



ScienceWriters™

National Association
of Science Writers, Inc.

Winter
2009-10

ON SCIENCE
BLOGS THIS WEEK
DEBUTS

NASW
BYLAWS
REVISIONS AND
CALL TO VOTE

PAMPHLET
EVOLVES
INTO BOOK

AUSTIN
WORKSHOPS
WRAP-UP

DOES
FUTURITY
HAVE A FUTURE

Editor

Lynne Friedmann

Editorial Board

Robert Lee Hotz
Paul Raeburn
Deborah Blum

Proofreader

Judith Schwartz

Design

Carol Kerr Graphic Design
www.carolkerr.com

Advertising

Tinsley Davis
510-647-9500
director@nasw.org

NASW Policy

Mariette DiChristina
mdichristina@sciam.com

Editorial Submissions

Lynne Friedmann
P.O. Box 1725
Solana Beach, CA 92075
editor@nasw.org

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National Association of
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P.O. Box 7905
Berkeley, CA 94707
Phone 510-647-9500
www.nasw.org

Executive Director

Tinsley Davis
director@nasw.org

President

Mariette DiChristina
Scientific American

Vice President

Nancy Shute
Freelance

Treasurer

Peggy Girshman
Kaiser Health News

Secretary

Ron Winslow
Wall Street Journal

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FROM THE EDITOR

Hard to believe the first decade of the 21st century is history. Wasn't it just yesterday that we were writing about the Y2K glitch? Now, it's the alphanumeric H1N1 flu virus.

Top of mind of many science writers these days is thriving in this time of change, keeping on top of Internet media law, forecasting the future of science writing, and better integration of social media as a work tool. All these and more were topics at the ScienceWriters2009 meeting in Austin, Tex., recapped in this issue.

Read about On Science Blogs This Week; a new feature on the NASW website. Compiled by Tammy Powledge, this weekly blog aggregates selected blogs of professional interest to science and medical writers.

In an act of horn tooting, the redesigned ScienceWriters took home first-place honors in the "Trade Publications: Association/Member Magazine" category of the San Diego Press Club 2009 Journalism Awards competition. Judges remarked on the publication's "bright, clean graphics and a fascinating mix of news and features."



Lynne Friedmann

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Explaining *Explaining Research*

BY DENNIS MEREDITH

The project began some five years ago as a revision of the outdated NASW booklet *Communicating Science News*, written in the last century. My wife, Joni, and I planned to self-publish the new booklet, so I began to explore the technology and economics of self-publishing. One product of this exploration was the marketing and publishing section on the NASW website (NASW.org/resource/publishing).

That exploration yielded advice that is key to developing a successful book: Identify target readers, figure out what information they want, and

create a book to give them that information. In the case of our book project, following that advice led us to realize that only a small fraction of our target readers, scientists and engineers, care much about reaching the media. The majority are far more concerned with other audiences: their colleagues, officers of funding agencies and foundations, donors, their institution's leaders, corporate partners, students, and legislators. The information our readers need to reach those audiences ranges widely, including how to create effective news releases, feature stories, blogs, websites, videos, etc.

Thus, the book began to expand in scope, even more so as I interviewed several dozen PIOs and science writers, who contributed great ideas and anecdotes. Although the book had grown far beyond a mere pamphlet, we still believed we should self-publish, since it would give us more control and a bigger slice of any income. And, we calculated that the available self-publishing services—for example, cover and interior design, layout, and short-run printing—would enable us to initially self-publish and market a book for a few thousand dollars.

We named the book *Explaining Research* and importantly, found that we could reserve the URL ExplainingResearch.com. In developing the book's website, we followed another excellent piece of advice: Make the site a major marketing tool. So, to show potential readers the book's substance we posted considerable content, including the table of contents, preface, acknowledgments, and introduction. Also, we put the references online, rather than including them in the book, to allow updating and expansion.

Ultimately, our self-publishing scheme went out the window when we realized how large the potential market had become. Our audience analysis showed there are about 6.5 million scientists, engineers, and physicians in the U.S. alone who might buy the book, not to mention the students in scores of science writing courses.

While it is economically feasible to self-publish a narrowly targeted book with a relatively small audience, Joni calculated that if

E*xplaining Research* (Oxford University Press, 2010), began its eccentric evolution as a modest booklet-sized manuscript that I planned to self-publish; but ended up as a 368-page book produced by a major academic publisher. The tale of that evolution, I think, offers useful lessons for authors who face a daunting new era of self-publishing technology and an economically depressed publishing industry. The experience certainly taught me quite a bit about how to navigate this new publishing world and emerge with a useful book and maybe even a bit of income.

proposed an initial contract, and we launched into negotiations that taught us a hard lesson in the tough economic realities of publishing today. For example, Oxford offered an initial advance of only \$1,500 and proposed to calculate royalties based on the net price rather than the traditional basis of list price. The net price is the amount that the publisher receives from the bookseller, while the list price is the suggested retail price.

Oxford also wanted to hold the copyright to the book. And if it requested a new edition, and I declined to produce it, Oxford wanted the right to hire another writer and charge the costs to my royalties.

Fortunately, we were alerted to the pitfalls of such contract terms by the book *Negotiating a Book Contract* (available from bookcontracts.com). And even more fortunate, a top-flight literary lawyer, Bob Stein of Pryor Cashman in New York City, agreed to negotiate the contract for me. Although he obtained far more favorable publishing terms, the final advance was still low—\$2,000 plus \$1,000

to help pay for cartoons for the book. Thus, given that I had to pay for research expenses, the index, lawyer's fees, and website fees, the book started out in the red.

I do not blame Oxford for its tough contract negotiations. After all, it needs to stay in business during hard times for publishers. Not long before we began negotiations Oxford U.S. laid off 60 people from its staff of 700.

I asked Stein whether Oxford's contract was typical of book contracts these days. He commented that, even though Oxford has been described as the most "commercial" university press, its contract form "contains provisions more similar to those used by other university presses and by textbook publishers than those of trade publishers; provisions which favor the publisher rather than the author." These provisions include (among others) those dealing with copyright ownership, later revisions of the book, royalty advances, and royalties. Stein emphasized that, especially given today's publishing climate, having a savvy negotiator is critical to coming out ahead in negotiations over such issues.

Because Stein was familiar with standard trade publishing

*...our self-publishing
scheme went out the
window when we realized
how large the potential
market had become.*



The 2009 NASW workshops and CASW New Horizons in Science meeting provided a wealth of opportunities to network, learn new skills, take part in field trips, and participate in NASW governance. Social network links allowed members to find roommates in order to manage travel expense or to chat with other attendees.

ScienceWriters2009 *by the*

BY NANCY SHUTE

The 2009 NASW workshops in Austin, Texas, drew 330 attendees from around the country. Attendance rivaled the 2008 meeting in Palo Alto, despite the grim economy and grimmer publishing industry.

Who was there? Here are the numbers, based on a post-meeting online survey with a 30 percent response rate:

28 percent university science writers or public information officers
23.6 percent full-time freelance writers
19.7 percent part-time freelance writers
15.7 percent government, foundation, or industry-based science writers or PIOs
11.8 percent students
7.9 percent part-time freelance editors
3.9 percent full-time staff editors
2.4 percent full-time staff journalists
2.4 percent science writing professors

Attendees' experience level ranged from science-writing newbies to silverbacks, with the majority having been in the business for less than 10 years:

6.3 percent currently students
25.2 percent 0-3 years science writing experience
29.9 percent 4-10 years
14.2 percent 11-20 years
13.2 percent 21-30 years
8.9 percent 30-plus years

What drew people to the meeting?

Networking and professional development ranked first, followed by increasing background knowledge of new events, social events, and a location with low travel costs. We science writers are frugal! That was followed by an attractive location, availability of funding, story-idea generation, and field trips.

And was it worth the trek? Yes, attendees said, rating the session an 8.4 out of 10. "Excellent meeting. Came home with

my mind abuzz," wrote one attendee. "I always find the meeting extremely valuable for meeting new people, learning science writing skills, and gaining background on scientific research," wrote another. "It was awesome," said a third. "I was really impressed by the caliber of the panelists attending and the openness and helpfulness of current science writers, as well as the facilities and the overall planning and layout of the meeting."

But nothing's perfect, least of all a meeting for writers and editors well versed in critical thinking. "The meeting was not as helpful as it was in the past when there were more traditional journalists to meet and develop relationships with," wrote one person. "It is now mostly PIOs talking to each other, which is not worthless, but the purpose is different." Several people commented on a need for more sessions targeted to the needs of PIOs, as well as more sessions on the writing craft. While most people welcomed the deliberately heavy emphasis on multimedia skills and social media, several echoed this attendee's comment: "I am sick to death of social media and web stuff."

NANCY SHUTE IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST AND THE NASW WORKSHOP COMMITTEE CHAIR. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT NSHUTE@NASW.ORG.



Sessions were followed on Twitter (#sciwr09) and reported on nasw.org by travel fellows. CASW briefings were streamed live; a video archive is available on casw.org, courtesy of the University of Texas at Austin and Ustream.



continue those relationships afterwards. (The #sciwr09 hashtag on Twitter was still generating traffic, two months after the meeting.) And there were requests for presenters' slides, which are now posted on the NASW website, along with audio slidecasts of three sessions, organized by volunteer Dennis Meredith.

These and the many other thoughtful and incisive comments from attendees will serve as the beginning of the planning process for the 2010 NASW workshops in New Haven, Conn. That's because the entire program is created and brought to life by NASW members. Please start thinking of must-have sessions for New Haven next November, and who you'd like to invite as speakers. We'll be calling for proposals early in the New Year. We're expecting a record turnout of science writers, given the East Coast location and the fact that we'll be celebrating NASW's 75th birthday. And contact me with questions or cavils about the workshop planning process; I've learned a lot from coordinating NASW members' efforts to create the 2009 workshops, and am excited at the opportunity to make 2010 more and better. On to New Haven! ■

numbers

Scheduling and logistics generated much comment.

Many people thought the combined NASW/CASW meeting was too long, stretching from the Friday night social session through a full day of NASW workshops on Saturday, followed by three days of CASW sessions, and field trips on Wednesday. "I could have done all in three days, instead of six," one attendee wrote. Some were frustrated that NASW's hands-on multimedia skills workshop was held on Wednesday, the same day as the CASW field trips, because of the expense entailed by the lengthy stay. The vast majority of respondents (81 percent) said a combined NASW/CASW meeting should run 4 days at the most. Here are the numbers:

3 full days	36.2 percent
4 full days	44.9 percent
5 full days	9.4 percent
6 full days	2.4 percent

In addition, attendees were befuddled by the separate paper and online programs for the NASW and CASW programs; there were multiple pleas for more coordination, even from attendees who recognized that the meetings are run by two independent organizations. "I appreciate that NASW is trying to maintain its journalistic integrity by creating a firewall between it and CASW, but these multiple printed programs and

websites make it very difficult to keep track of what is going on."

Technology could make advance planning and ongoing networking easier, people suggested. "Downloadable info for mobile devices," one respondent requested. "List of Twitter handles for attendees. For that matter, an attendee list." Several others suggested a more robust Facebook presence or a Ning group where attendees could network in advance of the meeting, and

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ScienceWriters 2009

NASW Workshops Recap

Thriving in a Time of Change

BY PATTY DINEEN



Dan Gillmor is very optimistic about the future of journalism—whether it includes journalists or not. At the opening plenary session of ScienceWriters 2009, and just a few days away from observing the 10-year anniversary of his first journalist-blog posting, Gillmor talked about mining the great potential he sees in the rapidly morphing ways that people can get and use information.

Gillmor knows plenty about the ups and downs—and silver linings—of change. He began the plenary session by sharing some of his own story: “A college degree on the 12-year plan,” playing and loving music, going to Silicon Valley in the mid-1990’s (“that changed everything”) and becoming a journalist covering business and technology. The weblog Gillmor started in 1999 is considered the first journalist blog, and in 2004 he published a book about citizen journalism *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*. He is currently the director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University and has written a new book, *Mediactive*, due out in 2010.

Expanding the view beyond his own experiences, Gillmor reflected on the past and swiftly evolving present of journalism. He presented a few iconic images to represent some of the milestones marking ways information has been recorded and distributed over the course of human history: cave paintings, scrolls, the Gutenberg Bible (“liberating the word of God from the priests who controlled it”), broadcasting, and electronics. He acknowledged the unsettling speed of change happening today in journalism, and the uncertainties and discomforts that such change can bring. “(But) on balance I’m very happy about the shift that’s happening,” he said. “We’re in an amazing constructive phase. Maybe messy, but I have no doubts that it will be wonderful.”

With energy and great optimism, Gillmor delineated some of the changes that he believes should be embraced and celebrated, not feared. First and foremost, he said, is that media is being democratized; effectively putting the tools of democracy—far beyond that of just voting—in everyone’s hands. News used to be about manufacturing and distribution, he observed but today, the process is fundamentally different. “We create stuff and people come and get it...consumers are becoming creators and collaborators.”

“Who is a journalist?” is the wrong question, he said. The

profession would be better served instead to ask, “What is journalism?” A silly YouTube video clip—no matter how often viewed—is not journalism, he said. But a person who captures video footage of tsunami flooding outside their second story window and shares it online is “committing a random act of journalism,” and is sharing important information with the world. A blogger who covers government better than anyone else is doing journalism. Some of the best information gathering may be done by an organization such as the American Civil Liberties Union, he noted. Above all, “news is becoming a conversation, not a lecture,” Gillmor said. “The first rule is to listen and not all journalists understand this.” These changes are something to celebrate, not fear or resist, he proposed. What’s more, the transformations portend even greater and more powerful changes to come in everyone’s future.

Turning his focus on what comes next Gillmor shared some insights and guiding principles.

- Don’t be afraid to change directions. Note Gillmor’s own path from music to journalism to entrepreneurship to helping students.

- Work with the best people you can: “My secret is to always work with people better than me.”

Journalists should also keep in mind some of the keys to successful entrepreneurship, he said.

- Ambiguity: Expect things to be chaotic at first and be ready to change directions on a dime

- Focus: If you don’t focus on the work, you can’t succeed

- Resourcefulness and speed: Use all the resources you can find

- Ownership: Take responsibility for the work

- Be innovative and take risks

Beyond that, he said, the process has to include three steps: try it, fix it, and iterate. Test your ideas. Find out what works and what doesn’t.

Most important, Gillmor noted, is that data be made openly available to all. “Put your data sets up and we can all play with it,” he said, adding that journalists should “take data and make it human-readable.”

About the perceived need to keep some information closely guarded, he responded “I don’t think keeping secrets is helpful. I believe in transparency. Journalism is far too opaque a trade.” He went on to say that he sees monopolies as market failures, not successes. He advocates for “letting everyone try everything and we’ll see what works,” and says that hoarding of information makes no sense.

Gillmor ended the session repeating his assertion that there have never been more opportunities to try new things than there are today. In the spirit of openness and information-sharing, he then contributed what may be the most important thing he has learned about what it takes to be successful: “Follow your passion. Make sure you love it. It’s so much fun to try stuff. It’s not fun to fail, but boy do you learn a lot.” ■

PATRICIA DINEEN IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST LIVING IN PITTSBURGH, PENN. SHE WORKS IN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF THE CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND IS THE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR FOR THE NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS INSTITUTE (NIFI) NEWSLETTER.

Media Law in the Internet Age

BY CHELSEA WALD

News organizations are more legally protected on the Internet than in other media, media lawyer Jonathan Hart of Dow Lohnes PLLA, told attendees at ScienceWriters 2009 during “Mini-Law School for Science Writers,” an NASW session organized by Peggy Girshman of Kaiser Health News.

The protections are thanks to the Communications Decency Act (CDA), passed by Congress in 1996, explained Hart, author of *Internet Law: A Field Guide*, who spoke from Washington, D.C., via videoconferencing. The CDA protects providers of “interactive computer services”—such as Facebook, Twitter, and news sites—from liability for user-generated content. In other words, Hart said, if a user posts defamatory or libelous content in a comments section, message board or other public place, the website that publishes the post is not legally responsible.

Importantly, that’s true even if the website’s owners—journalists, editors, or otherwise—edit the post. Four methods of editing are safe, Hart said: moving content for relevance, removing content altogether, editing content for indecency, and editing content for length.

Some lawyers still give what Hart considers outdated advice that online publications should protect themselves by never editing user-generated content. But that was only necessary before the enactment of the CDA, which is “designed to allow you to make those judgments as an editor...without becoming the publisher for legal purposes,” he said. “This is something that Congress really got right.”

Hart warned, however, that online publications are not protected if editors introduce defamatory content or change the gist of defamatory statements. For example, an editor can’t remove the word “not” from the user-generated sentence: “My husband is not an alcoholic.” He also warned that tightening prose and trimming for length, while allowed, could open publications to liability.

The legislation does not cover situations in which a website induces unlawful statements. For example, the legislation might not protect a website that encourages victims of sexual harassment to name the co-workers who harassed them and

CHELSEA WALD WAS A 2009 NASW FREELANCE TRAVEL FELLOW. SHE LIVES IN NEW YORK CITY, EDITS UNDERTHEMICROSCOPE.COM FOR THE FEMINIST PRESS, AND WRITES FOR SCIENCE, EARTH, AND OTHERS.

the companies where they were harassed, Hart said. However, the legislation would probably protect a news-gathering agency that asks users to report problems with their health care on a message board.

Of course, online publications are responsible for employee-generated content just as they would be in a newspaper or in any other medium, according to Hart.

Copyright issues related to user-generated content is covered by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Websites are given “safe harbor” under the act if they don’t know about the copyright infringement, get no direct financial benefit, are registered with the copyright office as an agent to receive notice of infringement, or if they act “expeditiously” to remove the infringing material when they are notified.

Journalists can excerpt from other works without violating copyright laws under the doctrine of fair use. But, Hart warned, “fair use is about as squishy a doctrine that there is in the law.” In other words, it is difficult to know whether an excerpt is covered under fair use. When considering whether fair use applies, the courts take into account the purpose and character of the use, the nature of the original work, the amount that’s excerpted and, most importantly, the effect on the market for the original work.

The idea that there are common rules of thumb about fair use is incorrect, Hart said. Some people, for example, may believe it’s always okay to excerpt a certain number of words or a certain length of video clip. But legal advice should always be “dependent on the circumstances,” he said.

