

**International Science Writers
Association**

News.ISWA

Volume 2 Issue 2

**PIO /
Communicators**



Staff Journalists



YOU?

Freelancers



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President's Letter — The Changing Role of Science Writers



Pallava Bagla

The way science is done is rapidly changing, so should science writing and journalism not change? The easy answer is yes. Today the Internet has brought scientists closer to people, yet the pace at which developments take place is sometimes hard to fathom; scientists themselves are still unable to establish the appropriate contract with the larger masses. It is here that the role of science writer/journalist/communicator is found, to make complexities of science accessible to lay people.

But these three roles are not identical. To me the *writer* explains it in text—in blogs, newspapers, magazines or even extended Facebook posts. A *journalist*, according to the Oxford Dictionary, differs because he or she is a ‘person who ... prepares news to be broadcast’, the key phrase is **news**, so it necessarily has to be current and relevant. A *science communicator* to me is a person who usually communicates using audio-visual media like radio, television, YouTube channels, and museum exhibits, to name just a few. There are also non-traditional ways of communicating as well, like folk theatre, street plays, painting, dancing, and many more. Many a time there is an important, usually unseen bridge, a public relations officer who facilitates but does not necessarily dictate the dialogue. Each role has a specificity, and each needs the respect a professional deserves. None can claim more nobility of action than any other.

In many parts of the world, especially USA and Europe, ‘science communicators’ are perceived to be ‘advocates’ of the scientists or the institutions they represent. This is a rather limited definition of a ‘science communicator’ specific to some dominant geographies. In most other parts of the world, such an advocate is called a public relations officer (PRO), or even a public information officer (PIO).

In today’s fast-changing world, someone like me does ‘pure writing’, television (both news and long form), still photography (news and features), plus radio, online journalism, and Social Media—Twitter and Facebook. Today, which silo -- writer/journalist/communicator -- I would be placed in is sometimes hard for me to categorize. Those days of purists who specialize in one media are all gone; the lines between all forms are very blurred. This indeed has to be celebrated, not mourned, as it gives more power to individuals.

A raging, almost ‘existential,’ debate in the National Association of Science Writers (NASW), the American science journalism organization, on allowing ‘science communications’ personnel to serve as officers burst forth recently. Of course, one needs to comprehend that ‘science communicators’ has different meanings in other parts of the world. Be respectful of diversity.

In this ever-changing world, your Association remains very relevant and is at the forefront of creating space for deeply committed professionals who seek to take the message of science to the people.

Pallava Bagla

Pallava Bagla is Science Editor for New Delhi Television (www.ndtv.com), India’s leading private broadcaster, and also a columnist for the Press Trust of India, and a correspondent for Science magazine. He can be reached at president@internationalsciencewriters.org and Pallava.bagla@gmail.com, and on Twitter: @pallavabagla

Dance With Your Audience's Neurons!

Wolfgang C. Goede

You want to engage with your audiences? Go beyond a science café, please! Add spices, excitement, new tools! This year's Public Communication of Science and Technology (PCST) conference, explored new dimensions, including a selection of 21 innovative formats.

April's PCST Istanbul event was remarkable. Despite a terrorist alert for Turkey and President Erdogan's crusade against journalists, some 250 attendants from 45 countries showed up. At the opening, PCST president Brian Trench (Ireland) stated very clearly that the international community of science communicators and journalists would bow to neither terrorism nor the president – and off it went with the first plenary: “Laughing About Science,” how to use humour in science communication, to make it more entertaining, and to express criticism. This set the tone for a number of following sessions, which ventured into innovative methods. Out of 21 interesting ideas, here are a few that seem particularly useful to science journalists.

This gets us to storytelling. People will love you for it. A hero, an adversary, ups and downs, love, sex, and crime. Give your stories the smell of a campfire. Find inspirations with the Odyssey, 1001 Nights or any Hollywood blockbuster! Use these elements also to deliver a **TED talk** (Technology, Entertainment, Design): 18 minutes, three times longer than a Pecha Kucha, but without pictures.

Don't try to be the guru and the guy that knows everything, tap the audience's experience and expertise, for example by means of **Robert Jungk's future workshops**. It consists of three distinct phases which describe a sine curve: dive down into the subject and **criticize, take-off and envision, touch-down and realize**. This all allows for plenty of creativity.

