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BELS *Letter*

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BELS Annual Meeting 2004 Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

On Sunday May 16th, BELS members got together on the top floor of the Vancouver Hyatt for our annual meeting. With a great view overlooking the port and Stanley Park, we enjoyed cocktails and fellowship before sitting down to a wonderful dinner. Many thanks go to **Christy Costello, ELS**, for making the local arrangements (with help from **Norman Grossblatt, ELS(D)**) and choosing the lovely table decorations.



After dinner, introductions were made of the new President-Elect, **Kim Berman**, and Treasurer, **Bethany Thivierge** (in absentia).

Donna Curtis, ELS, gave the treasurer's report, announcing that BELS increased its cash reserves this year by \$9500.

Leslie Neistadt, ELS, BELS Registrar, reported that in the past year BELS has given 7 exams. During this period, 88 people took exams, and 56 of those passed, for a passing rate of 64%. Twelve people took the exam in Vancouver, and there are currently 107 people eligible to take the exam. In addition to the usual slate of exams for the coming year, we're offering exams in Sydney, Australia, and in Ottawa, Canada, and

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BELS Annual Meeting, *continued from page 1*

plan to offer one at the EASE meeting in Krakow in 2006. Leslie added that if any BELS members are interested in proctoring, please let her know. We have a handbook that describes the entire process, and it's an easy yet meaningful way to contribute to BELS.

Finally, we were treated to a talk from our President, Walter Pagel (see transcript on this page).

As always, we enjoyed an evening of good food, good wine, and great conversation. Our membership is composed of very interesting people with a wide range of interest, and getting to converse with these people at least once a year is definitely one of the advantages of BELS membership.



President Walter Pagel and President-Elect Kim Berman.

Editing Is Good and Bad Magic

President's speech from the BELS annual meeting

Walter Pagel, ELS (D)

I think of editing as magic. In many ways, that's a good thing. There's self-satisfaction in pulling off a clever editorial trick. And our clients stand back in amazement: "How did she do that?" Sometimes, our trick is so clever that it involves seeming to know some science that we in fact simply tweezed out of the context of the article we were editing. Then our clients are even more amazed: "How did she know that?"

In some other ways, thinking of editing as magic is not a good thing. Everyone, be he amateur magician or sometime editor, knows a trick or two and thinks the trick may qualify him or her as a professional. So though our clients are amazed, others believe that they too could be editors if they wanted to. Another bad thing about being a magician is that half the audience really hopes you flub a trick big time. Haven't you had clients call you with delight in their voices to point out some error you made?

So what's the difference between the professional and amateur editorial magician? I

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Donna Curtis and Della Mundy welcomed members at the annual meeting.

Useful Websites

Garner's Usage Tip of the Day

<http://www.oup-usa.org/mailman/listinfo/us-usage-1>
Sign up for daily usage tips from Bryan Garner's *Modern American Usage* to be e-mailed to you each day.

MT Desk - <http://www.mtdesk.com/>

This is a site for medical transcriptionists, but their glossary has brand-name items with links to the manufacturer's site. This is useful for journal copyeditors.

Welcome new BELS members!

BELS has given 5 exams so far in 2004. The new members listed here passed the BELS exam in Berkeley, California; Princeton, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; or Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Joan Brodovsky, ELS
San Jose, California

Julie Bohlen, ELS
Glenvil, Nebraska

Rosalind Penty, ELS
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Marie A. Chesny, ELS
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Sarah L. Brownd, MA, ELS
Memphis, Tennessee

Barbara Tomlin, MA, ELS
North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Charlene R. Counsellor, ELS
Sewell, New Jersey

