result, I think I'm reasonably well positioned to help guide science writers—including myself—through the transition without losing the professional values we've already established.

David Levine (freelance)

If elected to the board, I will bring the same energy and enthusiasm I have brought to my role as co-president of Science Writers in New York (SWINY) and act as an active, accessible, rational, and fair voice for all. I write for both mainstream and scientific media. I'm particularly interested in mental health and cancer (I was director of media relations for the American Cancer Society). I've written about epigenetics, robots, the Google X Lunar Prize, and the NIH. I received my B.A. in humanities and M.A. in creative writing, both from The Johns Hopkins University. I also spent a year at the University of London. NASW is a great organization helpful to both new and seasoned writers. NASW membership has enriched my life: I have met writers/journalists from around the world, found work, and received grants to take courses. I am a member of the PIO committee and led a workshop at the annual meeting in New Haven. I will also be leading a workshop at the upcoming meeting. I have participating in NASW's mentorship program at the last two AAAS meetings.

Rosie Mestel (*Los Angeles Times*)

I started out with a Ph.D. in genetics and worked as a postdoc in a fruit-fly lab before deciding to switch to science writing. After completing the UC Santa Cruz science-writing program, I interned at the *Dallas Morning News*, then worked as a researcher/reporter for *Discover* magazine. Then I embarked on a semi-freelancing career (West Coast correspondent for *New Scientist* and a contributing editor for *Health* magazine, while writing articles for *Natural History*, *Discover*, *Earth*, and *Science*). I joined the *L.A. Times* as a staff writer in 1998, writing first for the health section and then reporting on science and medicine for the news section. I was deputy and then section editor for science and health for about seven years—and have recently returned to a mostly writing gig at the paper. As someone who's freelanced, I know how hard that work can be, and I've always tried to make the experience of people who write for my newspaper as decent as possible. And as someone who's watched staff levels dwindle year after year at the *L.A. Times*, I have had a good taste of the challenges we face in our line of work. I want to continue to help our community.

A'ndrea Elyse Messer (Penn State)

I am running for NASW's board because I believe the association needs strong representation from the public information membership. As assistant systems operator for the website I helped establish the website and two web redesigns. I have created NASW workshops and understand the importance of balancing all segments of the association—PIO, freelance, staff. I have seen the association grow and want to help sustain that growth and move NASW to the next level. I am the senior science and research information officer in Research Communications at Penn State. I was a science writer at the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and worked at Bell Labs doing technical writing and on the "History of the Bell System." In Israel, I edited 11 review journals in chemistry, book translations, and children's book. I write about engineering, physical sciences, earth and mineral sciences, materials science, and anthropology. I have a B.A. in science & culture (chemistry) from Purdue University, an M.S. in journalism: science communication from Boston University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology from Penn State. I am a AAAS Fellow. I'm currently on the Internet and PIO committees and have served on the workshop committee.

Steve Miller (freelance)

I do not classify myself as a journalist, PIO, editor, or book author although my work encompasses each of these categories. I am, however, a science writer dedicated to accurate science communi-

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Dave Mosher


Tabitha M. Powledge


Czerne Reid


Hillary Rosner

Member-at-Large Candidates

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cation in many venues. As a freelance science writer and member of NASW since 1999, I have seen my work balance shift many times. I believe this will be typical in the future of science writing, for staff as well as freelance writers. A primary goal of NASW should be to help members in the transition from clearly defined and focused job titles to the broad field that encompasses today's science writing, broadcasting, and webcasting. As a board member, I will focus on that goal along with NASW's traditional strengths of promoting accurate science communication, advocating for science writers, and sharing both our collective knowledge of the trade and the occasional pitcher of beer. I have been active on the NASW education and freelance committees as well as organizing and serving on workshop panels on the business of freelancing and on writing for children. Unrelated to science writing, I have developed organizational leadership skills as a municipal elected official and as a board member, and currently president, of a regional nature conservancy/land trust.

Dave Mosher (freelance)

New tools, new outlets, new audiences, and new competition: These things whack science writers on the head almost every day. While the pace of change makes it easy to fall into despair, I'm firmly in the "change is opportunity" camp. I began my career by asking my favorite science writers for advice. I found most of them hiding in budget-cutting bunkers, and I quickly learned that hard work and constant reinvention was essential to keeping my passion for science writing fed and my bank accounts in the black. I'm a contributor to *Wired* and a freelancer for several popular science outlets, both online and in print. Before that I covered NASA's space shuttle program for Space.com, launched a multimedia website about space for Discovery.com, and learned to develop my freelancing work into a sound business. I have tackled a dizzying variety of opportunities in different formats—print and online; photography and video; blogging and social media; production and editing; full-time and part-time and "perma-lance"—and these experiences have sculpted me into the enterprising science writer I am today. If elected, I'd love to bring a forward-looking voice to the board while honoring the core values and standards of our field.

Tabitha M. Powledge (freelance)

Radical moves in science-writing markets—from ink to electrons, from desktops to tablets and smartphones, from feature articles to blogging and tweets—have changed everything. In the years I have been a board member, NASW has become more activist and concerned about these professional and business issues, especially for freelances. For seven years I wrote about these changes quarterly in the *ScienceWriters* column "The Free Lance." Since 2009 I have written about them every Friday On Science Blogs This Week (**nasw.org/user/157/blog**). A longtime member of the NASW freelance and Internet committees, I am intrigued by the science-writing potential for e-books and shorter e-forms like Singles. I organized how-to sessions on e-publishing at ScienceOnline2012 and SW2012. I am working on an updated e-version of my book *Your Brain: How You Got It and How It Works*. The plan is that it will be an e-book, with sections marketed as Singles. I was founding editor of *The Scientist* and an editor at *Nature Biotechnology*. A full-time freelance writer and editor since 1990, I have written for paper and web-based publications including *Scientific American*, *Popular Science*, *Health*, *PLoS Biology*, *The Scientist*, *Washington Post*, Salon.com, *BioScience*, and *The Lancet*. My book *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Microbiology* came out in 2007.

Czerne Reid (University of Florida)

I am a science writer and assistant news director at the University of Florida. In an earlier life I was an education-turned-health-and-science-turned-business reporter for *The* (Columbia, S.C.) *State* newspaper. In 2007, I was named a Kaiser Media Fellow and completed a series on HIV/AIDS in South Carolina. I earned a Ph.D. in environmental chemistry at Emory University in 2003 and a graduate certificate in science communication at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 2004. I am committed to using my skills and talents not just in my own work, but also in service of fellow science communicators. I serve on the NASW PIO and education committees. For the annual meeting, I have served on the workshops committee, helping to plan the program for two meetings, and have also served as a panel organizer and moderator. As an editor for the NASW travel fellowships program, I have had the opportunity to help guide young science writers as they take their first steps on a new career path. If elected to the NASW board, I will support ongoing efforts to identify and address professional development needs of members both new and seasoned. With this kind of investment, NASW is helping to secure not just the future of new

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CANDIDATES

Charles Seife

Brian Switek

M. Mitchell Waldrop

Voting Ends September 4

See back cover for in-person and online voting options.

generations of science writers, but the future of the organization itself.

Hillary Rosner (freelance)

I'm a freelance science journalist specializing in the environment, and a 2012 Alicia Patterson Fellow. Last year, I was a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT, and won a AAAS Kavli Science Journalism award for a story about valiant efforts to save an endangered Colorado River fish. My reporting has taken me around the world, from the Canadian Rockies to Borneo, Iceland to Ethiopia. Over the years, I've been a staff writer, an editor, and a full-time freelancer. I write for the *New York Times*, *Wired*, *National Geographic*, *Popular Science*, *Mother Jones*, *Audubon*, *OnEarth*, *High Country News*, and many other outlets, and I blog at the PLoS Blogs Network. Over the past several years, I've organized panels and workshops for NASW, SEJ, and Science Online. I'm interested in improving science communication broadly, and I've led many workshops for scientists on how to present their work and ideas to the media and the public. At a time when nearly half of NASW's members identify themselves as freelancers, I think it's crucial to elect board members who understand freelancers' unique needs and concerns: financial, technological, psychological. As someone who has successfully navigated that world for more than a decade, as it's shifted (okay, quaked) beneath our feet, I feel I could make a significant contribution to NASW's leadership.

Charles Seife (New York University)

Almost anyone who's been in science writing for a while has had to reinvent himself or herself a few times over the years. I'm no different. In the past 18 years, I have been a freelancer, a staff writer at *New Scientist* and *Science*, a book author, and, since 2005, an academic—a professor of journalism at NYU. It is in this last role that I think I will be most useful to the NASW community. There are pressing problems that affect academic and nonprofit journalism—problems to which most journalists and writers are unaware. For example, it is an open question whether journalists at academic institutions should be required to submit their work to Institutional Review Board review? (*Near v. Minnesota* be damned.) It's a huge issue—one that very few journalists have weighed in on simply because they are unaware that the debate is happening. I believe that NASW as an organization can help answer such questions. In so doing, it takes part in shaping the future of an increasingly important sector of science journalism.

Brian Switek (freelance)

There's more than one way to be a science writer. From traditionally trained journalists to scientists who blog, science writing encompasses a variety of different approaches for those who seek to accurately express the excitement of discovery and debate to the public. As part of the NASW board, my goal would be to represent freelancers, bloggers, and scientists who have found their calling as science writers through their passion for the natural world. I followed a similar alternate route. My two blogs—Laelaps at *WIRED Science* and Dinosaur Tracking at *Smithsonian*—acted as a springboard to freelance science writing and the books *Written in Stone* and *My Beloved Brontosaurus*. I learned to be a science writer by jumping into the practice, and I want to assist others who are following other untraditional paths. Now, more than ever, we need to make the most of the various platforms that have opened up in the science writing ecosystem, and my aim is to continue to promote a diversity of approaches as our discipline continues to evolve.