Debates are always in vogue, e.g. the ones organized by debating societies, which follow parliamentary procedure. At the world conference of science journalists in Seoul, this type of debate was applied to scientific and technological issues. People enjoyed the experience, but it was only a show. But it might work really well when done with the printed word.

Now it's high time for the arts, stage and performance. **Science Slams were derived from Poetry Slams**. Present papers, research, theories in poetry, or some other artistic format, especially if you are video or media journalist. In eight minutes, you must be done. As suggested in Istanbul, also all kinds of music can be applied, i.e. opera, gospel, you name it. How about a Science Hip-Hop?

Like storytelling, **Science Comics** are a very useful tool. As applied in Germany by *acatech*, simple drawings can demonstrate complex ideas such as artificial photosynthesis and how algae can be used to produce energy. Also **cartoons** serve the needs. As presented in Istanbul, **pictograms** and posters can be helpful to educate low-income people about health and hygiene, e.g. the need to regularly wash hands.

Finally, sometimes you should look elsewhere for inspirational science stories. Here's

one—**Science at the Margins**. One of the frontrunners of this format is Claudia Aguirre, Exploration Park (Parque Explora), Medellín, Colombia (Photo 1). This museum was instrumental in converting a dangerous garbage dump into a park, created by the locals, with the locals, and for the locals. In the process, staffers educated vulnerable populations about science and made them smart about taking care of their community. As a follow-up, marginalized neighborhoods in Medellín were taught to use balloons and cameras. With aerial pictures, they put themselves on the city map (Photo 2).



Photo 1. The crew of Exploration Park poses for a moment at the scene of a former garbage dump-now park, created by and for local inhabitants of Medellín, Columbia. Courtesy Claudia Aguirre, Parque Explora.



Photo 2. When you feel lost from society, sending up balloons with cameras can help you learn where you are, scientifically. Courtesy Claudia Aguirre, Parque Explora.

Similar approaches occur in Mexico, to empower the marginalized with mathematics; or in Spain, where the Big Van takes science comedies to prisons.

Good science communication isn't only done with words and photos. Sometimes it is done better with other techniques, and finding stories about people bringing science to the masses in other interesting, even unique ways. ✍️ **MI**

Links to tools and methods

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Caf%C3%A9_%28conversational_process%29

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Debating_Societies

http://www.pcst-2014.org/pcst_proceedings/artigos/wolfgang_c_goede_workshop.pdf

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weird_Science_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weird_Science_(comics))

<http://www.sciencecartoonsplus.com/index.php>

http://jcom.sissa.it/sites/default/files/documents/JCOM_1302_2014_C04.pdf

Goede was P.M. editor for 29 years, and is on the Board not only of ISWA but also of the WFS, and formerly of the EUSJA, which means he is never bored....

Summary of ISWA's Board Meeting—February 2016

Sedeer el-Showk

the moment; the Secretary also has access to the accounts in order to serve as a backup. According to the Treasurer, ISWA had 22 members at the time of the meeting, a significant decline from the association's heyday, when there were well over 100 members. Attracting new members is a priority for the Board, and we hope the current members will join us in rebuilding ISWA.

The Board was informed of the results of the membership survey carried out by newsletter Editor Larry Krumenaker, together with a report on how the first issue of the new newsletter was received. The survey yielded several excellent suggestions from members, including a one-day international activity supported or sponsored by ISWA, such as a Global Science Writing Day, and sponsoring a network of local meetings. We hope to realize some of these as we re-launch ISWA. One member suggested publishing the newsletter on a monthly basis; while this is not possible at the moment, we may begin sending a monthly digest of announcements.

The ISWA membership fee has been fixed at \$25 for some time, and the Board considered whether to raise the fee. While raising the rate would provide more funds and thus enable ISWA to organize more activities, there was also concern that this might discourage potential early-career members or members from developing economies. We agreed to leave the fee at \$25 based on a majority vote.

We also received the report of the Constitutional Committee. The ISWA constitution has not been updated since 1987, so the committee proposed changes to update and simplify it during this transition. Since we were unable to consider the changes during this meeting, it was agreed that a separate meeting would be held to consider the constitutional revisions before putting them before the members for comments and ratification.