Leannah M. Harding, MS, ELS
Arlington, Virginia

Anne L. Wenzel, ELS
Arlington, Virginia

Daniel P. Di Paolo, ELS
North Wales, Pennsylvania

Constance L. Manno, ELS
Park Forest, Illinois

Tim Badgery-Parker, ELS
Broadway, New South Wales, Australia

Matthew J. Hasson, ELS
Lambertville, New Jersey

Susanne Richardson, MSc, ELS
Indianapolis, Indiana

Anna M.L. Breckon, ELS
Auckland, New Zealand

William A. Howard, MA, ELS
Baltimore, Maryland

Philip Sefton, ELS
Chicago, Illinois

Amanda Caswell, MBBS, ELS
Marmong Point, New South Wales, Australia

Karen McFadden, MA, ELS
Wilmington, Delaware

Carrie Clark Walsh, ELS
San Francisco, California

Robert J. Freeman, ELS
Bridgetown, Western Australia, Australia

Kristen McGrory, ELS
Wilmington, Delaware

Rebecca M. Barr, ELS
New York, New York

Shannon O'Connor, ELS
Mantua, New Jersey

Barbara Every, ELS
St. Albert, Alberta, Canada

Alexandra M. Holliday, ELS
Rushcutters Bay, New South Wales, Australia

Charlene B. Powell, ELS
Trenton, New Jersey

Anne Federer, MLS, ELS
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Cara Pschar, ELS
Ringoies, New Jersey

Susan McManus, MS ELS
Gabriola Island, British Columbia, Canada

Ann Munroe, ELS
Warriewood, New South Wales, Australia

Margaret Reith, RN, MS, ELS
Prospect Park, New Jersey

Hai L. Nguyen, MS, ELS
Houston, Texas

Evelyn Roberts, ELS
Winmalee, New South Wales, Australia

Laurie E. Thomas, MA, ELS
Madison, New Jersey

Kathie Stove, ELS
Penneshaw, South Australia, Australia

Aileen Wiegand, ELS
Mantua, New Jersey

BELS DIPLOMATE STATUS: What is it? How do I get it?

by Kim Berman, ELS, Immediate Past Diplomate Registrar

You've seen BELS members' names in print with a (D) after their ELS credential, you've noticed individuals wearing golden BELS pins to our meetings, and you've probably wondered "What is that all about?" and "How can I get one of those pins?"

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences awards diplomate status to BELS-certified editors who pass our diplomate examination. Achievement of diplomate status indicates that an editor has demonstrated exceptional editorial proficiency, reflecting greater mastery of editorial skills and knowledge than required for certification as an editor in the life sciences.

How do you go about obtaining "the golden (D)"? Is it difficult, time-consuming, or expensive? For those BELS members who are interested in diplomate certification, here are the basics:

1) Who is eligible?

A BELS-certified editor is eligible to apply for candidacy starting 2 years after passing the certification exam. The applicant must document 6 years of experience as a manuscript editor in the life sciences or related fields. Candidacy lasts for 3 years, beginning when the member's application is accepted.

2) What does it cost?

The total fee is \$200 (US dollars) for those candidates who complete the evaluation process within the ordinary time, otherwise renewal, resubmission, or re-evaluation fees may be applicable.

3) What is the procedure?

Anyone who has passed the Board exam and wants to take the diplomate examination must be accepted for candidacy. Once accepted, the candidate submits a portfolio for evaluation. The portfolio consists of: a) a total of 15 to 30 pages of scientific text and at least one table that the candidate has

edited, b) a description of the circumstances under which the submitted material was edited, and c) two essays of 500 to 1000 words each on topics related to concerns of editors in the life sciences (topic list provided).

4) Who are the examiners?

Examiners are appointed from among those BELS members who have achieved diplomate status.

5) How long does the process take?

Once your portfolio materials are distributed to the examiners, you can expect to receive your results within 8 weeks.

6) What is the outcome of the portfolio evaluation?

If, in the judgment of the examiners, a portfolio shows exceptional proficiency in scientific editing according to BELS standards, the candidate will be awarded diplomate status.

If the examiners determine that a portfolio or parts thereof do not meet BELS standards, the candidate will receive a summary of the reasons and will be invited to submit appropriate revisions for re-evaluation upon payment of additional non-refundable re-evaluation fees. There is no limit to the number of portfolios a candidate may submit.

