



EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Spring 2007

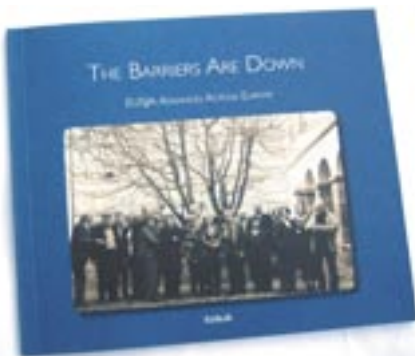
Latest news

A Brief History of Eusja

Fresh from the printing press comes the new book about Eusja's first 35 years. The title is "The Barriers are Down", which of course refers to the fact that Europe is no longer divided by the wall of the cold war.

The book contains contributions from a number of countries. Not to miss is Wolfgang Goede's piece about Teli, the German association, and how science journalism was performed in Germany during the Nazi era.

The book can be ordered from Eusja secretariat. For address see page 12.



Inside...

Telepathy gave press coverage to BA festival p2

Finally a Russian science festival in Moscow! p6

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Editorial

After Helsinki, before Melbourne

We have left behind us our 35th Anniversary event in Helsinki. While some member associations, despite many attempts to invite all Presidents or Board members didn't send their delegate, the celebration was a tremendous success. We travelled to Helsinki, unseasonably warm and thanks to our hosts, the Finnish Academy of Science and Tekes, enjoyed a Gala Dinner preceded by an interesting seminar about Finnish science. During the dinner in between some speeches and a wonderful music programme we introduced our commemorative book, edited by our Hon secretary, Barbie and published by our Treasurer Vesa. Thanks to them as well to those associations and authors who sent contributions for this book.

We invited to the event former Presidents and two, Rosemarie Waldner and Werner Hadorn joined us as well our grand dame, Paola de Paoli from Italy who told us their memories from the former years of Eusja.

Connected with our Anniversary meeting there was also in Helsinki, the final event of the EC Project, Wonders 2006 and thanks to Heureka, the Finnish science centre who covered our third night's accommodation we were able to attend and also take part in the Finals science café.

By the way, the EC has accepted the Wonders 2007 Project but with a much reduced budget, which means Eusja participates, but this time the associations will get less money, although the journalists who will participate in an interesting game in schools will get their honoraries. I accepted these circumstances because I wanted to keep our presence in the consortium in the hope of an increased budget for this prosperous Project in the first year of the 7th Framework Programme. Furthermore the Commission has recognised our efforts since it seems they may finally decide to hold their official "European Science Week" in the week 19 to 24 November together with the Wonders finals.

I am able to announce a Swiss study trip in the first half of this year which could hopefully be the start of some interesting new study trips proposals. I believe there will also be an offer from Austria. I also hope in our forthcoming Assembly we will be able to vote positively for the next applicant to EUSJA, the Catalan science journalists who have benefited from the change of the Constitution and have already sent their official application to Strasbourg.

I also would like to launch a programme, "Eusja Ambassador" which means delegates from strong member associations would visit weak associations and try to give advice to refresh their activities. They could use the experiences of the book, currently been written by Barbie Drillsma for the WFSJ on running a successful science journalists' association. I hope too that by the end of the year we can finalise our preparations and launch our proposed Eusja Award.

Finally I wish to those colleagues and associations who will be able to attend in April in Melbourne on the 5th World Conference of Science Journalists, a very successful and fruitful meeting and lively get-together networking.

Istvan Palugyai
Eusja President

Remember Eusja's session on whether as science journalists we are merely story tellers or should put our own slant and opinions on stories? Look what happened at the British Association's Annual Festival of Science this year, held at Norwich University.

Kangaroo court?

There was a paranormal uproar at the BA's festival of Science in September. ABSW chair Ted Nield reports...

Peace reigned at the University of East Anglia. Bunny rabbits hopped in newly mown grass. The lake, undisturbed in the September sunshine, reflected the angles of Sir Denys Lasdun's famous zig-zags. Meanwhile, deep in the concrete jungle behind them, the British Association Annual Festival of Science was feverishly connecting, engaging and outreaching. From the Broad's tranquil shore, you would never have known.

But the British public had only 12 hours to wait before quite a different picture would emerge in the pages of The Times, The Daily Telegraph, and The Independent, from which you would think that the shining lake had been a seething morass of angst and bile. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the whole edifice of science was apparently being assaulted and insulted - at the hands of an organisation founded to promote it. Scientists' screams and moans were drowned only by the occasional sound of breaking glass, as various defenders of scientific rectitude - Lord Winston, Prof. Richard Wiseman, Sir Walter Bodmer, Prof. Peter Atkins and "A Royal Society spokesman" - apparently ripped their heads off in protest and threw them out of the windows.

