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President's Letter — Science Reporting in a Changing Climate



Pallava Bagla

Climate change has occupied our mind space for a very long time, but don't take your eyes off the ball just yet. Only recently politicians ratified the Paris Agreement to contain the negative effects of climate change. Scientists and most science writers have spoken vocally on the need for the world to come to some understanding for a long time, yet it took the policy makers and the larger public a few decades to reach a global consensus to try and keep the temperature of the globe from rising more than two degrees centigrade. Over 190 nations have signed into the Paris Agreement and France's foreign minister and the host of the 2015 Paris Conference, Laurent Fabius, called it an 'historic turning point' in the goal of reducing global warming. Yet...

It is reported that the US President-elect Donald Trump may seek to trash the Paris Agreement since his party, the Republicans, have long been skeptical of human-induced warming of the Earth. It may not be easy for Trump to rescind the global pact but dilute it he could do. If the world's biggest emitter pushes back one can be sure there will be other nations who may join the chorus. The political climate, as well as the planetary one, indeed may be changing.

Science journalists need to once again turn their attention from reporting on the science behind a changing climate, which now seems well established, unless of course Trump decides to open that debate. Now the time has come to keep a strict watch on how nations account for their greenhouse gas emissions. There will be cheaters and others who will try to obfuscate the carbon audits; it is here that science journalists can keep a vigil to ensure that nations and businesses who subvert the system are brought to book.

In addition ISWA, being a global organization, and its members are best placed to ensure that there is some equity in technology transfers that may take place if the global pact to limit the worse warming effects are to be implemented.

As a community we need to be vigilant that countries that polluted the planet the most and rapidly amassed wealth at the cost of clean air of the entire globe, do not once again make a killing by selling so called clean and green technologies at exorbitant prices. Being ever vigilant is the role that science communicators can play in a changing climate.

Pallava Bagla

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What ISWA Has Done For Me

Dr. Larry Krumenaker, and others

Little did I know that when I broke into Jim Cornell's Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory office (so he claims, actually, he left his door open) that my punishment for the crime would be chained to ISWA for nearly 25 years. But as rehabilitation programs go, this has been a really good deal.

Unlike other science and/or journalism organizations, ISWA is something of a throwback; it works on old-fashioned networking and personal contact to make it work. As an American who has lived now in two other countries, and traveled as a journalist to several more, ISWA has provided me with the names of persons I can use as sources and as expeditors for my adjustments to living in another culture. Of course, then-President Jim Cornell was (and still is!) a major human rolodex for contacts.



As ISWA's first webmaster, I got to be a kind of penpal with Sir Arthur C. Clarke, before he passed away, emails I treasure and have never deleted. I was also able to be a last minute substitute speaker and panel moderator at the World Science Forum in Budapest, Hungary, essentially my world debut after having been involved in the US NASW group. Later, I moved to Korea for a year and Jim and Bruce Lewinstein gave me names of Korean science writers and others to help get my research going at Seoul National University, and sources for articles I wrote and published in my *The Classroom Astronomer* magazine. I now have my own rolodex of contacts in countries around the world. Even in this digitized world, that is still my most valued ISWA momento.

But I am not the only person who has benefited from membership in ISWA; I asked all the other Board members what they've gotten from being an ISWA member:

ISWA Vice-President Lucy Calderon told me...



Neither in Guatemala nor Central America existed a science journalism association, so when I was accepted as an ISWA member, I felt very happy and thankful because it gave me the opportunity to meet nice people and get the support I needed to participate in contexts where you are asked to have a journalistic affiliation.

Being a member of ISWA gave Calderon the opportunity to serve on two science journalism Boards. On the World Federation of Science Journalists Board, she was one of several ISWA members there, an outsized proportion for such a Group. Then she became VP of ISWA during this time of reinvigorating this organization.

You learn about the importance of being associated and the challenges that involves to run an association of its type. However, the professional and friendly relationship among the WFSJ and ISWA's Boards of Directors encourages you to keep

moving and be more enthusiastic about science journalism. So, I invite to all journalists and science writers who have not a representative association in their country to join us and work together in order to foster the good practice of science journalism.