For links to online articles, the emerging consensus is that excerpting a headline and a few lines of text—as Google News does—is safe, but that excerpting more may not be. Hart cautions that people should be especially careful about using music, which has complex licensing rules.

Workshop attendee and National Public Radio reporter Vikki Valentine asked Hart about a specific case she encountered at work: NPR excerpted YouTube clips of dancing animals for a video. The clips ran from two to 10 seconds. Was this fair use? Hart couldn’t be sure without looking at the specific clips, he said, but he did advise that shorter clips are safer than longer ones.

Hart spent the final minutes of his talk briefly reviewing several topics. First, he told attendees that an employer must use the exact words “work made for hire” on contracts if the employer wants to own the copyright to a freelancer’s work. Otherwise, the copyright defaults to the freelancer.

Next, he noted that a work doesn’t have to bear a copyright notice in order to be copy-

Grabmeier Lauded for Service to NASW

Jeff Grabmeier, co-chair of the education committee, is this year’s recipient of the Diane McGurgan Service Award in recognition of his many contributions to NASW over the years. He’s pictured here with the award’s namesake. ■



righted. However, he said, it's a good idea to put a copyright notice on one's own work, such as © or the word "copyright," followed by the date, and the copyright owner's name.

Finally, he discussed privacy laws. For example, if a website collects information on California residents that could be used to identify an individual, the site must comply with the California Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). The law is not burdensome, according to Hart. He also warned attendees to adhere to stated privacy policies or they could be accused of a deceptive trade practice or a breach of contract.

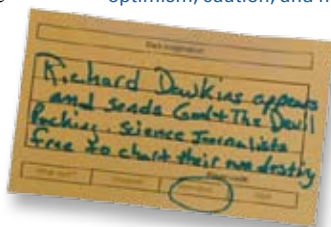
Session organizer Girshman asked whether a nonprofit site would be exempt from the privacy laws. The California statute uses the word "commercial," Hart replied, but it's not yet clear if that includes, for example, nonprofit sites that collect donations. Complying with the law is the safest course of action, he said.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act prohibits collecting identification information from children under 13 without prior, verifiable parental consent. This is very difficult to do properly, Hart said, so he advised attendees to avoid it altogether.

Finally, Hart reminded attendees that, online, "if you publish anywhere, you are publishing everywhere." That means it's



Science writers were invited to prognosticate about the future and did so with enthusiasm, optimism, caution, and humor.



possible to break laws in other countries even when adhering to U.S. laws. Fortunately, he said, some U.S. courts have declined to enforce foreign judgments when they are not consistent with U.S. laws. However, he told attendees that they should pay attention to the laws of countries where they have assets and wish to operate and that they should always carry libel insurance. "It allows you to defend the integrity of your product," he said. ■

Forecasting the Future of Science Writing

BY AMANDA MARTINEZ

A day-long game at ScienceWriters 2009 allowed NASW members to tackle head-on the question weighing heaviest on the minds of science writers everywhere: What is the future of our field? As a reflection of just how dire a media landscape fraught with so much unprecedented change has become, the game kicked off with the prediction of an exuber-

AMANDA MARTINEZ WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL FELLOW AT SCIENCEWRITERS 2009. SHE IS A MASTER'S STUDENT IN THE MIT GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SCIENCE WRITING.

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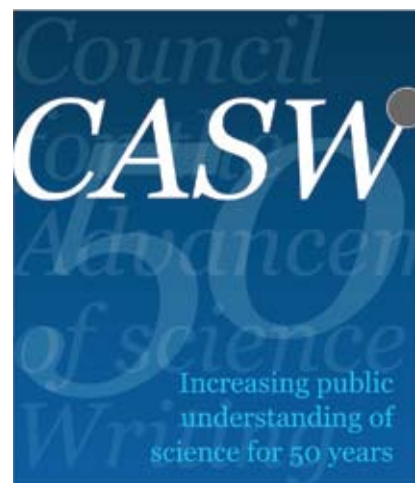
In 2010, the **Council for the Advancement of Science Writing** will observe its 50th anniversary.

Since its founding, CASW has worked to improve the public's understanding and appreciation of science and technology by conducting programs designed to enhance the quality of science and medical reporting and by fostering stronger relationships between scientists and the media.

We'd like to hear from you about CASW's impact.

To help commemorate our half-century milestone, the CASW board invites comments, observations and reminiscences from any and all who have participated in our programs, including:

- Reporters, writers and science writing educators who have covered or attended CASW's annual **New Horizons in Science**® briefings for science writers;
- Public affairs officers of the academic institutions that have hosted the 47 **New Horizons** briefings held to date;
- Scientists who presented at **New Horizons**;
- Recipients of CASW traveling and academic fellowships and science writing "residencies."
- Writers and editors who have participated in CASW's "traveling guru" program (aimed at improving local coverage of science) and "brown bag" initiative (designed to enlighten scientists about the practice of science journalism).
- Donors who have helped make our programs possible.



We're eager to hear from all. Please visit our Website, www.casw.org, and click on **50 Years of Science and Science Writing** to tell us what CASW has meant to science, science writing and the public and how we can best continue to serve over the next 50 years.

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ant deus ex machina.

"GOD REAPPEARS," the card read. "Offers moral order to science writers to make sense of overflowing data."

It was hastily followed by another card: "Devil reappears...offers moral corruption to science writers to ignore data and just make up good stories that sell."

The matter was settled by a third card describing the arrival of renowned atheist Richard Dawkins, who quickly restored to science writers their destiny.

The game was straightforward with one broad rule—any idea goes—and NASW members quickly got into the spirit. To augur something optimistic, you filled out a "positive imagination" card. Negative predictions were consigned to "dark imagination" cards. And neutral response cards allowed players to disagree with or build upon ideas. All cards were posted on brown paper, which allowed players to draw lines linking their ideas. By day's end, the paper—which covered a wall about 4 feet high and 20 feet wide—revealed a sprawling web of forecasts.

"I wanted to offer a venue for people to engage, to get their ideas out there," says David Harris, the game's mastermind and editor in chief of *symmetry* magazine. "I firmly believe that there's a healthy, exciting future ahead of us, but we need to put our brains to work in a really creative way."

Creativity was in ample supply, although it manifested in multiple forms. Some idea threads were posted in earnest. A debate about life sans embargoes explored a scenario that effectively "killed the hegemony" of peer-reviewed journals and allowed writers to focus on "accuracy over expediency." Another post turned the current avalanche of raw data into an asset, casting future science writers as "the ultimate fact checkers" and masters of statistics.

But other threads enlisted the game as an outlet through which NASW members could vent their fears, frustration, and exhaustion. These threads ranged from the hyperbolically hopeful (consumers suddenly insist on "analytical, thoughtful stories" that are "best, not first" and brains are rewired to be "sexually stimulated by solid science reporting") to the downright macabre (web terrorists erase all online journalism, the average attention span plummets to 1.2 seconds, and video footage-hungry journalists seek only the most charismatic scientists). A prediction that Google would hire reporters to "auto-tune" content for readers, virtually eradicating traffic to all other news sites, struck onlookers as particularly disturbing—perhaps because it seems so possible.

According to Harris, this built-in catharsis valve was all part of the plan. The mix of seriousness and fun, he said, was crucial to establish a safe space in which bold, new ideas could flourish. And in fact, the game did yield at least two novel roles that future science writers might fill: A "coder-editor" whose job would be to evolve publications in lockstep with advancing technology and a "visualizer," who, in a future where scientific research was transparent, would aid reporters in analyzing raw data.

Ultimately, Harris hopes the game will serve as a launching point for an online version to be continued among NASW members over the coming months. "We're at such a critical time with our future going potentially so many different ways," Harris says. "It's important that we continue to find ways to help shape it both for us and for society." ■

The Secret Life of Social Media: New Rules for Science Writers

BY BECKY OSKIN

Just dipping a toe in the rapidly changing social media stream is often intimidating. Newbies wonder, "Will the information flow drag me under? Are there trolls lurking ahead? Why should I even bother?"

To help writers understand how social media works, and why they should use these tools, panelist Davis Harris provided a breakdown of social networking sites during a session on social media at ScienceWriters 2009.

"As science writers, our trade is information," said Harris, founding editor in chief of *symmetry* magazine. "Information is increasingly flowing in new ways. We all need to know how these mechanisms work if we are to take advantage of them."

WORKSHOP *continued on page 36*

BECKY OSKIN WAS A FREELANCE BASED IN DAVIS, CALIF., AND IS AN EARLY ADOPTER (AND DISCARDER) OF SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS. SHE WRITES ABOUT SCIENCE AND HEALTH FOR A NUMBER OF CLIENTS INCLUDING *NEW SCIENTIST*, *NAVIGENICS*, AND THE *BURROUGHS WELLCOME FUND*.

ScienceWriters 2010

AN EVENT PREVIEW

Mark your calendar for the 2010 annual meetings of the NASW and the CASW at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., Nov. 4-9.

ScienceWriters 2010 will mark important milestones for both groups: The 75th anniversary of the founding of NASW and 50th anniversary of the start of CASW.

Workshops and other events are in the planning stages. If you have a suggestion for an NASW workshop topic, please contact Nancy Shute (nancy@nancyshute.com), chair of the 2010 workshop committee. And check throughout the year with www.sciencewriters2010.org and <http://www.casw.org> for more information on New Haven.

■ ■ ■

CASW CLIPPINGS SOUGHT

As part of its 50th anniversary celebration, CASW is looking for story clips filed from its annual New Horizons of Science Briefings, held since 1960. Our archive is rather incomplete. We'd like to use examples of coverage in a photo-montage of datelines, headlines, lead paragraphs, and of course bylines. We also plan to bind the lot into a book for browsing during this year's meeting in New Haven and other events.

Any year is fine; earlier years particularly so. There is no hard deadline, but by the end of March please let me know of any clips you can copy and share. Thanks! Charlie Petit, CASW vice president (petit@nasw.org). ■



Scholarly Pursuits

Academic research relevant to the workaday world of science writing

BY RICK BORCHELT

“Know Thy Audience” is key to effective communication. Researchers at George Mason and Yale have done a benchmark study of audiences for climate change communication with important ramifications for other controversial science issues.



Campo, Shelly et al. (2009). Using evidence-based research to redirect a conversation: newspapers’ coverage of strategies to address college binge drinking. *Public Relations Review* 35 (2009): 411-418.

In public relations (as in communications overall), there’s a huge disconnect between what academics find in their research and what public relations practitioners do in their jobs. Bridging that gap is one of the reasons I write this column. But seldom is the disconnect so clearly revealed as in Campo’s analysis of campaigns to stem college binge drinking. In order to get a sense of what strategies colleges were

...a huge disconnect between what academics find in their research and what public relations practitioners do in their jobs.

using to combat binge drinking, and to see how those strategies were covered in the media, the team followed coverage in 32 major newspapers for 10 years. What they wanted to see was whether the strategies health scientists knew were ineffective continued to receive media attention, or whether newspapers were exercising some kind of “quality control” when reporting about college binge drinking. As the researchers note, “news coverage indirectly impact[s] youth binge drinking behavior by mediating policy actions and changes in social acceptability of the behavior. Therefore, it is important to examine the messages that the public and college administrators may receive through media.”

Media coverage over the decade of analysis (about 250 articles), they found, focused disproportionately on strategies that don’t work well, in particular student awareness campaigns and more robust law enforcement. In general, the strategies that the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism touts as the most effective, such as the use of motivational interviewing and the building of campus coalitions that include students, seldom attracted coverage. This isn’t necessarily the fault of reporters, they

note: “The media may be focusing attention on actual health interventions on college campuses rather than covering those that have the strongest scientific evidence, which, unfortunately, many colleges are not choosing to implement.”

Clearly, the best fix here is for colleges and others to implement better strategies. But if they don’t, do reporters and PIOs have a responsibility to point this out? The authors suggest that health advocates need to work more closely with public relations staff at their institutions and with the media to increase coverage of evidence-based strategies to control binge drinking. As they explain, “public relations academics and practitioners, who develop strategic public relations plans founded on evidence-based practices that emerge from existing research, are more likely to gain greater reception and support for their offerings from other professionals and advocacy groups working toward similar goals.”



Maibach, Edward et al. (2008). Global warming’s six Americas: an audience segmentation analysis. *Yale Project on Climate Change/George Mason University Center for Climate Change. <http://research.yale.edu/environment/climate/>.*

By the time this issue of ScienceWriters reaches readers, the UN’s Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change will be history. The controversy over e-mail by climate researchers hacked by climate change deniers will probably be yesterday’s news. But news coverage, op-eds, and editorials—from all sides of the debate, will continue unabated. Few if any of these will be informed by an understanding of how different segments of the public audience seek out, attend to, or respond to media messages about climate change.

“Know thy audience” is the first rule of public relations, but surprisingly few campaigns are based on good formative

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



RICK BORCHELT IS DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS IN THE USDA OFFICE OF RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS.

evidence to figure out who their audiences are, how they seek and process information, and what kind of messages different segments of the audience find persuasive. The teams from George Mason and Yale have done a truly elegant analysis of the audiences for messages about climate change, which they find break down into six basic categories—or Six Americas—based on their underlying beliefs about climate change, the social networks that inform and

...few campaigns are based on good formative evidence to figure out who their audiences are...

reinforce their beliefs, and the messages that are most likely to affect these beliefs.

The Six Americas, they say, break down as follows: The Alarmed (18%) are fully convinced of the reality and seriousness of climate change and are already taking individual, consumer, and political action to address it. The Concerned (33%)—the largest of the six Americas—are also convinced that global warming is happening and a serious problem, but have not yet engaged the issue personally. Three other Americas—the Cautious (19%), the Disengaged (12%) and the Doubtful (11%)—represent different stages of understanding and acceptance of the problem, and none are actively involved. The final America—the Dismissive (7%)—are very sure it is not happening and are actively involved as opponents of a national effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Each audience needs a different communication approach to reach and engage them in dialogue about climate change. The Concerned, for example, “have average rates of media use. They say that they need additional information about global warming before firmly making up their minds about the issue, but they tend not to pay much attention to information about global warming or to take steps to seek it out. They are most likely to trust scientists as a source of information about global warming, followed by environmental organizations, Al Gore, and Barack Obama.” To reach this audience, the authors find, communicators need to know that its members “pay roughly average attention to political news of all types, with the exception of health news and the local weather, to

which they pay a bit more than average amounts of attention. They are somewhat more likely than average to watch national nightly news on (or use the websites of) CBS, ABC, or NBC, to watch MSNBC, CNN, local TV news, and are somewhat less likely than average to listen to Rush Limbaugh.”

Six Americas goes through robust and detailed discussions of the demographics, beliefs, social networks, and media use for all six audience segments and offers a rich blueprint for developing communications strategies for the full range of audiences. Engaging the Dismissive, for example, is unlikely to be productive if the goal is to get their support of climate change mitigation; however, the report suggests, attempts to belittle or challenge their beliefs will almost surely be counterproductive and may even serve to cement their anti-climate-change beliefs.

While Six Americas is specifically about climate change, its implications reach far beyond climate to communicating about controversial, or “contested,” science in general. Communications programs to reach citizens about controversial issues in science, health, and technology would do well to develop similar audience typologies for their intended audiences before the first word of the first message is crafted.

■ ■ ■

Woloshin, S. et al. (2009). Press releases by academic medicine centers: not so academic? *Annals of Internal Medicine* 150:613-618.

Media reportage of medical research is routinely criticized for being sensational, and a favorite sport at NASW meetings is assigning blame either to reporters or to PIOs for this failure. In this study of news releases produced during 2005 by 20 major academic medical centers (the top 10 and the bottom 10, according to rankings published by *U.S. News & World Report*), Woloshin and colleagues looked to see both how news release production and quality

SCHOLARLY continued on page 37

Media reportage of medical research is routinely criticized for being sensational...

ON SCIENCE BLOGS THIS WEEK

On Science Blogs This Week is a new feature on the NASW website—a blog about selected blogs of professional interest to science and medical writers. A new post goes up at www.nasw.org, the NASW website’s public home page, on Friday mornings.

The point of On Science Blogs This Week is to filter at least a small part of the flood of information that comes across the desks and computer screens of NASW members every day. It’s a roundup of selected blog posts likely to be helpful to science writers. The posts provide background and analysis on current scientific and medical topics, insider observations from scientists about research, and commentary—not always laudatory—on specific examples of science and medical blogging.

The new NASW blog started Nov. 13. Topics and bloggers covered already have been quite diverse. They have included the live, real-time sectioning of H.M.’s brain at the University of California, San Diego (H.M. was a patient famous among neuroscientists for being unable to form short-term memories.) On Science Blogs This Week has also covered climate change disputes, birding, health care policy such as controversies over mammograms and other diagnostic screening, stimulus money spending on science, ownership of genetic data, birthday celebrations for *On the Origin of Species*, recent successes at the Large Hadron Collider, and more.

Every week the blog also analyzes critiques of science and medical writing. On Science Blogs This Week is written by Tabitha M. Powledge, known to all as Tammy. For several years, she wrote The Free Lance column for *ScienceWriters*.

Go to nasw.org on Fridays for a new edition of On Science Blogs This Week. Or sign up for the RSS feed (<http://www.nasw.org/rss.xml>) and get a link to each new edition automatically. And, if you blog and haven’t let Tammy know about it yet, please do. Contact her at tam@nasw.org. ■

Why Futurity Fails

BY EARLE HOLLAND

My problem with Futurity isn't largely with what it's doing but instead with what it purported to do.

Born as the idea of a handful of senior university PR officials and billed as an alternative source for science news in a world supposedly hemorrhaging science writers, the Futurity website (www.futurity.org) offers up four or five new research stories daily, fresh from the country's major research universities.

Officially christened in Sept. 2009, (although it had been in a beta/trial mode for several months earlier), Futurity shoved its way into the public eye through a major PR roll-out coordinated among the 40-plus institutions that had signed onboard. State and regional newspapers ran stories that the local research university had joined this noble consortium intent on filling an alleged gap in science reporting. The member institutions rushed out news releases, most varying little from an apparently pre-arranged template, announcing that XYZ University was a "founding member" of Futurity.

EARLE HOLLAND IS ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY.

Any fair assessment of the program's kick-off would brand it an exemplary success, marred only by the conflict of two unexpected factors.

