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1998 CBE Meeting and MORE

Ann Morcos MA ELS

My assignment—I had chosen to accept it—was to get a “sense of the meeting” (or “bias of the reporter”) for the BELS Letter.

The scratched window of the TWA 727 Stretch didn't prevent me from seeing what looked like blood drifting along the shore of the Great Salt Lake. I'd read about the lake; 20% to 27% saline and only 13 feet deep. Nothing could live in those conditions, I thought, or not for long, anyway.

Saturday, 2 May 1998, at exactly 4:21 PM, TWA flight 341 glided easily onto the runway at Lambert International Airport.

The lobby of the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Salt Lake City swarmed with activity as members of the Council of Biology Editors checked in and crowded the elevators, eager to get settled in before attending the welcome reception of the 41st Annual Meeting of CBE.

“Excuse me, ma'am,” I said to the hotel clerk. “Do you know what makes the water in the Great Salt Lake look red?”

“I've never noticed that the water looks red,” she said never looking up, but continuing to check me in. “Next!”

This CBE annual meeting had a number of firsts. Preceding the official start of the conference, a Short Course for Managing Editors was offered. This course aimed to teach novices and seasoned managing editors the ins and outs of managing a scientific publication. Whether or not it succeeded in its goal will be revealed next year. Will it be offered again or will it not? We'll find out in Montreal.

A call for posters went out for the first time this year. Anticipated poster topics included trends in manuscript submission, effectiveness of peer review, journal structure and management, legal/ethical issues, effectiveness of author guidelines/instructions. Posters were to be on display throughout the duration of the conference with an “attended” session on 2 May from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. The poster session was canceled. Evidently not enough submissions were received to justify its inclusion in the conference.

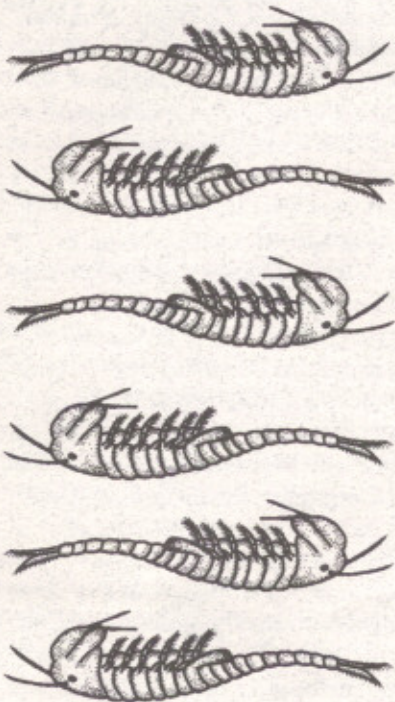
Another first was an Employment Clearinghouse, which offered attendees an opportunity to meet representatives from employment agencies and professional associations to learn about job openings in the industry. Of the 43 companies contacted only three participated. Perhaps the kinks can be worked out so that the clearinghouse is more useful.

Although not a first, CBE in Salt Lake City enjoyed a rare evening of dancing after the Awards Ceremony.

Could the redness in the Great Salt Lake be a massive coverup by the Utah Tourism Commission? Who'd want to visit the Really Big Red Lake?

There were a lot of animals at CBE's 41st meeting. Keynote speaker and Nobel laureate Dudley R Herschbach discussed dolphins, and in particular how scientists have not been able to decipher dolphin language but dolphins have succeeded somewhat in learning ours. (So who is wiser?) Dolphins have intrigued humankind for centuries. This intrigue presents a window of opportunity to improve the general public's understanding of science.

continued on page 2



1998 CBE Meeting . . . continued from page 1

Plenary I speaker P Michael Conn, Associate Director and Senior Scientist at the Oregon Regional Primate Center, shared his concern about how poorly science is being communicated to the public. On an international performance test, American high school students performed very poorly compared with students from other countries, despite the fact that more money is spent in the United States on education per student than in any other country in the world. Science and technology are seen as one, an incorrect perception. Worse yet, science and technology (together) are seen as a large uncaring machine and people feel alienated and threatened by it. When genetic experiments and animal research, particularly with primates, are reported in the media, many people become angry. Animal rights activists hoist their placards to protest use of animals for research. Scientists and the media, said Conn, have failed to adequately explain the need for animal research in order to find vaccines and cures for diseases. Conn stressed that animal researchers do not enjoy performing medical procedures on animals. They do, however, understand the need. It is this need plus the challenge and beauty of scientific discovery that must be communicated to the public.