M. Mitchell Waldrop (*Nature*)

I am running for the NASW board for two reasons. First, I can represent the interests of virtually every member in the organization from first-hand experience. In my 30-plus years as a science writer I have been a reporter facing weekly deadlines (*Chemical & Engineering News* and *Science*), a freelance magazine journalist (*Scientific American*, *Technology Review*, and elsewhere), a book author (*Man-Made Minds*, *Complexity*, and *The Dream Machine*), a public-affairs officer (at the National Science Foundation), a blogger, an editor (*Nature*), and even a purveyor of editorial opinion (also at *Nature*). Second, as we all live through journalism's tumultuous transition to the web era, I think NASW needs to take the lead in providing its members with information, training, discussion forums, and mechanisms for sharing best practices. No one can claim to be an expert in this subject; it's changing too fast. But I have the good fortune to work for Nature Publishing Group, which has been among the most innovative publishers out there at finding new ways to take advantage of the web. I hope to use that experience and those contacts to NASW's advantage. ■

Quicksand for Home Businesses

BY ROBERT NILES

Is your start-up news website legal?

That might seem like an absurd question, especially for readers in the United States, where the First Amendment protects the freedom of the press. How can a news website be illegal?

Well, while the First Amendment protects freedom of the press, plenty of other federal, state, and local legislation regulates the conduct of business. And the First Amendment doesn't give news publishers a free pass to ignore that. So you'd better be paying taxes on your business income. And abiding by legal hiring and employment practices if you're bringing on help.

"No sweat," I can hear some of you saying to yourselves. "I pay my state and federal income taxes and work by myself at home. I don't need to worry about employment law or all that other stuff."

Ah, you work at home, you say? Then you might not be running a legal business after all.

Work at home? You might not be running a legal business…

Have you checked your local zoning code to see what it says about running a business out of your home? You might surprised by what you learn. Even if all you do in running your business is to type on your home computer, the fact that you're earning income that's not coming from an employer is enough in some jurisdictions to cover you under local home-business zoning and tax rules.

Every few years, the City of Pasadena (California) sends me a letter asking me to pay up for a city business license and tax. The same letter goes to everyone with a Pasadena mailing address who reported Schedule C income on his or her federal tax return who hasn't obtained a license yet. (Schedule C is the form through which you report all 1099 or miscellaneous income. It's the form that home business owners who do not incorporate use to report their business income.)

Pasadena's hardly alone. New York City, for example, levies an unincorporated business tax that hits many freelance writers and website publishers. The City of Los Angeles also hits freelancers and writers (among others) with a city business tax, but exempts the first $100,000 in income. Fail to pay these local taxes and license fees, and you're running an illegal business.

Now, even through the U.S. postal service assigns me a Pasadena mailing address, I actually live in unincorporated Los Angeles County. So whenever I get that letter, I just reply with a written note that I live outside the city limits, and they leave me alone. But I always wonder how many less-informed L.A. County residents don't realize that, and send in the money anyway. It must be enough to make it worth the city's postage costs in sending out those extra letters.

But even in unincorporated L.A. County, I'm subject to residential zoning code addressing home-based businesses. (Writing and publishing don't fall on the long list of home businesses required to obtain an L.A. County business license, so that's not an issue for me.) Now, before I go any further, let me acknowledge that busting writers making money on work they're creating at home is pretty far down the priority list for most communities. Getting money from unpaid taxes is one thing, but zoning enforcement's rarely an issue for home businesses that don't generate excess noise, garbage, or foot or vehicle traffic.

That said, if you're writing stuff that might, uh, tick off the powers-that-be in your community, it's just smart business to make sure that you're not breaking any rules a vindictive local official might use against you.

So take a look at your local residential zoning code. Here are a few interesting things I discovered about unincorporated Los Angeles County:

- "Retail sales" are prohibited for a home business. So if you print up website T-shirts, you can't legally sell them to a reader who comes to your home. (Storing retail stock in your home for mail-order delivery is illegal in some jurisdictions, so be on the lookout for that, too. L.A. County's rules say "No stock in trade, inventory or display of goods or materials shall be kept or maintained on the premises, except for incidental storage kept entirely within the dwelling unit.")

The safest thing to do as a publisher is to rent yourself some office space in a legally zoned commercial office building.

- "The home-based occupation shall not be conducted in any attached or unattached structure intended for the parking of automobiles." So no working out of the garage. Sorry, would-be Hewletts and Packards.
- Prohibited uses in a home business include: "Recording/motion picture/video production studio, except for editing or pre-recorded material." So much for video blogging for your site from your home-office desk. Or Skyping into a conference or classroom. Perhaps this one made sense in the era of bulky, power-hogging cameras and lighting, but now, here's a classic example of a law written for pre-Internet technology. But it's still on the books here.
- "There shall be only one home-based occupation per dwelling unit." Now this is one that got my attention. I am not a lawyer, but I'd be interested to learn the prevailing local definition of "occupation." Is publishing an e-Book a different "occupation" than writing for a website, or selling ads for that site? (If so, I am so busted.)

LEGAL continued on page 33

ROBERT NILES IS A 17-YEAR VETERAN OF ONLINE NEWS PUBLISHING.

Congress Again Lowers Self-Employment Taxes for Writers

by Julian Block

Tax legislation enacted last February again reduces Social Security taxes for employees and self-employment taxes for writers, artists, photographers, and other freelancers. The special break trims their taxes by 2 percent for 2012, an exact repeat of what was done for 2011.

What's the savings this year for NASW members? The amount will vary, depending on how much they receive from salaries or from freelancing. Their savings can be as much as $2,202.

The law requires employees to pay Social Security taxes known officially as FICA (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) taxes on their salaries. It requires employers to match those payroll taxes out of their own funds.

FICA taxes consist of two components with different rates. Normally, employees pay 6.2 percent for the Social Security benefits portion (the old age, survivors, and disability insurance fund), up to a limit of $110,100 for 2012. Consequently, withholding from paychecks for Social Security taxes ends at $110,100.

The 6.2 percent rate drops to 4.2 percent for 2012, just as it did for 2011. The savings on payroll taxes is $600 for employees who earn $30,000, $1,000 when they earn $50,000, and tops out at $2,202 when earnings are above $110,100. The savings is $4,404, double the amount for individuals, for households with two wage earners who both make more than $110,100.

The other FICA rate is 1.45 percent for the Medicare fund (the federal hospital insurance program for the elderly). There's no ceiling on the amount of wages subject to the 1.45 percent rate, meaning employees with earnings above $110,100 must pay Medicare taxes on *every* dollar of their salaries and other forms of compensation. They surrender $14.50 to Medicare taxes for each $1,000 of compensation ($1,000 times 1.45 percent). This year, there's no decrease in the 1.45 percent rate.

Similar rules govern self-employment taxes—Social Security taxes for the self-employed. Individuals liable for self-employment taxes include writers and others who operate their businesses as sole proprietorships, in partnerships with others, or as independent contractors.

The self-employment tax rate normally is 15.3 percent on net earnings (receipts minus expenses). This is twice the 7.65 percent usually paid by employees, because self-employed persons pay both the employer and employee halves. Like FICA taxes, self-employment taxes consist of two components with different rates. The rate is normally 12.4 percent for the Social Security benefits portion, up to a limit of $110,100 for 2012.

The 12.4 percent rate drops to 10.4 percent for 2012, just as it did for 2011. The savings on SE taxes is $600 for writers with net earnings of $30,000, $1,000 when net earnings are $50,000, and tops out at $2,202 when net earnings are above $110,100.

What happens after the November election? Right now, it's uncertain…

The other self-employment rate is 2.9 percent for the Medicare fund. There's no ceiling on the amount of net earnings subject to the 2.9 percent rate, meaning self-employed persons with earnings above $110,100 must pay Medicare taxes on *all* of their earnings. They forfeit $29 to Medicare taxes for each $1,000 of earnings ($1,000 times 2.9 percent). This year, there's no decrease in the 2.9 percent rate.

What happens after the November elections? Right now, it's uncertain whether Congress and whoever is in the Oval Office will cut a deal to reduce payroll taxes and self-employment taxes for 2013. What's certain is that our lawmakers will enact even more complications to an already confusing tax code. ■

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

BOOKS
BY AND FOR MEMBERS

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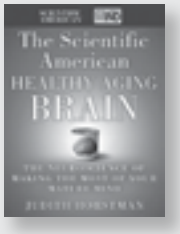
Microsoft Word files only. Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

The Scientific American *Healthy Aging Brain: The Neuroscience of Making The Most of Your Mature Mind* by Judith Horstman (NASW), published by Jossey-Bass/Wiley

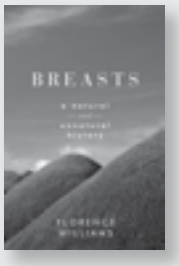


Judith Horstman, a Sacramento, Calif. freelance, practices what she advocates and keeps her brain busy writing about the brain. Her latest book taps into the most current research to unearth secrets about the brain as it ages. Neurologists and psychologists have discovered the brain from ages 35 to 65 years is much more elastic and supple than anyone previously realized. Far from disintegrating, the aging brain can continue to develop and adapt in many ways. Happiness increases, Horstman maintains, and while our short-term memory may not be what it once was, we gain better control and develop superior neural networks—something that was entirely beyond us when we were younger. The book offers new insights on how even an aged brain can repair itself, and the best strategies for keeping your brain healthy. It also shows how aging people can still achieve new level of intelligence, acquire new skills, perspective, and productivity; dispels myths about the aging brain-improvement; and explores what we should be aware of and what to expect as our brains mature. ■ *Press representative for the book is Samantha Rubenstein at srubenstei@wiley.com or 415-782-3213.*