Finally, Larry Krumenaker suggested that ISWA might be able to offer assistance to refugees in Europe, some of whom may be journalists or science communicators. ISWA could try to connect with these people and help them move out of refugee status. There are likely many highly educated people among the refugees (particularly Syrians), and this is an area where ISWA could have a real, immediate impact. We would welcome input from members who might be able to help with this. ✍️ **NI**

ISWA's Board Secretary, Webmaster and newly-minted Ph.D. Sedeer el-Showk blogs science from a farm in Morocco, and sometimes from a cabin in Finland.

The ISWA Board

President: Pallava Bagla president@internationalsciencewriters.org

Vice-President: Lucy Calderón vice-president@internationalsciencewriters.org

Treasurer: Dr. Larry Krumenaker treasurer@internationalsciencewriters.org

Secretary: Dr. Sedeer el-Showk secretary@internationalsciencewriters.org

Newsletter Editor: Dr. Larry Krumenaker editor@internationalsciencewriters.org

Webmaster: Dr. Sedeer el-Showk webmaster@internationalsciencewriters.org


Past President/Board Member: Jim Cornell j.cornell@internationalsciencewriters.org

Member-at-Large/Board Member: Wolfgang Goede w.goede@internationalsciencewriters.org

ISWA Membership News

ISWA secretary **Sedeer el-Showk** successfully defended his PhD in plant genetics at the end of May. His dissertation, “Auxin and cytokinin interactions regulate primary vascular patterning during root development in *Arabidopsis thaliana*,” was the result of experimental and computational research carried out at the University of Helsinki and the John Innes Centre, UK. Sedeer is currently a freelance writer, but he hopes to keep one foot in the research world for the next few years.

Pallava Bagla has been gathering laurels. In May he received the “2016 Red Ink Award” for a film about the science in vedic yoga. In March he was conferred the “National Award for Outstanding Efforts in Science and Technology Communication in the Electronic Medium,” by the Ministry of Science and Technology of India.

Larry Krumenaker, fresh off six months of teaching about misconceptions in science to students at the University of Cologne, will be on a book tour beginning mid-July in London, and then August thru early September in Georgia, USA. While one might debate that historical books aren’t necessarily science, his Civil War book, “Walking The Line,” is about rediscovering the whereabouts and conditions of the forts that defended Atlanta from Union forces, through GPS and landscape archaeology. Members within range of these locations are welcome to contact Krumenaker to find exact dates to hear his presentations.  **NI**

A Member’s Commentary— Where to Focus Science Stories?

Victor King McElheny


As a lifelong technology reporter, I recommend a focus on technological and financial aspects of where science actually hits daily life. I see a lot of obvious issues.

For example, one is the constant pressure of costs on the aim of making medical care available to all people as a right. Many specific attacks on disease, usually affecting modest

numbers of people, already are emerging from genomics and its applications. But the drug prices look pretty high, even when some can actually cut the total cost of handling an illness.

Alongside the new technologies are the struggles to organize the delivery of care to hold costs down. In America, medical costs per person are often double those of other wealthy countries. Can this be chalked up to inefficiency in bureaucracy, and incentives to over-test and over-prescribe? This disparity is a big, continuing story.

The underlying points of the above two examples is that humanity really does face a set of imperatives; it is a duty of science journalists to keep hitting on these for the decades it will take to handle them.

To be sure, focusing on technology sets a tough standard for our craft. We have to work harder to get closer to the actual leading edge of science (like using CRISPR to dissect how living cells work in greater detail), and simultaneously follow how the results get applied to medicine. When you cram at least 30 percent more people into the world’s cities in the next 30 years, the redesign of cities — marrying technology and humanistic insights into patterns that people can actually live with, we really have to keep up with how stuff is made, and costs.  **NI**

An Existential Tsunami Roils Science Journalism Organizations

Larry Krumenaker, with contributions by Jim Cornell & Wolfgang Goede

Okay, so ISWA's constitution was created back in the pre-Internet Stone Age and it was felt that we had to bring it out to the Techno-Age. While there have been some grumblings and heat over wordings, sections and changes, it is nothing compared to the storm that the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) in the United States has unleashed upon itself, and torn off a mask of science writing tranquility.