Plenary II speaker Ira Flatow, veteran science correspondent for National Public Radio, CBS's "This Morning", and PBS's "Newton's Apple", discussed how the birth of Dolly (a sheep cloned from an adult cell) and other scientific events have done much to stimulate public interest in science. Flatow and his partner Dr Eilene Augenbraum have started the Science and Technology News Network to make local and national news stories available to all television markets. Flatow, by the way, changed the title of his talk from "If It Bleeds, It Leads" to "If It Breeds, It Leads."

"Excuse me sir. Can you tell me what causes the water in the Great Salt Lake to look red?"

The waiter looked at me blankly, thought for a minute, then said, "Just moved to town, myself. Can't say as I've ever heard about that. Sorry I can't help you."

Thirty-two sessions in the usual concurrent pattern rounded out the conference. The greatest number of sessions were devoted to money matters (pricing e-journals, print journal manufacturing costs, advertising dollars, enhancing and preserving revenues, keeping publication costs down) and the impact of the Web (legal issues, using the Web for peer review, abstract submission on the Web, Web impact on how science is done and reported, using the Web to keep up with nomenclature). Clearly, money and the Web are uppermost in the minds of journal editors. Research, peer review, and communicating science were topics covered in four sessions each. Managing the editorial office and ethical issues were covered in three sessions each. And one or two sessions were devoted to editing, editorial boards, authorship, and the Scope and Mandate Task Force.

It was time to leave Salt Lake City. As always when CBE conferences are over, I felt invigorated, motivated, pleased to see old friends and make new ones, and acutely aware of how little I know.

At Lambert International I put my hand luggage on the security belt to be scanned and then walked through the metal detector. (It didn't betray signs of my investigation.) I picked up my bags on the other side. I looked at the security guard and said, "Excuse me, sir, do you know what makes the water in the Great Salt Lake look red?"

"Yes." I waited for an explanation, but none came. "Well?"

The guard looked at me steadily. "Brine shrimp, ma'am, brine shrimp."

"Oh . . . more animals." Disappointed, I turned and walked toward Gate 6C.



Executive Council Meeting in Salt Lake City, May 1998

A system has been proposed for acquiring and validating new questions for the certification exam. The first step is to accumulate quickly from Executive Council members enough questions to comprise 20% of an exam. As validation the questions will be formatted into a short exam to be given (without repercussions) to willing BELS members at the October AMWA meeting in Vancouver. Comments on the questions will be welcomed immediately after the exam. Validated questions will be incorporated into the certification examination by the time of the 1999 CBE annual meeting in Montreal. Beginning with the 1999 dues notice, questions and question material (and dues) will be requested from every BELS member. Meanwhile, anyone who wishes to submit a question for the certification exam may send it to Walter Pagel, Chairman of the Certification Examination Development Committee.

The Diplomate program will be discussed in depth at the CBE-AESE-EASE meeting in Washington, DC, in September. The Diplomate Examination Development Committee consists of Martha Brookes, Chair, and Gil Croome and Susan Eastwood as members.

Gil Croome will chair the Nominations and Elections Committee for 2 more years. Gillian Brown will be Executive Secretary for 1 more year. Flo Witte will remain as Treasurer for 2 more years and a Finance Committee will be appointed to develop a budget and suggest ways for BELS to invest any money in excess of operating expenses. Carol Kakalec will chair the Appeals Committee for 2 years with the help of members Frances Porcher, Grace Darling, Elizabeth Rockwell, and Jonathan Briggs, who will serve 1- or 2-year terms. David Orr will chair the Public Relations Committee for 1 more year with the aid of Elaine Firestone. A new editor for the *BELS Letter* is being sought. Barbara Reitt will chair the ad hoc Bylaws Committee with Martha Tacker and 2 other people as members. Carol Cadmus will chair the Member Relations Committee for 2 years. The BELS Registrar, Shirley Peterson, now handles queries and registration for both certification and diplomate examinations. Shirley will serve a 2-year term, renewable.