***Out of Nature: Why Drugs from Plants Matter to the Future of Humanity* by Kara Rogers (NASW), published by University of Arizona Press**

Kara Rogers, senior editor of biomedical sciences at *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, sheds light on the multiple ways in which humans, medicine, and plants are interconnected. About half of all species under threat of extinction in the world today are plants. The loss of plant biodiversity is disturbing for many reasons, but especially because it is a reflection of the growing disconnect between humans and nature. Plants have been used for millennia in traditional systems of healing and have held a significant place in drug development for Western medicine as well. Despite the recent dominance of synthetic drug production, natural product discovery remains the backbone of drug development. Through stories of drug revelation in nature and forays into botany, human behavior, and conservation, Rogers explores the relationships between humans and plants, relating the stories of plant hunters of centuries past and examining the impact of human activities on the environment and the world's biodiversity. *Out of Nature* provides a fresh perspective on modern drug innovation and its relationship with nature. Rogers also highlights the role that plant-based products can play in encouraging conservation and protecting the heritage and knowledge of indigenous peoples. ■ *Reach Rogers at kerogers@nasw.org.*

***Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History* by Florence Williams (NASW), published by W.W. Norton**



Did you know that breast milk contains substances similar to cannabis? Or that it's sold on the Internet for 262 times the price of oil? Feted and fetishized, the breast is an evolutionary masterpiece. But in the modern world, the breast is changing. Breasts are getting bigger, arriving earlier, and attracting newfangled chemicals. Increasingly, the odds are stacked against us in the struggle with breast cancer, even among men. What makes breasts so mercurial—and so vulnerable? In this informative and highly entertaining account, science reporter Florence Williams sets out to uncover the latest scientific findings from the fields of anthropology, biology, and medicine. Her investigation follows the life cycle of the breast from puberty to pregnancy to menopause, taking her from a plastic surgeon's office where she learns about the importance of cup size in Texas to the laboratory where she discovers the presence of environmental toxins in her own breast milk. The result is a fascinating exploration of where breasts came from, where they have ended up, and what we can do to save them. ■ *Reach Williams at willflo1@gmail.com. Her website is florencewilliams.com.*

Global Weirdness

by Michael Lemonick

Global Weirdness began with a *New York Times* column by Thomas Friedman in February of 2010. In it, he wrote:

> …the climate-science community should convene its top experts—from places like NASA, America's national laboratories, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, the California Institute of Technology, and the U.K. Met Office Hadley Centre—and produce a simple 50-page report. They could call it "What We Know," summarizing everything we already know about climate change in language that a sixth grader could understand, with unimpeachable peer-reviewed footnotes.

An editor at Pantheon named Erroll McDonald thought this was a fine idea, and began looking for someone to put the book together. Eventually, he found Climate Central (climatecentral.org), a nonprofit science and journalism organization that he felt was ideally suited to the job. We did a proposal, and he liked it enough to give us the go-ahead. He thought it should be patterned after *The Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook*—straightforward, matter-of-fact. "Just the facts," he said, "and short, easy-to-read chapters."

So that's what we did, drawing on the expertise of Climate Central's staff scientists and on the peer-reviewed literature. In cases where the scientists don't know the answers to key questions, we say so. In cases where they're pretty sure they do, we say that too, and explain why. Every chapter was vetted internally by our scientists, then vetted again by an outside panel of experts. We ended up with general references rather than footnotes, mostly because the latter proved too cumbersome, and the text is probably too advanced for many sixth graders, but not by an awful lot.

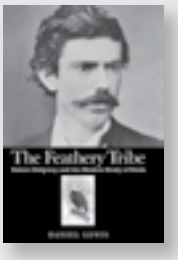
We're hoping *Global Weirdness* will prove to be a good, basic explanation of the science as it's currently understood, without any politics or advocacy to detract from that. ■ *Global Weirdness: Severe Storms, Deadly Heat Waves, Relentless Drought, Rising Seas, and the Weather of the Future.* Published by Pantheon.

Michael Lemonick is senior science writer at Climate Central Inc.

Against Their Will: North Carolina's Sterilization Program **by Kevin Begos (NASW), Danielle Deaver, John Railey, and Scott Sexton, published by Gray Oak Books**

The authors are investigative reporters, all of whom (except Begos) work for North Carolina's *Winston-Salem Journal*. In this book, they reveal a shocking and recent eugenics program in which for more than 40 years, North Carolina ran one of the nation's largest and most aggressive sterilization programs. It expanded after World War II, even as most other states pulled back in light of the horrors of Hitler's Germany. The victims were wives, daughters, sisters, unwed mothers, and children; even a 10-year-old boy. Some were blind or mentally retarded. Toward the end they were mostly black and poor. What began as an award-winning series in the *Winston-Salem Journal* led to an apology from the North Carolina governor and the first legislation in the nation seeking to compensate victims of eugenics, or involuntary sterilization. This team of reporters combined original research and interviews with victims with work done by historians Johanna Schoen and Paul Lombardo to produce a detailed expose of the eugenics program. After the series was published, the *Journal*'s editorial page began a campaign to bring attention to the needs of surviving victims of the program. Now available as a book, *Against Their Will* has drawn praise from civil rights leaders, historians, journalists, and the public. ■ *Reach Kevin Begos at kbegos@nasw.org.*

The Feathery Tribe: Robert Ridgway and the Modern Study of Birds **by Daniel Lewis, published by Yale University Press**



Amateurs and professionals studying birds at the end of the 19th century were a contentious, passionate group with goals that intersected, collided, and occasionally merged in their writings and organizations. Driven by a desire to advance science, as well as by ego, pride, honor, insecurity, religion, and other clashing sensibilities, they struggled to absorb the implications of evolution after Darwin. In the process, they dramatically reshaped the study of birds. Author Daniel Lewis, the Dibner Senior Curator of the History of Science and Technology, at The Huntington Library, in California, has written a biography of one of ornithology's key figures, Robert Ridgway, the Smithsonian's first curator of birds and one of North America's most important natural scientists. Lewis offers readers a world in which the uses of language, classification, and accountability between amateurs and professionals played essential roles. He also explores the inner workings of the Smithsonian and the role of collectors working in the field and reveals previously unknown details of the ornithological journal *The Auk* and the untold story of the color dictionaries for which Ridgway is known. Lewis, former corporate archivist for the *Los Angeles Times*, is also the author of *Beautiful Science: Ideas that Changed the World.* ■ *Reach him at dlewis@huntington.org.*

NASW President
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President's Letter

Writing for money, and for love

HERE AT NASW, WE WORK HARD TO MAKE SURE THAT SCIENCE WRITERS GET PAID, AND PAID WELL. FROM THE WORDS' WORTH MARKET DATABASE TO WORKSHOP SESSIONS ON NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS, WE'RE ALL ABOUT MAKING OUR ENTERPRISE MORE PROFITABLE. SO IT'S A REAL PLEASURE TO SAY THAT IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS THIS ORGANIZATION HAS DISTRIBUTED MORE THAN $200,000 TO NASW MEMBERS WHO APPLIED FOR IDEA GRANTS.

This idea of directing cash to members isn't new. For years, NASW has been sharing its modest wealth, via travel fellowships to the NASW workshops, to the AAAS meeting, and to the World Conference of Science Journalism. We've funded career grants for members seeking to learn new skills and subsidized the cost of the annual workshops.

But the Idea Grants program is our most audacious effort yet. It was made possible by an unusually large influx of cash from the Authors' Coalition, which distributes photocopying fees collected in Europe to writers' organizations worldwide. That gravy train won't be running forever, so we want to make sure that the money goes to people who are trying to do insanely great things for the future of science writing.

Check out the winning Idea Grant proposals at the NASW website and it quickly becomes evident that even though some of the grants are significant, they don't come close to paying the rent. Instead, 99 percent of the energy comes from NASW's chief source of power: The unpaid labor of volunteers. Instead, the grants are intended to provide the extra spark of energy to get a great project launched, or to take it to the next level.

Grants so far include:

$30,000 to The Open Notebook (**theopennotebook.com**), an online dialogue on the art and profession of science writing. (Siri Carpenter and Jeanne Erdmann.)

$35,000 to EXPLORE Utah Science (**exploreutahscience.org**), a project to bolster scientific literacy among Utahans, provide jobs to freelance writers, and train new science writers. (Julie Kiefer, Kim Schuske, Ross Chambless, and Jennifer Napier-Pearce.)

$10,000 to Science Writers in New York, The Hastings Center, and the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism to help fund a one-day spring 2012 Bioethics Bootcamp workshop (**bootcamp.swiny.org**). (Proposal by Carol Milano; see page 4 for project details.)

$20,000 to ScienceOnline, to fund travel scholarships and 450 complementary copies of *A Field Guide for Science Writers* at its 2012 conference, and video streaming for its 2011 session. (Anton Zuiker and Bora Zivkovic.)

$10,000 to University of Wisconsin-Madison to help fund Science Writing in the Age of Denial workshop (**sciencedenial.wisc.edu**) in April. (Terry Devitt, Sharon Dunwoody, Deborah Blum, and Jill Sakai; see page 1 for recap.)

$43,000 to SciLance Writing Group, LLC, to fund writing and editing of a comprehensive, up-to-date guide to freelance writing. (Kendall Powell and Thomas Hayden; read the proposal at **bit.ly/MxYo8h**.)