Despite the fact that I am but a year away max from being one of NASW's 25 Years of Service List members, the oldest ~22% of its members in terms of longevity, I still feel more like a student when I hang out with some of those who have been around even longer. But we all recall the old brouhaha that came up more than 20 years ago on whether to drop the membership category B—Associate Members. These were for the PIO types, not we regular journalists (and back then, freelancers still were considered JOURNALISTS, even if grudgingly and condescendingly). The two-tier structure was scrapped, with the proviso that Officers were only to be journalists.

So the new brouhaha goes to the question: “Should non-regular science writers be allowed to be officers of NASW, the one perk of membership they do not have?” The argument goes that true staff journalists are now the smallest minority in NASW (the annual statistics I did for NASW—until this year—have shown that for quite a while), that freelancers by far outnumber the staffers, and the bulk of members can be counted as old Associate-types, sometimes called science communicators, though that can also be broad enough to cover “true journalists” as well. Furthermore, many persons now live in the overlap zones of the Venn diagram PIO/freelancer/staffer circles. (See Page 1.)

As a result, a group of writers within NASW proposed a constitutional amendment that would allow any member to stand for election to any office. A committee charged with determining the implications of such a change sent a survey to all members to determine 1) the occupational breakdown of the current membership and, 2) how each of the disparate groups within the group might react to such a change.

The results were, in brief, both surprising and disturbing, exposing rather serious philosophical divides between “journalists” and “non-journalists,” which had been expected, but also between “staff writers” and “freelancers,” which had not been. The summary results—and comments by the committee-- can be seen at [Final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Constitutional Review](#) (Actual facts and figures are accessible only to NASW members, but this PDF will give most you all you need to know.)

Perhaps the greatest concern for the committee—and others within the organization—is that a significant proportion of “journalist” members would rather leave NASW than see its “professional” status compromised by “non-journalists” in leadership positions. The current Board opposes this. (The potential for the demise—or, at least diminution—of NASW is described nicely in “Undark,” the new, oddly named, but intelligently written, on-line news-commentary-criticism forum produced by the Knight Center for Science Journalism at MIT.) Go to: <http://undark.org/2016/05/27/a-looming-rift-in-science-journalism/>

This argument is not strictly American. In Europe, the question could be phrased “Are

you still a journalist or already a communicator?” Nowadays, many tend to be both, often because we need to make a living and journalism alone does not feed us any more in a rapidly changing media landscape.

The German Association of Science *Writers* (TELI), founded in 1929, is the oldest association of scientific and technical journalists in the world. Already back in the 1980's, there was increasing unrest about the above question, which led in 1986 to the founding of the German Association of Science *Journalists* (WPK). The latter accepts only journalists as full members and, consequently, there are no communicators on its Board. TELI admits communicators, also to Board positions; however, the president has to be a journalist. Due to dwindling membership and shifts in the profession, there has recently been discussion about opening up TELI to any stakeholder of science and science journalism. The debate was fierce, pro and con, and since constitutional changes always rock the self-understanding of any association, it has not been concluded to date.


The debate about who is a science journalist has also been rampant in the European Union of Science Journalism Associations (EUSJA). For example, the French pulled out a few years ago, because they thought that there were too many PIOs in the European umbrella. Recently, EUSJA members have witnessed a strong movement towards pure science journalism. But its advocates could not gain the majority during the board elections. Subsequently, they announced the creation of another European group, a Federation of Science Journalists. However, it never got far off the ground. EUSJA's current president is trying to consolidate and rejuvenate EUSJA now and get the supporters of a more pure and independent science journalism back on common ground.

Perhaps the European divide can be summarized by quotes from two emails from EUSJA President Jens Degett in response to Yves Sciana of the French Science Writers. The latter discussed how the French left EUSJA because of a perceived bias towards communicators and not journalists on EUSJA's Board.

All the (EUSJA) board members have long careers as science journalists behind them, but two of them are now working as PIO's for research institutions. I do not think we have any conflict of interests. The focus should rather be on integrity, quality and good practice.

We have had this discussion on real journalists vs PIO's in Europe for years, and I do not find it productive. The question of who is a science journalist and who does not live up to the definition is a very valid one, also because definitions are manifold and tend to be vague. At the same time, the controversy hurts our profession. In my mind it cannot be solved. It needs further discussing, and quite possibly compromises, not histrionics. All types of science writers are an essential part of our democratic system and its institutions, which journalism is an important contributor.