"Uproar at top science forum" thundered the Thunderer. "Festival attacked" screamed the Telegraph. "Scientists angry" asserted the Independent.

Interestingly not one of those allegedly indignant luminaries was anywhere near Norwich at the time. Stranger still, all five managed to utter the identical angry words to all newspapers. How had they done this? Perhaps it was telepathy. Perhaps there was a more rational explanation. What could have moved the grey eminences of science so?

Weird science

As the bunnies hopped, the BA Media Centre organised a press briefing to promote a session taking place later that afternoon entitled **Beyond the brain: making science personal. The session's preamble set the tone:**

"Evidence that the effects of the human mind extend beyond the physical brain tend to be dismissed and ridiculed by reductionist science. But just how good is the latest evidence for telepathy, remote cognition and out-of-body experience? Should science accept the first-person perspective... or is it just "new age" woolly thinking?"

The session was due to hear from Dr Peter Fenwick (Scientific and Medical Network) on near-death experiences and Prof. Deborah Delaney (University of Northampton) on remote cognition. Also present was Dr Rupert Sheldrake (Director, Perrot-Warwick project on unexplained human abilities, funded by Trinity College, Cambridge) who would present his latest experiments testing the reality of "telephone cognition" - the common experience of receiving calls from people about whom one has just been thinking. The session would be rounded off by a debate, chaired by Quentin Cooper, between the three speakers and the open-minded sceptic, Prof Chris French (Goldsmith's College, London).

STICK TO PROSE

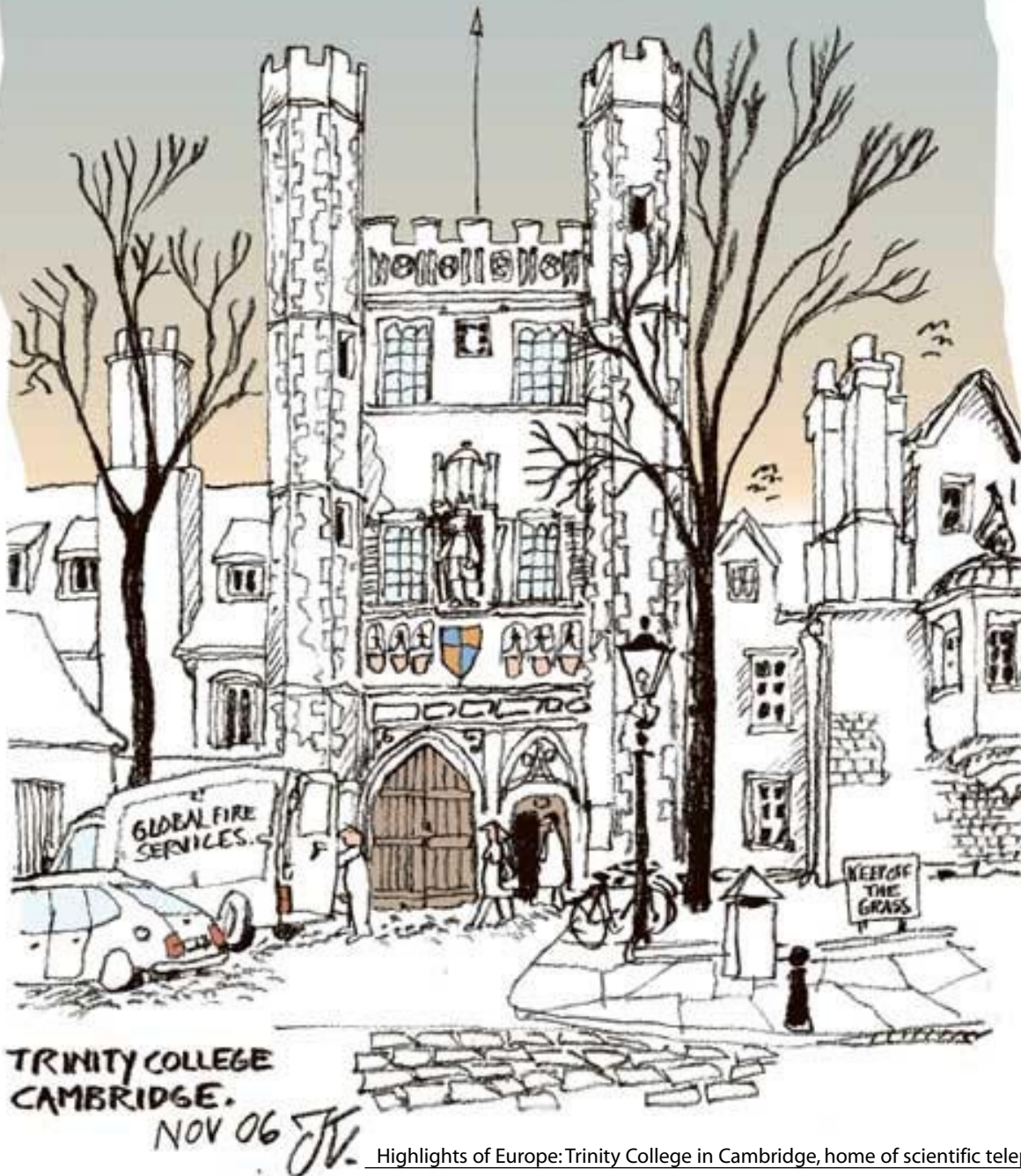
Science journalist, Lewis Smith of the UK's Times newspaper won the ABSW's summer competition of a stuffed (toy) kangaroo, donated by the organisers of the Melbourne conference. Competitors were asked to describe the Coriolis effect in verse. Lewis, who has been urged not to give up his day job, wrote:

"Coriolis didn't do things by half
While peering at girls in the bath
Which way will it go?
He wanted to know
And pulled out the plug for a laugh"



One in the hand is worth two in the bush. Lewis Smith of The Times, plainly ecstatic with his prize.

Drawing Kaianders Sempier



Highlights of Europe: Trinity College in Cambridge, home of scientific telepathy.

After listening in respectful silence, the assembled pack posed a few polite questions. Rupert Sheldrake came under closest questioning about the rigour and security of his experiments, which seemed to show a statistically significant indication of telepathic ability among his subject group. But despite the pack's best efforts, Sheldrake's methods were not exposed as flawed. Nothing was thrown. All heads remained attached to necks.

French not given

Had one lingered, however, one would have seen the Chair of the Festival Programme Committee Prof. Helen Haste (Bath University) defending the BA's decision to allow the press conference to proceed in the way it did. Where was the sceptic on the panel? Where was the balance? Why was the BA giving credence to charlatany? In reply she emphasized the bona fides of all the researchers. Although the work was controversial it had

Continued...

been rigorous and scholarly. French's presence at the panel discussion later would allow for dissent – though she admitted it was unfortunate that he had not been at the press conference.

“We feel at the BA that we should be open to discussions or debates that are seen as valid by people inside the scientific community, as long as they are addressed in acceptable ways. These seem to be phenomena that are commonly experienced but have not been subjected particularly effectively to scientific investigation. This is a legitimate area of research. I do think it is appropriate at a festival like this to have people who are serious about their approach and scientific methods” she said.

So what, as a science journalist, was one to make of this story? One could quite legitimately write a story saying “scientists uncover evidence of the reality of extra-sensory perception”, which was essentially what Rupert Sheldrake was saying his experiments showed – and many, like Richard Sadler, writing in the Daily Express, did. Julie Wheldon (Daily Mail), took the same approach, but also emphasized scientific criticism and used the drummed-up quote from Prof. Peter Atkins. The Oxford University chemist opined that because there was no reason to suppose telepathy to be “anything more than a charlatan’s fantasy”, researching it was “a complete waste of time”.

Non posse, matey

Yet the BA's archives are full of discussions of topics regarded by the establishment of the time as little better than witchcraft, but which were later vindicated. The usual



ABSW chair Ted Nield with his favourite underground map.

reason these ideas were seen, in their time, as voodoo was because no-one (especially physicists) could see how they possibly could work – what is known as the “non posse” argument – denying evidence because of a lack of causative mechanism.

As I found out while researching my forthcoming book Supercontinent – our once and future world (Granta), the BA meeting in Hull in 1923 saw British geologists considering continental drift. According to a report of the meeting in Nature, the main scientific opposition occurred over Alfred Wegener's (mistaken) idea that the Atlantic had completely opened during the Quaternary. The basic concept of drift itself posed no problems for those present – although in the United States at the time, continental drift theory was universally rejected – even reviled – ostensibly on the basis that no known physics could make it work.