$2,500 to *High Country News*, to fund customized, in-depth training in investigative reporting techniques for the publication's editors. (Proposal by Michelle Nijhuis.)

$6,000 to DCSWA, to fund travel expenses and provide defrayment of registration fees and A/V support for the 2011 Professional Development Day conference (Submitted by Elia Ben-Ari and Andrea Widener; read the proposal at **bit.ly/Mw5mwo**.)

$900 to Northeast Science Writers (NESW) for video archiving for a February 2011 regional health and science blogging event. (Proposal by Carol Morton.)

As you can see, the winning ideas are all over the map—conferences, professional guides, experiments in web publishing. Those that have already come to fruition have been resoundingly successful. I'm sure that sooner or later an Idea Grants project will fizzle, but that's an inevitable part of funding innovation. We do require grantees to refund the money if they fail to meet benchmarks established for each grant.

Fortunately, there's still money in the cookie jar; we should be able to hand out about $80,000 in the 2012-13 budget year. So start dreaming—and applying.

Even though we're lucky enough to have this extra cash, NASW is still fiscally lean, and we're committed to staying frugal. The organization's finance committee (Ron Winslow, Mari Jensen, and Rick Bogren) keeps a keen eye on the books, and has slapped my hand more than once when I blithely suggested spending money on this or that. In June, the board agreed that we would continue our longstanding policy of not paying members for contributions to *ScienceWriters* magazine and the NASW website.

So, yes, we write for money. But there some things we do for love. And supporting NASW is one of them. ■

DAVIS COURTESY OF MARK D. COHEN

Tinsley Davis
Executive Director
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Why Your Vote Matters

What exactly does it mean to be an NASW board member? While the generous and enthusiastic individual volunteers who offer their services may change, the responsibilities do not.

The Role of a Board Member

Candidates come from different areas of science writing and bring different strengths to the table, but serving on any nonprofit board requires a baseline of service and understanding from each board member. Here's a quick primer on what you can expect your board members to know and do.

NASW is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization incorporated in the state of New York, and as such, the board is the ultimate governing body, entrusted with the care of the organization.

Importantly, the board ensures viability of the organization by providing oversight and asking itself these questions:

1) Is NASW fulfilling its mission?

2) In what direction should NASW go and how should it get there?

3) How do we provide leadership and continuity? Board members serve for two-year terms. A smooth hand-off is important. The board also oversees the executive director.

4) Is NASW financially sound? While the finance committee, led by the treasurer, undertakes financial planning (and we are very lucky to have two excellent non-board volunteers Rick Bogren and Mari Jensen who have taken the finance committee from 0 to 60 in the past two years), no board member is off the hook; each board member should have a working understanding of the budget, current accounts, tax filing status, etc.

5) Does NASW adhere to all legal frameworks? Board actions as a whole are held to three legal principles that rely on individual board member's actions:

A) Duty of Care: Show up, speak up, do your homework, exercise independent judgment (something journalists are already skilled at), act prudently.

B) Duty of Loyalty: Put the organization first by disclosing potential conflicts of interest, respect confidentiality, act fairly, and realize that even though you may not be speaking for the organization, as a board member, you may be perceived as doing so.

C) Duty of Obedience: Get familiar with the governance regulations and laws applicable to NASW and comply with them, ensure taxes and other forms are filed, act in accordance with the mission.

Board members are expected to be active and engaged: contributing to discussions of NASW business and actively participating in or leading at least one committee, amounting to an average of a few hours per week. Officers will spend more time, but the good news is that, unlike many nonprofit boards, NASW doesn't fundraise and thus doesn't expect board members to contribute financially.

Hope to see you in D.C. on Sept. 4, at the National Press Club, when the NASW election in-person vote is held. ■

Here is a rundown on NASW board duties. Board candidate statements appear on pages 10–15. Details about your voting options are on the back cover.

Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
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Cyberbeat

Less than two years ago, NASW

FINISHED A SWEEPING REVAMP OF ITS SCIENCEWRITERS (**NASW.ORG**) WEBSITE.

Shortly after that, the NASW board hatched a plan to enhance the site's content. Besides serving NASW's members, the goals were to attract more visitors to the site, raise the organization's profile, and reach more of the worldwide science-writing community.

A little more than one year later, we've had more than 500 new front-page posts, with links to web content relevant to science writing specifically or journalism generally. We've refreshed, as appropriate, much of our existing content in specialty sections such as "All about freelancing" and the "Marketing and publishing resource."

And we've hatched plans for ambitious new content, including a comprehensive listing of journalism grants, fellowships, and other funding sources—a much-needed resource in this era of transition.

We've also leveraged our content by cross-posting to the ScienceWriters page on Facebook, the @ScienceWriters Twitter feed, and our two most popular discussion lists, NASW-Talk and NASW-Freelance. As a result, we now have more than 1,500 Facebook "likes"—one-quarter of them from outside the U.S.—and more than 5,000 Twitter followers. That last number is more than double our current membership roster, and it's a strong potential pool of new members and new attendees for the ScienceWriters annual meetings.

As always, suggestions are welcome. If you see something on the Internet that you think should be shared on our front page, send a tip to cybrarian@nasw.org.

NASW-FREELANCE

What was your best moment as a science writer? Colorado Springs freelancer Matt Bille posed that question on NASW-Freelance in early May, and offered his own example to start the discussion.

"At the National Space Symposium last month, I saw that Dr. Neil DeGrasse Tyson would be signing his new book on space exploration," Bille wrote. "I mentioned I was lead writer on a history called 'The First Space Race,' and said we'd like to send him a copy. After asking who published it, he said, 'I have that.' Very cool."

Other list members quickly recounted their own "best moments."

From Germany, freelancer Alexander Hellemans: "I wrote a news article for *Science* about the use of chaos to encrypt messages, an experiment performed in France. A few days later I got a phone call from a researcher at Georgia Tech who worked in the same area, and he said 'I really liked your article; I´m going to call the guy you wrote about.' A few months later he called again and told me that Georgia Tech and the [French lab] had decided to set up a joint laboratory."

Brighton, Mass., freelancer Noelle Swan: "I'm just starting out, so I'm still celebrating small triumphs. A major milestone was sitting on the train and looking up to see that the woman sitting across the aisle from me was reading an article I had written."

MIT science writer David Chandler: "A former editor of mine was riding the elevator in a downtown office building, and overheard two janitors, in their coveralls and carrying their mops and buckets, having an animated conversation about a quite arcane story of mine, about black holes, that had run in that day's paper."

From Norway, freelancer and former newspaper reporter Nancy Bazilchuk: "I had written a five-part series on a Superfund site in Burlington, Vt. … The most gratifying aspect was perhaps when the acting administrator for Region 1, Paul Keough, came to my newspaper to meet with our editorial board … When he met me, Keough pulled me aside for a quick chat. His face went red and the veins in his neck popped out as said to me through clenched teeth, 'Will you PLEASE tell your READERS to STOP faxing me copies of your articles!'"

For more, read the "Best moment as a writer" thread in the NASW-Freelance archives: **bit.ly/K7qXXz**.

NASW-PIO

Does a big ugly grant number belong in a press release? The National Institutes of Health apparently thinks so, according to an April NASW-PIO thread started by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory PIO Mary Beckman.

"So I just got an interesting note from someone at NIH," Beckman wrote, "who tells me NIH wants PIOs to put the grant numbers in press releases they put out. I have no idea how they plan on enforcing this—blacklisting entire institutions?—but moreover I don't understand why."

The list mostly recoiled at the idea. Typical was this reaction from Penn State PIO A'ndrea Elyse Messer: "I've never seen a newspaper story with the grant numbers in it. This is absurd."

Maybe, but then Doug Levy, public affairs director at Columbia University Medical Center, tried to convey NIH's thinking.

"NIH's new and very robust online grants index (**report.nih.gov/**) searches the Internet for any mentions of NIH grants. If a news release has the NIH grant number referenced, then it will show up whenever a person looks for that research or something related. We've been including the NIH grant numbers for several months here at Columbia University Medical Center, and I've seen only positive results from doing so."

Beckman followed up by querying the NIH system for one project and was surprised by what she found: Not just details on the project, but a link to a press release about it and a "similar projects" tab.

"You know, it's only a matter of time before NIH will want to include real news stories in their database. They should call the 'news' tab something other than 'news,' since it will only be populated by releases, since those writers are the only ones they'll convince to include the grant number. I wonder if this system would work if the grant number was provided in metadata. It would make NIH look more mysterious!"

Messer again: "Mary, that's exactly what I was thinking. We could put it in metadata, but because of the way we publish, it will never get into the actual story."

For more, including a related discussion about quoting NIH officials in press releases, see the NASW-PIO thread "NIH grants" at **bit.ly/Lnc1GS**. ■

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News From Afar

WITH 670 PARTICIPANTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND OVER 450 SPEAKERS, PANELISTS, AND VARIOUS PERFORMERS USING DIFFERENT PRESENTATION FORMATS, THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (PCST) TOOK PLACE IN FLORENCE, ITALY, IN APRIL, AND WAS HAILED AS A SUCCESS.

The 12th of a series of biennial meetings organized since 1989 by an international network of academics, science communicators, and science journalists, this year's conference was dedicated to "quality, honesty, and beauty in science and technology communication."