The more important issue, to this writer, is the worldwide decimation of the traditional media, particularly print. This causes the ranks of science specialist journalists to greatly diminish, to make it all but impossible to earn a good living as a freelancer as well, especially if the majority of articles are PIO-written, for free, and editor-managed.

ISWA does not face this communicator/journalist problem, yet, I think. ISWA does have members of all the three main types—some via long-term legacy, grandfathered memberships—but in principle it is a journalist-only membership. You have to be writing for the public. The Board members are mostly freelancers, with one staff journalist, one former staff journalist, but no communication types. ISWA has other issues, such as size, aging membership, but, it is possible that this tsunami may simply have not reached our shorelines.  **NI**



Preparing Yourself for a World Conference in San Francisco

James Cornell

Science journalists from developing countries who attend next year's World Conference in San Francisco should feel right at home. Although the city is arguably the most ethnically and racially diverse in the United States, it is also the most income unequal city; even the most casual observer must be struck by the stark contrast between hordes of hip young techies, eyes glued to iPhones, strolling the scenic streets seemingly oblivious to the scores of buskers, pan-handlers, and derelicts clutching tin cups. San Francisco has always been a city of contrasts; indeed, that has been its charm. In a recent letter to *The San Francisco Chronicle*, a correspondent urged his fellow residents to warn friends from abroad what to expect when they visited the City on the Bay. Although I am not a resident, I visit San Francisco frequently, so I am providing this same alert—not to discourage anyone from coming, but to help visitors (and, particularly, journalists) get around and to understand the turmoil that has shaken our political system. while fully enjoying the conference experience.

San Francisco is still **an exciting place to visit**, cosmopolitan and urbane, with some of the best restaurants in the country, a couple of really good—if not great—museums (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, or SFMOMA, and the de Young), and a host of unusual attractions, including the celebrated Golden Gate Bridge, the legendary Alcatraz prison, and the iconic cable cars. Best of all, unlike most American metropolises, it is imminently walkable, with a dozen or so distinct and different neighborhoods, from Chinatown to Waterfront, each offering its own unique character. There are stunning views from almost every corner. Admittedly, some of the hills can be a bit daunting and thigh-testing, but with some careful planning the worst inclines can be skirted. Of course, one can always hop on a cable car for really tough up-hill travel.

Some practical notes: **The WCSJ venue** is (at this time, anyhow) the Marriott Marquis Hotel, a large, rather typical, commercial-convention-type hotel, undistinguished except for its size, but well-located in the Financial District within easy walking distance of the Moscone Convention Center, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Market Street (with major department



stores and a cable car terminus), the Port of San Francisco pier and waterfront promenade, the newly renovated SFMOMA —closed for three years and just reopened this May with doubled size and, appropriately enough for this tech-crazy city, a big digital component to all exhibits—and “Yank Sing,” the best dim-sum restaurant in SF, if not the entire Western Hemisphere.

There are many other more colorful, more charming **hotels** in SF (including the historic “Palace” just blocks away, and my favorite, the “St. Francis,” both of which survived the 1906 Earthquake); but, given that the city is one of the most expensive in America, you may not find better *deals* anywhere—and certainly not near the meeting site. However, it is worth an Internet search. Google “hotels near Union Square,” where you may find some funky little, non-chain alternatives. And don’t forget “Airbnb”, the Uber hotel-equivalent, which, interestingly enough, was founded in San Francisco in 2008.

Getting into town can be stressful. Taxis are really expensive—US\$50 to \$60 from airport to meeting hotel—depending on time, traffic, and tip (at least you can determine the last part), and the drivers are usually surly, impolite, and unhelpful. They seem to resent the popularity of Uber, and its growing market share. In fact, Uber is a good travel alternative, but one for which you’ll need the appropriate app on your smartphone; rates are actually comparable to metered taxis, especially during peak travel times. For me, the best bet is Super Shuttle, a van service that will take you to any hotel (or private address) in the central city for the same price—as of this writing, approximately US\$17 one-way; and cheaper still if you choose round-trip, i.e., return to airport at end of your stay. The travel time can be a little longer than that for cabs, since the van may need to make various stops. Shuttle reservations and prepayment can be made on line. There are also rapid transit (BART system) connections between airport and downtown, but I have never taken it, since it requires carrying one’s bags and body from stop to hotel. However, there is a station (Montgomery Street) only about six blocks from the meeting hotel.

