

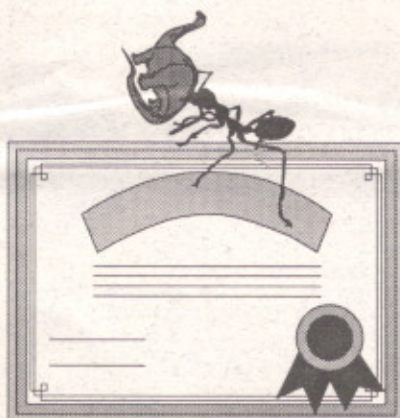
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I'd Like To Thank the Academy . . .

The 6th annual meeting of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences was an unqualified success. The gathering took place at a small restaurant near the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in early May, and was well attended by an enthusiastic group of BELSites—those who could get away from CBE obligations, that is. Many thanks to Carol Cadmus for making all the arrangements; you've earned a gold star!

The keynote speaker was Earle E Spamer ("How do you pronounce your name?" "Earle."), he of relative obscurity in the Paleontology Department of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences but a shining light on the editorial board of the *Annals of Improbable Research (AIR)*, *The Journal of Record for Inflated Research and Personalities*. Earle delighted us all with tales of some of the more unlikely research studies ever to be seen in print (see below) and their subsequent exposé in *AIR*.

Among the examples Earle gave was the report of the Okamura Fossil Research Laboratory in Japan, which found miniature ducks, horses, dinosaurs, plants, and human beings in rocks from the early Paleozoic Era. These tiny creatures were, except for their size, identical to their modern, living counterparts. According to the Okamurian mode of evolution, the sole change in organisms has been in the introduction of appendages and dramatic growth in body size, such as the change in adult humans from 3.5 mm to 1700 mm. Particularly captivating were photographs of a mini-sperm whale (3.4 mm long) and a mini-Saint Bernard (size not given but also tiny). I think I speak for all when I say we had a lovely time listening to Earle.

As part of the evening's festivities, two BELS members were recognized for their efforts on behalf of the organization. Shirley Peterson, ELS, until very recently Assistant Treasurer of BELS, was awarded a plaque that reads as follows:

Presented to Shirley Peterson in recognition of her consistently competent, careful, and even cheerful financial handling of BELS for 5 years, during which she has maintained the solid fiscal standing of BELS, has kept track of its sometime-strange bills efficiently, has reimbursed BELS members quietly for their expenses even when their expense reports were not submitted in the most fastidious manner, and has kept her head while some around her were losing theirs.

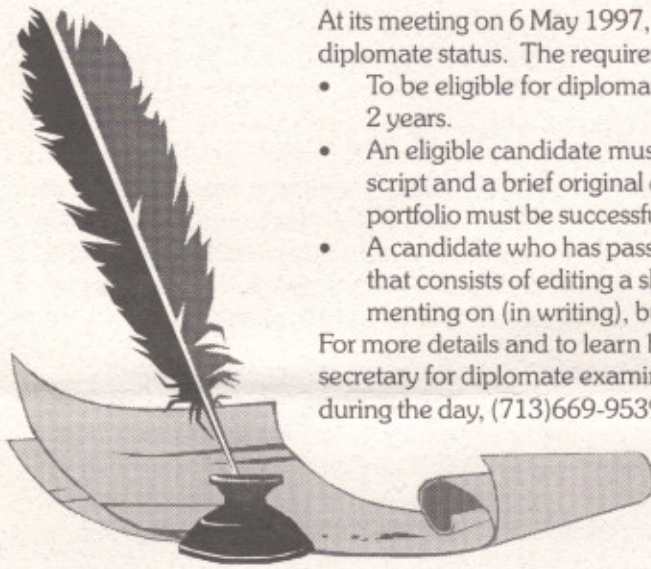
Another award was given to yours truly, your fearless *Letter* editor. My plaque reads *Presented to Grace Darling in recognition of her initiative and leadership in the creation of the BELS Letter and her imaginative editorial direction of what has become an outstanding emblem of the mission and ideals of BELS.*

Shirley and I are thrilled, and we both hope our overwhelmingly positive experience will inspire others to become involved in the affairs of BELS. Thank you.

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

Arthur C Clarke, *The Lost Worlds of 1887*

Attention All Members



At its meeting on 6 May 1997, the BELS Executive Council revised the procedure for achieving diplomate status. The requirements are now as follows:

- To be eligible for diplomate status, a candidate must have been certified by BELS for at least 2 years.
- An eligible candidate must submit a portfolio that consists of 15-30 pages of edited manuscript and a brief original essay on a subject relevant to editing in the life sciences, and the portfolio must be successfully reviewed.
- A candidate who has passed the portfolio stage must pass a proctored 4.5-hour examination that consists of editing a short paper, condensing a piece of text, and reviewing and commenting on (in writing), but not editing, a paper. The examination has no oral component.