Following the opening speech by the popular icon of Italian TV science journalism Piero Angela, the presentations offered a range of questions and discussion about the basics of science communication:

- "Pus, Pest, PCST, Plus: Will our models be complementary, in competition…or simply irrelevant?" (asked Cornell University's Bruce Lewenstein)
- Historical accounts of the birth of the first hoax about the life on Mars (presented by space scientist and popularizer Giovanni Bignami, who currently heads the Italian National Institute of Astrophysics)
- The use of images for conveying complex scientific concepts in an immediate way, without distortions (presented by photographer and visual artist Felice Frankel at MIT)
- Several panels discussed issues related to the revolution underway in the field of open-access publishing, including the implications for the use of embargoed press releases.

The well-tested model of the Science Media Centers (SMC)—already operating in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and the United Kingdom and is in various stages of development in countries such as Denmark, Italy, and the United States—was described and discussed in a very lively panel that

NASW Members Invited to Take International Survey

by Fabio Turone

What do you have in common with your colleagues in your country and abroad? Are there differences between a science writer and a science journalist? And between each of them and a science communicator? Are there ways for sharing ideas and resources globally, maybe in search of the "kick-ass science journalism" invoked by former President of the World Federation of Science Journalists and BBC science correspondent Pallab Ghosh?

The online survey "Know Thyself Science Writer," recently launched by the Association of Science Writers in Italy, is trying to provide answers to a few basic questions that will hopefully help better understand the needs of a profession that has been depicted as "under threat," and needs to adapt to a changing professional landscape, and needs to resist many kinds of outside pressure.

The online questionnaire is composed by some 20 questions that explore several areas, from basic demographics to the degree of specialization, from a description of daily work to education and lifelong learning, and includes a few questions on the use of social media and online presence.

The survey was preceded and inspired by the unexpected success of a similar questionnaire aimed at science journalists and writers from Italy: it was maybe with the ancient "Gnothi seautòn" in mind that 318 Italian professionals completed the online survey. An analysis of the first 250 responses was published, in Italian, in the magazine of the Order of Professional Journalists of Lombardy, that supported the survey.

■ ■ ■

The new survey in English is still open, and aims at collecting as many responses as possible.

NASW members are invited to take the survey at tinyurl.com/sciencejourno

Analysis of the final results will be publicly available.

FABIO TURONE IS THE EDITOR IN CHIEF AT *AGENZIA ZOE* IN MILAN, ITALY.

EARTH © PHOTODISC 1996; GORDER COURTESY OF JO McCULTY

put together Fiona Fox, from the UK SMC (the first such center), and Morten Busch, from the Danish Experimentarium, in Copenhagen (the latest SMC), who discussed the model with Scottish microbiologist Anne Glover, the newly appointed chief scientific adviser to the European Commission (the EU's governing body).

Fox described the way the UK SMC works—in cooperation with the international network—and recalled the recent experiences of controversial science topics hitting the headlines; scares that just a few years ago risked to spreading unscientific fears capable of surfing the front-pages for weeks are nowadays covered in a more complete and balanced way by most media, basically thanks to a better cooperation among scientists and media professionals.

The debate started to heat up after Fox stated that, thanks to the SMC, scientists are becoming more able of "setting the agenda."

Critical questions from the audience about "scientists setting the agenda for the media" were debated at length, echoing an equally heated discussion that took place at last year's World Conference of Science Journalists, in Doha (Qatar). There, in a panel discussion about the experience of international teamwork in the days after the Fukushima accident, the president of the Association of British Science Writers, Connie St. Louis, objected vehemently that the work of the Science Media Centers is making science journalists lazy, and even more prone to press-release-based "churnalism."

In response, Fox explained that from her point of view this is just one way of looking at a phenomenon that existed before the SMCs and is due to the pressure for producing copy at a faster and faster pace with fewer and fewer staff and economic resources. And many in the audience agreed that even when you start from a press release you can do good science journalism, and even when it is mediated by a third party, a good relationship with trusted sources can add a lot of value. (Full disclosure by the author: I produced and moderated the panel on the SMCs, and am taking part in the exploratory effort to establish one such center in Italy).

The next PCST conference will take place in May 2014 in Salvador de Bahia,

Brazil, and will explore "Science Communication for Social Inclusion."

LINKS

The full program can be downloaded from:

- **pcst2014.org**
- **storify.com/ehauke/pcst-2012-florence**
- **pcst2012.org/images/BookofAbstracts.pdf**
- **pcst2012.org/photogallery.php**
- **pcst2012.org/podcast.php**
- **sciencemediacenter.org** ■

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Our Gang

NASW members made a strong showing at this year's American Society of Journalists and Authors awards, in New York City, in April. **John Moir** received the Outstanding Profile Article award for "The Chameleon," which appeared in the *Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine. **Laura Beil** received the June Roth award for Medical Journalism for her *Men's Health* piece, "Who's Spiking Your Supplements?" **Holly Tucker** won an Outstanding Book Award honorable mention in the general nonfiction category for *Blood Work: A Tale of Medicine and Murder in the Scientific Revolution*. In the awards for Reporting on a Significant Topic, **Michelle Nijhuis** won for "Crisis in the Caves," which appeared in *Smithsonian*, and **Brendan Borrell** took an honorable mention for "The Gloucester Fish War," which ran in *Bloomberg Business Week*. Borrell also captured the Lifestyle Narrative award for "The Great Pumpkin," published in *Smithsonian*. Send congratulations to john@jmoir.com, laura@laurabeil.com, holly.tucker@vanderbilt.edu, michelle@nasw.org, and bborrell@nasw.org.

Beryl Lieff Benderly reports that she and a whole band of science writers will attend Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF2012) in Dublin, Ireland, in July as Robert Bosch Stiftung (RBS) Journalism Fellows. Among them are NASW members **Steven Ashley**, **Sid Perkins**, **Neil Savage**, **William Schulz**, and **Erik Vance**. RBS is a German charitable foundation, and ESOF is the biennial pan-European meeting dedicated to scientific research and innovation. Attendees discuss new discoveries and debate the direction that research is taking in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Send cheers to blbink@aol.com, ashley@interport.net, sperkins@nasw.org, nsavage@nasw.org, dcbill07@gmail.com, and erik@erikvance.com.

A dozen NASW members were among those chosen to attend the inaugural University of California High-Performance AstroComputing Center Science/Engineering Journalism Boot Camp, in June. Called "Computational Astronomy: From Planets to Cosmos," it was the very first journalism "boot camp" on astronomy to be held on the West Coast, and focused on pioneering investigations in astronomy with a computational twist. Attendees included **Rebecca Boyle**, **Camille Carlisle**, **Charles Day**, **Pam Frost Gorder** (hey, that's me!), **Heather Marie Goss**, **Lisa Grossman**, **Donna Hesterman**, **Earle Holland**, **Bruce Lieberman**, **Angela Posada-Swafford**, and **Elizabeth Wilson**, with **David Perlman** as a special guest. Write to us at beckyw31@gmail.com, cmcarlisle@nasw.org, cday@aip.org, pfrost@nasw.org, heathergoss@gmail.com, ligrossman@gmail.com, donna.hesterman@gmail.com, urd1234@gmail.com, bruce.lieberman@yahoo.com, aswafford@the-beach.net, e_wilson@acs.org, and dperlman@sfchronicle.com.

NASA Goddard Space Flight Center has contracted with **Lisa-Natalie Anjozian** for monthly earth-science features. Her first piece "The Real Story of Precipitation in the Southern Appalachian Mountains" went live in April. In it, she reported scientists' discovery of a surprising water source that maintains life in the Great Smokey Mountains. "Much of the water people counted on falls as light rain, and no one knew about it," she wrote. Read the story at **nasa.gov/topics/earth/features/smokies.html**, and write to her at lisanatalie@gmail.com.

Rick Asa has taken a new job as associate director for research communications for the Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTS) at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine. The NIH-funded center serves as a catalyst to bring clinical research to the bedside and community, and to serve as a two-way pipeline between basic and clinical research. "I will be focusing on communications and content marketing—which used to be called writing," he says, "to make

Upcoming Meetings

Sept. 3-6, 2012 • ***Kavli Prize Science Forum,*** Oslo, Norway.
kavlifoundation.org/kavli-prize-science-forum

Sept. 4-7, 2012 • ***International Conference on Science Communication,*** Nancy, France.
jhc2012.eu

Oct. 3-6, 2012 • **"Crisis or Opportunity? Health in an Age of Austerity"** (European Commission forum on international health policy issues for the next half-century). Gastein, Austria.
ehfg.org

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

May 5-8, 2014 • ***13th PCST (Public Communication of Science and Technology) Conference,*** Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.
pcst2014.org

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

the university, community, media, and other stakeholders more aware of the center, what it does, how it can help facilitate translational research." Get the scoop at rjasa@comcast.net.

Dan Ferber has a lot going on. He took top honors in the science category of the 2012 Green Book Festival Awards for his book *Changing Planet, Changing Health*, which he co-wrote with the late Dr. Paul Epstein of Harvard Medical School; he taught a spring semester course on science writing to undergraduates at Indiana University, Bloomington; and he'll return to the university to teach a graduate course this fall. "I am once again freelancing," he adds, "with a renewed focus on energy and sustainability." Find out more at ferber@nasw.org.

David Harris has started a new position at the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, where he will launch a new magazine front-section of the journal. He will be looking for freelancers for the section in coming months. Contact him at physicsdavid@gmail.com.

Based on **Sandra Katzman**'s poignant story "Cancer in Kyoto: a First Person Account" in the spring 2011 issue of *ScienceWriters*, the editor-in-chief of *Health Care for Women International* and a member of the board of directors of the International Council on Women's Health Issues (ICOWHI), asked Katzman to submit a paper analyzing her experiences for peer review. Her original research article, "Becoming Patient: A Path to Effective Participation with Chronic Terminal Cancer" will be published in Jan. 2013. In addition, Katzman will present this paper in Bangkok, in November, at the ICOWHI Congress. Contact Katzman, who lives in Japan, at s.katzman@stanfordalumni.org, for tips on why it's important to express anger to your doctor, and how to trust a nurse who speaks a language you can't understand.