By all means, allow a few extra days either before or after WCSJ 2017 (October 26-30, 2017) to explore and enjoy this city that is on almost everyone’s must-visit-list. But this is also the city of the weird, so be advised that the day after the meeting—October 31, Halloween—is often the occasion for some very outré events. ✍️ **NI**

Jim Cornell was the long-time President of ISWA before he wisely exiled himself to the deserts of Arizona where he happily deals more often with scorpions than editors.....

The <http://wcsj2017.org/> 10th World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2017) is announcing its Call for Session Proposals.

All science journalists, writers, broadcasters, bloggers, etc. are invited to submit expertly crafted proposals that consider professional development and scientific issues from an international perspective. Make WCSJ2017 in your conference by submitting a session proposal. Proposals are due September 30, 2016. For complete details and instructions, and a link to the online session proposal submission form, visit <http://wcsj2017.org/call-for-proposals/>.

Australian Viewpoints on the Future of Science Journalism

Bianca Nogrady

Three experienced Australian science journalists at the conference of the Australian Science Communicators in March this year pondered the future, and the answer wasn't necessarily pretty. A panel consisting of Australian Broadcasting Corporation's science editor Genelle Weule, *Cosmos* magazine editor and journalist Elizabeth Finkel, and *Scientific American* contributing editor George Musser Jr. all agreed that science journalism in Australia and around the world is in a state of flux.

The panel also agreed that gone are the days when every Australian metropolitan newspaper had an in-house science editor or even a dedicated science reporter, as is common elsewhere in the world. Print magazines are folding or being severely reduced in size, and many of the freelance journalists in the science space have to supplement their income with communications work to make ends meet, which can raise issues about conflicts of interest when they are asked to report on an organisation for which they also provide writing services.



Journalists Elizabeth Finkel, George Musser, Jr., Genelle Weule and Bianca Nogrady discussing the state of science journalism on a panel last March.

“It is an ongoing effort to maintain a print presence for *Cosmos* magazine,” Elizabeth Finkel said, “against increasing pressure to shift to online.” But, as she also pointed out, despite the apparent mass extinction going on in media, we may be at the beginning of a ‘Cambrian explosion’ that could see a new and wonderful variety of science-focused journalistic endeavours. The panel all agreed that there are increasing numbers of quality online science publications emerging to fill the gap left by declining print publications; sites such as *Nautilus* and *Undark*, and initiatives such as *Retraction Watch*.

Buoyed by the opening speech from Australia's Chief Scientist Dr Alan Finkel, who backed the importance of good science journalism and science writing, there was a sense of optimism that, while times may be tough for science journalists, there may be a wealth of exciting new opportunities around the corner. Whether hard copy or electronic, there is still a need for good science journalists who know the beat, know the background, know how to read a research paper, know what questions to ask, and not just report from a press release or an abstract.

The rest of the one-day conference explored how to understand and respond to rejection of science, the cultural value of science communication, and some novel ways of helping scientists to communicate. ✍️ **NI**

Bianca Nogrady is an Australian freelancer who's yet to meet a piece of research she doesn't find fascinating. Editor of the anthology “2015 Best Australian Science Writing.”

ISWA's Draft Constitution

Below is the draft of the revised ISWA Constitution, its first update since 1987. The Constitutional Committee consisted of Dr. Larry Krumenaker and Dr. Sedeer el-Showk, with input afterwards by the whole Board. It is presented to the membership here, as per our current Constitution for comment. You may make your comments during the period ending 5PM, 8 July, 2016, Central Europe Time at the Constitutional Revisions Forum on the ISWA Website. Comments are open, and you can respond to any post. The committee will take up suggestions, and then put a final constitution to a vote.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE WRITERS ASSOCIATION CONSTITUTION

(as approved by a General Meeting of the Association, Montreal 1967
with amendments September 1972; February 1987; and totally revised June 2016)

1. Name and Definitions

- a) The name of the body to which this Constitution applies is the International Science Writers Association.
- b) The terms "science writers," "science journalism" and "science writing" shall be interpreted to mean the popularization of science, i.e., the communication of information about science and technology to general audiences through various media, including print, broadcast, online and social media.
- c) International Science Writers Association shall be abbreviated as ISWA, and in this document be referred to as the "Association."
- d) The Association is an organization of individual membership, and, while such members may belong to national or regional organizations, they represent only their individual interests, not those of any other organization, association, or interest group.