My successor as Webmaster, Dr. Sedeer el-Showk, came aboard like many others because of an ISWA encounter at another meeting. He writes,

I met Jim Cornell at the WCSJ meeting in Helsinki in 2013 and offered to help rebuild ISWA's webpage, unaware of what I was getting myself into. Over the next few months, my role expanded into helping revitalize ISWA and, eventually, serving as secretary on the transitional board. I've learned a lot during the process, and I hope to contribute more to ISWA in the coming years.

As an early-career science writer living in Morocco, a country without a strong tradition of science journalism, I've found ISWA valuable in connecting with the larger science-writing community. I've gotten valuable guidance and advice from some of my fellow board members, and I've corresponded with ISWAns from a range of countries. These connections started through ISWA, though some of them have since grown into friendships.

Another Board member, long-time German writer/editor Wolfgang Goede, was also corralled by James Cornell at a meeting...

I first met Jim in the summer of 1998 in Berlin for the 6th PCST International Conference (Public Communication of Science and Technology). It was my first public presentation about science journalism, editorial challenges and how to popularize nerdy science for mainstream folks. He was chairing a panel, and I needed a title for my presentation. The following title was born: You have to be a checkered violet, if you want to break out of the ghetto. Jim liked the unconventional picture, teased me with it, pretended not to understand. Perhaps he did not. So we hit the ball back and forth, which eased my tension. At one point I pulled out a checkered violet which my wife had made of paper. I waved it at him and the audience and pointed at it: "That's how you get attention, colleagues, not with standard routine, anemic phrases, boring headlines, dare to go beyond, please and become creative!". That hit home. My



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

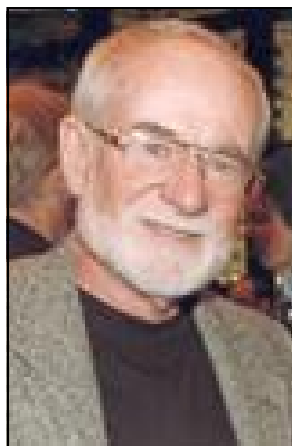
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Past President/Board Member: Jim Cornell j.cornell@internationalsciencewriters.org

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

listeners understood my philosophy and on the way Jim and I had become friends.



The former long-time ISWA president, now senior consultant, exhibits this unique talent to connect people, many years before networking became so in vogue. He just introduces colleagues to each other, relentlessly and sometimes breathlessly, facilitated by his Irish humour and always accompanied by a witty story. Only if you personally connect, you produce the glue to form a group and lobby for a stronger and more relevant science journalism.

This is exactly ISWA philosophy, in 2017 for 50 years: not virtual facebook, but real face to face.

Jim Cornell himself says,

Being part of ISWA has allowed me to assist journalists in the developing world. The original (if unofficial) intent of ISWA was to create a mutual-aid society for an extremely small group of journalists—mostly white, male, and Anglo—who, when they travelled to odd places to write about science and technology, might find kindred souls offering sustenance, support, and sources of news.

This model served ISWA and its members well for two decades, but, by the 1980s, a few of us began to question its worth, especially since a new generation of science reporters was emerging in the non-Western world. The late Howard Lewis and myself, aided by several members working abroad as teachers and consultants, actively recruited many new, young, and indigenous writers, thereby literally changing the complexion of our association.

By the late 1990s, our membership represented an impressive number of countries in both the North and South. However, in many of those countries, our member was often the only professional science journalist. We looked good on paper, but our political impact was limited and our economic power was nil.

Consequently, Howard and I began to question ISWA's future—even whether it might be time to pull the plug. We decided to hold off any decision until after a meeting in Germany, where we expected an unusual number of members to attend. Indeed, a dozen or so of us gathered in anteroom of the conference center to talk about possibly dissolving ISWA. But first, we went around the table introducing ourselves (most of us knew each other by correspondence only). When it was the turn of an African member, he pulled out a battered and tattered ISWA membership card and declared, 'Thank you, ISWA! This little piece of paper got me here—and maybe saved my life!' He had been stopped leaving his country—the Congo, I think—and held by government officials, who finally relented and let him go once presented with proof that he was an "accredited journalist" recognized by, as he put it, a "major international organization." Howard Lewis immediately turned to me and said, simply: 'Well, I

(Continued on page 6)

WANTED! STORIES!