In October, **Joely Johnson Mork** and family moved cross-country from Troy, N.Y., to Seattle, Wash. She continues to freelance full-time for various clients, including *Endovascular Today* (a Bryn Mawr communications publication), *V-Aware* (the journal of the Center for Vascular Awareness), and various institutions of higher learning. In June, she attended the Creative Nonfiction Weekend at Centrum, in Fort Worden, Wash. Her participation in this workshop was funded by an NASW Career Grant. "I am always open to new freelance projects," she says. "Jobs having to do with children, vascular health, cancer, and yoga are particularly near and dear to my heart." Send requests to jaycubed@earthlink.net.

Alaina G. Levine was awarded a number of fellowships this spring. She just completed the Logan Science Journalism fellowship at the Marine Biological Laboratory, in Woods Hole, Mass., and received a travel grant to attend the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings (see page 28). She was a visiting science journalism fellow at the Santa Fe Institute in July. Congratulate her on scoring a fellowship trifecta at alaina@alainalevine.com.

The Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting Program (SHERP) at NYU has a new internship coordinator, **Apoorva Mandavilli**. She'll take an adjunct faculty position at the university while she continues to direct and edit SFARI.org, a leading website for autism research news. SHERP program director **Dan Fagin** reports that current students are fully booked for summer 2012, but editors in search of interns for future semesters can reach Mandavilli at apoorva.mandavilli@gmail.com.

Phillip Manning has just completed the Cramster training program, the heart of which was solving and explaining two moderately hard problems in differential calculus. His certificate of completion qualifies him to take on his first assignment: producing step-by-step answers to 1,000 precalculus problems. He says: "My guess is that not every science writer would jump at this opportunity, but it suits me. Although I might change my mind after the first hundred or so." Write to him at pvmanning@mindspring.com to find out how to solve the vertex of a parabola.

Follow the hashtag #Akko2012 on Twitter to catch **A'ndrea Messer**'s exploits in Akko, Israel, throughout July. She'll work with a field school from Penn State, doing communications for the university and for the dig itself, and also doing "some plain old archaeology." She'll handle photography, website building, blogging, and podcasting, too. Check out the project blog site at **telakko.wordpress.com**, and write to her at aem1@psu.edu.

Clearwater Conservancy, a regional land trust in central Pennsylvania, is now under new leadership: **Steve Miller** was elected president in May. For over 30 years, the trust has protected some 5,000 acres from development, removed three outdated dams, and cleaned more than 3,000 tons of garbage from the watershed. Miller's goal is "to build on these successes and establish new, practical programs to protect natural areas in central PA." Address emails to "Mr. President" at stevemiller100@comcast.net.

Kathleen M. Raven, a second-year graduate student in the health and medical journalism program at the University of Georgia in Athens, will spend six months in New York City writing news briefs and feature stories during an internship with *Nature Medicine* from June until November 2012. Write to kathraven@gmail.com to find out if you can keep a science writer down in the heartland after she's seen NYC.

Richard Robinson has begun writing regularly for the ALS Association, covering new research developments for both professionals and patients. Most recently, he wrote about researchers' continued efforts to use gene discoveries to develop new ALS drugs, 19 years after the discovery of the first ALS gene mutation. Write to him at rrobinson@nasw.org. ■

ScienceWriters Welcomes Letters to the Editor

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

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

email to:
editor@nasw.org

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In Memoriam

Kenneth J. McCracken
Science, Medical News Reporter

We all knew him as "Mac."

His full name was Kenneth John McCracken, but that was much too long a name for someone who was such a gregarious character, such a big part of the *Post-Bulletin* (Rochester Minn.) newsroom from 1960 to 1988. So we just called him Mac.

McCracken, 80, died Tuesday in Chatham, Canada, where he had lived for many years. An NASW member for nearly 50 years, he was planning a "victory lap": A last trip this fall to the NASW meeting in North Carolina, plus stopovers at his old newspaper and the Mayo Clinic, which he reported on for so many years.

He was best known for covering both the police and Mayo Clinic beats, something he did with vigor and insight. He received a scientific writing excellence award from the Mayo Clinic chapter of Sigma Xi.

Although he left the newsroom 15 years ago, many present and former reporters and editors still remember him well.

Here are some of their stories:

"Mac was Mac, and Mac was just the way he was. He was always a professional," said Jerry Reising, who worked with McCracken as a reporter and later was his editor/boss.

While editors sometimes complained about his writing style, "he handled his assignments evenhandedly."

"Ken was a brilliant journalist, an avid storyteller, and a great friend whose emails I will greatly miss," said Aleta Capelle, who worked with McCracken for many years.

McCracken had many tales of celebrity meetings, having met or pursued many when they were in Rochester, including Randolph Scott, Ernest Hemingway, and Billy Graham.

"To celebrities, physicians, editors, police and sheriff deputies, and judges, Ken could at once be an inquisitive, determined, thorn-in-their-side reporter, a prankster, and a good friend," Capelle said.

"He was very gregarious, very friendly with people, very helpful," according to Bob Retzlaff, who hired Mac and said he covered Mayo and the police beat very well. "He was a great representative of the paper."

Jack Erwin, another friend and editor, said that when McCracken covered the police beat, he pretended to ignore some police reports that he found interesting when he and local radio and TV reporters were going through them at the daily police press conferences.

"When all the reporters had left the press conference, he'd go back to dig into what he'd seen as a good story, but had appeared to pass up," Erwin said. "It took a long time for the competing reporters to figure out how he got good stories they had missed."

"On my first day at the *Post-Bulletin*, I was assigned to go with Ken to the police station for the morning news briefing," said reporter Tom Weber. "I wasn't sure why we were leaving at 8 a.m. for a 9 a.m. news conference, but it all made sense when Ken stopped along the way at Richard's Roost for a breakfast of ham and eggs. 'Gee,' I thought, 'this job might be kind of fun.'" ■

(Source: The Post-Bulletin*)*

2012 Lindau Fellows Selected

Since 2008, the Council for the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings has provided NASW members, who are working journalists or freelancers, the opportunity to apply for travel grants to attend the annual Meeting of Nobel Laureates in Lindau, Germany. The funding covers airfare to Germany, hotel accommodations, and the conference fee.

Congratulations to this year's recipients:

- **Alaina Levine**, freelance, Tucson, Ariz.
- **Danielle Venton**, KRCB 91-FM and freelance, Paonia, Colo.

The 62nd Meeting of Nobel Laureates, took place from July 1 to 6, and this year's meeting was dedicated to physics. More than 25 Nobel laureates and 550 young researchers from around the world participated. To learn more about the meetings, visit **lindau-nobel.org**. ■

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Regional Groups

Chicago

Dark matter holds the galaxies intact while dark energy drives the accelerating expansion of the universe, scientists theorize. Astrophysicist Joshua Frieman, of the Fermilab and the University of Chicago, shed light on these dueling dark forces at an April luncheon meeting hosted by Chicago Science Writers. The meeting was held at the Medill News Service offices of Northwestern University. Chicago Science Writers have a partnership with Medill's science journalism program and the event was covered by student Eric Eckstrom, who wrote:

> Had Darth Vader been an astrophysicist, he would have been spot-on when he cautioned his son Luke not to underestimate the "dark side" of the Force. In some ways, it's not a stretch to compare dark matter and dark energy to this sci-fi idea. They are invisible, yet powerful, phenomena lurking in the shadows of our universe, which exert enormous impact on every galaxy.
>
> Frieman says that 70 percent of the universe is composed of dark energy, 25 percent is dark matter, and only five percent is normal matter. Science has yet to definitively "prove" the existence of dark matter or dark energy, and so the question is why we ought to consider them at all. Dark matter, speculated to exist because galaxies, behaves in such a way that indicates an amount of matter much greater than what is visible when applying the laws of gravity. The hypothesis is that there must be matter we cannot see—dark matter—to explain this disparity.

CLANCY COURTESY OF MARC LEIBERMAN

"Very faint stars, planets, and other forms of 'normal' matter [have been] ruled out: there isn't enough normal matter in the Universe to account for all the dark matter we infer," Frieman said.

In fact, it's the extra gravitational pull of dark matter that holds galaxies intact even as the universe expands.

To see more of Eckstrom report and read more of the work of Medill's science writing program, go to **bit.ly/KM7Rur**.

NEW ENGLAND

When the annual AAAS meeting was last in Boston (2008), the New England Science Writers hosted the traditional Saturday night party for fun-seeking scribes at snow-covered Fenway Park. With AAAS heading for Boston in 2013, NESW is gearing up for another surge of 500 or so science writers, PIOs, etc., expected to be in the AAAS newsroom next February. NESW steering committee member Richard Saltus is point person for planning, along with deputy Susan Spitz, and an able cadre of volunteers. For more information, or to inquire about sponsorship opportunities, contact Richard at richard_saltus@dfci.harvard.edu. Stay tuned for updates at **neswonline.com**.