For more details and to learn how to apply for diplomate status, get in touch with Carol Kakalec, secretary for diplomate examination administration. Carol can be reached at (713)770-2046 during the day, (713)669-9539 in the evening, and by e-mail at ckakalec@wt.net.

Congratulations

We welcome the following new BELS members:

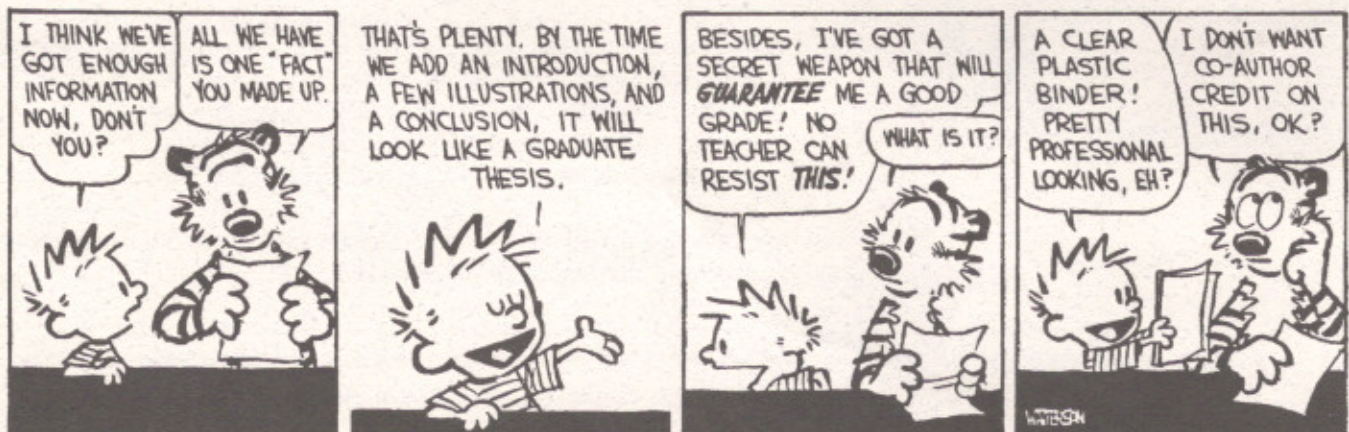
Sandra L Bryant
 Kimberly Callan
 Donna Carpenter
 Frances R DeStefano
 Elaine R Firestone
 Theresa Flynn
 Janet Ghigo
 Donna Goodrich
 Terri B Goshko

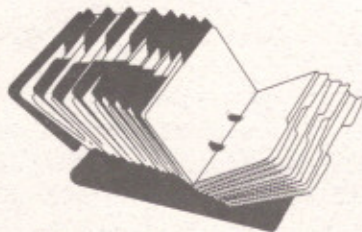
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 Stephanie E Kasza
 Jennifer Kilpatrick
 Julie Kostecky
 Kathleen S Mayer
 Michael D Murray
 Susan Gardner Murray
 Leslie E Neistadt

Rhana Pike
 Susan Schindler
 Roger I Schreck
 Sandra Smith Schulte
 Shirley Strunk
 Susan Skinner Vaupel
 Scott J Warnock
 Roxanne K Young

All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure.

Mark Twain





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The Jury Is Out

by Judith H Dickson, ELS (D)



This issue's editing question, posted to the BELS e-mail list, brought in more responses than we could fit in this column. Our plan was to balance the replies and use half on each side of the question—for some unfathomable reason we thought there would be two basic views. Silly of us. So, here are the replies received in the order they were received, used until all the allotted space was filled. (Note: replies were edited because of space constraints.) Many thanks to everyone who replied.

New editing question: When you are editing a paper by an author who uses constructions like "the broader impacts of widespread adoption," do you change *impacts* to *effects*? (When do you make this change and when do you leave it alone?)

