

**Issue No. 32**  
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**Editor**

Donna Tilton, ELS

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# BELS *Letter*

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## AMWA Annual Conference 2003

Congratulations to our own Susan Eastwood, ELS(D)

At the 63rd AMWA Annual Conference held in Miami in September, Susan Eastwood was awarded the Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award. This award is presented for distinguished contributions to medical communication or distinguished service to the medical profession and is named after the founder of AMWA.



Susan was cited for her service to professional organizations, commitment to education of biomedical communicators, dedication to improving the integrity and ethics of research and biomedical publications, and excellence of publications.

In her acceptance speech, Susan talked about the changes in the role of biomedical editors and writers in the last 25 years. The role of editors rose during the 1980s as fewer principal investigators had the time (or skills) to mentor young research scientists about the fine details of writing their research. Authors' editors became partners with scientist in helping them to follow ethical guidelines in reporting their research. But with changes in the economics of the medical industry, professional writers and editors were often the first sacrificed.

If medical writers and editors are seen as scribes for medical research, they have quite a history to live up to. Susan reminds us that at different times in history, scribes have been seen as exalted keepers of wisdom or charlatans working for their own advancement. But there is a place for professional writers (or scribes) in biomedical sciences today. Authors for whom English is a second language often need help to present their ideas clearly in English publications. And even native English speakers need help to avoid ambiguity in reporting their research.

A full report of Susan's speech will be published in the next *AMWA Journal*.

*Continued on page 2*

Susan Eastwood, *continued from page 1*

## About Susan

**SUSAN EASTWOOD** is Director of Publications & Grants Writing with the Department of Neurological Surgery and the Neurological Surgery Research Centers at University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and a founding Diplomate of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences. She is a Fellow of the American Medical Writers Association and a founding member of the AMWA at Asilomar Board of Directors. She has served as President and a Director of the Council of Science Editors, and was a member of the steering committee of the CONSORT Group and the QUOROM Group, developing guidelines for improving the quality of reporting of clinical trials and meta-analyses. She has twice been awarded the UCSF Chancellor's Outstanding Achievement Award. She is the collaborating editor of eleven books primarily concerning neurosurgical disorders and brain tumor biology and therapy. Her own research and publications primarily concern scientific writing, research training and ethics, scientific publication ethics, and improving the quality of reporting of clinical research.

BELS members were in full force at the 63rd annual AMWA conference in Miami, Florida, September 18 to 20.

**Flo Witte, MA, ELS**, was named President, **Mari-  
anne Mallia, ELS**, is Immediate Past President,  
**Susan E. Siefert, ELS**, is Secretary, and **Cindy W.  
Hamilton, PharmD, ELS**, is the new Treasurer.

**Jill Shuman, MS, RD, ELS**, was awarded Fellowship by the American Medical Writers Association. Fellowship is awarded to biomedical communicators recognized for their sustained and significant

professional accomplishments in the field, as well as their contributions to the goals and activities of AMWA.

In addition, BELS members serve as the head of six different departments:

**James R. Cozzarin, ELS** - Annual Conference  
**Nancy D. Taylor, PhD, ELS** - Awards  
**Melanie Ross, MSJ, ELS** - Chapters  
**Theresa Wolfe, ELS** - Membership  
**Mary G. Royer, MS, ELS** - Publications  
**Karen Klein, MA, ELS** - Public Relations

## BELS Annual Breakfast

*Norman Grossblatt, ELS(D)*

BELS held its almost-customary breakfast get-together on September 20 at the American Medical Writers Association annual conference. Some 20 BELS members gathered for a lavish buffet breakfast and informal conversation in the Indigo Restaurant of the Inter-Continental Hotel in Miami, as arranged by **Mary Anne Mitchell. Edie Schwager**, the newest Honored Editor in the Life Sciences, was presented with her ELS(H) certificate. Apart from that, the session was an example of a rare phenomenon: an organization meeting with no agenda, no business, no fund-raising, no announcements, no structure whatever—just a bunch of colleagues talking, in small groups and large, about anything and everything.

BELS members who will be at next year's AMWA annual conference—in October in St. Louis—should consider joining this nongroup for breakfast and collegial conversation. They might even want to volunteer to help in the planning. (Just let any officer know.)

## AMWA Keynote Speaker

*Linda J. Winsor, PhD, ELS*

Sometimes it is not bad to be a compulsive note taker. I came back from Miami without a suntan but with enough notes to tell you about the 2003 AMWA Annual Conference, particularly its keynote address, "The Wonderful World of Longevity." The topic sounded like fluff, but I was pleasantly surprised. The speaker, Robert N. Butler, MD, organized the International Longevity Center (ILC) in 1990. The organization is nonprofit and exists to help societies address the issues of population aging and longevity and to highlight the contributions of older people (see [www.ilcusa.org](http://www.ilcusa.org)). The ILC conducts the Age Boom Academy, a weeklong seminar held in New York City for a small, select group of journalists interested in the effects of the aging of the world's population. The name of the seminar relates to the aging of the baby boomers, the oldest of whom will be 58 next year.