NEW YORK

Science Writers in New York (SWINY) had a busy several months. First, the group launched its YouTube channel (**youtube.com/user/ScienceWritersNYC**). Videos of sessions from The Bothethics Bootcamp, in March, as well as from previous SWINY events are availalble. The group thanks SWINY co-chair Joe Bonner for his hard work on this. In May, Maggie Koerth-Baker, author of *Before the Lights Go Out: Conquering the Energy Crisis Before It Conquers Us*, gave a talk about her book at CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism. Koerth-Baker discussed how our energy systems were built, how they work today, and how they will influence what we can and can't do over the next 30 years. She also gave some behind-the-scenes insights into the process of writing her book. Also in May, SWINY had its spring social at Windfall Bar and Restaurant. In April, author/scientist Ricki Lewis spoke about her new book on gene therapy, *The Forever Fix: Gene Therapy and The Boy Who Saved It*. Lewis covered the history of gene therapy, focusing on the story of a boy named Corey Haas, who had his sight restored with gene therapy, and provided some personal insights behind the writing of her book. Leaving the SWINY board are co-chair Beth Schachter and Peggy Crane. Many thanks for their numerous contributions over the years.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DC science writers kicked off spring with DCSWA's annual Professional Development Day. Soren Wheeler, Radiolab's senior producer, began the event with a rousing discussion on "science as entertainment." Other highlights included book agent Howard Yoon describing the changing landscape of publishing; John Verrico, of the Department of Homeland Security, taught PIOs how to train scientists to deal with the media; and Monica Corcoran, of *National Geographic*, gave a crash course on photography for writers.

Also at Professional Development Day, DCSWA announced the winners of its third annual Newsbrief Award, which recognizes short-form writing. *Science News* astronomy reporter, Nadia Drake, won the award and $500 prize for her 310-word "Iapetus Gets Dusted." Drake also received an honorable mention for another piece, as did her *Science News* colleague, chemistry reporter Rachel Ehrenberg.

In May, DCSWA held a "Board & Brew": an open board meeting/happy hour to celebrate the inauguration of new DCSWA president, Charles Blue, of the American Institute of Physics, and to bid farewell to outgoing president Jennifer Huergo, of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

DCSWA's popular D.C. Science Café series also had a busy spring. In March, science writer and blogger Wray Herbert, author of *On Second Thought*, opined on myriad ways in which our brains make decisions, and how we can recognize certain behavioral patterns to prevent our brains from making choices that sometimes aren't best for us.

In April, microbiologists Liliana Losada, of the J. Craig Venter Institute, and Alison O'Brien, of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, took Science Cafe attendees on a tour of the body's microbial inhabitants. Later in the month, John Gillaspy, a physicist at NIST, revealed the invisible, lively world that occupies "empty space," or the quantum vacuum. And in May, the Science Café celebrated its one-year anniversary with a look at how nutrient pollution and climate change are affecting the Chesapeake and San Francisco Bays. Jim Cloern of the U.S. Geological Survey and Walter Boynton of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science explained how these two seemingly similar systems have responded very differently to these problems.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

NCSWA members, keen on slowing down the hands of time, paid rapt attention to research showing that some substances in the blood of the young may be able to rejuvenate aging bodies. So far, that is, in the aging bodies of mice. Stanford neuroscientist Tom Rando suggests it may be possible to identify biochemical stimuli that can induce stem cells in old tissues to repair injuries as effectively as in young tissues—research with potential implications in regenerative medicine and stem-cell transplantation. In a spring talk, Stanford M.D. and informatician Atul Butte shared his thrill at how science is being transformed by the data revolution. Most data will just gather dust. But it needn't. His lab has mined databases to find a gene that may play a causal role in Type 2 diabetes, and has established a potent strategy to identify off-patent drugs that are candidates to treat diseases. Probing the deep pool of open-access data for under-the-radar connections, his lab reports a new scientific paper more than once a month. "A 12 year old is armed with all the skills and tolls necessary to do this," he said.

NORTH CAROLINA

The Science Communicators of North Carolina (SCONC) have been hard at work planning ScienceWriters 2012, in Raleigh. The newly opened Nature Research Center will host the annual awards banquet. This 80,000 square-foot wing of the North Carolina Museum of Nature Sciences puts research in the public's view. NASW members David Kroll and Brian Malow

REGIONAL GROUPS continued on page 33

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The PIO Forum

SID CAESAR ONCE SAID THAT COMEDY HAS TO BE BASED ON TRUTH. BY THAT MEASURE, THE HUMOROUS COVER DESIGN OF THE 2011 ANNUAL REPORT FOR RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS AT OHIO STATE (RESEARCHNEWS.OSU.EDU/ANNUALREPORT) WAS BASED ON THE TRUTH THAT THE FOUR OF US THEN ON STAFF—EARLE HOLLAND, JEFF GRABMEIER, EMILY CALDWELL, AND MYSELF—ARE, FUNDAMENTALLY, EXTREME PERSONALITIES.

We are actually quite well balanced, if you consider that our dead-serious commitment to excellence in science communication is countered only by our insatiable appetite for puns, jokes, and general silliness. Or, as one of our interns once said with some amazement, "I've never seen people who are so passionate about their work, but at the same time find so much humor in it."

The substance of our annual report is, in fact, not funny at all. It's a detailed analysis of the news releases we produced during the year and the coverage they received. Like any annual report in industry or academia, it tells stakeholders (in this case, university leadership) that we're doing a good job, and (hopefully) drives home the point that we should be allowed to continue to exist. This year, we decided to wrap that medicinal message in the sugary coating of a cover image of a vintage sci-fi B-movie. The results went beyond what we expected. Our audience expanded beyond leadership to include friends, family, and colleagues.

I have to admit that the idea to publish the report on the web for the first time this year was partially based on my laziness. The assembly of the report has always been my job, and I loathe the tedium of creating a print layout. I also mourn the trees that lose their lives so that I can annually print dozens of copies of a sometimes 20-page document.

Further, I questioned whether anyone ever read the whole thing, and wondered if we couldn't capture more of our target audience in leadership if they could simply click on a link in an email to read it. A web report would be dynamic, I thought—we could link to our actual stories and the resulting clips to demonstrate that our achievements are concrete.

Likewise, the idea to construct a sci-fi cover was born out of my need to take a break from mind-numbing data analysis. The hours I spent here and there photo-shopping an old movie poster provided the playtime that kept me sane during a month of report production. We've always featured some kind of art on our cover—a word cloud, a map, or even a funny cartoon—and so the notion of a movie poster only seemed to carry our whimsy just a little bit further. Besides, Earle loves B-movies, so I knew he would approve.

Over the years, the length and content of the report have varied, depending on the disposition of our vice president for communications. We've seen VPs come and go. Some wanted a report that detailed every news clip we could track, while others were happy with a bare-bones list of stories with a checkbox to indicate whether each received national coverage or not. A particularly corporate-minded VP inspired us to write an executive summary so that he would have to read no further

OSU ANNUAL REPORT COVER IMAGE AND STATISTICS COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

…our dead-serious commitment to excellence in science communication is countered only by our insatiable appetite for puns, jokes, and general silliness.

OSU RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER SOURCES, 2002-2011

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
News Briefs	22	24	23	18	15	11	7	16	6	4
OSU.edu splash pages	12	10	14	10	7	6	5	4	3	1
OSU.edu Redlinks				8	7	24	26	35	64	85
onCampus stories	53	72	72	69	85	78	81	81	61	72
OSUToday stories	65	49	67	91	67	43	50	39	54	57

than the first page. Another who seemed particularly engaged with our methods inspired us to discuss in more detail what we do, and how we do it.

Still, our means of crafting the report has remained basically the same. We each make note of clips that our own stories generated and Emily tallies the various ways that our stories were used by different communications units internal to the university. Then we add up the raw numbers. Or, rather, I add up the numbers over and over again on computer and in pencil until I get the same answer more than once, then have Earle check my math.

We're doing our regular jobs all this time, so we make headway whenever we can carve out a few hours to work on our story lists. With all the web searching, counting, gnashing of teeth, and sharpening of pencils, this process takes about two weeks.

Then for about a week I retreat into my cube to write a seat-of-the-pants analysis of how we did. I periodically share the analysis with Jeff, Emily, and Earle, and get a sense of our best accomplishments, and things we want to do better. I examine Pew Research Center surveys and such to get a sense of how our communications strategies fit into national trends. During this dark, dark time for me, my three colleagues construct lists of their professional activities for the year, which we add as appendices to the final report.

Then it's a matter of compiling all that information, making sure that it reads well, and formatting it to look pretty. Emily, Jeff, and Earle each take turns editing the final draft. That week rounds out our month-long effort.

...wondered if we couldn't capture more of our target audience in leadership if they could simply click on a link...

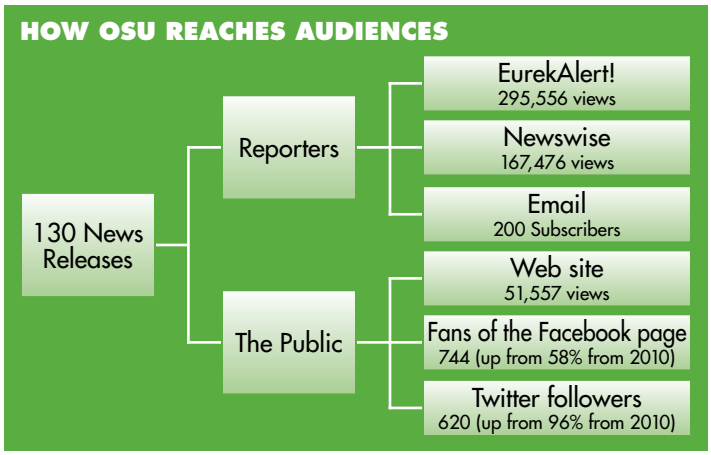
This year, with Earle's permission, I set about putting the report on the web. One of our new-media editors helped me install Wordpress on our server, because I already knew how to use it. I picked a free template that I'd used a few times before, because it allowed for a slideshow. The process took a couple of days of solid work, with me installing plug-ins to Wordpress to sort and display our data. I even did a tiny bit of CSS coding to make the slideshow run just right. I was so proud.