Interested in applying for candidacy? The first step in this process is easy, quick, and costs you nothing. Simply e-mail the Diplomate Registrar or drop us a note asking for more details. We look forward to hearing from potential diplomats!

Nathalie Bacon, ELS

BELS Diplomate Registrar

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Editing Is Good and Bad Magic

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believe it is that professional editors have complete command of all the editorial tricks, not just the ones they happen to remember or find most fascinating. Professional editors learn tricks from all the experts, especially those published by CSE, AMWA, ISI, and University of Chicago, as do professional magicians. Like magicians, they go to workshops too, like those at AMWA and CSE.

Now if anyone can be impressed by a flashy trick or two, how does a typical author distinguish professional from amateur editorial magicians? Why, they turn to BELS, the Barnum & Bailey, the Cirque du Soleil of editorial magicians. Your certification is evidence that you have the skills to

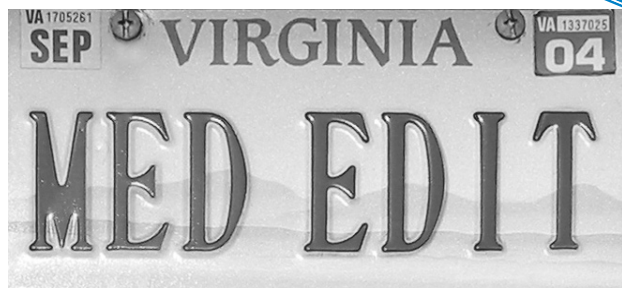
be a professional.

Here I would like to issue a crucial caution. The self-satisfaction that comes from pulling off a few showstoppers can lead to complacency. I've noticed some editors tend to believe that a good job is done if a manuscript is improved. But if any trick improves a manuscript, and it usually does, then why would you care whether you hired a professional or an amateur editor. Remember, anyone can pull off a trick or two. It's because you want your manuscript to be as good as possible, not simply better. It's because you don't simply want fewer defects; you really want no defects.

If you apply all the tricks to every manuscript, within the limitations of time, organization, and employer, and if your goal is 0 defects, I would call you a professional editorial magician.

Have you seen this car? *

If you have seen this car or any other interesting vanity plate or sign related to medical writing or editing, please send it in.



*This vanity plate belongs to BELS member Ann Donaldson, of Charlottesville, Virginia

In Memoriam

Martha Tulloch, ELS, of Massachusetts lost her three-year battle with cancer on November 22, 2003. She was 55 years old. A graduate of Wellesley College, Martha worked as a research assistant in a laboratory and later as a medical editor. She served as a copy editor for The American Journal of Sports Medicine from May 1997 to June 2000. She was a member of the American Medical Writers Association and was certified by the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences in 1999. Among her survivors are two sons and a daughter, to whom we express our deepest sympathy.

BELS Capsules

Congratulations to our newest BELS Diplomate! Matthew Stevens, ELS(D), is the 18th BELS member to be awarded diplomate status, and he is the first from outside North America to achieve this distinction.

Congratulations also go to Patti Wolf, ELS. Patti graduated from University of Maryland University College (UMUC) in May with a Doctor of Management degree with a specialization in Information Technology Management. Her dissertation is entitled, "Best Practices in the Training of Faculty to Teach Online." Patti reports that she immediately got a promotion and is now Director, Faculty and Distance Education Services, at UMUC.

Upcoming BELS Examinations

Date	Location	Meeting	Register by
October 6, 2004	Ottawa, Canada	Canadian Medical Association	September 15, 2004
October 20, 2004	St. Louis, Missouri	AMWA	September 29, 2004
March 2005	Boston, Massachusetts	None	TBA
April 9, 2005	San Francisco, California	Asilomar	March 19, 2005
May 21, 2005	Atlanta, Georgia	CSE	April 28, 2005

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BELS Letter