One was its name. "Futurity" is an odd moniker more akin to Stephen Colbert's lexicon than a web-based science site, and it shared the news spotlight with a well-known horserace for two-year-old quarter horses—The All American Futurity race—also held in September.

The other deflating factor was me. In an e-mail at the end of that month, University of Rochester Vice President for Communications Bill Murphy had written "Every time I turn around, Mike Schoenfeld is sending me a blog entry in which you are blasting Futurity. You turn up in Futurity clips as often as we do."

Murphy, Schoenfeld—Duke University's vice president for Public Affairs and Government Relations—and a couple of other peers were the brain trust behind Futurity. Murphy was a friend and former boss and, while I've known many of the project's leaders for years, it was clear I was a major pariah in their eyes. I was following the conversation in the blogosphere and when stories appeared announcing the start of Futurity, I quickly offered an alternative view. While news websites and blogs reported on the project, raising questions of whether it was "news" or "PR," I was commenting on what I saw as shortcomings.

Murphy, et al., just couldn't see what my problem was with the project. Why wasn't I onboard?

About the time that Futurity was first gaining notice, I got three e-mails from senior leadership at my university asking why we weren't a player in what seemed to be an obvious opportunity to tout Ohio State research. Colleagues at other major research institutions were facing similar questions and the pressure to "get onboard" was mounting.

There were, however, substantive problems with how the website worked and with what had evolved over the years as Ohio State's effective research communications effort:

- The Futurity staff was allowed to alter the content of the research stories institutions submitted, based on their own discretion, and no approval of any changes was included in their policies. This meant that stories carefully written and vetted by researchers to ensure accurate reporting could be modified in ways that

misrepresented the studies;

- No one on the Futurity staff was an experienced science writer;

- Hyperlinks included in Futurity's versions of an institution's stories initially directed readers to the main institutional website rather than to the institution's original version of the research story, suggesting Futurity's leadership was more interested in driving web traffic to the universities than it was directing readers to the original content;

- The annual cost for participating in Futurity was \$2,000, substantially more than annual membership in EurekAlert! and comparable to annual costs for Newswise. Both services distribute an institution's research releases, unaltered, to thousands of reporter-types.

Once my bosses heard these and another half-dozen objections I voiced about Futurity, the pressure to participate evaporated

In the beginning, the project's backers touted it as an alternative to conventional science reporting, a newswire of sorts to fill in the gap left by laid-off science writers in the national media. Months later, they acknowledged that Futurity was basically an aggregator of such stories, rather than the suggested journalistic alternative.

During a session on online magazines at this fall's NASW workshops, Futurity staffer Jenny Leonard offered an overview of what the project's intentions were. In a conversation prior to her talk, she acknowledged that Futurity originally had linked to an institution's main website, "but that has changed—we now link to the story." Links within the Futurity version of stories now do point to original releases but the links at the end of Futurity's story offerings still point readers back to either the institutional homepage or to the institution's "news" page.

Regardless of other signals, it's hard not to see that linkage decision as anything more than a conscious effort to drive traffic to the institution rather than to the specific research in question.

In his e-mail admonishing me in September, Murphy argued that I needed to "stay up to date" if I was going to continue my criticisms. He wrote: "We have also changed the editorial process to include an e-mail back to a university's

FUTURITY continued on page 37

Searching for Job Search Deductions

BY JULIAN BLOCK

Despite rising unemployment, Congress has done nothing to ease the tight restrictions on claiming deductions for job-search expenses. The tax code limits write-offs for job hunting expenditures and most other miscellaneous expenses that are claimed as itemized deductions on Schedule A of Form 1040.

The IRS broadly defines miscellaneous expenses. They include outlays for such items as unreimbursed employee business expenses and fees for advice on taxes or investments. The IRS allows deductions for miscellaneous expenses only to the extent that, in the aggregate, they exceed two percent of adjusted gross income (AGI), the amount entered on the last line of the first page of the 1040 form.

Let's say that Hester Dimmesdale works in publishing and fears she soon will be sacked. Hester anticipates an AGI of \$100,000 and that she will shell out at least \$3,000 for job hunting and other miscellaneous expenses, such as her payments to NASW for membership dues and attending annual and regional meetings.

...take deductions only for expenses to find a new job in the same line of work.

Hester has to forfeit any deduction on Schedule A for the first \$2,000 of her miscellaneous expenses (two percent of \$100,000). So her allowable write-off shrinks from \$3,000 to \$1,000. It evaporates completely if she runs afoul of the alternative minimum tax, which disallows most miscellaneous expenses or if Hester decides to use the standard deduction, rather than itemize.

Her allowable search expenses include job agency and career counselor fees, resumes, postage for mailing applications, and ads in newspapers, trade magazines and websites. Hester can even deduct travel and hotel costs for interviews (to the extent she is not reimbursed by prospective employers).

On the down side, Hester can take deductions only for expenses to find a new job in the same line of work. The IRS allows those deductions even if she decides against leaving her present position or fails to find another one. But it disallows deductions for looking for new employment in a *different* line of work. This holds true even if her quest succeeds.

If Hester is unemployed when looking for work, the IRS says that her occupation is what she did for her last employer. Too bad if hardly any jobs are available in her previous field of work.

All is not lost if jobless Hester previously worked at different jobs. Presumably, it's okay for her to cite any of those past positions, provided it was recent, to establish that she seeks a new job in the same line of work.

The IRS requires Hester's previous job to be a recent one because it deep-sixes deductions when there is a "substantial break" between the previous one and her present hunt for work. An otherwise engaged agency has yet to explain how much time must elapse before a spell of unemployment becomes sufficiently lengthy to justify disallowance of job-search deductions. Nevertheless, it prohibits any write-offs when there is a substantial break between Hester's last job and her present search. It also nixes deductions when Hester enters the job market for the first time because, for example, she is just out of college.

To illustrate, the IRS bestows no tax balm on a teacher who switches to selling for a few years and now wants to resume teaching. A compassion-challenged IRS is similarly unmoved by the plight of a woman who leaves work and settles in for several years as a stay-at-home mother or as a caregiver for an ailing parent or other

family member, until her husband's job loss obliges her to look for work.

If the IRS questions her deductions, the burden is on Hester to show that they qualify, particularly outlays for unsuccessful hunts and out-of-town interviews. She should save records of all of her spending and correspondence, including proof of the job openings and names of interviewers. ■

A Strategic Partnership

In early December, National Geographic Digital Media (NGDM) and ScienceBlogs.com announced the formation of a strategic partnership spanning technology, advertising, business, and content development.

Through this partnership, **National Geographic.com** and **ScienceBlogs.com** will create and exchange content through connected social media features, as well as work together to create new multimedia programming for both sites. ScienceBlogs.com will feature content from National Geographic bloggers and National Geographic explorers. The site also will have access to National Geographic's news resources and will increase its exposure through NGDM's worldwide audience. NGDM, in turn, will feature content from ScienceBlogs.com and SB bloggers on Nationalgeographic.com.

In addition, NGDM will lead advertising sales on ScienceBlogs.com, adding a social media platform to the portfolio and giving advertisers access to an audience of more than 2 million young, educated, and digitally savvy readers. Under the terms of the agreement, NGDM will acquire a minority stake in ScienceBlogs, LLC, parent company of ScienceBlogs.com.

NGDM and ScienceBlogs.com's initial rollout will feature blog content and applications that highlight green, science, and technology subject matter. ■

(source: news release)

JULIAN BLOCK, AN ATTORNEY IN LARCHMONT, N.Y., HAS BEEN CITED AS "AN ACCOMPLISHED WRITER ON TAXES" (WALL STREET JOURNAL). HIS BOOKS INCLUDE *TAX TIPS FOR WRITERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, ARTISTS*, AVAILABLE AT WWW.JULIANBLOCKTAXEXPERT.COM. COPYRIGHT 2010 JULIAN BLOCK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

BOOKS

BY AND FOR MEMBERS



Ruth Winter
44 Holly Drive, Short Hills, NJ 07078
or e-mail ruthwrite@aol.com

Send material about new books

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

Explaining Research: How to Reach Key Audiences to Advance Your Work by Dennis Meredith (NASW), published by Oxford University Press



Drawing on knowledge gleaned from a 40-year career in research communication, Dennis Meredith shows researchers and communication practitioners how to use a wide range of communication tools and techniques to disseminate discoveries to key audiences: colleagues, institutional leaders, legislators, corporate sponsors, funding agency administrators, media, and the public. *Explaining Research* shows how to use websites, blogs, videos, webinars, old-fashioned lectures, news releases, and lay-level articles to reach audiences, emphasizing how to understand each audience and effectively tailor communications to its unique needs. Among “how to” topics covered: develop a communication “strategy of synergy,” produce news releases that attract media coverage, give clear media interviews, serve as a public educator in schools and science centers, and protect yourself from communication traps. Meredith is a former NASW board member and wrote the NASW handbook on media relations, *Communicating Science News*. He was a creator and developer of EurekaAlert!, working with AAAS to establish this international research news service. Meredith can be reached at meredith@nasw.org, dennis@glyphus.com, or 336-973-4793. PR for the book is Mary Kaufman at mary.kaufman@oup.com.

The Case For Pluto: How a Little Planet Made a Big Difference by Allan Boyle (NASW), published by Wiley & Sons



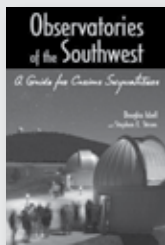
Allan Boyle, msnbc.com's science editor and the creator of Cosmic Log, traces tiny Pluto's ups and downs, its strange appeal, the reasons behind its demotion, and the reasons why it should be set back in the planetary pantheon. *The Case for Pluto* is the tale of a cosmic underdog that has captured the hearts of millions: an endearing little planet that is changing the way we see the universe beyond our backyard. Boyle writes that Pluto may never again be the ninth planet, or the littlest planet, or the most distant planet. But, he advises, don't sell Pluto short: It has an atmosphere and weather, geology and possibly liquid water, and as many moons as Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars put together. “It's time to stick up for the little guys of the solar system!” he concludes. Boyle has appeared on many national TV shows holding forth on scientific subjects ranging from the chances of an asteroid Armageddon to the 3-D wizardry behind the Harry Potter movies. He can be reached at alan.boyle@msnbc.com and 425-936-1867. The book publicist is Erin Lane Beam at 415-782-3213.

Archaeologist's Book of Quotations by K. Kris Hirst (NASW), published by Left Coast Press



Hirst was a working archaeologist in the American midwest, American southwest and, for one heady season, in Mexico, before retiring in 2005 to write freelance science articles on archaeology, primarily for About.com. She loves a good quotation and has collected several hundred over the years. The material in her book come from academic papers and books on archaeology, as well as popular books and novels, movies, comic strips, music, and other pop culture (past and present). She says some of the most surprising things that people say are pertinent to archaeology and the study of the past. “You would almost think it was a popular obsession for human beings,” she muses. Who says archeologists are dull? Kirst quotes archaeologist Kent Flannery who contends: “Archaeology is still the most fun you can have with your pants on.” And the late Glyn Daniel, a Welsh scientist who made some of the earliest efforts to popularize archaeology on radio and television, once said: “The problem in archaeology is when to stop laughing.” The publicist is Caryn Berg at archaeology@lcoastpress.com and 720-320-5892. Hirst can be reached through at krishirst@scribaltraditions.com.

***Observatories of the Southwest: A Guide for Curious Skywatchers* by Douglas Isbell (NASW) and Stephen E. Strom, published by the University of Arizona Press**



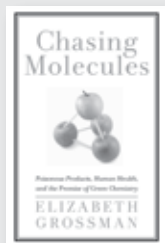
The southwestern United States, with its clear skies and low humidity, is an astronomer's paradise, unique in its loose federation of like-minded research outposts and in the quantity and diversity of its observatories. Douglas Isbell and Stephen Strom, both intimately involved in southwestern astronomy, have written a practical guide to the major observatories of the region for those eager to understand the role these often quirky places has played in advancing our understanding of the cosmos. For each observatory, the authors describe its history, highlight its contributions to astronomy—with an emphasis on recent results—and provide visitor information. Also included are wide-ranging interviews with astronomers closely associated with each site. Observatories featured range from McDonald in Texas to Palomar in California, with significant outposts in between. The book is accessible to amateur astronomers, tourists, students, and teachers. Isbell is the United States national contact for the International Year of Astronomy 2009 and a professional astronomy and space communicator. He has more than two decades of experience at the National Optical Astronomy Observatory and NASA. Strom is astronomer emeritus at the National Optical Astronomy Observatory. Reach Isbell at dougisbell@hotmail.com.

***Diabetes Rising: How a Rare Disease Became a Modern Pandemic, and What to Do About It* by Dan Hurley (NASW), published by Kaplan Publishing**



Hurley is a freelance science writer and journalist who regularly contributes to the *New York Times* Science Times and writes for numerous medical newspapers. In *Diabetes Rising* he investigates a disease now affecting 23 million people in the United States. The book chronicles the millennia-long quest to understand and cure what many consider the most mystifying, annoying, fascinating, and maddening disease known to humanity. It is the story of how diabetes rose from obscurity, and how a relatively small number of passionate, smart scientists, advocates, and public-policy strategists are struggling against orthodoxy to bring it to its knees. Among the revelations he cites in *Diabetes Rising*: Why the rate of type 1 diabetes has been rising just as fast and just as long as the rate of the type 2 form, transforming a childhood disease that was once exceedingly rare into one that now affects most elementary school systems in the country. And why international diabetes experts believe that three simple, little-known approaches—avoiding cow's milk in baby formulas, getting adequate amounts of vitamin D, and simply playing in the dirt—could prevent many cases of diabetes. Hurley can be reached at hurleydan@aol.com. The press representative for the book is Jessica Jonap at Jessica@JonapPR.com or 305-864-5521.

***Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health, and the Promise of Green Chemistry* by Elizabeth Grossman (NASW), published by Island Press**



Portland, Ore. freelance author and journalist Elizabeth Grossman, who brought national attention to the contaminants hidden in computers and other high tech electronics, now tackles the hazards of ordinary consumer products. She shows that for the sake of convenience, efficiency, and short-term safety, we have created synthetic chemicals that fundamentally change, at a molecular level, the way our bodies work. The consequences range from diabetes to cancer, and reproductive and neurological disorders. Yet, it's hard to imagine life without the creature comforts current materials provide—and Grossman argues we do not have to. A scientific revolution is introducing products that are “benign by design,” developing manufacturing processes that consider health impacts at every stage, and creating new compounds that mimic rather than disrupt natural systems. Through interviews with leading researchers, Grossman gives us a first look at this radical transformation. *Booklist* writes: “Grossman is as an eloquent scientific muckraker, outing the truth about commonly used hazardous chemicals that are leaching out of everything from plastic bottles to children's toys and infiltrating the biosphere and our bodies to deleterious effect.” Grossman can be reached at lizzieg@spiritone.com and 503-233-2558. PR for the book is Jaime Jennings at 202-232-7933 x 44 or jjennings@islandpress.org.

***After the Ice: Life, Death, and Geopolitics in the New Arctic* by Alun Anderson, published by Smithsonian Books/Harper**



We have all seen the pictures of forlorn polar bears perched on tiny icebergs amid open water. The sea ice, which covers an area of ocean larger than the whole of the United States, is melting away, and the Arctic summer ice appears to be disappearing for good. Research biologist turned journalist Anderson combines science, business, politics, and adventure to take the reader to the ends of the earth and reveals the ways in which global warming is changing the Arctic faster and more dramatically than any place else on earth. Hundreds of scientists are urgently trying to predict just how the Arctic will change and how those changes will in turn affect the rest of the planet. But plenty of other people, driven by profit rather than data, are interested as well. The riches of the world's last virgin territory have spurred the reawakening of old geopolitical rivalries and a new era of oil rigs and drill ships, of tankers taking shortcuts from Yokohama to Rotterdam, as well as a potential fight over the Arctic's treasures. Anderson was variously editor, editor in chief and publishing director of *New Scientist* magazine from 1992 to 2005, during which time he successfully launched the magazine in the United States. Previously, he was the Washington, D.C. bureau chief for the science journal *Nature*. Press contact is Barbara Teszler at 212-207-7727 or barbara.teszler@harpercollins.com.



NASW President
Mariette DiChristina
Scientific American and
Scientific American Mind
 MDICHRISTINA@SCIAM.COM

President's Letter

21st Century NASW

AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO NASW'S 75TH (AND CASW'S 50TH) ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT THE OCTOBER SCIENCEWRITERS MEETING AT YALE, YOUR NASW BOARD IS GETTING AN EARLY START BY DOING SOMETHING THE ORGANIZATION HASN'T DONE SINCE IT WAS INCORPORATED 50-PLUS YEARS AGO: FULLY MODERNIZE THE ORGANIZATION'S BYLAWS. SEE PAGE 18 FOR THE REVISED DOCUMENT, WHICH IS MARKED SO THAT YOU CAN SEE THE NECESSARY CHANGES.

Along with updates to our governing document, we have begun to codify much of what is already standard organizational practice by developing and adopting policies in a number of areas. We've started with some that are included on the recently revised IRS Form 990, including conflict of interest, whistleblower, and document retention policies. You can read these policies and future installments, such as the forthcoming executive review and compensation policies, on the website in the "About NASW" category.

In keeping with best practices of nonprofit organizations, we've also adopted a travel expense reimbursement policy and formed a finance committee (see treasurer's report at right). NASW has engaged in an outside independent annual audit for years, and the finance committee will oversee expenses during regularly scheduled conference calls during the year, enabling the organization to plan more effectively for funding member programs and to undertake creation of a formal reserve fund. These are the changes I called "boring but important" during our membership meeting (see page 16). Good governance may not be scintillating, but it is central to enabling the organization to fulfill its mission and remain transparent for members, and I am grateful to those on the board and elsewhere who are contributing. Our ever-energetic executive director, Tinsley Davis, whose patience and efficiency never fail to impress me, worked with Gene Takagi, an attorney who specializes in nonprofits, to upgrade the language of the bylaws. Ad-hoc subcommittees of board members developed the required policies.

One of the major changes to operating procedure involves how NASW will record and act on decisions made by the membership in voting. NASW is incorporated in the State of

New York. New York Not-for-Profit Corporation (NY NPC) law does not recognize mail voting. We are, therefore, making a transition to a proxy system. When NASW solicits members for votes at annual meetings, those who cannot attend may instead send in a form that resembles an absentee ballot; this proxy will then be submitted on behalf of those absentee members at the meeting. You will use this system for the first time when you vote on the adoption of the revised bylaws (see page 18).