2. Mission

- a) To provide a channel for the exchange of ideas and professional experience among those engaged in international science writing.
- b) To conduct meetings and to plan congresses and events with a view to improving international knowledge of science writing.
- c) To foster the highest standards of science writing, and to provide a critical voice, throughout the world.

- d) To negotiate with scientific organizations and institutions to obtain improved, free, and open access to meetings, workshops, and information for all accredited science writers.
- e) To raise funds for awards, teaching, seminars, etc.
- f) To undertake such other activities as may be of general benefit to all members.

3. Membership

- a) Full membership shall be open to persons of demonstrated experience in science writing, as defined in Section 1b, over an extended period of time, through an independent medium, or about research independent of their organization.
- b) Associate membership shall be open to persons concerned with the dissemination of scientific information, for example, but not limited to, professors of journalism or institutional spokespersons, and willing to further the aims of the Association. Associate members shall not be entitled to vote.
- c) Lifetime membership shall be by decision of the Board to any person who has performed long, meritorious service to ISWA; such shall pay no dues, but have all other rights and privileges of membership.
- d) Student membership shall be open to undergraduate or graduate students in science, science journalism or general journalism programs with a demonstrated interest in science journalism, as defined in Section 1b, and dedicated to the objectives of ISWA. Student members have no vote, and can only be members as long as they are full-time students.
- e) No position or membership in the Association shall be denied to any person based on gender, race, religion, nationality, creed, or sexual orientation.

4. Administration

The organization shall be administered by a Board, in whom shall be vested fullest executive powers, provided that in the exercise of such powers no Article of the Constitution shall be contravened. All meetings and elections mentioned herein may be conducted electronically in lieu of actual physical meetings.

a) Constitution of the Board

The Board shall consist of six Full members, four of whom are the Officers and two Members-At-Large. The immediate past President shall be offered the option to serve as one of the Members-at-Large. The term of office for all Officers shall be two years. Casual vacancies shall be filled by the Board for the remainder of the term for which the vacancy would have continued. Changes to the structure of the Board shall be proposed to the membership and voted upon in a referendum within two months in a called election or a General Assembly of members.

b) Election of the Board

Election shall be by the members of the Association, in conformity with procedures set from

time to time by the Board, through an Election Committee made up of non-Board Full Members. The Board in office during the time of the 2016 Constitutional revision shall remain in place until December 2016, when an election must be held for new officers to be instituted the following January, and oversee the Association until the new Board is seated.

c) Meetings of the Board

All non-emergency meetings of the Board shall be called by the Secretary, and notice with a preliminary agenda shall be given at least two weeks in advance to all members of the Board. The President may call for an emergency meeting with less than two weeks notice. A quorum of the meeting shall be four members, which must be chaired by the President or Vice President. Decisions at all Board meetings shall be by simple majority, the Chair to have a casting vote.

d) General Assembly Meetings

The Board shall meet during a General Assembly at least once a year, which may be a virtual or electronic assembly, in which Members can speak directly with the Board. Motions made and seconded during a General Assembly are to be voted upon by all present, and a quorum for such a vote is 9 persons.

5. Admission to Membership

- a) All applications must be submitted on the standard application form of the Association.
- b) Membership in the Association shall be conditional on strict observance of the highest standards of journalism. Willful or frequent misrepresentation or inaccuracy, willful breach of confidence, or behavior in any way prejudicial to the professional interests of the Association shall be considered in breach of such observance.
- c) A member against whom a written formal statement of complaint of infringement of Section 5b, duly signed by the complainant, is laid shall be called before a committee of three or more members as requested by the Board. A copy of the written statement shall be received by the respondent at least three weeks before any hearing. An adequate record shall be kept of the hearing. In lieu of a formal hearing, due to geographical constraints, a complaint may be circulated to the assembled committee members--with a copy to the accused member--and judgments solicited by and received by the Association President. A summary decision of the Committee will be provided to the member within one month of first circulation; however, copies of all comments (unsigned) will be made available upon request. Only the Board or the committee shall have the power to warn, suspend, or expel the member complained against. A written statement of the reasons for any suspension or expulsion shall be made to members of the Association upon their request.