Try it. You'll LIKE it!

Patti Wolf, ELS



In late March, the BELS Web site, <<http://www.bels.org>>, officially debuted after months of hard work. The site includes information about BELS, information about the exam, a printable application form, and a list of scheduled dates for the certification exams. There is also a page of links of interest to members. I've registered the site with all the major search engines, and we've received a number of inquiries about certification. Best of all, now when your friends and colleagues express interest in BELS, you can easily refer them to the site for more information.

The most popular part of the site is the members-only area, which is accessible only with a password. If you are a current member of BELS and have not received instructions on how to access the site (or have forgotten them), please contact me at <patti@wolfpubs.com>. The members-only area includes a current listing of members (soon to be updated), a bulletin board where members have been posting questions and carrying on dialogues since the site went up, a copy of the most recent newsletter, and access to the BELS listserv. Now, if a BELS member wants to send a message to the entire membership, he or she can simply send the message to <members@bels.org> using an e-mail program. Please be sure to put BELS in the subject line of any message you send and limit these messages to time-sensitive items of interest to BELS members such as job postings or announcements about upcoming meetings. You can post a message of general interest to the bulletin board from within the members-only area (for example, an amusing quote or anecdote or subject for discussion). If your employer wants to place an ad on the site, please have the appropriate person contact me at <patti@wolfpubs.com>.

The most eagerly anticipated part of the site is advertisement posting (for a small annual fee) for freelance services. It will be great when potential clients are able to search these postings when looking for a freelance. Our Web site administrator, Donna Perry, is currently working on the coding for this feature, which we hope to have ready by the end of August. We've received several inquiries from potential employers, which I have forwarded using the listserv. Already the traffic on our site is good. Shirley Peterson has received several queries about the certification exam, and I've received requests from people interested in either finding a BELS-certified editor or learning more about BELS.

Further enhancements to the site will include Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) files—one file in the general area and one in the members-only area. In addition, in an attempt to satisfy the people who've asked for a more graphics-intensive, "jazzier" site as well as those who've requested a text-only site for faster loading, I will soon be redesigning the site to offer users both options.

Because of time constraints, I've sometimes found it difficult to keep up with maintenance of the site. Sally Edwards has volunteered to help with the site, so you should begin to see faster responses to your requests and suggestions. However, we ask for your patience. Please remember that we maintain the site in our spare time as volunteers, and we're not always able to respond immediately. We do want your suggestions and questions about the site, though. Send them to me at <patti@wolfpubs.com>. If you change your e-mail or mailing address, please notify both Carol Cadmus <ccadmus@erols.com> and me. I will make the change on the listserv and in the online member directory.

We hope that you find the BELS Web site a useful membership benefit and that you visit it often. Please let us know what you think!

We've all heard how 1,000,000 monkeys pounding on 1,000,000 typewriters will eventually reproduce Shakespeare's entire works. Well, now thanks to the Internet, we know that's not true.

Robert Silensky

Newsbits

Amy Redmon-Norwood MA ELS, was featured in a *Baltimore Sun* article (12 July 1998) on careers in medical publishing. Amy, a senior technical editor for the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, gave readers a good idea of the varied tasks that are part of the editing profession. The article listed several professional societies (AMWA, CBE, SSP, Baltimore Publishers Association) and added, "You also may go for certification in the field to establish your credentials—a notable one in the field is certification by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS)." Congratulations, Amy, and thanks for the good press for BELS.

Sherri Bowen ELS wrote an article on authorship issues that appeared in the June 1998 issue of the AMWA Southwest Chapter News. After attending both the 3rd International Congress on Biomedical Peer review and the CBE Retreat on Authorship in Biomedical Publication, Sherri is conversant with current practices and proposed solutions. Current practices include such abuses as misassigned coauthorship, gift authorship, and ghost authorship. One suggested solution is the "contributorship" system under which each person would be identified by the contribution made, and one or more contributors would function as guarantors who would vouch for the integrity of the data. These issues and related ones were to be discussed at the July 18 chapter meeting by Sherri and Faith McLellan PhD ELS. The article was reviewed (nice to see the acknowledgment) by Mary Royer ELS.