The board must arrange to meet in person (as we do during the annual meetings) or to conduct business during a conference call; the goal is to secure a venue in which all board members can be heard at once. We will continue electronic discussions and set up conference calls for cases in which we need to have a more formal discussion and votes.

In another change, to satisfy reporting requirements of NY NPC law, the NASW operating cycle will move from calendar year to a July to June fiscal year. It's a labor-intensive switch, but once it is done we will benefit from having audits conducted when accountants are generally less busy, speeding that process.

Once the bylaws are approved, we will update the number of board members on the 1954 Certificate of Incorporation to the current total of 15. The increased board size from the initial eight reflects the organization's growth over the past 50 years.

In other news that is important for the continued health and future of NASW, the Internet committee is moving forward with plans for a revamp of our website by the middle of next year. We have retained the design firm Aten Design and will, as needed, expand the hours of contract Cybrarian Russ Clemings through the duration of this project to assist with coding and other support. Be on the lookout for a debut in late spring. And, as always, a big thank you to all the terrific volunteers who make our ambitions to continue to improve NASW a reality. ■



Peggy Girshman
Treasurer
Kaiser Health News
 PGIRSHMAN@KFF.ORG

Treasurer's Report:

WE ARE HAPPY TO SAY THAT WE HAVE FINISHED THE 2008 FINANCIAL AUDIT. IT REPRESENTS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL, CLEAN AUDIT OF THE ORGANIZATION'S RECORDS. WHILE ANNUAL AUDITS HAVE BEEN STANDARD PRACTICE, REQUIRING ONE IS PROPOSED AS A SPECIFIC CHANGE TO OUR BYLAWS.

Dispatches

FROM THE Director



Peso
Guest Columnist
for TINSLEY DAVIS
DIRECTOR@NASW.ORG

T

insley keeps muttering about being busy with renewal season, so I thought I'd help out and take the opportunity to introduce myself. But, first, thanks for renewing. I love to sleep on the opened envelopes before they get scooped up into the recycling bin.

Tell us about yourself.

I'm Peso, a 17-year-old domestic shorthair with a slightly askew tuxedo pattern—a dapper, professional look. My commute between the food bowl and the office is very short—having NASW operate out of the director's home office has its advantages. Tinsley doesn't exactly sport formal wear in the office, but she doesn't work in her PJs, either, as people often tease. I'm sure you freelancers out there get tired of that question, too.

How did you come to your current position?

I've known Tinsley since I was 14. She adopted me from my former owner whose family had gotten too overwhelming for a cat. I was found as a kitten in Houston and was named after a local restaurant. Maybe some of you Texas members know the place and will e-mail a picture for my wall. Tinsley promised me a quiet retirement, and I went home with her, not knowing that I'd soon have her around all day when she started working for NASW.

What is your most crucial work-related contribution?

Whether I am snoozing in the empty box in the closet or curled up in the recycling bin, I'm never too far away to provide counsel. My unsolicited contributions during conference calls provide practice with operation of the phone's mute button.

Which personality traits have contributed to your success in this field?

My affinity for corralling loose paperclips and rubberbands comes in handy when it's time to process the award entries.

Meet the Office Staff is an occasional feature. Next issue we interview the ficus plant.

What specific strengths did you bring to the table?
I've been taught that it's rude to get on the table.

Where do you think newspapers are headed?

I think I speak for all cats when I say that the loss of any more newspapers is unacceptable. Information on a screen provides an intellectual value, of course, and some cats really go for the multimedia moving pictures, but if I can't walk across a newspaper as it is being read or choose to sit right on the last paragraph of a compelling story, what good am I as a cat? ■

Q&A with the Director's Cat

Much of the budget spreadsheet is self-explanatory, but we thought it was a good idea to give some details on certain areas.

■ Though we continue to receive robust renewals and new member applications, proposed dues income for 2009/2010 is lower than 2008 because of the recession. Ditto on expected ad income for 2009 and 2010.

■ In recognition of the economic downturn for many in the profession, we used Authors Coalition funds to offer travel fellowships to the World Conference of Science Journalists in June 2009, increased the number of traveling fellowships to our annual meeting, and funded the first round of the NASW Career Grants, among other projects. To continue to provide science writers with opportunities to improve their craft, the 2010 budget includes funding for two more rounds of Career Grants (\$50,000), seed funding for the 2011 World Conference of Science Journalists, and an overhaul of the nasw.org website to provide increased networking opportunities and to assess professional development resources.

■ We debuted the first multimedia day-long workshop in Austin and will rollover the remainder of fund (~\$20,000) allocated for this project for development of more regional multimedia workshops in 2010.

■ Speaking of Authors Coalition funds, we do not know, from year to year, how much we will receive from overseas royalty distributions until it is actually received. We try not to anticipate more than \$50,000/year, as it is an incredibly fluid. That explains why we've budgeted a lesser amount for 2010. As you may know, this money is restricted to paying for projects that directly help writers and cannot be used for administrative fees such as salaries.

■ Our salaries, payroll taxes, and benefits decreased significantly as of June 2009 which marked Diane McGurgan's retirement and the completion of the administrative transition.

■ Board travel is not increasing for 2010 because the meeting is in New Haven and we think it will be less expensive for the board to get there.

■ By instituting print-on-demand for the annual member directory we will save over \$10,000. It will still be available in July as an aggregate document, and will be available in aggregate online to members.

■ We are increasing contracted hours with NASW's cybrarian to assist with the new web redesign and assist with content

NASW Budget Report

Income	2008 Proposed	2008 Actual	2009 Proposed	2010 Proposed
Dues	\$ 175,000	\$ 178,832	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000
Labels	18,000	21,726	18,000	18,000
Ads/Online & Newsletter	23,000	43,219	30,000	35,000
Unrealized Gains	1,000	2,512	1,000	1,000
Misc. Income	2,500	-	-	-
Subtotal	\$ 219,500	\$ 246,289	\$ 209,000	\$ 214,000
Special Sources				
Dividends /Investments	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,553	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
CASW Grant	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Awards Dinner	7,000	-	-	-
SW Field Guide	2,500	3,017	2,500	1,800
Workshops	49,400	62,295	50,000	60,000
Authors Coalition	122,000	197,126	150,000	50,000
Subtotal	\$ 194,400	\$ 276,491	\$ 214,000	\$ 123,300
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 413,900	\$ 522,780	\$ 423,000	\$ 337,300

Expenses				
Salaries	\$ 93,000	\$ 92,924	\$ 78,000	\$ 75,000
Payroll Taxes & Benefits	35,600	38,019	22,000	15,000
Magazine Production	45,000	52,518	45,000	55,000
Magazine Editor	23,000	23,092	23,000	23,000
Awards	14,000	14,740	15,000	15,000
Roster	13,500	10,587	18,000	5,000
Postage	4,700	4,200	4,000	4,500
Printing	4,000	3,749	4,000	4,500
Supplies	2,500	4,025	2,500	3,000
Telephone/Internet	2,600	6,256	3,500	3,800
Accountants' Fee	7,000	8,942	8,500	9,000
Legal Fees	N/A	-	2,500	2,500
Corporate Taxes	250	356	360	400
Authors Coalition	75,000	Now Broken Out: See Below		
Bank Charges/Service Fees	2,600	3,180	3,000	3,500
Check & Payroll Services	1,200	2,828	1,800	1,800
Ins. (Bd. Liability/Work Comp)	3,000	1,825	2,500	2,220
Bad Debt	-	600	500	500
Board Travel	10,000	10,680	10,000	10,000
Computers/Support	500	-	500	500
Cybrarian	21,000	21,000	22,000	33,000
Organizational Dues	300	300	300	350
Web Hosting	2,500	1,454	2,500	2,500
Subtotal	\$ 337,450	\$ 301,275	\$ 244,660	\$ 234,200

Special Projects and Programs

Local Groups	\$ 1,000	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
SW Field Guide	-	-	-	-
Workshop	60,000	93,681	75,000	80,000
Awards Dinner	7,000	Now Folded Into Workshops		
Diane McGurgan Award	800	500	800	800
Elections	-	1,464	-	1,500
Outreach + Education	N/A	2,450	38,500	25,000
Fellowships	N/A	25,856	54,300	100,000
Content/Design	N/A	6,899	82,000	2,500
Special Events	N/A	N/A	25,000	2,500
Subtotal	\$ 68,800	\$ 131,350	\$ 276,600	\$ 213,300

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 406,250	\$ 432,625	\$ 521,260	\$ 447,500
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Bank Report		12/31/08	12/31/07
CDs	\$ 160,122		\$ 221,127
Mutual Funds	53,896		49,138
Cash and Equivalents	236,293		63,751
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 450,311	\$ 450,311	\$ 334,016

development and flow on the website. The board decided to form a finance/audit committee to coordinate the board's financial oversight responsibilities by recommending policy to the board, interpreting it for the staff, and monitoring implementation. The committee also will provide board oversight of the organization's annual financial audit.

The finance/audit committee shall consist of not fewer than two board members. The members of the finance and audit committee shall be appointed by the president for two-year terms and will be chaired by the board treasurer. The committee will meet monthly beginning in January 2010. Committee members are:

Peggy Girshman, *chair*

Richard Bogren

Mariette DiChristina (*NASW president*)

Mari Jensen

Nancy Shute (*NASW vice-president*)

I wish to express my thanks to Richard and Mari for volunteering for the committee. ■



**NASW Secretary
Ron Winslow**

WALL STREET JOURNAL
RON.WINSLOW@WSJ.COM

NASW Annual Membership Meeting Minutes

THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE WRITERS WAS HELD OCT. 17, 2009 AT SCIENCEWRITERS09 AT UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN. ABOUT 80 MEMBERS ATTENDED.

Mariette DiChristina, president, called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. She told the membership that the organization's constitution and bylaws need revising to comply with laws of New York State, where NASW is incorporated. She said Executive Director Tinsley Davis asked an attorney to look at our documents, which hadn't undergone a thorough review since the 1950s.

"Whether we like it or not, we're a

corporation," DiChristina said. Most of the revisions are technical word changes, she said, but the update will result in some tangible differences, including voting procedures (by proxies instead of e-mail), a change in our fiscal year, and an update in the number of board members to reflect the current practice of 15 (four officers and 11 board members-at-large).

Changing the constitution and bylaws requires a petition signed by at least 20 members to put such changes to a membership vote, she said. The following petition was circulated and signed by the required number of members after the meeting:

We, the undersigned regular members of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc. (the "Association"), hereby request of the Association's President that the Association's Constitution and Bylaws be updated to be in accordance with current and applicable laws of the State of New York and that the appropriately amended Constitution and Bylaws be put before the membership for adoption.

DiChristina said that "going hand-in-hand" with the revisions to the constitution, the board is adopting and updating travel reimbursement, conflict of interest, whistleblower, document retention, and other policies that apply mostly to board operations. The board is also establishing a finance committee, composed of two officers and two regular members, to conduct regular reviews of the organization's finances.

Terry Devitt, a board member and co-chair of the Internet committee, said a revamped NASW website will be rolled out "probably by the middle of next year." In addition to greatly improving the ability to add and edit content, the website will have "lots of bells and whistles," like enhanced profiles and customization, for members.

The website redesign will be paid for out of Authors Coalition funds, which are also supporting other initiatives, including career development grants the board established in response to the economy and turmoil in the media business. Beryl Benderly, a board member and liaison to the coalition, urged members to fill out the survey related to the Authors Coalition that accompanies bills for annual dues. "For every click you put on the survey, we get money," she said.

The board plans at least one more round of career development grants from these funds after the number of promising applications exceeded the amount of available funds during the first go-around, Benderly said.

Peggy Girshman, treasurer, summarized the budgets, saying the 2010 budget anticipates income of \$337,300, compared with \$420,500 for 2009. The main difference is a conservative estimate on revenue from the Authors Coalition fund.

Vice President and workshop committee chair Nancy Shute said 330 people registered for the workshops this year, compared with 450 at Stanford in Palo Alto, Calif., in 2008. With the recession, plus the comparison with a popular Bay Area location last year, she was enthusiastic about the turnout and said "kudos" to all who made it to Austin.

Bob Finn, board member and chair of the awards committee

said there were 130 entrants for the Science in Society Award, which has several new categories. The plan is to continue with the same categories at least one more year. Bob asked for volunteers to serve as judges.

Dan Ferber, filling in for freelance committee chair Richard Robinson, said the All About Freelancing section of the NASW website is regularly updated with advice for freelancers. Member Catherine Dold has led the effort. He also urged members to contribute information to the Words' Worth database of rates and contract information. It will "help other freelancers keep track of what the market conditions are like," he said. He also thanked Jeff Hecht for tracking and providing information to members on the Google book settlement.

Ferber, who is chair of the grievance committee, said that group handled five cases and provided advice on four others last year, with several success stories in getting members paid for their work. "In the next year, we're going to talk about how to prevent grievances" in addition to handling whatever cases come the committee's way, he said.

Vikki Valentine, board member and membership committee chair, said NASW added some 200 new members in 2009.

Charles Choi staffed an NASW booth at the Asian American Journalists Association meeting in Boston; the committee hopes to send two volunteers to a conference next year to bolster recruiting efforts.

Reporting for the education committee, Robert Irion said the mentorship and internship fair at the AAAS annual meeting in Chicago was especially well-received. Fifteen national recruiters and 45 students attended the fair while mentorship pairings gave 31 students a much appreciated opportunity to file stories and observe experienced science writers at work. NASW Travel fellowships helped 10 undergraduates attend.

The committee is also starting a project to update science-writing curricula materials available to teachers on the NASW website.

Glennnda Chui, board member and co-chair of the information access committee, asked for perspective from PIO members on the issue of providing reporter access to scientists and science information. Terry Devitt invited anyone interested in forming a PIO committee for the organization to meet with him after the meeting.

At the close of the meeting, Mariette reminded members of the critical role volunteers play to "make it happen" for NASW. Then she announced to sustained applause that Jeff Grabmeier, co-chair of the education committee, is this year's winner of the Diane McGurgan Service Award for his many contributions to NASW over the years.

Next year's meeting will be at Yale University, New Haven, and will celebrate the 75th anniversary of NASW and the 50th anniversary of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing. Joint NASW/CASW meetings began five years ago.

Your secretary thanks Michelle Nijhuis, a 2009 NASW Freelance Fellow, whose own report on the membership meeting was posted on the NASW website Oct. 21 and was especially helpful in the preparation of these minutes. ■

"It's time to take the organization from its lovable mom-and-pop self into a more modernized structure and framework."

—Mariette DiChristina, NASW President, to the board of directors, Oct. 16, 2009

NASW Bylaws Revisions

For your consideration are proposed revisions to the NASW bylaws, recommended by the NASW board of directors. These changes have the potential to save money, streamline decision-making, and lead to more transparent NASW governance.

The proposed bylaws revisions are shown in a “track changes” format, such that deletions appear as a ~~striketrough~~ in the text, additions appear in **bold**, and rationale for more involved changes appears in *italics*.

A vote on proposed bylaw revisions will take place at a special meeting of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc., at 4:00 p.m. on Sat., Feb. 20,

2010 in Room 16A of the San Diego Convention Center (during the AAAS annual meeting). NASW members attending AAAS, or who live in southern California, are encouraged to attend this special NASW meeting so that a quorum of 100 is reached.

Members can also vote online (http://www.nasw.org/elections_bylaws/index.php?ID=2), or mail in a signed proxy (see page 25) by Feb. 15.

Deadline
for voting by
Proxy:
February 15
SEE PAGE 25

Proposed Updates, dated January 5, 2010, to the Constitution **and Bylaws** of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

ARTICLE I — General

Section 1. NAME OF ORGANIZATION. This organization shall be known as the National Association of Science Writers, Inc. **(the “Association”)**.

Section 2. PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION. This organization shall foster the dissemination of accurate information regarding science and technology through all media normally devoted to informing the public; and shall foster the interpretation of science and its meaning to society, in keeping with the highest standards of journalism. In addition, this organization shall foster and promote the professional interests of science writers.

ARTICLE II — Membership

Section 1. CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP. There shall be three classes of membership in the Association: Regular, Honorary, and Student.

Section 2. REQUIREMENTS FOR REGULAR MEMBERSHIP. **Regular** members shall be people who are professional science writers or instructors of science writing. This includes — but is not limited to — journalists, authors, editors, producers, public information officers, and people who write and produce films, museum exhibits, and other material intended to inform the public about science and technology. Individuals applying for regular membership must present the names of two current members who endorse them for membership.

Section 3. REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORARY MEMBERSHIP. Honorary membership may be extended to scientists or other persons who have notably aided the purposes of this organization as expressed in Article I, Section 2.

Section 4. REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT MEMBERSHIP. Student members shall be enrolled in a **college or graduate level** journalism program and/or science program.

Section 5. RIGHTS OF MEMBERS. **Regular** members shall have full voting privileges. Student members and Honorary members shall have all rights of membership except they may not vote or hold office.

Section 6. RIGHTS OF INSPECTION. Any member who has been a member of record for at least six months immediately preceding his or her demand shall have the right to examine in person or by agent or attorney, during usual business hours, minutes of the proceedings of its members and list or record of members and to make copies from such records. An inspection may be denied to such member upon his or her refusal to furnish to the corporation, its transfer agent or registrar an affidavit that such inspection is not desired and will not be used for a purpose which is in the interest of a business or object other than the business of the corporation and that he has not within five years given, sold or offered for sale any list or record of members of any corporation or aided or abetted, or attempted or offered to aid or abet, any person in procuring any such list or record of

members for any such purpose.

Rationale: This section added to comply with New York Not-for-Profit Corporation (NY NPC) Law. Members may examine minutes and membership list, but they may not sell or distribute the list. Note that the membership directory is already made available to members annually and membership meeting minutes are printed in ScienceWriters.

ARTICLE III — Elections Board of Directors

Section 1. OFFICERS. The elected officers of the Association shall consist of a president, a vice-president who shall be president-elect, a treasurer, and a secretary, who shall all be members of the executive board. A substantial majority of an officer's science-writing activities shall be journalism. Journalism is defined as reporting, writing, editing, or producing news, analysis, discussion, and features for: media outlets such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations, and networks; books written and published in keeping with journalistic standards; and other forms of mass media that are credible sources of news and information. Officers may not write press releases or otherwise act on behalf of an institution or company to affect media coverage while they serve in office. Officers who engage in such activities shall notify the board immediately. They may remain on the board, but the board shall appoint another fully qualified member to carry out the officer duties.