**SOMETHING YOU DID? SOMETHING YOU LEARNED?
SEND TO EDITOR@INTERNATIONALSCEINCEWRITERS.ORG!**

Summary of ISWA's Board Meetings—July and September 2016

Dr. Sedeer el-Showk

the 26 members, giving a respectable 77% turnout. The Board thanks the membership for taking the time to participate in this important process.

With the new constitution in place, we're now focusing fully on ISWA activities to aid existing members and attract new members. Several ideas have been put forward, including creating webinars for early-career science writers, running small local meetings when possible, and holding a "World Science Journalism Day." Of particular interest was the suggestion of establishing an ISWA podcast focused on science journalism in a global context. In addition to addressing questions relevant to the science journalism community, the podcast would also draw on ISWA's members (and their networks) for discussions of the challenges, joys, and importance of science journalism in different societies and contexts.

The Board is looking for volunteers to help realize these projects. If you're interested in working on the podcast or have an idea for a webinar, get in touch and we'll make it happen. The Board cannot do this alone, and ISWA's growth and success will depend on active participation by the members. Suggestions for other activities are also welcome!

ISWA's membership card is due for a redesign, and ISWA needs a logo. The Board decided to hold a contest among the members to find ISWA's new "look," awarding the creator of the winning design a free year of membership. Further details can be found in the contest announcement elsewhere in this newsletter.

Finally, the Board is putting out a call for volunteers to join the Election Committee. The current Board will step down at the end of this year, so a committee of non-board members is needed to organize elections for the new board. The committee is open to all non-Board full members; anyone interested should contact me at secretary@internationalsciencewriters.org. Sedeer will serve as the liaison between the Election Committee and the Board. (See page 8 for the make-up of the now-constituted Committee.)

This is also a good time to think about whether you'd like to stand as a candidate. Information on the procedures and deadlines for the election will be distributed by the Election Committee once it is established. All full members are eligible to run for a board position, and the Board hopes many will consider it. During the past 18 months, we've worked to re-establish and modernize ISWA's infrastructure; now we're eager to be joined by new faces with fresh ideas for ISWA. ✍️ **NI**

ISWA's Board Secretary and Webmaster Dr. Sedeer el-Showk blogs science from from a cabin in Finland.

(Continued from page 5)

guess we have to go on.'

"And, so we did. Two decades later, ISWA is still here and —I hope—still serving science journalists everywhere."

The key observation to be made here is that, we're not an organization that seeks to keep our organization successful, but to help its members be successful. ✍️ **NI**

ISWA Membership News

ISWA's membership, country-wise, has the USA is still the leading nation in ISWA, 11. But I think this maybe the first time it is less than 50%. Second is India with 4 and Germany with 3. Continent-wise: North America leads with 11; Asia edges out Europe 8 to 7; Africa has 2 and Australia 1. No South American members. Nobody from Antarctica either....

The following members joined since our last newsletter in June:

Vasiliki Michopoulou (Full) is a journalist-science writer in Greece, formerly a Greek television reporter. A new Ph.D. in International Relations, Ms. Michopoulou comes out of both biology and political science. Reach her via email at vmihop@gmail.com, Website: <https://vmihop.wordpress.com/>, LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/vasiliki-michopoulou/56/3b8/102>, Twitter: @vmihop, and Facebook: Vasiliki Michopoulou .

Dr. Hanoch Slor (Associate) is professor emeritus of Human Molecular Genetics and Biotechnology at the Tel Aviv University School of Medicine, Israel. He has written for the Israel Journal of Medical Sciences and Harefuah. Reach him via Email: slorscience@gmail.com or LinkedIn: hslor.

“After nearly 50 years of being a scientist, the developer of the first maternal blood alfa fetoprotein assay in the world, teaching and publishing on molecular human genetics, biotechnology, and cancer, I have decided to write on new innovations in science in a clear and simple (but accurate) way. The vast scientific "breakthroughs" attracted many writers to "tell the stories". However, most of them have no proper scientific background and this is reflected in their writings. As a molecular biologist, biotechnologist, and inventor, I am able to better describe new developments to the "regular" readers, in an attractive and accurate way.”