Concepts of aging are changing slowly. When Social Security was instituted in 1935, life expectancy in the US was only 57 years for men and 69 years for women. The Department of Labor still classifies people over 40 as "older workers." Thanks to Florida's Senator Claude Pepper, we have a law against age discrimination. (I thought of this when noticing a statue of Claude Pepper in the new park named after him, just a hundred yards from the host hotel for the AMWA conference.)

As Dr. Butler pointed out, Medicare was introduced because private insurance was available but was sometimes cancelled by the insurers when the insured became elderly or ill. He feels that if we are thoughtful and organized, we can manage Social Security. Also, we need to think about cultural and productive roles for older persons (Dr. Butler does not call them "seniors") in our national life. Aging of a society may have economic benefits. On average, a child in our society requires more money per year than an older person because of educational expenses.

One of Dr. Butler's heroes is Eubie Blake, a composer who lived to be 100 years old. Eubie observed, "Had I known I was going to live so long, I would have taken better care of myself." Today, the chief threats to longevity are infections, environmental degradation, a sedentary life, and overeating. Tonga Islanders are the only people who are heavier on average than Americans. To encourage you to exercise, the ILC sells at cost a pedometer that automatically records the number of steps you take in a day. It provides direct feedback and is more empowering than weighing yourself.



## McGovern Luncheon Speaker

*Bethany S. Thivierge, MPH, ELS*

Following Thursday's luncheon was the presentation of the John P. McGovern medal, an award given to a person known for preeminent contributions to medical communications. This year's recipient was Jerome Groopman, MD, a Harvard professor and *New Yorker* staff writer. His books and articles on the extraordinary experiences of his oncology patients as they faced death became the basis for the television series *Gideon's Crossing*. Although Hurricane Isabel prevented Dr. Groopman from flying to Miami to appear in person, he had prerecorded his presentation and sent it to the moderator in anticipation of problems. He was such a warm and articulate speaker even on videotape that the audience bemoaned the loss of a live question-and-answer session. However, audience members were uplifted by the doctor's take-home message that because the art of healing is socially sanctified, delivering clear and accurate medical information to give people choices, and therefore hope, is a noble profession.

## Receiving Payments from Out-of-USA Clients

Michael S. Altus, PhD, ELS



The increasing ease in "working at a distance" means that it is much easier for USA-based editorial freelancers to have writing and editing clients who are outside the USA. Here I summarize ways for USA-based freelancers to be paid by out-of-USA clients. I thank participants in the e-mail lists of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences ([www.bels.org](http://www.bels.org)) and of the Editorial Freelancers Association ([www.the-efa.org](http://www.the-efa.org)) for sharing their experiences with me.

### **"The check is in the mail!"**

Companies that have accounts in US banks can write checks on those accounts, so it's worthwhile asking an out-of-USA client if it has a US bank account. A check issued on an out-of-USA source takes longer to clear and is subject to bank transaction charges. Payments denominated in foreign currencies will be exchanged into US dollars, which are also subject to bank transaction charges.

### **"Get wired!"**

A wire transfer is an electronic transfer of funds from one account to another. Wire transfers work well, but are subject to charges imposed by the sending bank, the receiving bank, and intermediary banks if the sending and receiving banks don't correspond directly. The more intermediary banks the wire goes through, the greater the opportunity for error.

### **"Pay up, pal!"**

According to its Website, PayPal, an eBay company ([www.paypal.org](http://www.paypal.org)), "enables any business or consumer with an e-mail address to securely, conveniently, and cost-effectively send and receive payments online." PayPal now serves 38 countries including the US.

Opening an account and sending payments are free. PayPal makes money by charging account holders 0.7% + 30¢ to 2.9% + 30¢ for receiving credit card payments, depending on the number of transactions and the use of other PayPal programs. Major credit

cards (except the American Express Corporate Card) are accepted. Receiving a payment in US dollars from another country incurs an additional 1% fee for crossing the border. PayPal does currency conversions.

PayPal sends an e-mail notification when payments are received. The money can then be withdrawn without charge to the bank account through an electronic funds transfer that can take 3 to 4 days.

PayPal's questions-and-answers section is awash with clearly written answers to many questions, and those responding about PayPal were enthusiastic about it. However, a simple Google search on "PayPal" hit on complaint sites that describe problems with frozen accounts, lawsuits against PayPal, and other unfavorable situations. Although PayPal's arrangement seems straightforward enough, I suggest that potential account holders check out the complaint sites.

