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*Contributors*  
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## Thank You, Norman

Barbara B Reitt ELS(D)  
Inaugural address, May 22, 1999



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The next 2 years are important ones for BELS. We have reached maturity, and we must now develop ways of operating that reflect that status. We have just finished administering the 45th certification test. We are rapidly approaching a membership of 300 editors. Undeniably, we are now a significant force in our profession.

For me and the rest of the Executive Council, the new bylaws provide a blueprint for action during the next 2 years. As we labor to replace old habits of relying on a tiny cadre of dedicated founders with procedures that bring a larger number of our members into active leadership roles, we are bound to hit some snags. However, I am confident—in fact, optimistic—that we will succeed in extending our reach and influence. We are a growing personal presence at major meetings like those of CBE and AMWA. We are a presence on the Web. And we are a presence on title and credit pages, where our names with our BELS letters following them are appearing more and more often. We will persuade increasing numbers of our colleagues to sit for examinations, and we will increase our visibility and credibility in the larger world of scientific publishing. I hope all this excites you as much as it excites me. And I hope that if you have not already expressed an interest in helping out, you will come forward this week to let us know of your interest in helping BELS reach these goals.

Tonight marks another turning point besides this larger one for all of us, and we must not let it slip by unnoticed—although I think he is so modest that he'd be glad if we did. Tonight, Norman achieves Immediate Past President-hood, and perhaps only Mickey, his wife, knows how much he deserves the relief that this new status implies. It's certainly one of my goals to give Norman as much rest as I can. But—not quite yet, Norman, not quite yet. First, you must endure our gratitude and our praise.



During recent months, Norman has been coaching me in the fine art of leading BELS. His advice, being good and always well thought out, is easy to follow, but his example will be hard to emulate. At one point a few weeks back I wasted a few thousand kilowatts of energy detailing my concerns about a small problem. Norman's response was immediate alarm: I was in danger, he said, of becoming too much like him. I replied with a crack about becoming "Normanized," and his reply to THAT was to advise me to seek help immediately.

However, being a good editor, I was more inclined to check the dictionary, to see if "Normanize" is even a word. Of course, nothing less than the venerable OED would do. Now, believe it or not, there IS such a word! I quote: "Normanize. Verb. Also -ise. 1. Verb intransitive. Adopt the Norman language or Norman customs. 2. Verb transitive. Make Norman or like the Normans."

*Continued on page 2*

From page 1

Not much clarification there. All this says is that you can Normanize yourself or do it to others. But I've worked with Norman since 1981, and I know Normanization when I see it, so let me offer my own definition:

First, a Normanized person is someone who is one very determined human being. What else could describe the person who endured the hours and days and months and finally years of talk among the other zealots for the BELS cause?

Second, Normanization means acquiring that rare form of intelligence that perceives and respects the intelligence of others. Moreover, this is intelligence that is linked to unshakable devotion to high standards of performance. We who worked so closely with Norman during the development of the first tests and their supporting materials know very well how high he set the goals. Some might say it was the situation that challenged us to meet those goals, but Norman had a big hand in creating that situation.

Another quality of the Normanized person is the keen eye for the small mistake that makes a big difference, combined with a love of getting things right and a generous willingness to do the chores that make it happen. To the extent that the rest of us on the original EC were able to Normanize ourselves, we were able to pull together and make BELS happen. Norman has always been at the heart of that process.

Normanized people, I'm happy to report, have a large capacity for friendship. All of us who have worked with

Norman can testify to that. He has made newcomers feel welcome and many of the rest of us feel as though we'd known him all our lives. As a result, BELS is far more than just a test.

Finally, the mark of the *truly* Normanized person is a keen love of words and language, and most especially of their humorous possibilities. If you're on Norman's e-mail list, if you've sat in meetings he's conducted, or if you've tried to have a brief phone conversation with him, you know very well what I mean. Norman can put the humor in and take the pomposity out of even the dulllest situation faster than anybody else I know.