The Jury is Out

Judith Dickson ELS(D)



The question for this column was sent, as usual, to everyone with an e-mail address. Unfortunately, my question for this issue laid an egg. The question: Have you noticed any trends or new usages recently in the papers that you edit? As an example I added that three papers I had edited for different projects all used the phrase "arm of the study." Well, few of you had noticed usage trends, but several of you commented on the study arm issue, so the question was changed to, Do you leave "treatment arm" or do you change it? Here are the replies to both questions:

Have you noticed any trends or new usages recently in the papers that you edit?

I cannot stand "technology transfer" for someone teaching you how to do something, but the phrase is in current usage. Efforts at international harmonization (reaching a consensus on how to test for certain hazards [mutagens, for example]) sure does not sound good to me, and once when I changed a term because it implied the opposite of what was actually meant I was told that the usage was defined by a professional organization (which admitted it was weird but could not think of anything better).

Miriam Bloom ELS(D)

"Molecule a *competed out* molecule b" for "Molecule a occupied the binding sites typically occupied by molecule b" and other variations that indicate that molecule a prevented molecule b from binding to another to form some complex.

Walter Pagel ELS(D)

Three trends I have noticed and adopted (because I like them): email (no hyphen, no capital), Internet, and punctuation OUTSIDE the quotation marks unless it is part of the quotation. For example: Use "P/N" instead of spelling out "Part Number".

Lorelei Bosserman ELS

I have noticed that "health care" is sometimes closed up. This is a style decision by the journal or publishing organization, perhaps in response to the spelling used by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

Lindsay Edmunds ELS

Do you leave "treatment arm" or do you change it?

I have seen this usage in manuscripts by biologists from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. There, "arm" was used in "the research arm of the Fish and Wildlife Service" and should have been replaced by "research centers" or "research facilities." When, as their editor, I asked them about this usage, they seemed embarrassed. I concluded that it was not even jargon but merely poor vocabulary on the part of the writers. Unfortunately, jargon often becomes acceptable and languages constantly evolve. As an editor, I try to nudge the direction a bit.

Elizabeth Rockwell ELS

I remember seeing the expression "arm of the study" for the first time in 1992, and the usage seemed so weird that I wanted to change it. Uncharacteristic prudence prompted me to ask first, and I quickly learned that it is standard usage for clinical trials. I do not think you can refuse to use any term—no matter how awful it is—if it is used by people in the field. People who work in the same field are like a fraternity, and their jargon is their secret handshake; if you do not use it you are not one of them.

Miriam Bloom ELS(D)

"Study arm" is used all the time in the department where I work. It refers to one of two or more branches of a study protocol to which patients are assigned. It does not refer to the group of patients (or I would say "the radiotherapy group" or something like that). It refers to that part of the protocol.

Patricia McCarty ELS

I assume you are referring to a treatment arm (or control or intervention arms, or control and experimental arms) after randomization in an RCT. This is discussed in the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*, ninth edition (17.2.1, "Randomized Controlled Trial," in the Statistics section).

I consulted several JAMA medical and copy editors (including the editor who wrote the statistics section in the style manual) as to whether they thought this was jargon. With the notable quip that "arm" is probably not used in the orthopedic surgery or dermatology literature, all agreed that this usage is appropriate.

Roxanne K. Young ELS

Just today I encountered my first armed study! It was an annotated reference, and the annotation began, "This random, controlled, three-armed study . . ." (The only alarming prospect, some wag might point out, would be a blind, three-armed study, in which case we would certainly hope that it was at least controlled.) Further reading revealed that the study compared three groups, one the control and two that were assigned the variables being tested. I saw no reason to refer to arms, figurative or otherwise, and so I rewrote the annotation so that it simply described the three groups that were compared.

Bobbie Reitt ELS(D)

"Treatment arm" is standard terminology in the pharmaceutical industry.

Patti Raley ELS

Arm (and leg) of the study is used in the pharmaceutical industry and may originate in the study protocols—we usually accept it. Another expression we cannot change (at least in regulatory documents) is "animals were sacrificed"; we are not supposed to say "killed." (I draw the line at "euthanized," however.) Other pharmaceutical jargon that we do not accept: Animals were fasted before dosing. Translation: Animals were deprived of food (we are not to say "starved") before dose administration. We do change "gender" to "sex," but the change is sometimes ignored.