I always suggest changing the verb *impact* to standard usage such as *affect*. My clients usually want me to make them sound better. I tell them that using standard English whenever possible will give their writing more authority. Of course, I include the disclaimer, "You're the author, so do as you think best. This is my suggestion."
Sharon Naron, ELS

I always change *impacts* in this sense, usually to *effects*. Of course, if it were a comet or something, impact might be correct.
Nancy Landis, ELS

I generally change *impact* to *effect* in constructions such as the one you gave as an example. I only use *impact* as noun in the form as defined by Webster's. I also follow Bernstein (*The Careful Writer*): "A strong word, *impact* is in danger of losing some of its power." Finally, I usually change it because almost all of my clients specifically dictate in their style guides their preference for *effect*.
Patti Wolf, ELS

I can just barely imagine my leaving this one alone if the author were particularly ungrammatical and particularly testy, but under most circumstances I think I'd change it. The problem is with that adjective *broader*. I think I can understand "impact of widespread adoption" and maybe "broad impact of widespread adoption"—though a broad impact seems to contradict itself—but I begin to lose any sense of meaning when we get to "broader impact" and the sense of "broader impacts" escapes me completely. Besides, who can say impacts out loud?
Sherry C Williams, ELS

I've no problem with *impact* used as a noun, but I'd make it singular. And I'd change *broader* to *broad* unless a comparison was being made—eg, broader than. Is this another can of worms?

Grace Darling, ELS

Without doing something sensible like looking the definitions of *impact* and *effect* up in the dictionary, I'd use *impacts* when the context implies that an action has negative effects (eg, the broader impacts of widespread adoption are disruption of families and loss of family medical history). I'd use *effects* when the context is positive, neutral, or implies both positive and negative effects.

Lindsay Edmunds, ELS

I change *impact* to *effect* or something else unless a physical blow is involved. In the example above, I would probably use *effects*. Based on the short phrase you presented, though, I might very well change more than that one word.
Elena Westbrook, ELS

For at least 30 years, dictionaries have recognized that one of the meanings of *impact* as a noun is "the (strong) effect of one thing, person, action, etc., on another; influence." We, as a society, recognize the psychological impact of child abuse, the environmental impact of landfills on water supplies, and the impact of two worlds colliding, such as the world of capitalism and the world of nature. These uses are metaphorical extensions of the original *impact* or *collision*. Most readers understand this meaning and never confuse it with impacted teeth or the impact of a car collision. If 90% of readers understand the meaning, why change it (unless it serves another purpose)? If the paper is filled with constructions using *broader* and *widespread* in the same sentence, those are the terms I would recommend changing.
Retta Whinnery, ELS

Simply becoming a glutton for exhibiting my ignorance, but I have never seen a construction like "the broader impacts of widespread adoption." I would think "the broader impact" would be okay—although the impact should be greater or lesser or harder or softer rather than broader. It's a colloquial expression used a lot and I have no quibble with it. (Why do I suspect I've missed the whole point?!)
Susan Eastwood, ELS(D)

I almost always change *impact* to *effect* (or something comparable), preferring to use *impact* only in its physical sense.
Norman Grossblatt, ELS(D)

The Jury Is Out , Continued...

You wouldn't believe how often that word appears in the papers I edit! Institutionalized in the Environmental Impact Statement required for every project undertaken on the landscape, *impact* has replaced *effect*, *result*, *outcome*, and *consequence* in all our documents—and so has *impact* as a verb. The noun is nearly always singular, as though any action produces a single heavy falling object (or its figurative equivalent), rather than years of cumulative changes (often viewed as positive by some people and as disasters by others), which is what the authors usually mean. And they even use it to mean or include effects that are clearly beneficial. I usually write a note to the authors, suggesting that they reserve the word for senses in which something hits something (whether literally or figuratively) and tell them why I make that suggestion. I also ask whether they want the reader to recognize that multiple effects is what they're talking about. I've never had an author object—though the next manuscript sent will still be loaded with *impact*, still used inappropriately. The word—both noun and verb—is so commonly used that it is likely to lose its literal meaning (it already seems to have, in popular parlance). BUT, in science writing, in which all readers are supposed to receive exactly the same message, I change *impact* whenever the word's literal meaning makes its use inappropriate. (Another imprecise term our scientists are fond of is *level*.)
 Martha Brookes, ELS(D)

It's probably sacrilege to say this, but I'd leave it like it is. I'd leave it alone because the *American Heritage Dictionary* my employer provides lists one of the definitions of the word as the effect or impression of one thing upon another. Despite the dictionary, I do have qualms about it. The CBE style guide states that the word *impact* "should be reserved for the meaning of the striking of one body against another . . ." I hate to admit it, but grammar, punctuation, and word choice are as subjective as art and music. It all depends on which style guide is your bible or what colors and sounds you prefer. (This is a secret I keep from the engineers and scientists I work with.) Some background: I work as a technical editor/writer for an environmental consulting firm. In an industry that responds to government regulations requiring the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements, no one—except a technical editor—would ever question this use of the word *impact*.
 Robyn L. Remington, ELS