Rationale: Moved to Article IV, Section I.

Section 1. POWERS. The Association shall be managed by its Board of Directors (the "Board").

Section 2: BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE. In addition to the four officers **ex officio directors described in Article IV or these bylaws**, the executive board shall also consist of 11 members at large. Any regular association member, **at least 18 years of age**, is eligible to serve as a board member at large.

Rationale: In this case ex officio means by virtue of their office. Officers have and will continue to be members of the board.

Section 3. TERM OF OFFICE. All officers and board members shall serve for two years from the beginning of the year immediately following their election: **commencing no more than 4 months following their election and until a successor officer or director has been elected and qualified.**

Rationale: Commencing a term in January means that the first board meeting a new board member has the opportunity to attend is 10 months later. The Board sets the timing of elections to ensure that new board members can attend the first board meeting sooner rather than later.

Section 4. NOMINATION PROCESS.

(a) NOMINATION OF OFFICERS. Within one year after election, the president shall appoint a nominating committee of no fewer than five members who shall nominate one member for vice-president/president-elect, one member for secretary, and one member for treasurer. The membership and nominating committees may request material from candidates to identify those who would qualify as officers, as set forth in Section 1. The membership committee shall determine which nominees meet the qualifications for officer.

Rationale: Moved to Article IV, Section 2 because Article III now deals with the Board and Article IV with Officers.

(b) NOMINATION OF MEMBERS AT LARGE. The nominating committee shall also nominate at least 15 members, including at least six who are qualified to serve as officers; to run for at-large seats on the executive board. **A group of 20 or more members may nominate by petition to the nominating committee board members. These nominees must meet the requirements as set forth in Section 2 of this Article III. All nominations, whether by the nominating committee or by petition, shall be forwarded to the executive director no less than 6 months prior to the end of the current board members' terms.**

(c) NOMINATIONS BY PETITION. A group of 20 or more members may nominate by petition to the nominating committee members for vice-president/president-elect, secretary, treasurer, and board members at large. These nominees must meet the requirements as set forth in Section 1 of this Article, as determined by the membership committee.

Rationale: Language in (b) and (c) is now folded into the single paragraph of Section 4. Officers are dealt with in Article IV.

Section 5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND **BOARD** MEMBERS AT LARGE. The executive board will set the timing of the biennial NASW elections within the six months prior to an annual meeting, with timely notification of the members thereafter. The executive director shall prepare ballots **cause to be prepared and sent to all members a proxy form** reflecting all nominations made in conformance with this article **Article III**. Of those at-large candidates qualified to serve as officers, the four garnering the most votes shall be elected to the board. The remaining at-large positions will be granted to the seven remaining candidates with the most votes, regardless of whether they are qualified to be officers. In the event of a tie, a run-off election between the contested nominees shall be held by mail ballot as expeditiously as possible. **Board members shall be elected by a plurality of the votes cast by regular members entitled to vote in the election.**

Rationale: Details of electing officers now addressed separately in Article IV, Section 3.

Section 6. VACANCIES. A vacancy or vacancies in the Board shall be deemed to exist in case of (a) the death, resignation or removal of any director; or (b) the increase of the authorized number of directors. Any director may be removed with cause by vote of the directors at a duly held meeting. Such vacancy or vacancies shall be

filled by vote of the members at a regular or special meeting.

Rationale: Added per NY NPC code to define vacancies and how to deal with them.

Section 7. PLACE OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD. Meetings of the Board shall be held at any place within or outside the State of New York that has been designated from time to time by the Board.

Rationale: Added per NY NPC to address the location of Board meetings. Traditionally, these happen in conjunction with the annual NASW workshops. The location of the workshops, and thus the annual board meeting, varies throughout the U.S.

Section 8. REGULAR MEETINGS. Regular meetings of the Board may be held without notice on such dates and at such times as may be fixed from time to time by the Board.

Rationale: Added per NY NPC to address the timing of Board meetings. Traditionally, these happen in conjunction with the annual NASW workshops, now in the fall of each year.

Section 9. SPECIAL MEETINGS. Special meetings of the Board for any purpose or purposes may be called at any time by (a) the President; or (b) any director upon the written demand of no less than one-fifth of the entire Board. Notice of the time and place of special meetings shall be given to each director by (i) personal delivery of written notice; (ii) first-class mail, postage prepaid; (iii) telephone, including a voice messaging system or other system or technology designed to record and communicate messages, either directly to the director or to a person at the director's office who would reasonably be expected to communicate that notice promptly to the director; (iv) facsimile; (v) electronic mail; or (vi) other electronic means. Any such notice shall be addressed or delivered to each director at such director's address as it is shown upon the records of this corporation or as may have been given to this corporation by the director for purposes of notice or, if such address is not shown on such records or is not readily ascertainable, at the place in which the meetings of the directors are regularly held. Notice of a special meeting sent by first-class mail shall be deposited in the United States mails at least four days before the time set for the meeting. Notice of a special meeting given personally or by telephone, facsimile, electronic mail or other similar means of communication, shall be delivered, telephoned, or otherwise sent, as appropriate, at least 48 hours before the time set for the meeting. Notice of a special meeting shall state the time of the meeting and the place. The notice need not specify the purpose of the meeting.

Rationale: A requirement of NY NPC law.

Section 10. QUORUM. A majority of the entire Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business or of any specified item of business.

Section 11. PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS BY CONFERENCE TELEPHONE. Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as all members participating in such meeting can hear one another at the same time. Participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting.

Rationale: When the board cannot meet in person, NY NPC law allows for a conference call to conduct business.

Section 12. ACTION WITHOUT MEETING. Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board may be taken without a meeting, if all members of the Board shall consent in writing to the adoption of a resolution authorizing the action. Such action by written consent shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board.

Section 13. ADJOURNMENT. A majority of the directors present, whether or not a quorum is present, may adjourn any meeting of the Board to another time and place. Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given to absent directors if the time and place be fixed at the meeting adjourned, except as provided in the next sentence. If the meeting is adjourned for more than 24 hours, notice of any adjournment to another time or place shall be given prior to the time of the adjourned meeting to the directors who were not present at the time of the adjournment.

Section 14. BOARD COMMITTEES. The Board, by resolution adopted by a majority of the directors then in office, may create one or more committees, each consisting of three or more directors and no one who is not a director, to serve at the pleasure of the Board. Appointments to standing committees of the Board shall be by majority vote of the directors then in office. The Board may appoint one or more directors as alternate members of any such committee, who may replace any absent member at any meeting. Any Board committee shall have all the authority of the Board, to the extent provided in the Board resolution, except with respect to: (a) the submission to members of any action requiring members' approval under the NPC Law; (b) the filling of vacancies in the Board or in any committee; (c) the fixing of compensation of the directors for serving on the Board or on any committee; (d) the amendment or repeal of the bylaws or the adoption of new bylaws; (e) the amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board which by its terms shall not be so amendable or repealable. The Executive Committee shall be a standing Board committee composed of the four *ex officio* directors. The Executive Committee shall have the power to act in place of the Board between Board meetings on routine corporate matters. Appointments to special committees of the Board shall be made by the President, with the consent of the Board; provided, however, that the Board may directly make the appointments without action of the President, at the Board's sole discretion.

Rationale: Defines what Board committees are and what they can/cannot do. Note that the Executive Committee, i.e. the officers, can conduct routine business on behalf of the board. NASW does not compensate Board members.

Section 15. COMMITTEES OF THE CORPORATION. The Board may from time to time appoint non-Board committees of the corporation as deemed appropriate, consisting of directors and/or persons who are not directors, but such committees shall not be deemed committees of the Board and shall not exercise any powers of the Board. Notice of, and procedures for, meetings of committees of the corporation shall be as prescribed by the chairman of each such committee, and meetings of any committees of the corporation may be called by the President or the chairman of such committee.

Rationale: This defines non-Board committees. Many of our working committees fall under this, like the Grievance Committee or the Workshop Committee.

ARTICLE IV — Officers Officers' Duties

Section 1. OFFICERS. The elected officers of the Association shall consist of a president, a vice-president who shall be president-elect, a treasurer, and a secretary, who shall all be *ex officio* directors. A substantial majority of an officer's science-writing activities shall be journalism. Officers may not write press releases or otherwise act on behalf of an institution or company to affect media coverage while they serve in office. Officers who engage in such activities shall notify the Board immediately. They may remain on the Board, but the Board shall appoint another fully qualified member to carry out the officer duties.

Rationale: This used to be Article III, Section 1, but Article III deals with Board members and Article IV now deals with Officers, i.e. ex officio directors (Board members by virtue of their office). The old Article IV, Section 1 is now Section 5.

Section 2. NOMINATION PROCESS. Within one year after election, the president shall appoint a nominating committee of no fewer than five members who shall nominate one member for vice-president/president-elect, one member for secretary, and one member for treasurer. The membership and nominating committees may request material from candidates to identify those who would qualify as officers, as set forth in Section 1 of this Article IV. The membership committee shall determine which nominees meet the qualifications for officer. A group of 20 or more members may nominate by petition to the nominating committee members for vice-president/president-elect, secretary, and treasurer. These nominees must meet the requirements as set forth in Section 1 of this Article IV, as determined by the membership committee. All nominations, whether by the nominating committee or by petition, shall be forwarded to the executive director no less than six months prior to the end of the current board members' term.

Rationale: Here we deal with nomination of officers much the same way we did for board members in Article III, Section 2 and in the same way we have done in the past except that elections need not be on a calendar year system (to allow new board members to attend a board meeting earlier than their 10th or 11th month in office). Qualifications do not change.

Section 3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS. The officers of this Association shall be elected by a vote of the regular members. Vacancies of such offices may be filled by the board or by a vote of the members at a regular or special meeting.

Section 4. TERM OF OFFICE. All officers shall serve for two years following their election and until a successor officer has been elected and qualified.

Section 5. DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT. The president shall: (a) Preside over all meetings of the Association; (b) Call special meetings when they are considered advisable; (c) Call to the attention of the membership any development threatening the functions of the organization or of its members, or any method of improving the activities of the Association; (d) Appoint nominating and membership committees, and any other committees that are desirable; (e) Arrange for participation of the Association in meetings such as the annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; **in other meetings and conferences as needed;** (f) Represent the Association in any activities in which the Association may be involved, or provide representation.

Rationale: No need for a reference to any specific organizations here.

Section 6. DUTIES OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT. The vice-president shall: (a) Assume the functions of the president when the president is unable to perform them, or when the president chooses to delegate them. (b) Serve as president-elect; and assume the presidency when the president completes his or her term or otherwise leaves office.

Section 7. DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY. The secretary shall: (a) Record the proceedings of all meetings of the Association and provide each board member a copy of the general substance within two months after each meeting; **a copy of the minutes of a meeting within one month after such meeting;** (b) Write a summary of the annual meeting to be circulated to the membership.

Rationale: Minutes is a more correct term than general substance. The delivery timeline is quicker, too, to ensure that business gets recorded and communicated in a timely manner.

Section 8. DUTIES OF THE TREASURER. The treasurer shall (a) Plan an annual budget to be considered by the executive Board;

(b) Transmit to the membership an annual summary of the financial status of the organization.

Rationale: The Association's budget is published annually in ScienceWriters. Old sections 1-4 are now renumbered to 5-8.

ARTICLE V — Membership Process

Section 1. **NOMINATION ACCEPTANCE OF NEW MEMBERS.** The president shall appoint a committee of at least five **regular** members to judge membership applications whenever questions arise about an applicant's qualifications. If the committee rejects an applicant, the committee shall inform the candidate of the reason for doing so. Decisions of the membership committee may be appealed to the ~~executive board~~ **Executive Committee.**

Section 2. **HONORARY MEMBERS.** Honorary members, **nominated by the Board or by petition submitted to the Board and signed by no fewer than 20 regular members,** shall be elected by a majority vote of ~~the~~ members at a regular meeting.

Rationale: Clarified process for nominating and electing Honorary Members

ARTICLE VI — MEMBERSHIP Meetings

Section 1. **MEETINGS.** The Association shall have regular meetings at least once a year at a time and place designated by a majority vote of the executive board: **an annual meeting at a time and place designated by the Board. The Association may have other regular meetings at such times and places as may be designated by the Board.**

Section 2. **SPECIAL MEETINGS.** Special meetings may be called at the direction of the **Board or** president. ~~Any 30 members~~ **A group, consisting of a minimum of 10 percent of regular members,** may petition the president to call a special meeting, which must then be called within two months of the completed petition: **in writing, the secretary to call a special meeting on a date not less than two months nor more than three months following the date of the petition. The secretary upon receiving the petition shall give notice of such meeting, or if the secretary fails to do so within 10 business days thereafter, any member signing such demand may give such notice. If, for a period of one month after the date fixed under the bylaws for the annual meeting of members or, if no date has been so fixed, for a period of thirteen months after the last annual meeting, there is a failure to elect a sufficient number of directors to conduct the business of the corporation, the Board shall call a special meeting for the election of directors. If such special meeting is not called by the Board within two weeks after the expiration of such period or if it is so called but there is a failure to elect such directors for a period of two months after the expiration of such period, the provisions of Section 604 of the NPC Law shall apply.**

Rationale: The additions cover provisions for special meetings in the case of too few Board members in place.

Section 3. **NOTIFICATION NOTICE OF MEETING.** The secretary shall make sure that members are notified of all meetings at least one month in advance: **given written notice of all membership meetings (i) personally or by first class mail at least 10 days, but no more than 50 days, in advance; or (ii) by other class of mail at least 30 days, but no more than 60 days, in advance. If the meeting is a special meeting, the notice shall indicate that it is being issued by or at the direction of person or persons calling the meeting and state the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called.**

ARTICLE VII — Dues

Section 1. **FISCAL YEAR.** The fiscal year of the Association shall coincide with the calendar year: **begin on July 1 and end on June 30.**

Rationale: This change facilitates timely preparation of financial and audits for presentation at the fall board meeting.

Section 2. **DUES.** The **Membership** dues shall be fixed **from time to time** by vote of the membership **Board.**

Rationale: The Board, elected to represent the membership and imbued with governance by NY NPC code, has the fiduciary obligation to keep the organization financially solvent.

Section 3. **ARREARS.** A member whose dues remain unpaid by ~~May 15~~ February 28 shall be considered in arrears. A member in arrears shall have all services suspended **and may not vote until dues and any applicable fees are paid in full.**

Rationale: Explains how to get out of arrears.

ARTICLE VIII — Sanctions

Section 1. **SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF MEMBERS.** Any member who remains in arrears for 12 months shall be given a month's notice. If dues are not paid at the end of the month, membership shall be terminated. In each case, the executive director shall give the delinquent member proper notice: **A member may be suspended, under Section 2 of Article VIII of these bylaws, based on the good faith determination by the Board, or a committee authorized by the Board to make such a determination, that the member has failed in a material and serious degree to observe the corporation's rules of conduct, or has engaged in conduct materially and seriously prejudicial to the corporation's purposes and interests. A membership shall terminate on occurrence of any of the following events: (i) resignation of the member; (ii) expiration of the period of membership, unless the membership is renewed on the renewal terms**

fixed by the Board; (iii) the member's failure to pay dues, fees, or assessments as set by the Board after they are due and payable (but such terminated member may re-apply for membership after satisfying all payments in arrears); (iv) any event that renders the member ineligible for membership, or failure to satisfy the membership qualifications; or (v) termination of membership under Section 2, Article VIII of these bylaws based on the good faith determination by the Board, or a committee or person authorized by the Board to make such a determination, that the member has failed in a material and serious degree to observe the rules of conduct of the corporation, or has engaged in conduct materially and seriously prejudicial to the corporation's purposes and interests.

Section 2. ~~DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS~~ **PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP.** Should the president, or any 20 members, find the conduct of a member to be **materially and seriously** prejudicial to the best interests of the Association, charges shall be brought at the next meeting **investigated by a board committee and brought before the Board.** The membership shall have access to all pertinent information. The member shall be informed of the full nature of the charges and the names of those bringing the charges, and shall have full opportunity to be heard. Upon a vote of two-thirds of the members present, the member may be disciplined as directed by a committee of three, to be appointed by the president. Disciplinary action may include expulsion. **The Board will decide if the charges warrant giving notice to the member of the proposed suspension or termination. Notice shall be given by any method reasonably calculated to provide actual notice. Notice given by mail shall be sent by first-class or registered mail to the member's last address as shown on the corporation's records. The member shall be given an opportunity to be heard, either orally or in writing, at least five days before the effective date of the proposed suspension or termination. The hearing shall be held, or the written statement considered, by the Board or by a committee authorized by the Board to determine whether the suspension or termination should occur. The Board or committee shall decide whether the member shall be suspended, expelled, or sanctioned in any way. The decision of the Board or committee shall be final.**

Rationale: The procedure for bringing charges is the same, but the procedure for investigating and deciding charges is now more protective of the individual's privacy and provides more clearly for due process.

ARTICLE IX — Decision Process

Section 1. VOTES. Except where otherwise specified **herein or required under applicable law**, all actions of the Association shall be determined in one of two ways: (a) by a majority vote of those members present and voting at the annual meeting, provided a quorum is present; (b) by a mail ballot. No matter shall be presented to the members by mail ballot except by approval of a majority of the executive board, except as provided by Section 3 of this article: **by the Board.**

Rationale: NY NPC law does not provide for voting by mail. Standard NPC operating procedure has been inserted to facilitate day to day business of the Association.

Section 2. QUORUM. Fifty members shall constitute a quorum. **The lower of 100 or 10 percent of the regular members shall constitute a quorum.**

Rationale: Since NASW has more members, this is changed per NY NPC law.

Section 3. MAIL BALLOTING. In the absence of a quorum at the annual meeting, the members present shall set forth the matter upon which they wish to vote, and it shall be conveyed to all members by the executive director in the form of a mail ballot. The president shall decide in advance how long ballots will be accepted for a particular vote. A majority of members voting shall determine the outcome of the matter being voted on.

Rationale: NY NPC law does not provide for mail-in balloting. Thus, Section 3 is eliminated.