Freelance journalist **Elisabetta Curzel** (Full) is in Trento, Italy. She has written for, among others, Corriere della Sera, IISole24Ore, and Italian public television. Reach her via Email: elisabetta@gmail.com, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/elisabettacurzel>, and Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/elisabetta.curzel> .

Dr. Mischa Dijkstra (Associate), formerly an evolutionary biologist) is a Dutch science writer and press officer for Frontiers journals of Switzerland. Reach him via Email: michiel.b.dijkstra@gmail.com, Website: <http://www.darwinizer.org>, and LinkedIn: <https://ch.linkedin.com/in/mischa-dijkstra-2a889747> .

 **MI**



ISWA Announcements

The ISWA Constitution

Seventy-seven percent of the membership voted on the new ISWA Constitution, all in favor, fulfilling the old constitution's voting requirements, and immediately putting the new Constitution into effect. The document can be found online at the ISWA website.

Elections

Per said Constitution, an election committee has been set up to find candidates for a slate of new officers to take over in 2017. The committee is made up of members Elisabetta Curzel of Italy, Harem Kakil of Iraq, Nigel Hey of the USA, and Judith Rauch of Germany. The actual election will occur as soon as they produce a ballot of candidates.

Treasurer's Report

Until now our funds had been kept in a US bank account that was withdrawing around \$12 per month because of a low balance, constantly depleting it. This year the account was moved to a free account. With a small rise in membership and a drop in expenditures, our bank balance is \$700, plus we have a running balance in our Paypal account of \$375.95 and a Euro balance of 92.76. Using current conversion rates, our total funds are \$1172.87.


ISWA's NEW LOGO!

Want to NOT pay your next dues? Help us design a new LOGO for ISWA and you'll get next year free! Contact Board Vice President Lucy Calderon for all the details at Vice-President@internationalsciencewriters.org . Also, an announcement will be emailed soon.

ISWA's 50th

2017 will be ISWA's 50th year of existence! In addition to both working on improving our membership numbers, and working on ideas of things ISWA can do, now that the rebuilding of the infrastructure is completed (an 18 month journey by those who took part!), it is time to try to consider what we can do to celebrate our half century! (You can find out more about our origins and history on the website). The actual birthdate is considered to be 20 July, 1967. If you have ideas about what we can do and where we can do it, please email ISWA Secretary Dr. Sedeer el-Showk at secretary@internationalsciencewriters.org .

TIME TO PAY DUES!

Yes, the end of the year means it is time for our annual plea for funds, only this time, we can add to the pot described above and with our cut-down on expenditures we intend to put aside money for both our anniversary party and other contributions to members professional development. Still an incredible professional bargain at \$25!! Oh, and you will have to renew all your contact information this year.....  **NI**

The Freelancer's Book Tour

Dr. Larry Krumenaker

When other science writers ask me what I do, I tell them I do the most dangerous form of freelancing. No, I'm not a war correspondent, I'm a science writer, but I do it as a self-publisher of books. I'm just now finishing my sixth book and starting two astronomy-based ones at once, after two history books, but that's not the dangerous part. The danger is the fact that I'm responsible for more than just the writing. I'm also at risk of financial ruin. I have to pay for the printing, the marketing, etc. I have to do a lot of spending in advance. One means of covering these expenses is by touring. I make much of my writing income by giving presentations.



Recently, for a book based on an incident of the American Civil War (I have begun to expand out of science, and into a niche that includes both history and science—tour guides to historical sites), I began creating my own tours. When I lived full-time in the Atlanta, Georgia area, it was just pile stuff into the minivan and drive someplace local, set up, give my talk, sell my books, drive home. Living in Germany, that's no trivial expense. So how can I make it profitable, and what lessons have I learned?

First, you need to know your audience and where they are. Atlanta is rich in Civil War history; it is a major battle site, the beginning of the end of the Confederacy. That also means it is loaded with museums and sites that are related to the Civil War. My book, in fact, was on the forts that defended Atlanta for six weeks. They never fell, but they did get lost. I did the research and found them again, documenting them with maps, walking trails, and photographs. That got interest from the various museums and more. But there are only so many of them; where else can I sell books besides those places as presentation venues, and their gift shops, if any? Atlanta is also rich in Civil War enthusiasts, particularly Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) groups. During my earliest talks I got contacted by several of them.