Penny Hoeltzel ELS

Maybe it is just battle fatigue, but I am finding "arm" acceptable these days—especially when there are more egregious usage errors to contend with, such as "randomized and stratified patients." The term "arm of treatment" is concise and clear, at least once the design of the treatment protocol is described, and is the term in common use here.

Sharon Naron ELS

I admit that I found "arm" a little strange at first glance. On second observation, however, it is not too strange. If you look at schematics for study plans, the diagrams often appear to be bodies with heads, arms, and legs (depending on treatment alternatives in the study scheme).

Kim Berman ELS



Letter to BELS Letter readers

Unfortunately, your jury in The Jury is Out column this past spring deliberated over an outdated case. That is, the numbers style had already been tried by the editorial public several years before, and when the extreme polarity of opinion became obvious to the committee working on the seventh edition of the CBE manual, we knew that something had to be done.

So began a 2-year journey to revise the numbers style. Those efforts culminated with a new CBE numbers style published in the January-February 1998 issue of *CBE Views* (21:14-16) and soon to be posted at the CBE Web site. Had the BELS jury deliberated that case instead, the verdict would certainly have been more noteworthy.

During the CBE committee's efforts to devise a more universally palatable numbers style we discovered the American Medical Association was developing a modification of the CBE style for its new edition of the AMA style guide. Surprisingly, their perceived modifications were very similar to the modifications we were contemplating. How, we wondered, could we have settled on this common ground? Discounting the theory of infinite numbers of monkeys, typewriters, and time (because we knew our time was limited), we surmised that perhaps—just possibly—logic had provoked this allopatric convergence in ideology.

Startled by this inexplicable discovery, we moved forward with unbridled confidence, and eventually we each published our own thing in our own way. But basically, the CBE and AMA numbers styles are now the same (see recently published ninth edition of the *AMA Manual of Style*).

Yes folks, we do still support numerals over words for just about everything except zero and one, which we acknowledge are better spelled out when not attached to a unit of measure. We also acknowledge that there are situations in which larger numbers are used in a more idiomatic manner, where we suggest using words (eg, the sixty-four-dollar question, or the four of us). Numerous examples help explain an expanded rationale. Nevertheless, those die-hard one-digit numeral haters will find little solace in the revised style.

We know how disturbing transitions can be. Though changing six to 6 might not intellectually seem like much of a transition, most of

I do see the phrase "treatment arm" fairly often, but I have seen it for years. I usually try to change it if I can easily, without a major rewrite, because I also think it is more jargon than not. I prefer "treatment group."

Karen F Phillips ELS

I have no problem using "study arm" although I certainly prefer "treatment group" when groups are differentiated by the type of treatment received. It is akin to a branch of a study, although perhaps that's jargon too. Sometimes the jargon is actually clearer to readers because it is how they always hear something said. In those cases I express the term clearly in standard language at first mention per paragraph or section and then use the jargon thereafter.

Carol Cadmus ELS



us have found it difficult to recondition ourselves to the appearance of numerals in running text. But testimony of converts is reassuring—reconditioning does occur (with a willing mind). Eventually the old traditional style begins to seem a bit odd and arbitrary.

We chuckle perhaps over why 6 mm should have been so typographically pleasing while 6 replicates was so horribly distracting. We begin to wonder, was five authors, two editors, and three referees really easier to write, read, or absorb, than 5 authors, 2 editors, and 3 referees? And what special wisdom led our forebears to realize that if a 2-digit number is included in that series, then numerals rather than words display much more grace and elegance (eg, 10 authors, 2 editors, and 3 referees)?

These traditional rules, as one BELS juror wrote, "evolved for good reasons." We're sure they did too, but can anyone any more articulate those good reasons? We suspect that the only good reason left is that it is the system we grew up with and finally mastered. The modern scientific numbers style advanced by CBE and the AMA will therefore not be eagerly ratified by everyone. The modern style does not make the author's or editor's life immediately easier, nor is it totally free of subjective and arbitrary nuisances. But the singular emphasis it gives to enumerative elements in scientific prose is somehow more in step with the parsimony and simple clarity of scientific discourse. For that reason, we suspect that the present patchy acceptance will gradually become ubiquitous, allowing that for some it will occur only by attrition.