ARTICLE X — Legal History

Section 1. INCORPORATION. All members of the National Association of Science Writers shall be members of National Association of Science Writers, Inc., a corporation duly organized pursuant to the membership corporation laws of the State of New York. Any and all members elected prior to the date of such incorporation are hereby elected as members of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc., a membership corporation of the State of New York. The standing, participation, and authority of all members, officers, and past officers, committees, and boards, as set out in the said bylaws of the said association, shall be the same in said National Association of Science Writers, Inc., a corporation duly organized pursuant to the membership corporation laws of the State of New York.

Section 2. INCORPORATION CONFLICTS. Nothing contained in this constitution shall conflict with the provisions and sections of the Certificate of Incorporation, and any such provisions or bylaws which are in conflict with the Certificate of Incorporation are hereby declared to be null and void.

Rationale: Removes language left over from the original incorporation in 1954 that left a loop-hole that would have allowed members of any organization calling itself National Association of Science Writers (but not affiliated with us) to legally claim automatic membership in NASW, Inc.

ARTICLE XI — Constitutional and Bylaws Amendments

Section 1. AMENDMENTS. An amendment to this constitution **and bylaws** may be proposed by the vote of three-fourths of the

regular members present at a regular meeting; or by petition to the president of no fewer than 20 **regular** members. The proposed amendment shall be circulated to the membership and put to a vote by mail ballot **at a meeting**. If a substantial majority of a member's science-writing activities are science journalism, as defined in Article III, Section 1, he or she may state so on a signed ballot. Those ballots shall be verified by the Membership Committee and counted separately. An amendment shall be adopted if accepted by more than half the journalist members voting and by more than half the remaining votes. Only votes received within 45 days after ballots are mailed shall be counted. **at least 50 percent of regular members voting at a regular or special meeting.**

Rationale: All votes by regular members are treated the same, in line with the changes to the Constitution in 1999 that established one category of membership.

ARTICLE XI — Other Provisions

Section 1. INDEMNIFICATION. The corporation shall, to the maximum extent permitted by the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law (the "NPC Law"), indemnify each of its members, directors, and officers against expenses, judgments, fines, settlements, and other amounts actually and reasonably incurred in connection with any proceeding arising by reason of (a) the acts or obligations of the corporation or (b) the fact any such person is or was a director or officer of the corporation. In both circumstances, the Association shall advance to such member, director, or officer expenses incurred in defending any such proceeding to the maximum extent permitted by the Law. For purposes of this Section 12.1, a "member," "director," or "officer" of the corporation includes any person who is or was a member, director, or officer of the corporation, or is or was serving at the request of the corporation as a member, director, or officer of another corporation, or other enterprise, or was a member, director, or officer of a corporation which was a predecessor corporation of the corporation or of another enterprise for such indemnification of, or advance of expenses to, other agents of the corporation, and likewise may refuse to provide for such indemnification or advance of expenses except to the extent such indemnification is mandatory under the NPC Law. Notwithstanding any of the foregoing, the indemnity obligations of the corporation under this Section 12.1 do not include any obligation to defend any member for any actions taken or not taken by member or an affiliate of member in violation of these bylaws.

Section 2. ANNUAL REPORT OF DIRECTORS. The Board shall present at the annual meeting of members a report, verified by the president and treasurer or by a majority of the directors, or certified by an independent public or certified public accountant or a firm of such accountants selected by the Board, showing in appropriate detail the following:

- (1) The assets and liabilities, including the trust funds, of the corporation as of the end of a 12-month fiscal period terminating not more than six months prior to said meeting.
- (2) The principal changes in assets and liabilities, including trust funds, during said fiscal period.
- (3) The revenue or receipts of the corporation, both unrestricted and restricted to particular purposes during said fiscal period.
- (4) The expenses or disbursements of the corporation, for both general and restricted purposes, during said fiscal period.
- (5) The number of members of the corporation as of the date of the report, together with a statement of increase or decrease in such number during said fiscal period, and a statement of the place where the names and places of residence of the current members may be found.

The annual report of directors shall be filed with the records of the corporation and either a copy or an abstract thereof entered in the minutes of the proceedings of the annual meeting of members.

Rationale: This language codifies what has been standard practice by NASW in conducting financial audits.

Section 3. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS. Upon the written request of any person who shall have been a member of record for at least six months immediately preceding his request, the corporation shall give or send to such member an annual balance sheet and profit and loss statement or a financial statement performing a similar function for the preceding fiscal year, and, if any interim balance sheet or profit and loss or similar financial statement has been distributed to its members or otherwise made available to the public, the most recent such interim financial statement. The corporation shall be allowed a reasonable time to prepare such annual balance sheet and profit and loss or similar financial statement.

Rationale: Standard clause that allows members to request financial information. Much of this is already available either through ScienceWriters, the NASW website, or charity sites that post Federal 990 forms.

■ ■ ■

Members are encouraged to vote at February's meeting, online, or by mail. See page 25.

Exercise your membership right to

Vote

A vote on proposed bylaw revisions will take place at a Special Meeting of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc. There are three ways to cast your vote to ratify the NASW bylaw changes: in person, online, or by mail-in proxy.

**Issue your proxy quickly and securely
online by February 15**

www.nasw.org/elections_bylaws/index.php?ID=2



OR

Submit your proxy by mail

Ratification of updates, presented herein and dated January 5, 2010, to the Constitution and Bylaws of the National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

- For
- Against

Name of Regular Member _____

Address _____

I certify that I am a current, regular member of NASW.

Signed _____ Date _____

This proxy form is only valid when signed and dated. Cut, fold, seal, and stamp as directed on the reverse side of this page. **Mail to arrive no later than February 15, 2010.**

OR

Vote in person at the special meeting of the National Association of Science Writers

Saturday, February 20, 2010
4:00 PM
San Diego Convention Center
Room 16A

This special meeting will be held during the AAAS annual meeting. We encourage NASW members attending AAAS to also attend this special NASW meeting so that a quorum of 100 members is reached.

CUT ALONG THIS DASHED LINE TO DETACH PAGE



Mail-in proxy form is on the reverse side.
Proxy must be received by NASW
prior to February 15, 2010.

To vote by
mail-in proxy,
fold and mail
this page as
instructed.

CREASE ALONG LINE, THEN FOLD DOWN TOP PANEL FIRST

Place
Stamp
Here



CUT ALONG THIS DASHED LINE TO DETACH PAGE

Tinsley Davis
c/o NASW
PO Box 7905
Berkeley, CA 94707

CREASE ALONG LINE, THEN FOLD UP AND SEAL WITH TAPE AT TOP



Cybrarian
Russell Clemings
Fresno Bee
 CYBRARIAN@NASW.ORG

Cyberbeat

THE CONTRACT IS SIGNED, THE CONFERENCE CALLS HAVE BEGUN, AND THE SECOND MAJOR OVERHAUL OF NASW'S WEBSITE IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS IS NOW OFFICIALLY UNDERWAY.

Sometime before summer, you should see the results. Our plan is to freshen the design while keeping enough familiar elements to make it recognizable. At the same time, we plan major new additions to the site's features, along with a complete replacement of the underlying software.

We've contracted with Aten Design Group of Denver to do much of the heavy lifting. You can browse some of their other work at <http://www.atendesigngroup.com> (follow the "our work" link). We're using Authors Coalition funding to pay the bill—showing once again why it's important to fill out the annual AC survey when you renew your NASW membership each year.

Our 14-member Internet committee, led by board members Kelli Whitlock Burton and Terry Devitt, helped us pull together a wish list for the redesigned site. From there, Executive Director Tinsley Davis and I worked with President Mariette DiChristina and other officers and board members to formulate our agreement with Aten.

Here are some highlights of the new features we want to include in the redesigned site:

- Enhanced member web pages. Currently we provide 10 megabytes of free web space to any regular (not student) member who wants to set up a web page. That won't change, but we also want to provide a simpler alternative—a Facebook-style profile page that members can enhance with everything from PDFs of clippings to personal blogs. Members will be able to control what parts of their profiles are visible to the public. We'll also include tools to help potential employers find freelance writers.
- Customized landing page. Right now, we have a public page at nasw.org and a members' page at nasw.org/members. After the redesign, there won't be a separate members' page anymore. Instead, you'll simply see different content on the main nasw.org page when you're logged in as a member instead of an anonymous user. We're also working on ways for you to take selected content from elsewhere on the site and display it on the front page. Are you a freelancer who monitors the job listings? We want to make it so you can choose to have the latest job ads appear right on your nasw.org front page, instead of having to click deep into the site to find them. By the same token, if you're happily employed and therefore have no interest in the job ads, you'll be able to hide them and display something else in their place.
- Discussion forums. Our current email discussion lists are 14-years old in some cases and still going strong. But a lot of new technologies have been developed since we started them back in the previous millennium. So our new site will include forum

software for online discussions. But for those who prefer to continue communicating with the tried-and-true method, the forums will also be equipped to send and receive posts via e-mail.

Commenting. Like most blogs and other web publishing platforms, the redesigned site will include a comment function, allowing users to attach their thoughts to much of the content we post. Public comments will most likely be held for review before being posted to the site. But for logged-in members, we envision little or no time lag, as long as the usual rules of relevance and civility are respected.

- Ad hoc interest groups. Want to lead your own discussion of some current topic? Our new software will give you the ability to set up your own discussion groups and invite anyone you want. We expect this feature will be especially useful for short-term NASW projects and topics that are transitory or too narrowly focused for the forums.

- RSS and Twitter feeds. Virtually all of the site's content will be syndicated to RSS feeds and broadcast to Twitter. In addition, members will be able to use the NASW site to read their own selection of feeds from elsewhere.

Under the hood, we will be converting most of the site's software to Drupal, a highly flexible and powerful content management system with a wide array of built-in features, as well as thousands of freely available modules that can be used to add still more features. You can read more about it at drupal.org.

Some of the features we've added in the last couple of years, such as the online membership renewal system, will be retained and revamped for the new system. But Drupal will give us much more control over our site's content and the degree of access that various users—public, staff, members, and others—will have to it. And as mentioned above, it will also allow users to customize the site to meet their needs.

Things change quickly in the online world and what was state-of-the-art yesterday can seem hopelessly obsolete by tomorrow. But in moving toward a Drupal-based system, we think we will make a major improvement in the manageability of our online services, one that will allow us to add new features faster and more easily in the future, provide more frequent content updates and give our members the ability to adapt the site to their needs. ■



Mario C. Aguilera
 Assistant Director of Communications
 Scripps Institution of Oceanography
 at UC San Diego

The PIO Forum

LET'S TALK TRASH: PUBLICIZING GARBAGE SCIENCE FROM SEA

It's far too infrequent, but sometimes the stars align just right for an adventure-minded public information officer. That was the case last year when a tantalizing project popped up on the radar screen at the communications office at Scripps Institution

of Oceanography at UC San Diego.

In spring I heard about plans for a late summer expedition that had all of the ingredients for a compelling science news story: Scientists would be navigating the Scripps research vessel *New Horizon* to the North Pacific Gyre, otherwise known as “The Great Pacific Garbage Patch.” It is an under-studied vortex in the open ocean where plastic and other human-generated debris is collecting. A public that has been growing in environmental consciousness, my colleagues and I believed, would be intrigued by such an emerging ecological calamity-in-the-making. An added communications bonus: The expedition would be led by Scripps doctoral students, a new generation of marine scientists tackling a looming environmental threat.

Would it be possible for me to join the expedition? Any immediate excitement was tempered by my 12 years at Scripps during which I’ve learned that even if something appears enticing on the ship expedition schedule there are many hurdles to clear before sailing away on an adventure. Money is often the deal breaker for communications staff, particularly in sour economic times.

Scripps’ research vessels travel the world’s oceans and can be away for weeks, months, or years. Joining an expedition often means costly round-trip travel to far-off destinations such as New Zealand, Taiwan, or Tahiti. Fortunately, the August garbage patch voyage, or SEAPLEX (Scripps Environmental Accumulation of Plastic Expedition), would be starting in San Diego and ending in Portland, Ore., thus making for a reasonably priced travel itinerary.

The next obstacle was space availability since ship expeditions are usually maxed out with crew and scientists. Months ahead of the cruise, I asked Miriam Goldstein, SEAPLEX chief scientist, if by some miracle a spot might be available for a Scripps PR person (me). The initial answer was no. Then, a few weeks later, a spot opened up but was almost immediately taken by one of the cruise’s funding organizations. Two weeks before departure, another spot became available and I seized it.

To justify my place on board, I agreed to wear many hats. I would be a science team volunteer helping to deploy instruments, process samples, and any number of odd duties to support the research on board as well as help coordinate and edit the cruise blog dispatches. I would be a photographer, videographer, and journalist, reporting for Scripps’ website and *explorations* e-magazine. All this on top of contributing to the SEAPLEX website, online discussion page, Google Earth track plots, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr updates.

Ultimately, it was all worth it, both professionally and personally.

But it wasn’t all fun and games. The volunteer work was at times difficult for me. The ship bounced and rocked on the high seas for long periods; an imperfect situation for a novice seafarer. (In answer to all my curious family and friends: Yes, I

felt queasy at times, but no, I never lost my lunch).

Communications technology at sea often left something to be desired. Although *New Horizon* is fully Internet ready, the ship spent the majority of the voyage out of the free-service footprint. Thus, satellite uplinks were our most reliable connection, but at an extremely high cost. Blog text transmissions were OK, but photos needed to be vastly reduced and video was out of the question. Sending blog updates was also both mysterious and frustrating, as we had no clue how they were being received. Much later we learned that they were very popular and that our land-based communication colleagues were being swamped by SEAPLEX mania.

During the cruise, Lara Dickens, the SEAPLEX teacher on board, and I were charged with coordinating blog entries. We worked with the scientists, volunteers, and marine technicians to flesh out thoughts and nurture kernels of ideas. Blog topics ranged from fish biology to plastic debris issues to technical explanations of why the North Pacific Gyre exists to tales about what we ate and life on the ship.

A decided advantage of being aboard was my ability, working with the Scripps home office, to coordinate satellite media interviews matching a scientist’s expertise, interview skills, and availability (day vs. night crew) with appropriate news outlets.

It soon became clear that an onslaught of public and media attention awaited researchers when they were back on land. So I helped organize “media training at sea,” working with scientists to develop talking points and conducting mock interview sessions.

On the personal side, I accumulated a lifetime of experiences and memories. The sea life encountered ranged from curiously shaped sunfish to surface-skipping flying fish to albatrosses and an eerie vampire squid. Far out in the Pacific, clear blue, glassy waters gave way to jaw-dropping sunsets then faded to pitch-black nights with a dome of stars that put the best planetarium to shame.

By far the most astonishing sights the research team beheld were also the most distressing. They’d come to document human-produced plastic waste in the open ocean and found a shocking amount of it. Experiencing this first hand held many advantages for me as a public information officer. Rather than writing about the expedition later through diluted second-hand descriptions, I was able to convey the smell of a gigantic, rotting squid, the sweat involved in instrument deployments, the mood of the captain, the researchers’ faces as they captured the first plastic sample.

First-hand knowledge also better prepared me to provide information in the days and weeks following the expedition as journalists from around the world converged on Scripps for the SEAPLEX story. [For example, dispelling the common notion that a big “island” of garbage resides at sea—rather, it’s primarily broken-down bits and flecks of plastic spread loosely along the ocean surface.]

For these and many other reasons that continue to emerge long after the voyage,



Miriam Goldstein and Mario Aguilera deploy a manta net to sample the sea surface during SEAPLEX’s first sampling station at the North Pacific Ocean Gyre, Aug. 9, 2009.

the time spent on SEAPLEX was extremely well spent for this PIO. It's rare that such opportunities arise for newsworthy, cost-permissible, and space-available expeditions. But sometimes it does happen.

My recommendation: If the stars line up for you, go for it. ■



Pam Frost Gorder
Assistant Director
of Research Communications
Ohio State University
GORDER.1@OSU.EDU

Our Gang

Mariette DiChristina is top chef. Our NASW president has been named editor in chief of *Scientific American*. An award-winning science writer, DiChristina has been at the magazine since 2001, and before that, she spent 14 years at *Popular Science*. She oversees the print and online editions of *Scientific American* and *Scientific American Mind* as well as all newsstand special editions. Write to her at mdichristina@sciam.com and ask her what it's like to be the first woman ever to hold this position.

Ann Cairns, an earth science gourmet, has brought her talents to the American Geophysical Union (AGU), where she is now director of strategic communications and outreach. Cairns was most recently a freelancer, after spending nine years as director of communications, marketing, and sales for the Geological Society of America. She now manages the staff responsible for public information, government relations, education and career services, and the AGU website. She looks forward to planning AGU-wide strategies that will carry the society into the future. Congratulate her at acairns@agu.org.

Sid Perkins has written a recipe for disaster—and been honored for it. The American Meteorological Society has given him its 2010 award for Distinguished Science Journalism in the Atmospheric and Related Sciences for his feature article “Disaster Goes Global,” which appeared in *Science News* magazine on Aug. 30, 2008. The society praised Perkins for an “insightful article providing lessons for modern society on global climate disruption from a Peruvian volcanic eruption in 1600 that created global societal impacts.” Write to him at sperkins@sciencenews.org to ask what's cookin' now.

Dave Mosher is expanding his menu at the Simons Foundation. He reports that he's delving even deeper into web development as the full-time web editor for the foundation, a non-profit organization that supports basic science research. Though it funds mainly autism research, it also supports some work in mathematics, physics, and other fields. Mosher says that he's still living a double life as a freelancer for LiveScience.com and Discovery.com after hours. Write to him at davesciwriter@gmail.com to ask if he can snag you a Google Wave invite. Then ask him what Google Wave is.

Freelancer DeLene Beeland's articles boast all natural ingredients. The University of North Carolina Press

has acquired her proposal for a general science and nature book—her first-ever book. You can read her articles about earth sciences, life sciences, and the environment at <http://www.delene.us/>, and visit <http://sciencetrio.wordpress.com/> to check out her alter ego, the Wild Muse. Write her at delene@nasw.org to congratulate her on signing her book contract and for not cooking with MSG.