He's going to be a very hard act to follow, and I don't expect that I shall succeed in anything but the mildest form of self-Normanization. You have my promise, though, that Normanized or not, I shall try very hard to do half as good a job as he has done at the helm of this organization.

Norman: This past winter I asked everyone in BELS to help me show you our appreciation of your dedication to our cause for so many years. Members responded with enthusiasm and affection. Using the money we collected, we have bought you all the words we'd ever need to express our gratitude. But let me read the bookplate we have prepared: "This *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* and supplemental volumes are awarded to Norman Grossblatt on the occasion of his retirement from the presidency of BELS and in recognition of his years of dedication and service to the purpose and goals of the Board."

Thank you, Norman, again and again.

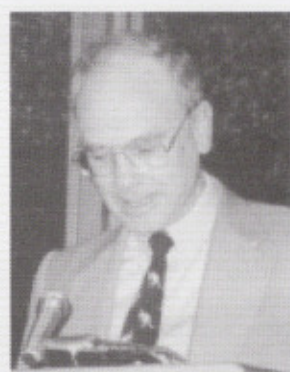
## BELS Executive Council 1999-2000

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## BELS Eighth Annual Meeting: Keynote Address

At the 1999 annual dinner and meeting of BELS, held in Montreal in conjunction with the last-ever CBE annual meeting,\* Dr Roger Prichard of the Institute of Parasitology at McGill University was our guest speaker. His topic was the current and future impact of genetic engineering and the perception and coverage of genetic engineering in the popular media.



Professor Prichard said that we are at an early stage of the Genetics Revolution, the effects of which will be far greater than those of the industrial, electronic, and computer revolutions combined. Given the power and speed of this new technology and the ease with which living organisms can have their genetic sequence altered, this revolution has the potential to transform numerous aspects of our lives: our crops, animals, the food we eat; medicine and health, life expectancy; population demograph-

ics; most professions; consumer and industrial products; the distribution of wealth and power; and personal relationships.

Despite the many perceived benefits and potential advantages of genetic engineering, some people, both within and without the scientific community, have serious concerns regarding the safety and wisdom of genetic engineering (or at least of the engineers). Concerns include the safety of genetically altered foods, increased antibiotic resistance, transmission of new diseases to humans through xenotransplants, negative effects on the environment, loss of genetic diversity, concentration of wealth and power in new (and fewer) hands, and the possibility of human cloning and eugenics programs.

\* In January 2000, CBE will become the Council of Science Editors.

Professor Prichard said that in Europe and elsewhere, the media and environmental lobbyists have organized against uses of genetic engineering, especially the production of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which they regard (to use his technical terminology) as "bad, bad, bad."

Professor Prichard believes that concerns regarding GMOs are misplaced and that foodstuffs from such organisms will in fact be more nutritious and of higher quality. However, he does see validity in the other concerns mentioned. Other potential problems he envisions include the creation of new species (with unpredictable consequences for the environment) and the accidental disruption of tumor-suppressor genes and other cell regulators following the insertion of transgenes, leading to new genetically transmissible diseases. Given the possibilities, "we would be foolhardy and short-sighted to dismiss the other concerns about genetic engineering." Furthermore, scientists and others involved in the creation of these technologies "need to be more careful, more selective, and more conscious of the potential downside of some aspects of genetic engineering so the whole field doesn't get condemned by the popular media and the public and populist politicians."

Professor Prichard believes that the cloning of humans is unlikely to occur, "at least on any large scale," because of widespread ethical concerns and strong emotions surrounding this idea. But the issue of eugenics is just one of many ethical concerns raised by genetic engineering, and he cautioned that "if we ignore the wider ethical questions associated with the use of genetic engineering, . . . then there will be some disasters."

Therefore, he concluded, all of the individuals involved in the evaluation of research in this field, not only the scientists who create this new technology and their peer reviewers but

also those who edit the scientific literature, "have a special responsibility to ask the relevant questions and to insist upon ethical considerations that will often need to go beyond those of the immediate research."