Kagi (*key* in Japanese; [www.kagi.com](http://www.kagi.com)) is another payment-processing company. Kagi accepts cash, checks, and major credit cards, but does not service as many countries as does PayPal. For transactions totaling \$100 and greater, the Kagi rate is 5% of the transaction plus \$5. For a \$2,000 job, this comes to \$105. The percentage decreases when the amount of monthly transactions reaches \$3,000. Furthermore, Kagi charges \$35 for an electronic transfer of money from your Kagi account to your bank account. Although Kagi prides itself on its customer service, I believe that the rates are too high.

### **"Charge it!"**

Unless one anticipates accepting many credit card payments, setting up to accept credit cards is not a good choice. Doing so entails having a bank account and either installing merchant card software or a credit card terminal to connect to the bank. Such accounts are subject to a monthly service charge (perhaps \$20) and to a transaction charge (perhaps \$0.10) each time a payment is

accepted. The credit card company charges about 2.5% for each transaction.

**"I'd like to place an order for money, please."**

The money order is a payment instrument for a specified sum that can be purchased for a fee at various outlets such as banks, telegraph offices, and post offices. Money orders can also be purchased at agents for issuers. A brief Google search on "money order" (including the quotation marks to search on the phrase) did not hit an organization worth recommending for receiving money orders from out-of-USA sources. Travelers Express MoneyGram ([www.moneygram.com](http://www.moneygram.com)) has agents in many countries, but requires the sender to pay an agent with cash, and the recipient to withdraw from an agent in cash. An out-of-USA client could find more information about money orders by inquiring at banks or post offices. A money order issued by an out-of-USA source is subject to bank transaction charges.

**"Could we have that in writing?"**

Regardless of the method of payment chosen, it's prudent to agree in writing on how payments will be made, such as denominated in US dollars, and if expenses will be reimbursed. A currency conversion might result in an amount in US dollars different from the amount agreed on.

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**CAPSULES**

**Toni Derion, PhD, ELS**, has written a book chapter that will be published in October in *Biotechnology Annual Review* (Vol 9: 249-258), a series published by Elsevier Science B.V. The chapter, titled "Considerations for the Planning and Conduct of Reproducibility Studies of In Vitro Diagnostic Tests for Infectious Agents," discusses issues associated with trials that test the reproducibility of assays based on polymerase chain reaction. Such issues include the ethics of obtaining donor specimens, and important study monitoring and data management activities.

**Have You Read?**



With this issue of the newsletter, we are inaugurating a new column of brief reviews of books that might be of interest to the BELS membership. Please send your one-paragraph review to Paula Robbins at [paularww@bellsouth.net](mailto:paularww@bellsouth.net).

**Steve Olson, *Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past through Our Genes***

Olson describes how recent research on human genetic variation has led to new understandings about the history of mankind. Human DNA is a repository not just of biomedical but also of historical information. He traces how modern humans first appeared in Africa and then migrated to the Middle East, Asia and Australia, Europe and the Americas. He ends with a look at one of the world's most heterogeneous populations: Hawaii. The book is well written and provides much information on the scientists whose work made this knowledge possible as well as the road blocks they have found to accomplishing their research.

Recommended by Paula Robbins, ELS

**Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake***

Margaret Atwood, the author of *A Handmaid's Tale*, returns to a view of the future in *Oryx and Crake*. This time, instead of a world with fundamentalist religion gone to extreme, she describes a future caused by man's increasing arrogance in manipulating transgenic crops and animals. The narrator of the story intersperses memories of his former life, growing up in the compounds of the large companies manipulating everything for food, health, and cosmetics, with his current reality in a world orchestrated by a genius.

Recommended by Donna Tilton, ELS



Websites for Literature  
[www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com)  
 Project Gutenberg: <http://promo.net/pgg>

## BELS & BIRDING

Ann Donaldson, ELS



How many years have I been talking about trying to get together a birding trip, either before or after the CSE/BELS meeting? Well, this is my attempt to try to rouse interest in such a thing and to see if there are any "takers." This is an introductory note to the birding wonders in and around Vancouver, site of the 2004 CSE/BELS meeting.

### Book Notes

"Southern British Columbia – Birds of the Northwest Coast" is one of the chapters in a book entitled *The Traveling Birder: 20 Five-Star Birding Vacations* (by Clive Goodwin, Doubleday, New York, 1991).

*Birding Around the Year* (by Aileen Lotz, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1989) states: "British Columbia, with its tremendous variety of life zones, offers adventurous birders a cornucopia from the boreal owl in the northern boreal forest, to the sharp-tailed grouse of the grasslands, and the high arctic pelagic birds who spend their winters in the coastal areas. The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, operated by the British Columbia Waterfowl Society, is a favorite of knowledgeable birders and offers a year-round menu. Migratory species pass through in large numbers and it is both a major wintering and nesting area. Much nesting activity is observed in April and May, followed inevitably by lots of ducklings and goslings."