But then I moved to Germany. This violated one of the main techniques for getting future sales—following up on word of mouth. People hear about you and spread the word, and your phone rings and your email inbox fills with strangers contacting you. Moving to Deutschland killed that.

But after my six months in Heidelberg as a Journalist-in-Residence and then six months at the University of Cologne as a guest instructor, it was back to freelance writing, but in Germany. How to pick up on this again? Europe is not exactly a beehive of Civil War activity (although that isn't to say there isn't any—I did one lecture presentation in London). I re-contacted every group I had heard from for which I had NOT been able to do a presentation a year and a half earlier. I also sought on the web the contacts for every other SCV group in northern Georgia, plus museums, plus national parks, and anyone else that could possibly be interested in my talk. Note: no matter how fantastic your talk is, you won't get everybody you contact. I sent out emails to over 40 groups; I ended up with 11 that worked out for my August-September six-week tour this year.

I also had made a contact who was doing talks for *his* book, at Barnes & Noble book-



stores. There, the stores make the sales as he persuades passersby to get interested, and he gets his cut mailed to him. There are 15 such stores in my area, I contacted them, I got ... two. I actually do sell my books in more B&N stores than that, on a regular basis, but these two were new ones, far from Atlanta.

I also had a couple of museums get interested, and a neighborhood association. Altogether 15

places signed up. From past experience I could estimate possible sales, and that had to add up to more than the airfare and hotel costs I expected. I couldn't always stay at friends' places (I no longer had a residence in Atlanta) all the time!

Notes: Don't buy your airfare until you think you've got all your expenses covered. And keep looking for more places to fill schedule gaps. Not all presentations will pay you what you think you will get.

I made my money from sales of the books and the occasional voluntary honorarium. I have a credit card swiper for Paypal. Often, credit cards make more, and larger, sales. I rarely get checks, but I have also never had one bounce. Each presentation usually gets me contacts for one to three more future presentations. In one case, I got a list of every possible group in the southern part of the state! Snowball economic theory. It works.

But one group cancelled on me, and some were a lot smaller than promised. For my current tour (I write this on my second such tour, for four weeks, made up mostly of those places I could not accommodate the first time around) I charge a speaker fee and ask far-away places for help on the hotel. So far, most find this agreeable. But I have also had more cancellations. I haven't a workable solution to that problem, yet.

So, **point one**, to set up a tour, you must find as many possible sites to speak at, in advance, and get good word of mouth out of them, and contacts. I now have information spread-

The Summer *Walking the Line* Tour.

City names alone are SCV groups based there. All are in the US state of Georgia except Chattanooga, in Tennessee. **Bold** is an presentation open to the public.

- August 4 Rome
- 5 Norcross Historical Neighborhood Association
- 8 Warner Robins
- 9 Macon Barnes & Noble bookstore signing
- 11 Southern Civil War and Locomotive Museum, Kennesaw**
- 13 Chattanooga Barnes & Noble bookstore signing
- 15 Toccoa
- 16 Palmetto
- 17 Marietta
- 18 Fayetteville
- 22 Lawrenceville
- 25 Newnan
- September 1 Athens
- 7 Barrington Hall, Roswell**
- 8 Gainesville

ing all over the East Coast because of contacts made here. That means in the future I will do large, well-attended annual conferences, larger museums, (in the photo to the right is my book on a national battlefield park bookstore shelf, and until this fall tour, I had never talked there!), and Confederate groups, Union Veterans groups, United Daughters of the Confederacy groups, and Civil War Roundtables, which are interested in the whole war, not just one side, and all of these are nationwide and even international.



Point two: Book sales don't cover everything. I have created auxiliary products to go with them. For my Civil War book, I also sell a Civil War in Atlanta Wall Calendar. In the future I will also have another Civil War book to go with that. In the past, for astronomy presentations such as some "dress rehearsal" talks for my future *Star Trek* astronomy book, I had other astronomy and astronomy education products to sell. I plan posters based on that book's illustrations, and a resurrection of a spectrum viewer card. Many people, when they like a talk, they buy one of everything you have.