I don't have a knee-jerk reaction to *impacts* used in this way. I find it hard to put into words why I would accept *impacts* in some circumstances: it gives a sense of more substantial results than *effects*, somehow. A film, for example, that I would describe as having had an *impact* on me would be a film that moved, shocked, or otherwise affected me strongly, whereas an *effect* might well be superficial, shallow, or transitory.
 Claudette Upton, ELS

The only change I might make in the sentence you quoted would be to change *impacts* from plural to singular, depending on context. Webster's Third gives an example of the use of *impact* in this way: "the impact of modern science and technology upon society as a whole" . . . I would always change *impact* if it were used incorrectly as a verb, as in the sentence "It is too early to tell whether widespread adoption will impact clinical practice" or something like that.
 Flo Witte, ELS

Although in most cases I change *impact* to *effect*, I make the change on the basis of context (ie, not as a knee-jerk edit). In the following sentence, I left *impact*. I felt that changing it to *effect* would weaken the sentence: The impact of these new concepts on public health policy and the health of the nation is likely to be substantial.
 Jennifer Scales, ELS

I would change *impacts* to *effects* in your example because, as far as I can tell, it means effects (as in causes and effects), especially since it is plural. I think of *impact* as physical—not necessarily involving an asteroid collision, but at least producing an impression. When Babe Ruth hit a home run, there was an effect on the crowd and an impact on the ball.
 Miriam Bloom, ELS

DILBERT



By Scott Adams

New (and Old) Word Alert

catachresis - *n*, *pl* -**ses**. 1.a. Strained use of a word or phrase, as for rhetorical effect. b. A deliberately paradoxical figure of speech. 2. The improper use of a word or phrase, especially in application to something it does not denote, as the use of *blatant* to mean "flagrant."

blatant - *adj*. 1. Unpleasantly loud and noisy. 2. Totally or offensively conspicuous or obtrusive.

flagrant - *adj*. 1. Conspicuously bad, offensive, or reprehensible. Synonyms: glaring, gross, egregious, rank.

Usage Note: *Blatant* and *flagrant* are often confused, but while *blatant* emphasizes the failure to conceal the act, *flagrant* emphasizes a serious wrongdoing in the offense itself.

continuously - *adv*. Constantly, incessantly, without interruption.

continually - *adv*. Recurring at intervals, over and over, intermittently.

minority - *n*, *pl* -**ties**. A group regarded as different from the larger group of which it is part. Individual members of minority groups should not be referred to as "minorities" themselves. They are "minority-group members" or "members of minority groups." "Three minorities" means three groups, not three persons.

Everyone knows that fractures, not people with broken bones, are **reduced**. Similarly, most of us remember that it is patients who are **treated**, not their illnesses or conditions, which are **diagnosed** and **managed**. But lately I've heard a number of senior medical editors say "...when he was diagnosed with cancer," instead of "...when his cancer was diagnosed." What do you think? Am I being a nitpicking fuddy-duddy, or should we try to make a stand against this encroaching sloppiness? Could it be that "people being diagnosed" has become accepted usage because it is perfectly unambiguous? I welcome your opinion and will report the results of this unofficial survey in a future issue of the *Letter*. Reply to: darlingg@airmail.net or drop me a postcard at 411 N Washington #6900, Dallas TX 75246.

Thanks to Gil Croome, Norman Grossblatt, and Walter Pagel for their contributions. Word definitions are excerpted from The American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd ed, unless otherwise noted.

Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*



From the "I Wish I'd Said That" Department

"Before long, cyberspace hype is going to pall on us all. Wireless telephony, cellular telephony, digital broadcasting, the Internet—none of them produce food, clothing, or shelter. It may be that we are moving from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, but as they used to say of love, you can't live on information. I've no doubt that the new communications technology will change our lives in ways we can't yet foresee, but to the extent that we can foresee, we owe it to ourselves and our posterity to ensure as best we can that commercial interests do not own our brave new world in its entirety." From an editorial in the *Arlington Star-Telegram*, 9 March 1997

News About Members

We are saddened to learn of the death of two of our members. A. Derek Farr, PhD, ELS, a long-time member of the Council of Biology Editors and the European Association of Science Editors, passed away at his home in Aberdeen last September. In Houston, Jerry Eastman, ELS, director of publications at Texas Heart Institute, died May 4, 1997, after a short but fierce battle with cancer. Friends and colleagues of these men in the scientific editing fraternity join us in expressing our sympathies to their families.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Excerpted from Ailey,
Baldwin, Floyd, Killen,
and Mayfield,
by Maya Angelou

Flo Witte, ELS, has agreed to serve as BELS's new Assistant Treasurer, helping Treasurer Martha Brookes, ELS(D), keep the books and other related matters pertaining to the Budget and Finance Committee. Shirley Peterson, ELS, our former AT, will henceforth be working with Bobbie Reitt, ELS(D), BELS's Secretary for Examination Administration, to assist her with the million and one tasks she now performs.