From *Where the Birds Are: A Guide to All 50 States and Canada* (by John Oliver Jones, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, 1990) we learn that "Canada has the longest coastline of any country in the world and about 14% (385 million acres) of Canada's total area of 9,976,000 km<sup>2</sup> are wetlands. The majority of those lands are north of 60°N."

### Internet

The following are Internet sites that will give you more information as you peruse taking some time to see if you can add something to your life list or if

you just want to get out and enjoy birds.

[www.naturalhistory.bc.ca/VNHS](http://www.naturalhistory.bc.ca/VNHS) - gives a map of the area plus a table showing location, how to get there, and what to look for and when to go. It also tells how to obtain a book entitled *A Birder's Guide to Vancouver and the Lower Mainland*.

[www.birding.bc.ca/vancouver/](http://www.birding.bc.ca/vancouver/) - also tells how to obtain the book mentioned above as well as birding locations and tips for Vancouver, including a guide to the hot spots.

[www.birding.bc.ca](http://www.birding.bc.ca) - This site focuses on all of British Columbia.

[www.birdingvancouverisland.com/](http://www.birdingvancouverisland.com/) - Click on one of the seasons to obtain a checklist of birds that can be found in that season. In spring, one may find tufted puffin, common murre, marbled murrelet, pigeon guillemot, rhinoceros auklet, black oystercatcher, and western tanager—all very exciting to those of us who do not live on or near the West/Northwest areas.

[www.camacdonald.com/birding/cabritishcolumbia.htm](http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/cabritishcolumbia.htm) - On this site there is a list of British Columbia hot spots, an area checklist, and birding factoids.

[www.bavarianbirds.de/bc/](http://www.bavarianbirds.de/bc/) - This is a personal Website of two people who were sponsored by Swarovski and sent to British Columbia to bird (what a lovely thought!). The site has their daily log and species list, as well as links to helpful sites, books, maps, and brochures.

[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) - For those interested in spending some time in the area, this site names hotels and B&Bs in the area, airlines that service the Vancouver airport, and lists attractions, guided tours (birding and walking), and more. This is a great site if you want to plan your own tour.

[www.vancouverislandabound.com/birding.htm](http://www.vancouverislandabound.com/birding.htm) - Feathered favorites, a merchant's directory (mainly accommodations), and Vancouver Island attractions (everything from whale watching tours to romantic getaways) are featured here.

This should be enough to whet your appetite. If you would like to be a part of some sort of group effort to see the birds of Vancouver, please send me an e-mail note ([morann@aol.com](mailto:morann@aol.com)) and I'll pursue. Thanks!



Mary Ann Schmidt, ELS, in her costume for the release of the new Harry Potter book in June.

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. -Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosopher (1889-1951)

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## We Welcome the Following New Members Who Passed the BELS Exam in Miami, September 17, 2003

**Lori Alexander, ELS** (2003)  
Alexandria, Virginia

**Donna Cain, MA, ELS** (2003)  
New York, New York

**Christina W. Chambers, MA, ELS** (2003)  
Houston, Texas

**Janet R. Davies, PhD, ELS** (2003)  
Memphis, Tennessee

**Vera F. Dolan, MS, ELS** (2003)  
Ukiah, California

**Katharine Evans, ELS** (2003)  
Glen Ridge, New Jersey

**Tracey I. Fine, MS, ELS** (2003)  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**Anne Fisher, MSc, ELS** (2003)  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

**Wilma M. Guerra, ELS** (2003)  
Bradenton, Florida

**Dan Hayden, ELS** (2003)  
Mukilteo, Washington

**Julie B. Henderson, PhD, ELS** (2003)  
Athens, Georgia

**Kelly F. Horn, PhD, ELS** (2003)  
Raleigh, North Carolina

**Michael L. Kahn, ELS** (2003)  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Jenny Lamont, MS, ELS** (2003)  
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

**Sandra Manheimer, PhD, ELS** (2003)  
Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina

**Lynn S. Perlmutter, PhD, ELS** (2003)  
Easton, Connecticut

**Faith Reidenbach, ELS** (2003)  
Ashland, Ohio

**Janine Rhodes Mura, MS, ELS** (2003)  
Louisville, Kentucky

**Jude Richard, MA, ELS** (2003)  
Houston, Texas

**Kathleen M. Sutton, MA, ELS** (2003)  
Campbell Hall, New York

## **BELS Examinations for 2004**

Date	Location	Meeting	Register by
March 7, 2004	San Francisco,	AMWA Pacific Coast Conference	February 15, 2004
March 20, 2004	Princeton, NJ		February 28, 2004
March 20, 2004	Chicago		February 28, 2004
May 13, 2004	Vancouver	Council of Science Editors	April 22, 2004
October 20, 2004	St. Louis, MO	AMWA	September 29, 2004

**BELS Letter**

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