John Moir won the cook-off. He is the Grand Prize Winner for the 2009 *Writer's Digest* Annual Writing Competition. Moir's winning article, which was published at Smithsonian.com, tells the remarkable story of the discovery linking lead bullets to the risk of sublethal lead poisoning in humans who eat hunter-shot game. He will receive a \$3,000 cash prize and an all-expense-paid trip to New York City with a *Writer's Digest* editor to meet with agents and editors. In addition, the November/December issue of *Writer's Digest* magazine features an interview with Moir and a profile of his work. The complete interview is available at <http://www.writersdigest.com/article/wdannual09/>. E-mail your best wishes and recipes to John@Jmoir.com.

Joe Carey knows the recipe for success. After 18 years with the Society for Neuroscience and one with the National Institute of Mental Health, Carey has been named vice president for public affairs at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research, in San Antonio. The Foundation has a wide range of research interests including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer, psychiatric disorders, high risk pregnancy, AIDS, hepatitis, malaria, parasitic infections, and other infectious diseases. Congratulate him at jcarey@sfbbr.org and ask what's for dinner.

Jennifer Wettlaufer is cooking up some spicy writing. She received two first place awards in the National Federation of Press Women 2009 at-large contest in the science articles and informational columns categories. The federation cited her “interesting, unusual” topics and “well-written, entertaining” prose. Write her at buffalolink@earthlink.net to find out why you can't use the same kind of measuring cup for wet and dry ingredients.

Prize-winning Cookbook. The History of Science Society has awarded its 2009 Watson Davis and Helen Miles Davis Prize to **Charles Seife** for his book *Sun in a Bottle: The Strange History of Fusion and the Science of Wishful Thinking*. The prize committee called the book “fascinating, engagingly worded, and insightfully illustrated,” and added that it “opens new windows for students and the general public into the lives and work of scientists.” In fact, Seife—a professor of journalism at New York University and former journalist at *Science* magazine—spent years studying the lives of scientists who sought to produce energy from nuclear fusion in controlled experiments in the years after World War II. Their wishful thinking spawned a checkered history that included irreproducible claims that cold fusion could be produced in table-top experiments. Write to him at cgseife@nasw.org to offer congratulations and speculate on when cold fusion cooktops will hit the market. ■

Correction

In “Our Gang” (*SW*, fall 2009) member Eugenie Samuel Reich was incorrectly identified as “he.” ■



Suzanne Clancy
Editor
Clinical Lab Products
SCLANCYPHD@YAHOO.COM

Regional Groups

CHICAGO

The Chicago Science Writers were joined Oct. 15 by science journalism students from Northwestern University for a behind-the-scenes tour of the bird research program at Chicago's Field Museum. The group viewed a collection of eggs, many marked to locations in the city where houses and apartment buildings have replaced the natural habitat. They also learned about the collision between migrating birds and the city's skyscrapers and other tall buildings. Science writers spoke with a volunteer who gathers the birds each morning, some of which are still alive and can be rescued. Volunteers are engaged each morning in rescue missions at the base of many of the city's tall buildings.

The work of the volunteers and others have prompted the owners of some of the large buildings to dim their lights so the birds, who depend on stars for navigation, are not confused as they fly through the city. The science writers saw specimens of preserved birds that document the migration patterns through the city as well as a collection of insects common to the area. The experience provided many opportunities for lively conversation at a reception afterward.

NEW ENGLAND

Getting a jump on the holiday season, the New England Science Writers (NESW) gathered for their traditional December dinner and networking at Johnny D's Uptown Restaurant and Music Club, in Somerville. About two dozen local science scribes were joined by some out-of-towners attending the four-day Boot Camp on Medical Evidence sponsored by the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships program at nearby MIT.

Appropriately, the Boot Campers attending the dinner had just heard a talk by former FDA Commissioner David Kessler, author of the recent book *The End of Overeating*. Among the Boot Campers at Johnny D's were Cristine Russell, CASW president; Becky Land, health, science, and environment editor at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*; Carol Cruzan Morton, freelance journalist and Harvard Medical School communications; Elizabeth Cooney, *Boston Globe*, correspondent; and Monifa Thomas, health reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Keep up with NESW doings on its new Facebook page.

NEW YORK

After a short summer hiatus, SWINY's fall programming roared to life with a September program on the "hot" topic "Lust, Romance, Attachment—what brain scanning says about the drive to love." Hard-working recording secretary Sheila Haas invited Lucy Brown, Ph.D., a prominent neuroscientist, and behavioral anthropologist Helen E. Fisher, Ph.D., her collaborator

since 1996, to discuss with SWINY members and guests how they have used fMRI to see what blood flow patterns in the brain can teach us about the neural circuitry involved in these fundamental aspects of human relationships.

The October event was a field trip organized by SWINY board member Carol Milano to the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory, home of Columbia University's climate and earth science research facilities. The observatory is located on the cliffs overlooking the Hudson River, and the panoramic views of the autumn landscape were stunning. The group was greeted by observatory director Graham Michael Purdy and then escorted by Kim Martineau, the observatory's staff science writer through a jam-packed day of visits to five different labs. In the seismology laboratory, scientists explained all the unsuspected seismic risks and earthquake history in their own neighborhood. The group also learned about what ancient tree rings unexpectedly reveal about Asian monsoons, and how Lamont scientists created the world's first comprehensive map of invisible peaks hidden beneath miles of ice by exploring melting glaciers at both poles.

In November, new SWINY board member Robin Lloyd put together a program on a timely topic, "Ethics in Hard Times: A Panel Discussion for Science and Health Journalists and Writers." The event took place at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute at NYU, and was organized in conjunction with the Association of Health Care Journalists. Panelists Christine Gorman, Unmesh Kher, Cristine Russell, and Shirley Wang discussed some of the content partnerships and sponsorships that have emerged this past year among news outlets and government agencies and businesses. They sought to answer some difficult questions, such as whether we can still offer strong journalism when we enter these kinds of partnerships and sponsorships with government, industry, and academia.

December's event, designed by SWINY Board member Beth Schachter, provides career-based information to scientists thinking of transitioning into science communications. Among the panelists was SWINY co-president Joe Bonner, who is the director of communications at Rockefeller University. Joe joined Eric Vieira, Sarah Greene, and Theresa Wizeman in sharing their unique career paths, how they arrived at their current incarnation, challenges they faced, and the skills they felt were important for making this career transition.

PHILADELPHIA

In September, members of the Philadelphia-area Science Writers Association (PaSWA) were treated to a rare tour of the conservation department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. All kept hands in pockets as conservationist Debra Breslin allowed the group a peak at some of the statuary and rare medieval weaponry currently under repair. Chemist Ken Sutherland then discussed some of the detective techniques used to better understand and restore objects from the museum's collection—from determining how Rembrandt altered one of his own works for sale to how the composition of paint chips told the true age of an enormous Tibetan altar.

In November, PaSWA met in Philadelphia's historic Pen and Pencil Club to hear member Paul Halpern discuss his new—and timely—book about the Large Hadron Collider *Collider: The Search for the World's Smallest Particles*. His talk was equal parts physics lecture and travelogue, as researching the book took him

IEEE-USA to Award \$1,500 Honorarium to Journalist Who Contributes to Greater Public Understanding of Engineering

IEEE-USA is awarding a \$1,500 honorarium to recognize journalists — print or electronic — who add to a greater public understanding of technology professionals' contributions to the social, economic and cultural aspects of life.

Submissions for the *IEEE-USA Award for Distinguished Literary Contributions Furthering Public Understanding of the Engineering Profession* will be judged on quality in portraying subjects, themes or incidents; or on editorial content. Submissions from print, Web or broadcast may include an individual presentation or a series of presentations. Self-nominations are welcome.

At its annual meeting in 2009, IEEE-USA awarded \$1,500 honoraria to two journalists: Alan Boyle, for his MSNBC.com articles on future engineering challenges; and John Dodge, for his *Design News* series on key new technologies in the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. First presented in 1988, previous IEEE-USA journalism award recipients have included: NPR's Richard Harris (1991); the *Chicago Tribune's* Jon Van (1993); and *The Wall Street Journal's* G. Pascal Zachary (1998).

For more information on the award, contact Pender M. McCarter at p.mccarter@ieee.org. Download the nomination form at ieeusa.org/volunteers/awards/documents/literary.pdf.



IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 210,000 engineers, scientists and allied professionals who are U.S. members of the IEEE, the world's largest technical professional society.



all across the Franco-Swiss countryside. Most important of all, he assured the group they had nothing to fear from tiny black holes and most likely would not die in a universe-crunching apocalypse any time soon.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

In May, DCSWA visited Sidwell Friends School (famously attended by President Obama's two daughters) to learn about the first LEED Platinum classroom building in the United States. From the roof (half solar panels and half planted) to the basement with its graywater treatment plant, science writers learned about the successes and also the remaining issues of this pioneering building. University of Maryland geologist Karen Prestegaard led about 25 DCSWans (and two dogs) on a tour of Great Falls in June, a spectacular waterfall and canyon on the Potomac River just north of D.C. During the three-mile hike, Prestegaard explained what causes the Potomac's most extreme floods (sudden snowmelts in the spring and hurricanes in the fall), and described how the canyon was cut by the river when sea level dropped during the last ice age.

In August, DCSWA's annual Summer Soiree weekend, under the leadership of Ranger Rick Borchelt, moved to Cape May, N.J. The festivities began Friday evening, with dinner followed by streaks of Perseid meteors. Saturday included a trip to the Haskin Shellfish Research Lab at Rutgers University, to learn about efforts to save and improve oyster harvests in the bay, and a bird-watching trip aboard the Osprey, a flat-bottomed boat that glides through the bay's wetlands. On Sunday, the group went into Delaware Bay and the Atlantic in search of whales—but

instead saw abundant bottle-nosed dolphins.

DCSWA's year was filled with social events as well, including happy hours, a Nationals baseball game, and science writer-focused trivia nights (with the occasional question about Barbie's real name and what LL Cool J stands for), and a special June happy hour to welcome the many interns who flock to D.C. during the summer. The final event of the year—the highly popular DCSWA holiday party—took place in early December, featuring a Year in Review in honor of members' achievements. ■

In Memoriam



Frank Karel

Health communications innovator;
philanthropy visionary

Frank Karel, 74, a former vice president of communications at the Robert Wood Johnson and Rockefeller Foundations, and the nation's foremost advocate for philanthropy as a driver of social change, died Sept. 19 at his home in Washington, D.C., after a long bout with prostate cancer. Had been an NASW member since 1965.

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Widely recognized as a preeminent thinker and innovator in health communications, Karel transformed the field. His innovative approaches established the two foundations as leaders in the nonprofit world—whether through the media, the Internet, social marketing, advocacy, or their own publications.

On Karel's watch, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation piloted community efforts to combat homelessness and support AIDS health services, which led to the Stewart McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and the Ryan White Care Act, and he led the Foundation's investment in the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which has significantly influenced a 45 percent drop in youth smoking over the past decade through state and federal laws on tobacco control. While at Rockefeller, he was a staunch advocate for communicating agricultural research as a means of public engagement in strategies to combat hunger in the developing world, and he oversaw the foundation's initiatives related to global vaccination.

A native of Florida, Karel was the *Miami Herald's* first science writer, covering the original space launches. The University of Florida has established the Frank Karel Chair in Public Interest Communications, the first and only endowed professorship of its kind in the United States.

(contributed by Andy Burness)



Laszlo Dosa
VOA Broadcaster,
Covered U.S. Space Program

Laszlo Dosa, an award-winning journalist, died Oct. 11 at age 80 in Juno Beach, Fla.

He came to the United States in 1951 as a Hungarian refugee from communism, knowing very little English. He was soon drafted into the Army where he served two years in military intelligence and psychological warfare.

In 1955, Dosa joined the Voice of America as a Hungarian writer and broadcaster. At night, he attended classes at American University, in Washington, D.C., earning a B.A. in communications. He said his most memorable event of that period was covering the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Fifty years later, he was deeply touched by this message from Houston:

In 1956, I was seven years old. Of those turbulent times, I do remember quite clearly the unsung hero of my parents and many other Hungarian-speaking people from all over the world. He was the Voice of America coming into our life via shortwave radio signals. Millions of Hungarians learned for the first time about the uprising and later followed with him the fate of those who had escaped. I grew up with his day-to-day broadcasting, and 40 years later I also had the privilege of meeting Laszlo Dosa.

Reaching the "glass ceiling" of VOA's foreign language services, Dosa volunteered to write science and medical reports for worldwide broadcast in English and translation into dozens of languages.

A media tour of Antarctica led to his documentary series about life and scientific research at the bottom of the world. Becoming a full-time science writer in 1968 in VOA's central services, he was eventually promoted to science editor of VOA.

In 1982, Dosa received VOA's Superior Honor Award "for exceptional skill, resourcefulness and dedication in reporting, accurately and comprehensively, trends and events in American physical, medical, and social sciences."

He covered the Apollo moon flight program from Cape Kennedy and Houston, all the other manned spaceflights, the early years of the shuttle program, and unmanned planetary exploration, including the first Pioneer probe reaching Jupiter. When Dosa was about to retire to Jupiter, Fla. in 1987, incredulous colleagues asked him, "Aren't you overdoing it?"

He preferred the term "recycled" to "retired" as he covered medical meetings in Florida for northern publications, accompanied by his wife, Catherine Power Dosa, who found and engaged the next interviewee with conversation until Dosa finished another interview. They loved traveling the world, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, from all over Europe to India, China, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia.

In summer 2009, Dosa published his memoir, *From the Tisza River to the Atlantic Ocean*.

(contributed by Dan Keller)



Peter Radetsky
Author, exhibit developer,
and lecturer

Peter Radetsky, 67, author of several popular science books and longtime lecturer in science writing at the University of California, Santa Cruz, died of cancer on Aug. 19.

Radetsky mentored scores of undergraduates and graduate students in long-form science writing as a lecturer in the science communication program at UC Santa Cruz for 18 years. His alumni recall his teaching as both intense and nurturing. He demanded clarity and professionalism from his students, and he helped steer dozens of his graduates toward successful careers as staff and freelance feature writers.

He was a contributing editor at *Discover* during the 1980s and 1990s, writing numerous features on evolution, AIDS, and other topics in biomedicine. He also wrote for *Science*, *Longevity*, and *American Health*.

Among his seven books were *The Invisible Invaders*, about viruses; *Allergic to the 20th Century*, about environmental illness; and *The Soviet Image: A Hundred Years of Photographs from Inside the TASS Archives*, written with his son, Sam Radetsky.

In his last decade, Radetsky turned to creating traveling museum exhibitions in science, art, and culture. He started his own exhibition company with graphic artist Tom Fricker. The partners collaborated on content with NASA, the Smithsonian Institution, the Vatican, and other agencies. Their notable shows

IN MEMORIAM continued on page 37



Apsell



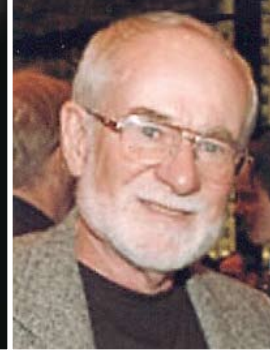
Benderly



Billings



Blum



Cornell



Grabmeier

Science Writers Well Represented Among AAAS Fellows

Paula Apsell, Beryl Lieff Benderly, Linda Billings, Deborah Blum, James Cornell, and Jeff Grabmeier have been elected fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). All are members of Section Y (General Interest in Science and Engineering). They will receive formal recognition of this honor at a ceremony during the 2010 AAAS Annual Meeting, in San Diego.

Paula Apsell is recognized for her “enduring work in informal science education as senior executive producer of the NOVA television series and her leadership as director of the WGBH Science Unit.” Apsell got her start in broadcasting at WGBH Boston, where she was hired to type the daily television program logs. Within a year, she found her way to WGBH Radio, where she developed the award-winning children’s drama series *The Spider’s Web*, and later became a radio news producer. In 1975, she joined NOVA, a fledgling WGBH-produced national series that would set the standard for science programming on television. Today, NOVA can be found in classrooms nationwide, where it is the most widely used television series among high school teachers.

In addition to NOVA, Apsell has overseen the production of many award-winning WGBH Science Unit specials: most recently, the eight-part miniseries *Evolution*. She’s also directed NOVA’s diversification into other media, most notably NOVA’s award-winning website. Her contribution to the area of informal science education and the quality of the programming she produces has been recognized through many awards including the first Public Service Award from the National Science Foundation.

Beryl Lieff Benderly, is cited for “outstanding science journalism and for leadership in advancing and protecting the economic and creative rights of freelance science writers.” A prize-winning freelance journalist, Benderly has written hundreds of articles that have appeared in national publications ranging from *Glamour* to *Scientific American* and international publications such as *Jerusalem Report*. She writes a monthly column on the website of *Science* and has also been science correspondent for www.religionlink.org, a columnist for *American Health*, and a contributing editor of *Psychology Today*. Benderly is the author of seven books including *The Growth of the Mind*, *In her Own Right: The Institute of Medicine Guide to Women’s Health Issues*, *Challenging the Breast Cancer Legacy*, and *Dancing Without Music: Deafness in America*, which has remained in print for 25 years.

Benderly has made significant contributions to the future vitality of the science-writing profession by building bridges to other writers’ organizations. In particular, the relationship she forged between NASW and the Authors Coalition that has brought with it significant financial resources. This has made it possible for NASW to provide fellowships for writers to attend professional development conferences and scientific meetings, much-needed

market surveys and databases, and mentoring outreach that has directly benefited hundreds of freelance science writers with new skills, information on market trends, and new ways to network; all vital for writers to remain competitive in today’s turbulent marketplace.

Linda Billings, Ph.D., is recognized for “excellent in public outreach on behalf of the space program and astrobiology through communications research, public affairs, science, writing, editing, and publishing.” Her 30-year career has spanned tenures across the board in science communication. She is the founding editor of *Space Business News* and the first senior editor for space at *Air & Space/Smithsonian* magazine. She also was a contributing author for *First Contact: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. Her freelance articles have been published in outlets such as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post* magazine, and *Space News*.

Billings currently is research professor, School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University and is principal investigator with the NASA’s Astrobiology Program. She is responsible for reviewing, assessing, and coordinating communications, education, and public outreach activities sponsored by the Astrobiology Program.

Billings’ expertise is in mass communication, science communication, risk communication, rhetorical analysis, journalism studies, and social studies of science. She holds a Ph.D. in mass communication from Indiana University’s School of Journalism. Her research has focused on the role of journalists in constructing the cultural authority of scientists and the rhetorical strategies that scientists and journalists employ in communicating about science.