Robert Wilbur and Peggy Robinson

Cochairs, Style Manual Committee, Council of Biology Editors

Guest Editor's note: On p. 511 of the *AMA Style Manual* the new rules are stated succinctly: *Numerals should be used to express numbers in most circumstances. Exceptions are numbers that begin a sentence, title, subtitle, or heading; common fractions; accepted usage such as idiomatic expression, numbers used as pronouns, and other uses of the number "one" in running text; ordinals first through ninth; and numbers spelled out in quotations or published titles.*

Changing your mind does not involve a transplant. Robert Half

Brief book reviews

Shirley M Peterson ELS

Dear Mr. Jefferson: Letters from a Nantucket Gardener. Laura Simon. New York: Crown, 1998. (hc \$23)

Simon's letters sound more like chats with Thomas Jefferson about gardens, his among them, and their continuing evolution during the last 200 years. She tells Mr Jefferson about the history of seed catalogs, the national transportation systems that allow distribution of seeds and produce, the advent of chemical fertilizers, the fashions in garden design, and the renewed public interest in vegetables with flavor and vegetable seed as heirlooms. The writing is rather casual at the beginning and declines from that level as the book lengthens.

Ship Fever. Andrea Barrett. New York: Norton, 1996. (pb \$12)

Stories based on 19th century events in science and scientists' lives. Writing is imaginative, romantic, and flawless. Barrett has a firm grasp of science history, scientific methods, and the 19th century. Imagine Linnaeus in his dotage. Follow Mendel, Nägeli, and the hawkweed awkwardness. Live with a public health doctor trying to stem the spread of ship fever brought to Canada by thousands of starving Irish immigrants. Wonderful insights.

The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants. Andrew Chevallier. New York: DK Publishing, 1996. (hc \$39.95)

Glorious photographs of plants and their usable parts, both live and dried. Wide margins display labeled collections of grouped plants. Arrangement of descriptions is neither phylogenetic nor alphabetic by family, but alphabetic by genus which makes for difficult comparisons within a family. Plant descriptions are divided into two sections, Key Medicinal Plants (100 of them) and Other Medicinal Plants (450). The first part of the book consists of well-written treatises on the history of herbal medicine in Europe and other parts of the world. Warnings are given, as they should be, about use of herbs, but recipes accompany the plant descriptions. When the active ingredient is known, it is mentioned. Many, many interesting facets to the book. The Index of Herbs by Ailment is rather startling.

Heirloom Vegetables: A Home Gardener's Guide to Finding and Growing Vegetables from the Past. Sue Strickland. New York: Fireside, 1998. (pb \$16.00)

The consultant, Kent Whealy, with his wife, Diane, founded the Seed Saver's Exchange in 1975 when they received heirloom seeds from her grandfather. The SSE seed bank now contains 18 000 varieties of heirloom seeds, and 8000 members in 14 countries exchange seeds and lore. The photographer, David Cavagnaro, does a magnificent job. The photos will make your mouth water to taste, and your fingers itch to plant, some of the beautiful vegetables.

Part 1 of the book is an exploration of various groups of vegetables (beans, potatoes, tomatoes, lettuces, etc.) whose genes are in danger of being lost. The dewy photos of leafy vegetables are superb, and the collages of plump, ripe vegetables can't be beat. Wonder what that spikey English lettuce tastes like. Tiny yellow eggplant? My grandfather grew some of those lumpy tomatoes. I remember trying to peel potatoes with nubs. Oh, and Romanesco broccoli—Fibonacci would adore the spiraled buds and may well have received inspiration from them!



"This must be Fibonacci's."

Aspects of worldwide vegetable production are explored. Genetics is mentioned appropriately. The Green Revolution is debunked. Problems with the standardization practices of the European Economic Community are detailed—clearly the people making decisions are neither botanists nor gardeners. Other losses of old genetic stock are laid at the feet of commercial seed companies, which have the bottom line and agribusiness harvesting practices to consider.

Part 2 of the book is a directory of specific varieties of vegetables and their individual qualities, where to get seeds, an introduction to seed saving networks, and a list of further readings. This section is copyrighted by Gaia Books Ltd, London.



Congratulations!