Factoids

It is generally assumed that for an English-language journal, the best foreign markets for new subscriptions are other English-speaking countries, as well as the Benelux countries and Scandinavia, partly due to the high percentage of English fluency in those countries. Many of these countries still represent a large volume of subscriptions; however, Canada, Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway have actually *declined* in new library subscriptions over the last 5 years, while France, India, Brazil, South Korea, Spain, and Italy have demonstrated sizeable gains.

Andrew Arnone, Allen Marketing & Management, in Journal Publishing Series for March/April 1997



British scientists were recently celebrating their DNA detective work they said identified a living descendant of a 9000-year-old skeleton. To establish the world's oldest known family tree, they matched DNA material extracted from the tooth cavity of Britain's oldest complete skeleton with that of a 42-year-old history teacher. The genetic material showed without doubt that teacher Adrian Targett is a direct descendant through his mother's line of the skeleton known as Cheddar Man, found in 1903 in caves in Cheddar Gorge in southwest England.

Posted on the Internet, London, March 8, 1997



Our view of the Moon depends solely on reflected sunlight, and our changing perspective on the Moon is the source of its phases. To find the full Moon's azimuth—the point on the horizon where it will begin to appear—check your own shadow several minutes before sunset. It will point toward the spot on the eastern horizon where the Moon will

rise. On 20 June 1997, the Sun was at its greatest distance north of the equator and the Moon at its greatest distance south. As the Sun's light passes through the thick lower atmosphere, most of the blue light is absorbed and scattered, leaving the red spectrum alone to light the Moon. The result of this spatial arrangement is that as the Moon makes its low track across the sky, it will glow a beautiful honey-orange. Check it out.

Excerpted from Natural History, June 1997

(The editor understands that there is a timeliness issue in the item above, but at press time she is immersed in a colorful episode of jet lag somewhere on the coast of Spain and has ceased to care.)

(Inter)Net Imponderables

A small, largely unrequested harvest from the garden of hyperspace.

Why isn't phonetic spelled the way it sounds?

Why do we drive on parkways and park on driveways?

Why is brassiere singular and panties plural?

Why is it that when you're looking for an address while driving, you turn down the volume on the radio?

Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.

The word *modem* is a contraction of the words *modulate*, *demodulate*.

The name Jeep came from the abbreviation used by the U S Army for its "general purpose" vehicle, G P.

It takes a lobster approximately 7 years to grow to be 1 pound.

No word in the English language rhymes with month.

From an article in the *Detroit News*: "Some 40 percent of female gas-station employees in Metro Detroit are women, up from almost none a year ago."

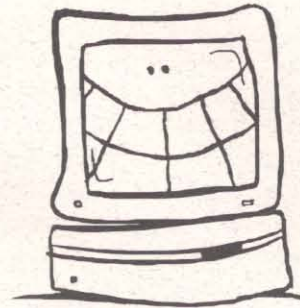
Headline in the *Toronto Star*: "Marijuana Issue Sent to a Joint Committee."



Gnome de Plume

URLs 4U

Social Security Administration: <http://www.ssa.gov>
 Internal Revenue Service: <http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>
 US Business Advisor: <http://www.business.gov>
 For a tour of the Net: <http://www.worldvillage.com/tourbus.htm>
 Government Printing Office: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs
 Online style guide: <http://www.idrc.ca/books/edit/eindex.html#sguide>
 Visible Human Project: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible-human/html>
 Biology on the Internet: selected sites: <http://www.iat.unc.edu/guides/irg-14.html>
 Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing (SHARP): <http://www.indiana.edu/~sharp>
 A listing of Internet-accessible scholarly resources for humanities and social sciences: <http://www.acls.org/n44toc.htm>



Calendar

- 16 August 1997** **AMWA Rocky Mountain Chapter, workshops on Effective Paragraphing and Punctuation for Clarity and Style, by Helen E Hodgson, PhD**
- 17-21 September 1997** **International Congress on Biomedical Peer Review and Global Communications, Prague, Czech Republic**
- 19 Sept-3 Oct 1997** **Medical writers delegation to Russia and Estonia, Citizen Ambassador Program, led by Barbara Gastel, MD**
- 20-23 September 1997** **Association of Earth Science Editors (AESE) annual meeting, Boulder CO**