Point three: Advance word of mouth works good, too. This tour is made up of people

The *Walking The Line* Fall Book Tour

Nov 12-13 Nash Farm, Hampton, GA CW Re-enactment weekend
Nov 17 Presentation in Jonesboro, GA
Nov 22 Presentation in Thomaston, GA
Nov 26 Book signing at Chickamauga National Park
Dec 9 Presentation in Augusta, GA

I could not accommodate on the first tour, or saw the tour elsewhere and wanted a presentation at their place but there was no opening on the schedule. Now, I have that *Star Trek* book coming out next year, and already I

have three *large* gigs, with audiences in the hundreds of persons, already set for 2017.

So in the future, when I have a large tour somewhere, in advance I will seek out groups in the area who would like talks on my other book topics, like the Atlanta battle, and book stores (though they aren't nearly as much a money maker as presentations, unless your name is Stephen King (mine isn't)).

Point four, the more in advance you can do this, and the tighter the scheduling, the cheaper your travel costs will be, that is, food and hotels, and gasoline for the car.

Point five: I use the opportunity for also adding to my repertoire of knowledge. In my summer tour, I also drove around to all the battlefields of the Atlanta campaign, from the start in north Georgia, up to those that surrounded the city. I also had the crazy idea of a scavenger hunt, for street signs listing all the names of generals who led the campaign. Why? Originally, to have more illustrations for the next year's calendar. Not sure that will happen now, but it will make both a fine photo book and a future talk on what traces of war can be found 150 years later. Which means I get to use a captured audience, all the groups I have already been at, to get future sales on future tours.

Think large when you do a tour. Just be mindful of the costs. It is all out of YOUR bank account. **NI**

Upcoming Meetings

December 2016, American Geophysical Union (AGU), California, USA

The latest in Earth and space science news will be presented at the 49th annual AGU Fall meeting this December, when about 24,000 attendees from around the globe are expected to assemble for the largest worldwide conference in the Earth and space sciences. (Despite the “American” in its title, this definitely is an “international” event.) This year, the meeting runs from Dec. 12-16, 2016, at the Moscone Center, 747 Howard St., San Francisco, California.

For more information about registration and housing, contact Lauren Lipuma, [+1 (202) 777-7396 or llipuma@agu.org] A complete media advisory, with links to program and paper abstracts, is also available online at: <https://news.agu.org/press-release/agu-fall-meeting-abstracts-and-sessions-now-online-book-hotels-by-16-november/>.


January 2017, American Astronomical Society (AAS), Texas, USA

The 229th Meeting of the American Astronomical Society will be held in Grapevine, Texas, January 3-7 at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center. The AAS holds two meetings annually, one at the beginning of the year, which tends to be the best attended and the best source of news, and a second, usually in early June. The AAS has received some criticism for holding recent meetings at resort or convention sites somewhat disconnected (and even distant) from academic centers. Grapevine would seem to be of that ilk—a tourist stop halfway between Dallas and Ft. Worth best known for its ersatz evocation of “Small town/Home town America.” Still, this meeting is a major event for media covering astronomy, astrophysics, and the space sciences, since many researchers choose it to release big results, such as those expected from the Rosetta mission.

The AAS offers complimentary meeting registration to bona fide working journalists and public-information officers. To request press registration, first check the AAS [eligibility criteria](#), then contact AAS Press Officer [Dr. Rick Fienberg](#), +1 (857) 891-5649 (cell), rick.fienberg@aaas.org. Media advisories will be posted at www.aas.org beginning in late October or early November 2016.

February 2017, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Massachusetts, USA

The 2017 Annual Meeting of the AAAS, built around the theme of how national and international policies should be based on the best scientific evidence, will be held in Boston, February 16-20. This gathering of both US and foreign scientists is arguably the world’s largest general science meeting and, while it is sometimes short on breaking news, it offers a broad overview of current science and technology. This makes it a very popular destination for international journalists who want to see, hear, and meet major movers and shakers of American science and, as the 2017 theme suggests, science policy. In the aftermath of a bitter election that almost totally ignored science and technology issues, it will be interesting to see if the national focus can be changed back to progressive and positive visions of the future.

General AAAS queries can be directed to +1 (202) 326-6440 or media@aaas.org. For specific information about the meeting, especially events for foreign journalists, contact Ginger Pinholster, Chief Communications Officer, +1 (202) 326-6421, gpinhols@aaas.org, gingpin@gmail.com .  **NI**

– Jim Cornell