A heartfelt welcome to our recent BELS members:

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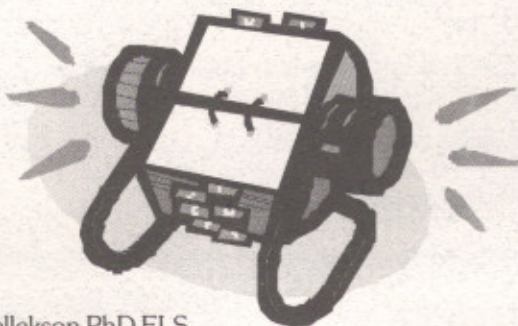
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More News Bits

Lisa DiDonato, a new ELS, has written an article for the newsletter of Women in Scholarly Publishing (WISP) about BELS and taking the certification examination. She gave a brief history of BELS, provided the official address for queries about the examination, mentioned the diplomate program, described the breadth and depth of the certification examination, and admitted that the exam was rigorous. Welcome, Lisa, and thanks for spreading the word so literally.

Julie Newman ELS has won an award from the Willamette Valley Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication for excellence in technical writing. The title of her article is "Defecation Disorders and the Role of Defecography." Julie also won AMWA's Rose Kushner Award for her excellent writing on breast cancer. Congratulations, Julie.

Jane C Lantz ELS and **Roxanne K Young ELS** were members of the author committee for the ninth edition of the *AMA Manual of Style*, and on the title/author page the ELS designations are writ large. Among those acknowledged for their help are Carol Cadmus ELS, Faith McLellan ELS, and Peggy Robinson ELS.



Dear Diary:

Visiting an editor at Random House, I stepped into a crowded elevator and found myself pressed close to the control panel.

"Has everybody got their floors?" I asked.

After a moment's silence, a young female voice from the rear said, "His or her."

"I beg your pardon?" I said.

"His or her. It's 'Has everybody got his or her floors?' Your pronouns don't agree."

"And shouldn't it be 'his or her floor,' not 'floors?'" a young man piped up. "Each of us gets off at only one floor."

"And wouldn't it be better to say, 'Does everybody have?' rather than 'Has everybody got?'" a third voice chimed in.

I stood corrected—and red faced. But I was glad to know that good grammar is alive and well.

Richard Curtis, New York Times, 7 June 1998

Calendar

- 10-14 Sep AESE-CBE-EASE Second International Joint Meeting, Sixth International Conference on Geoscience Information, and 32nd Annual Meeting of Association of Earth Science Editors. Washington, DC.
- 28-31 Oct AMWA 58th Annual Conference. Vancouver BC, Canada
- 22-25 May 1999 CBE 42nd Annual meeting. Montreal, Canada

BELS Test Sites

- 9 Sep 1998 Washington DC, in the Ambassador Room of the Embassy Suites, a hotel across the street from the Marriott where the AESE-CBE-EASE meeting will be held.
- 27 Oct 1998 Vancouver BC, in the Stanley Room (34th floor) of the Hyatt Regency, the same hotel where the AMWA meeting will be held.



Spinach Power

Popeye had better join the bomb squad. Scientists at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory have found that spinach enzymes can neutralize dangerous explosives such as TNT. Nitroreductase, found in sundry leafy greens, can eat, digest, and transform these compounds into less toxic by-products, which can then be used by industry or be further reduced to carbon dioxide and water. *Scientific American*. August 1998, p 24.

BELS Letter

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URLs 4 U

- Biologo, all sorts, in The Online Medical Dictionary
<http://www.graylab.ac.uk/omd/>
- Technicolor chemistry
<http://www.csc.fi/lul/chem/graphics.html>
- Vibrantly colored (for fun) SEM shots of small creatures
<http://www.pbrc.hawaii.edu/bemf/microangela/>
- Everything anyone knows about viruses
<http://www.tulane.edu/~dmsander/garryfavweb.html>
- INFOBITS a selection of (annotated) URLs relevant to educators
<http://www.iat.unc.edu/infobits/infobits.html> (html format)
<http://www.iat.unc.edu/infobits/text/index.html> (plain text format)
- Exposing fraudulent claims by pseudoscientists
<http://www.junkscience.com>
- Debunking psychic and other far-out treatments
<http://www.quackwatch.com>