In the complaint process, electronic documents—emails, PDF files, etc.—may be construed as ‘written statements.’

- d) A Membership Committee shall be empowered to make all such enquiries and to call for all such evidence as it may consider necessary to reach a decision on any application for membership. In absence of a Membership Committee, the Board shall act as one.
- e) The Membership Committee's decision to accept or to reject an application shall be final, pro-

vided that a candidate whose application is rejected shall be entitled to reapply for membership following an interval of twelve months after being notified of the decision.

6. Dues and Financial Year

The annual dues for Membership categories shall be fixed by the Board from time to time by majority vote of the quorum in attendance at any duly-called Board meeting, subject to three months notice being given to the membership of any proposed alteration. Regardless of time of application and initial dues payment, all dues shall be for the current fiscal year, which is the calendar year. The Treasurer, with oversight by the Board, shall have power to suspend or waive subscriptions in special circumstances.

7. Membership List

The Secretary shall annually circulate a list of members in good standing. The list will be maintained by the Treasurer to include contact information for each such member.

8. Officers

- a) The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board, and shall represent the organization on all external matters unless others are so designated by the President or the Board. The President shall also preside at the General Assembly of members. As executive in charge of administration of the affairs of the organization, the President shall carry out the Board's decisions and directions, enforce the Constitution, and serve as ex officio member and chair of all Committees.
- b) The Vice-President shall act in lieu of the President, if that officer is prevented from performing functions.
- c) The Secretary shall prepare the minutes of the Board meetings, and any Executive Committee meetings, and generally oversee the administration of the Association.
- d) The Treasurer shall supervise the collection and disbursal of all funds of the Association. Account books or records, which may be in electronic form, shall be available for audit. The Treasurer shall present a financial report to the Board annually, or as requested, and shall supervise the membership records.
- e) Officers act as an Executive Committee for Association operations between meetings of the Board.

9. Board-appointed positions

The Board shall be empowered to appoint such honorary or paid personnel as it may consider necessary for the efficient conduct of the Association, provided that no such official shall vote in the deliberations of the Board unless already a Board member.

10. Committees

The Board shall be empowered to create such committees as it may consider desirable, which

shall be filled by Members of the Association. The Board may appoint the Chair of each Committee, or the Committee can be empowered to make its own choice of Chair. The Chair shall be invited to attend and speak at Board meetings when Committee matters are discussed, but cannot vote on any Committee-related motion put before the Board, even if such Chair is a Board member.

11. Amendments to the Constitution

This Constitution, after the Membership during the year of its revision has voted its approval, may be amended at any time by two-thirds of the members responding to a ballot, notice having been given at least three months in advance of intention to amend the Constitution, together with the draft of the proposed change.

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06.2.87

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The Constitutional Process

Following the Board's approval of this revision of ISWA's Constitution, the draft shall be published in the newsletter and sent to all members of ISWA. It shall also be published on our website, along with the old, but still in force, Constitution. From that date of publication, until the 8th of July, comments by any member of ISWA to any part of the Constitution can be made on the Forum on the ISWA website. The site is moderated only for the purpose of reducing spam and trolling, not to stop any criticisms.

Comments shall be collected after this date and sent to the Board. It shall internally debate in either email or a meeting, and make changes or reject suggestions, and formulate a final draft to be put online and call for a vote, currently anticipated to be approximately around August 1, 2016. The mechanism of the vote shall be determined by the Board, and also any anticipated deadlines. By virtue of our current Constitution, the new Constitution will go into force when the vote is tallied and if there is a 2/3rds vote of approval at that time. The vote will be announced in email to all members.

Following this vote, the Board intends to begin the process of gathering a Election Committee for a new Board to be instituted in 2017. Additionally, it will begin considerations of activities ISWA can do to further aid its members in its science writing work, and to gain new members. **Assistance in these activities will be very much welcomed from the Membership—the Board can not do this alone!**

Dr. Larry Krumenaker

Treasurer of ISWA, Head of the Constitutional Committee