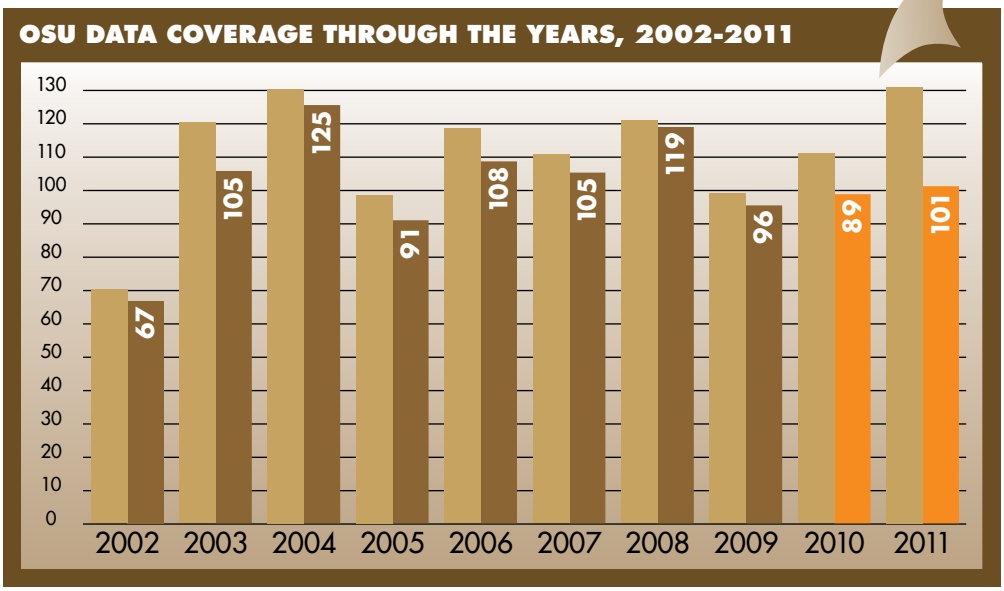
The response to our B-movie cover theme from senior leadership was positive. Our latest VP had just started her job when Earle showed it to her. He later described her expression as a few seconds of confusion, followed (blessedly) by laughter. Others around the university, in the administration, and in the Office of Research saw it and passed along compliments. Earle shared this feedback with some NASW colleagues, who also had very kind things to say. That exposure, in turn, led to an offer for me to write this column.

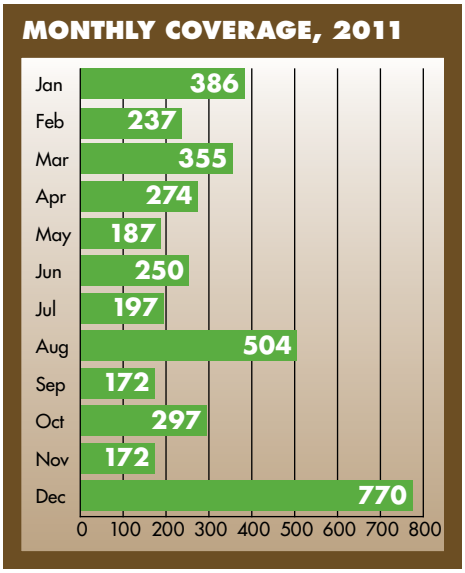
Since Feb. 13, Google Analytics indicates that the site has received 225 visits from 114 unique visitors, with a bounce rate of about 50 percent. That means that people have returned to see the landing page again, and—(gasp!)—half of the time, they actually stayed to read the report (or at least part of it).

Of course, when I proposed the website to Earle, he immediately knew the larger implication of that decision. Other universities would now be able to see exactly how many stories we write in a typical year, and how many get coverage. Our

PIO FORUM continued on page 33







- Number of stories
- Number with major coverage (old criteria)
- Number with major coverage (new criteria)
- Number of media mentions (via Meltwater News)

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**student member*

DENIAL

continued from page 3

really changed in the new age of denial. While all good journalists admit that we'll never be able to achieve complete objectivity, he still believes that we can all aim in that direction. Johnson took issue with the idea that transparency is the ideal solution for telling stronger science stories. He argued that perhaps if we are experts at what we do, maybe we need to worry less about transparency.

Johnson also talked about the difference between fact-checking and running copy past a source. He thinks that showing a full story to a source is not ethical fact checking.

Dennis Meredith shared a PowerPoint presentation about working with public information officers. He started with a cartoon that showed a researcher's simple correlation expanding through a game of "telephone," exaggerated though every step of the news cycle until it was blown way out of proportion. Jokes asides, Meredith encouraged journalists to ask PIOs some hard questions:

- Is the PIO part of the development office?
- Are there quirky administrative policies in place at the institution?
- Where does the PIO get his or her information from?
- What is the PIO culture at the institution?

Meredith also recommended pushing back against PIOs who mislead or mismanage.

Lastly, Dan Fagin tried to define how journalism ethics have changed in the new media landscape. He describes the fundamental changes in the media environment that allow news to be produced and shared

by anyone. Journalists are no longer the gatekeepers of information, and he warned against responding like a castle under siege. But, continuing with his analogy, if journalists come out of their castles, they have to engage in a world where most people don't follow the journalistic code of ethics. Fagin asked: "How can we learn to navigate that?"

Fagin also cautioned that it's very easy to create an "us versus them" mentality but stereotyping is dangerous, especially political stereotyping. There's a difference between correlation and causation, and there are certainly exceptions. With this in mind, he warned to beware of a partisan framework for our stories; looking for the difference between denial and outliers, because outliers require both respect and skepticism from us.

Lastly, the conversation turned to the new media landscape and the role that the next generation of journalists will play in a world where they won't be the gatekeepers of information. Both Blum and Fagin explained that so many new ways to communicate and new ways to reach an audience are perceived as opportunities by younger journalists who have joined the profession in the social-media age.

Robert Lee Hotz, of the *Wall Street Journal*, asked the first question from the audience, offering a passionate endorsement of Fagin's statement about refusing to accept a partisan framework. He said that it can be dangerously convenient to put on partisan blinders that prevent journalists from engaging directly with their readers.

Next, Joann Rodgers related that in her many years of experience at Johns Hopkins, only a handful of journalists ever asked her about who funds the research or other potential conflicts of interest. She explained that conflicts aren't necessarily bad or good, but they need to be part of the story, and she asked the panel how they would teach journalists to ask those hard-hitting questions. Fagin responded that perhaps it might feel awkward to ask these questions, but it shouldn't be, because it's how the world of research works today.

The panel concluded that these questions about the conflicts and the context that surround a science story are the places where journalists can succeed in the new media environment. Professional journalists might not be the first to break a story, but they can do the best job of giving a story the context it needs to be objective and relevant. ■

BIOETHICS

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"For a first time out, the Bioethics Bootcamp was extremely good," says Schachter. "What we learned was that added preparation could have made the event much richer and more accessible." [Translation: Moderators need to keep panelists on time in order to maintain the program schedule.]

NASW funded the event with a $10,000 grant, which was enough to cover expenses, which came to just under $9,900.

Lessons learned for next time: A day-long event demands a stunning amount of administrative work and detail.

"This event absolutely required a reliable, persistent, well-organized, highly assertive part-time onsite coordinator," says Milano. "Appropriate payment for such should be included in the budget for any day-long event."

"Also, it was difficult finding a company that provides one-day liability insurance, as required by NASW," notes Milano.

Among the 70 people who attended the event were science and medical reporters and editors, other professional science writers, public information officers, journalism students, and concerned physicians and scientists. Most attendees were NASW or SWINY members, as well as students from CUNY's Graduate School of Journalism, and NYU's Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting Program.

A side benefit of the workshop was recruiting new members to SWINY as a result of bootcamp promotion efforts. One of those new members has already volunteered to serve on the SWINY board. ■

LEGAL

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The safest thing to do as a publisher is to rent yourself some office space in a legally zoned commercial office building. That also can help make your emerging business look more legitimate in the eyes of potential customers and clients. But if the numbers don't work for you paying that extra rent each month, don't forget to give your local residential zoning code a look before you get too far down the road with your publishing business.

Because even if all you're doing is writing, you don't want a local commissioner you've just busted in an exclusive expose using that zoning code to bust *you* in retaliation.

Cover yourselves.

P.S. And L.A. County? Please, let's revisit that whole no "video production" thing soon. ■

*"Is your start-up news website legal?" OJR: The Online Journalism Review (***ojr.org***), posted March 27, 2012.*

REGIONAL GROUPS

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have been hired by the center to lead their communications efforts.

The annual science writer party, hosted by SCONC, will be a Halloween-themed gathering to mingle, dance, and unwind before the CASW portion of the meeting begins.

Tours have been planned for historic Beaufort, N.C., home to marine biologists, pirate bars, and a seafood feast after a ride on the Research Vessel Susan Hudson. The other tour showcases the NC Research Campus, a $500 million biotech hub in Kannapolis, and there will be a special portion on the science of NASCAR.

SCONC just past its five-year anniversary and plans are being made to celebrate this summer. ■

PIO FORUM

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batting average would become public knowledge. None of our colleagues, even those in public universities, shares that information, as far as we know.

We're not afraid to put our numbers out there. Our hope is that other universities will follow suit, because we believe that we can all learn from each other's successes and failures. In the end, we hope we can all become better at informing the public about the important research going on at our universities. ■

SW2012

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Candidate Statements are listed in this issue of *ScienceWriters*. Pages 10-15

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The week of August 6, NASW members will receive a personalized email that links to the online voting proxy.

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