Michael Worley ELS

## Treasurer's Report

1 November 1997 to 31 March 1998

<b>Beginning balance</b>	<b>\$ 6496.95</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$ 4360.00</b>
Dues	3525.00
Examination fees	825.00
Directory sales	10.00
Total income	4360.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>10856.95</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2534.48</b>
Printing and copying	25.48



Postage	506.66
Room rental	80.91
Supplies	180.14
Telephone	53.91
Clerical labor	40.00
Lists and labels	250.00
Internet site	100.00
Proctor expenses	62.38
Post office box rent	20.00
Mail list management	1215.00
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>2534.48</b>

**Ending balance** **\$ 8322.47**

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**Fiscal Year 1999  
1 April 1998 - 31 March 1999**

<b>Beginning balance</b>	<b>\$ 8322.47</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$ 7835.00</b>
Dues	900.00
Examination fees	5925.00
Annual meeting fees	775.00
Web site advertising	225.00
Directory sales	<u>10.00</u>
Total Income	\$7835.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>16157.47</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>10487.10</b>
Examinations and Appeals	
Printing and copying	207.19
Postage	560.22
Room rental	719.22
Supplies	352.01
Telephone	227.15
Clerical labor	40.00
Advertising	<u>245.02</u>
	\$2350.81

Member Relations	
Annual meeting	1072.25
Certificates, framing	197.54
Postage	<u>186.26</u>
	\$1456.05
Administration	
Mailing list management	3960.72
Post office box rental	20.00
Printing directories	653.20
Visa fees	26.35
EC meeting	322.22
Mail directories	<u>186.59</u>
	\$5169.08
Newsletter	
Mailing	\$ 121.16
Public Relations	
Lists and labels	\$ 540.00
Internet Site	
Maintenance fees	\$ 850.00
<b>Ending balance</b>	<b>\$5670.37</b>

## The CBE 1999 Annual Meeting in Brief

The 42<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the Council of Biology Editors was held last May in downtown Montreal at the beautifully refurbished La Reine Elizabeth, affectionately known to at least one fellow traveler as "The Queenie." This year's meeting was a greatly satisfying mix of short courses, thought-provoking workshops and discussions, excellent meals, and plenty of time for networking—or for slipping off to explore this supremely walkable city. A few brief highlights of the meeting follow.

After a collection of short courses, board meetings, tours, and receptions on Friday and Saturday, the meeting began in earnest on Sunday morning with a buffet-style networking breakfast, followed by a fascinating—and disturbing—keynote address by Dr Miriam Shuchman of SUNY



at Buffalo. Shuchman, who has been a CBC radio reporter and a medical commentator for National Public Radio, presented several case reports of difficulties faced by scientists whose findings have met with disapproval from private interests.

An ensuing panel discussion on Research Integrity and the Media extended the theme of differing expectations and perspectives in the communication of science. The three panelists explored differences in perspective among scientists,

reporters, and the public while underscoring the need for balance in the timing, accuracy, and clarity of scientific information. Other facets of the scientific process were further explored during afternoon sessions on the nature and ethics of ghostwriting and explorations of the mentor-student relationship as it relates to the conduct of research and publication of research findings.

Honorees at the CBE award ceremony and banquet later Sunday evening included Floyd E Bloom, Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, who received the CBE Award for Meritorious Achievement; and Lee Miller, Lois Ann Colaianni, and our own intrepid *BELS Letter* editor Grace Darling, who were presented with Distinguished Service Awards for their outstanding contributions to CBE. Congratulations, Grace!

Monday's sessions began with a stimulating plenary presentation by Dr Ginny Redish on "evidence-based scientific writing." Drawing on her experience in cognitive and linguistic theory and technical communication, Redish spoke of efforts to identify problems people have with workplace documents and to develop guidelines for preparing better ones. Her topics included understanding writers and readers, organizing docu-



ments in ways that reveal their structure, writing so that readers "get it" quickly, and using graphics to present data accurately and effectively.