Deborah L. Blum, professor of journalism and mass communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is lauded for “distinguished contributions to the public understanding of science through high-quality investigative journalism, award-winning books, and leadership in the science-journalism community.” She started her career as a general-

assignment newspaper reporter for the *Macon Telegraph*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, and the *Fresno Bee* before earning a master's degree in environmental journalism and turning to science writing. At the *Fresno Bee*, she was the first to report on the startling incidence of severely deformed waterfowl at the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge, in California's Central Valley, where poor management of irrigation runoff had polluted the wetland with toxic levels of the chemical selenium.

Blum later joined the staff of the *Sacramento Bee*, where she broadened her range to include subjects as diverse as medical issues, superconductivity, and the physics of weaponry. Blum wrote a series of articles examining the professional, ethical, and emotional conflicts between scientists who use animals in their research and animal rights activists who oppose that research. Titled *The Monkey Wars*, the series won the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting and was later expanded into a book of the same name.

Blum has given back to the science writing community through leadership. She is co-editor of the book *A Field Guide for Science Writers*, is a past NASW president, and currently serves on the CASW board and the AAAS Committee on Public Understanding of Science and Technology.

James C. Cornell, is honored for "distinguished leadership as president of the International Science Writers Association and for outstanding service in informing the public about space and astronomy research." For nearly 40 years, Cornell has been at the forefront of efforts to provide science journalists around the world, particularly those living and working in countries without national associations, connections with the wider world of science communication. He has conducted training seminars and workshops on science communication in Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Germany, India, South Korea, Spain, and Venezuela on behalf of ISWA and with support from funders including USIA, UNESCO, the Smithsonian, and the MacArthur Foundation.

In addition to his international interests, Cornell has played a major role in bringing news about space and astronomy to the American public. Before his retirement, he was manager of the Editorial and Publications Department of the joint Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) where he helped create the CfA preprint series of pamphlets, brochures, and broadsides distributed worldwide to thousands of teachers, students, and amateur astronomers. He turned the CfA Observatory Nights for the Public into a regular monthly event. As a founding member of the Planetary Advisory Committee at the Boston Museum of Science, he coordinated an annual series of free public lectures on astronomy.

Jeffrey S. Grabmeier, director of research communications at The Ohio State University, is cited for "uncommon skill in communicating the social sciences in ways that successfully bridge the gap of understanding between what scientists uncover and what interests the public." For more than 20 years, Grabmeier has been an essential part of the science communications team at Ohio State, charged with the task of explaining to the public and to the news media the complexities and wonder of ongoing research at one of the largest institutions in the world. Most science writers selectively choose to report on the physical or biomedical sciences, believing that this is the arena which garners

FELLOWS continued on page 37

2009 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards

A radio broadcast on probability told through a tale about a drifting balloon, a newspaper series on the impact of a devastating genetic disease on a family in rural Montana, and a group of gracefully written stories about genetics and evolution are among the winners of the 2009 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Independent panels of science journalists select the winners of the awards. The winners for each category will receive \$3,000 and a plaque at the 2010 AAAS Annual Meeting in San Diego, in February.

NASW member Carl Zimmer won in the large newspaper category for a trio of articles he wrote for the *New York Times* on aspects of genetics and evolution. "I sometimes feel a little embarrassed that I like to write articles about the kinds of basic questions my kids ask me," Zimmer said. "For the three stories I submitted, the questions were, 'What's a virus?' 'What's a gene?' and 'Why do fireflies flash?' I had a marvelous time talking with scientists about the complex answers to those simple questions, and now I don't have to feel at all embarrassed." Zimmer previously won in the AAAS Science Journalism Award online category in 2004.

NASW member Douglas Fox takes home honors in the children's science news category for "Where Rivers Run Uphill" (*Science KAVLI continued on page 37*)



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NASW CONTACTS

National Association of Science Writers, Inc.
P.O. Box 7905
Berkeley, CA 94707
Phone 510-647-9500
www.nasw.org

STAFF

Executive Director

Tinsley Davis, director@nasw.org

NASW Cybrarian

Russell Clemings, cybrarian@nasw.org

Workshops Coordinator

Tinsley Davis, workshops@nasw.org

ScienceWriters Editor

Lynne Friedmann, editor@nasw.org

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ARIZONA: David Despain* Univ. of Bridgeport, Chandler; Nova Walsh*, Univ. of Bridgeport, Chandler; Melanie, Lenart, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson. **CALIFORNIA:** Sarah Kahle Kuipers* UC Davis; Lauren Knoche*, SLAC Nat'l Accelerator Lab., Menlo Park; Adam Mann*, UC Santa Cruz; Thomas Levy, Children's Hosp. & Res. Ctr., Oakland; Karen Knee, Stanford University, Palo Alto; Kelly McGonigal, freelance, Palo Alto; Rose Eveleth*, UC San Diego; Michael Pena, freelance, San Jose; Sandra, Chung*, UC Santa Cruz.

CONNECTICUT: Charles, Gershman, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven. **FLORIDA:** Nicole Parker*, Univ. of Florida School of Medicine, Gainesville. **GEORGIA:** Deborah Chasteen*, Univ. of Georgia, Athens; Sonya Collins*, Univ. of Georgia, Athens; Yanli Liu*, Univ. of Georgia, Athens. **ILLINOIS:** Aniket Kaloti*, Northwestern Univ., Evanston; Tara Kerpelman*, Northwestern Univ., Evanston.

MASSACHUSETTS: Joseph Calamia*, MIT; Joshua Colin Febowitz*, MIT; Nidhi, Subbaraman*, MIT Grad. Program in Science Writing, Cambridge; Diane Kelly, freelance, Deerfield; Morgan Sherburne*, MIT; Pamela Marean*, Univ. of Mass. Dartmouth. **MARYLAND:** Natasha Hochlowski*, Loyola University, Bel Air; Robert Thomas, Scientific Writing Solutions, Gaithersburg. **NEW JERSEY:** Dan Hurley, freelance, Montclair. **NEW MEXICO:** Amanda Gardner, *Health Day*, Albuquerque. **NEW YORK:** Susan Horton*, NYU, Brooklyn; Tarah Sullivan*, Cornell Univ., Ithaca; Liz Day*, Columbia Univ. Grad. School of Journalism, NYC. **OHIO:** Alexis Linton*, Hiram College, Chesterland. **PENNSYLVANIA:** Jennifer Kruk*, Penn State Univ., State College; Christina Ward*, Univ. of the Sciences in Philadelphia. **TEXAS:** Bernard Appiah*, Texas A&M Univ., College Station; Christina Sumners*, Texas A&M Univ., College Station; Antonio Villarreal*, Texas A&M Univ., College Station; Aribisala Wuraola*, Texas A&M Univ., College Station. **UTAH:** Phil Sahm, Univ. of Utah Health Sciences, Salt Lake City. **WISCONSIN:** Chris Barnard, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison; Bethany Teeters*, Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln, Two Rivers.

UNITED KINGDOM: Laura, Gallagher, Imperial College, London. ■
*Student member

EXPLAINING

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practices, and had persuasive arguments (i.e., arguments which went beyond "I don't like this provision, and it's bad for the author... please change it"), he was able to obtain most of the changes I needed for my protection, and indeed a contract that rivaled those of most trade publishers.

"The exceptions, of course, were the low advance and royalty rates, which remain typical of university press publisher," said Stein.

Contract aside, it turned out to be a very wise decision to go with Oxford. Its editing and marketing has been first-rate, and its sales force has given the book a reach we could not possibly have achieved alone.

A major irony, however, is that we have ended

up back in the self-publishing business. When Oxford asked me to cut the manuscript by 15,000 words, I elected to pull out a long section on working with public information officers. We decided to self-publish the section as a print booklet (www.WorkingwithPIOs.com), besides posting it on the website as a service to researchers and PIOs. In deciding to self-publish the booklet, we followed another prime piece of publishing advice: Make your book a centerpiece of other related publishing and consulting ventures.

We are producing the booklet through the print-on-demand company Lightning Source (lightningsource.com) and selling it on the ExplainingResearch.com website through Amazon.com, and other outlets. Whether we will make any money on the booklet remains to be seen, but it's a worthwhile self-publishing experiment.

Now begins the real work of marketing *Explaining Research* using e-mail, flyers, talks, and other techniques we learned in exploring book marketing. My promoter's dream is to persuade readers to buy multiple copies—one for their office, one for their home study, and one for each bathroom. And maybe one to prop open a window, one to swat flies, one to... ■

WORKSHOP

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Sites such as Digg, Slashdot, reddit, and StumbleUpon can help everyone from freelancers to PIOs build relationships with people who get stories noticed, Harris explained. However, he added, even though the sites are meant to crowd-source good stories, it doesn't always work that way.

Here is Harris's navigation guide to social networking, include his recommendations for success.

■ Digg is like a gang. It has a strong hierarchy, and the dominance of an idea depends on who it comes from. If you want success here, be in with the leaders and don't cross them. In practical terms, this means identifying who posts science and health stories among Digg's 100 or so leaders. "You've got to find the right people and get them to submit the story for you," Harris said.

■ Slashdot is like organized crime. A small, tight group controls the flow of information, and outsiders are treated with suspicion. The key here is to post good stuff and get positive attention from the site's administrators, who can help a story land on the front page.

■ Reddit is like an ADHD direct democracy. Any story can get to the top, but it will fade quickly if it doesn't capture people's attention. For success, post a detailed headline that will appeal to a reader's interest and post often.

■ StumbleUpon is like a book club. The ideas don't have to be fresh, and popularity is more closely linked to the quality of the content.

Harris added that Facebook and Twitter send about 15 percent of the magazine's hits (150,000 to 200,000 monthly). His slides are available online at <http://www.slideshare.net/physicsdavid>.

Alexis Madrigal, who covers science and energy for Wired.com, suggested that writers spend time learning the norms of each community they join.

"If we take that behavior more seriously, we'll be more successful," he said. "I think it's respectful to learn the way the community works."

Madrigal acknowledged that the initial time investment can seem daunting, but the rewards include meeting new sources and learning about the general public's excitement for science stories.

"Once you've invested some time it will start to pay itself back," he said.

His slides are available online at <http://www.slideshare.net/alexismadrigal>.

Robin Lloyd, an online editor at *Scientific American*, said she joined Twitter after the Jet Propulsion Laboratory broke the news about Phoenix Mars Lander discovering water via a tweet. "At that point there was a sea change; everyone got an account," she said. Her Twitter name is robinlloyd99.

Lloyd now relies on Twitter to help her decide whether a story merits posting on *Scientific American's* site, both by following other reporters and scientists and asking the community for opinions on upcoming topics.

"For social media, it's who you are connected to are connected to that's important," she noted. "I have smart friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who are acquainted to people in stories that are important to me." ■

SCHOLARLY

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differed between the top and bottom tiers, and whether—overall—academic medical center news releases oversold medical news or otherwise failed to include appropriate scientific or medical context in their releases.

The team pulled some 989 news releases posted on EurekAlert! from these 20 centers for the year of the study—that's a prodigious average of 49 from each institution (the range was 186 from Hopkins vs. 13 from Brown); highest-ranked centers produced 743 releases to the 246 from lowest-ranked centers. Highest-ranked centers also were less likely to issue releases on about unpublished work, 9% vs 20% for the bottom 10. "All 20 centers said that media coverage is an important measure of their success," the researchers found, "and most report the number of 'media hits' garnered to the administration."

The authors then chose a set of releases from each center (10 each) for in-depth analysis, including comparison with the original research paper and subjective (but highly congruent among coders) assessments of the news releases' accuracy and balance. Overall, they found, "Press releases issued by 20 academic medical centers frequently promoted preliminary research or inherently limited human studies without providing basic details or cautions needed to judge the meaning, relevance, or validity of the science."

For example, "Although 24% (47 of 200) of releases used the word 'significant,' only one clearly distinguished statistical from clinical significance. All other cases were ambiguous, creating an opportunity for overinterpretation." Among the 87 releases about animal or laboratory studies, most (64 of 87) explicitly claimed relevance to human health, yet 90% lacked caveats about extrapolating results to people. Twenty-nine percent of releases (58 of 200) were rated as exaggerating the finding's importance. Exaggeration was found more often in releases about animal studies than human studies (41% vs. 18%). "Almost all releases (195 of 200) included investigator quotes," Woloshin et al. report, "26% of which were judged to overstate research importance."

The authors recommend that all academic medical centers issue fewer releases, and especially eschew unpublished findings presented at meetings and animal studies that purport to have human relevance. "Centers should limit releases about animal or laboratory research. Although such research is

important, institutions should not imply clinical benefit when it does not exist (and may not for years, if ever): Two-thirds of even highly cited animal studies fail to translate into successful human treatments," they admonish.

"By issuing fewer but better press releases," the authors write, "academic centers could help reduce the chance that journalists and the public are misled about the importance or implications of medical research. Centers might get less press coverage, but they would better serve their mission: to improve the health of their communities and the larger society in which they reside."

Woloshin and colleagues also report these data and offer advice to reporters in an editorial in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, "Promoting Healthy Skepticism in the News: Helping Journalists Get It Right," published online Nov. 20, 2009. ■

FUTURITY

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editorial contact (if Ohio State were a member, this would be you) as soon as a story is posted so that we can modify a story immediately if there is a problem."

But after-the-fact corrections of errors seems a poor approach to ensuring the accuracy of reporting. The researcher's and the university science writer's credibility is on the line in these cases and is too valuable to risk.

My problem with Futurity isn't what it is. Many other media outlets—conventional and otherwise—work the same way it does. No, my objection rests with what it claimed to be in the beginning and how it suggested it was filling in for the alleged diminution of science reporting. I also object to the suggestion that it offers institutions more than the long-established sites like EurekAlert! and Newswise are offering. Futurity backers argued that it would focus mainly on the general public, but EurekAlert! already can brag about getting 1.2 million hits each month.

In hard economic times, at public institutions at least, it's hard to justify the cost of Futurity participation, given the constraints I see.

But for those who disagree, just climb onboard.

POSTSCRIPT

On Nov. 9, I requested data on hits at the website, total visitors, and subscribers to Futurity's daily e-mail newsletter. By mid-morning of the next day, I received the stats for the site's first three months—and they were impressive. Since going public on Sept. 15, the site had 135,000 visitors and 325,000 page views. The daily e-mail (which highlights four stories) has 2,580 subscribers. Futurity also has 557 Facebook fans and 766 followers on Twitter.

Six hours later, Murphy shared similar data with Futurity's members and the followers of a public affairs listserv run by the Association of American Universities. Perhaps the timing was coincidental. ■

IN MEMORIAM

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included research on the human brain, microbes, deep-sea exploration, and the raising of the Liberty Bell 7 Mercury capsule.

He received his B.A. and M.A. in literature from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and his Ph.D. in creative writing and literature from The Union Institute of Cincinnati, Ohio. He received an

alumni award from the University of Colorado for his outstanding writing instruction there prior to moving to Santa Cruz in 1972. ■

(source: Robert Irion, UC Santa Cruz)

FELLOWS

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most public interest. In reality, the largest proportion of research reporting in the conventional news media focuses instead on the social sciences. Grabmeier recognized this early on and honed his skills in this selective field, deciphering research which all too often is misconstrued by a lay audience.

Grabmeier's work has brought him more than a dozen national awards during his tenure at Ohio State. Before joining the university's office of research communications, Grabmeier was a reporter for the *Columbus Citizen-Journal* and the *Gallipolis Daily Tribune*.

KAVLI

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News for Kids, July 23, 2008). He used his journey across Antarctic ice sheets to show how scientists are studying a strange world of lakes and rivers beneath the ice. He wrote that scientists think "lakes under the ice might act like giant slippery banana peels." He and the researchers traveled to a lake that is "buried under ice, two Empire State Buildings below our feet." A judge said that Fox "succeeds in bringing the reader with him as his scientific adventure in Antarctica unfolds." Fox said that perhaps the biggest challenge in writing his story for a young audience "was remembering to be awestruck by the basic things that we tend to take for granted—like the simple fact that glaciers can evaporate. More and more I think that this is also good advice for communicating science to adults."

Other winners:

■ **Small Newspaper-Circulation (less than 100,000 circ.):** Amie Thompson, for the series "Lethal Legacy" (*Great Falls Tribune*, June 21-23, 2009)

■ **Magazine:** Gary Wolf for "Barcode of Life" (*Wired*, Oct. 2008)

■ **Television/Spot News/Feature Reporting (20 minutes or less):** Julia Cort for "Diamond Factory" (*NOVA scienceNOW*, June 30, 2009)

■ **Television/In-Depth Reporting (more than 20 minutes):** Doug Hamilton for "The Last Extinction" (*WGBH/NOVA*, March 31, 2009)

■ **Radio:** Jad Abumrad, Soren Wheeler, Robert Krulwich for "A Very Lucky Wind" (*WNYC Radiolab*, June 15, 2009)

■ **Online:** Lisa Friedman for the series "Bangladesh: Where the Climate Exodus Begins" (*ClimateWire*, March 2009)

The awards are the first to be given under a new endowment by The Kavli Foundation (www.kavlifoundation.org). In recognition of that endowment, the awards—first given in 1945,—now are called the AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards. The Foundation, based in Oxnard, Calif., is dedicated to advancing science for the benefit of humanity. The new endowment also allowed expansion of the television category to include two additional awards: one for spot news/feature reporting and one for in-depth reporting. ■

Exercise Your Membership Right to Vote

Ratification of NASW bylaws changes

Notice of a Special Meeting of the National Association of Science Writers

Ratification of
NASW bylaws changes

Saturday, February 20, 2010
4:00 PM
San Diego Convention Center
Room 16A

Revised bylaws language
and explanation of
proposed changes found
on pages 18–24

*I'm voting in person.
San Diego has great
weather, and they're
serving refreshments!*

*I just bought a latte,
so I'm going to curl up
and read ScienceWriters
cover to cover then
vote by proxy.*

Participate via proxy vote

Your vote is needed to
ratify the new bylaws

Mail-in proxy
found on page 25

Or vote online at
[www.nasw.org/elections_
bylaws/index.php?ID=2](http://www.nasw.org/elections_bylaws/index.php?ID=2)

Deadline for receipt of
mail-in or online proxy
is Feb. 15, 2010