Copyeditors and others enthralled by the vast humor of the English language got a special treat on Monday when Lorraine Loviglio (retired from the *New England Journal of Medicine*), Margaret Mahan (of the University of Chicago Press), and Barbara Wallraff (of the *Atlantic Monthly*) discussed their pet peeves and betes noires encountered in their work. Laughter alternated with other, more pained expressions of recognition among the standing-room-only crowd.

The annual report-to-the-membership luncheon was tasty but hasty, with a seemingly endless parade of committee representatives reporting the year's activities. Fortified by garlicky pasta and news of progress, members and guests chose to finish out the day in a mini-retreat on authorship issues,



hands-on workshops on electronic copyediting or manuscript-tracking systems, or explorations of Montreal.

Tuesday, the final day of the conference, opened with an irreverent look at the consequences of doing

without integrity in science. In the second plenary session of the conference, Joe Nickell, a former private detective, stage magician, and technical writer, provided a fascinating overview

of his work investigating paranormal and pseudoscientific claims. A smattering of the topics covered included ghosts, waking dreams, and photography; spirit pictures on cloth; the mystery of the two Will Wests, which led to the use of fingerprinting in forensic science; spontaneous human combustions; and alien abductions.



The final workshop session on Tuesday morning presented the most difficult choice of the meeting: a summary of the previous day's 5½-hour conference on authorship issues? a discussion of ethical issues in the use of human subjects in research, and the role of institutional review boards and journal editors therein? dealing with the good, the bad, and the ugly aspects of migrating from print to Internet publishing? sharing ideas about running a small journal office? Initial thoughts of



"workshop surfing," slipping quietly from one room to the next every few minutes, were scuttled immediately by the engrossing tangle of ethics involved in approving the study of human subjects. One can only hope that *CBE Views* didn't send all their reporters home early on Tuesday!

Chris Wogan ELS

## Congratulations!

An enthusiastic welcome to our new BELS colleagues:

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## WANTED

Diligent, energetic, and enthusiastic person to edit the *BELS Letter*. General duties include the collection and organization of appropriate material (some writing is inevitable) and overseeing the production and distribution of the newsletter. If interested, please contact

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**Notes from Montreal**

Canadian humor shows up in some unexpected places. Take, for instance, their money. The \$1 coin has a lovely engraving of a maple leaf on one side and a loon on the other, and it's commonly known as a "loonie." Not to be outdone, the \$2 coin is affectionately referred to as a "moonie" because it features the queen on one side with a bear behind.



Harrassed editor to Delta ticket agent: "I am here because American Airlines cancelled my flight home." Ticket agent, leaning over counter in evident concern: "And how do you feel about that?"

Dour-looking customs agent, fixing weary editor with severe stare: "Where do you live?" "Arlington, Texas", says editor, worried that perhaps being a Texan has been declared illegal since she left the States. After a longish pause, brow furrowed in apparent confusion, agent asks, "Why?"



**BELS Examination Schedule**

Date	City & Association	Registration deadline
26 October 1999	Philadelphia, AMWA	12 October
25 March 2000	Newark, none	11 March
6 May 2000	San Antonio, CBE	22 April
20 May 2000	Tours, France, EASE	6 May
7 November 2000	Miami, AMWA	24 October

For more information, write to Registrar, BELS, PO Box 8133, Radnor PA 19087-8133.



**Beach Books**

The following is a purely subjective sampling of escapist "literature" from the recent crop. Note the preponderance of mysteries and suspense stories (Any theories on why editors seem so drawn to this genre?). Caution: You will need a strong stomach for some of these titles.

Chris's choices:

- One on One*, Tabitha King
- Domestic Pleasures*, Beth Gutcheon
- Survival of the Fittest*, Jonathan Kellerman
- Then She Found Me*, Elinor Lipman
- Darkness, Take My Hand; Sacred; and Gone, Baby, Gone*, Dennis Lehane
- I Know This Much Is True*, Wally Lamb
- Son of the Circus*, John Irving

Grace's choices:

- Havana Bay*, Martin Cruz Smith
- The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver
- Liberty Falling*, Nevada Barr
- Borderliners*, Peter Hoeg
- The Breaker*, Minette Walters

**BELS Letter**

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