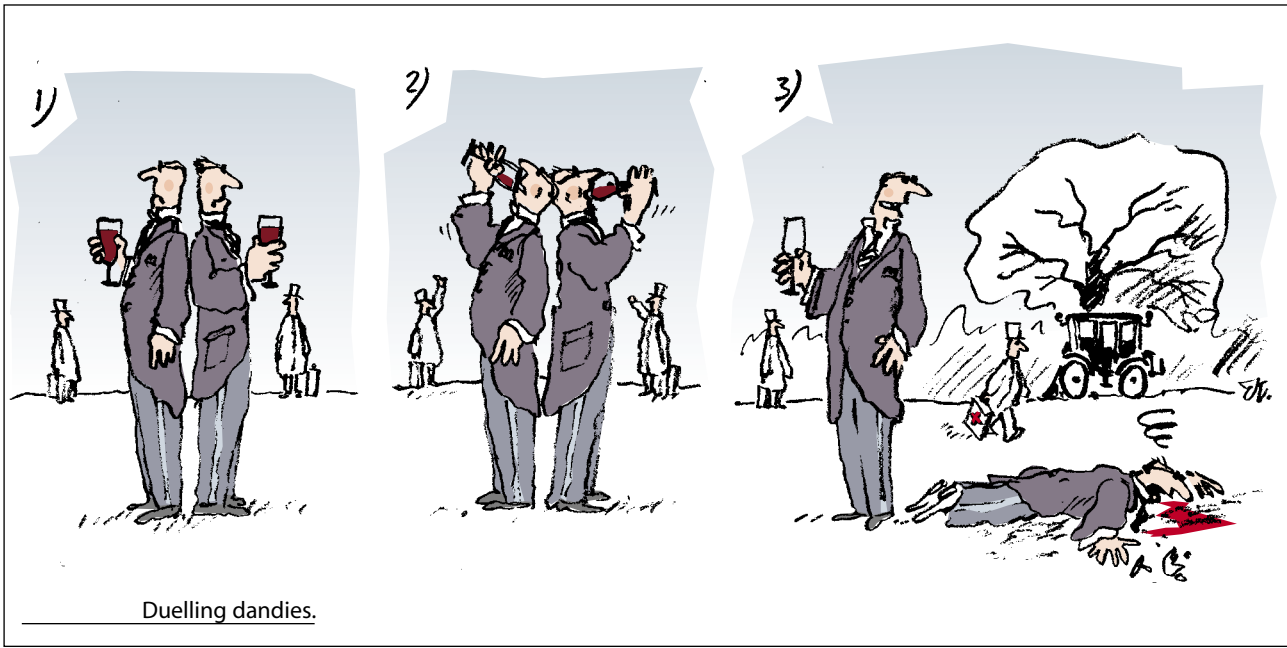
Ironically geophysicists eventually proved the reality of drift – but then, because they themselves had found the clinching evidence, it no longer seemed to matter that they still had very little idea how it actually worked. Physicists had never let the lack of mechanism prevent belief in the Earth's magnetic field, after all. Physicists were similarly adamant that our planet could not be as old as geologists suspected, because an initially molten Earth would cool to its present condition in a few tens of millions of years. Unfortunately physics hadn't then heard of radioactivity, whose discovery made a mockery of their assumptions.

Yet at no time did the opposition of the scientific establishment ever hinder the BA discussing these ideas. I was reminded of this when Sheldrake said, at the press briefing, that if his findings about telepathy were vindicated, they would not destroy physics – they would add to it.

Disorder in court

But back to the BA Media Suite. Mark Henderson, whose paper (The Times) devoted most effort and space to scorning the story, told me: “I just didn't want to be faced with the possibility of having to write a story that said “Experiments suggest telepathy is real”. The BA provided no counter-comment so we went to our contact books. I mean – are we journalists or stenographers?”. Roger Highfield (Daily Telegraph) agreed: “Why was the sceptic allowed to appear later at the session, before say 100 people, but not at the press conference with an audience of millions? That puts you in danger of the sort of coverage it got in the Mail - basically taking the line, with just a little bit of counter-comment tacked on at the end.”

Could Roger not have simply ignored the story, if he disapproved of it so strongly? Apparently not. “The news desk would have been clamouring for a full page – and I'd have written it, gladly, if the research had appeared in Nature or somewhere reputable, but it hadn't. Scientists don't take this stuff seriously, so why should we? We have enough crap to wade through as it is. And it's good to have a little mutiny once in a while, isn't it?”



Duelling dandies.

Not everyone saw it this way, smelling a controversy being “cooked up”. John von Radowitz (PA) said: “It isn’t our role as journalists to be science’s guardians of virtue or arbiters of good taste. That’s simply not our job. I think what they did was absolutely disgraceful.” This view was echoed by a Times correspondent, Milton Wainwright (Sheffield University) who complained in a letter published later in BA week of “certain self-appointed gatekeepers of science...attempting to halt progress by denying fellow scientists a platform”.

Alok Jha (Guardian), whose 300-word sidebar Telepathy work dismissed as fantasy reported the misgivings of Wiseman and Atkins, who were quoted at length in other broadsheets, but fell short of alleging there had been any “row”. He felt unhappy with other broadsheets’ approach. “I warned the desk what to expect and explained why I was unhappy about it. Luckily they just said “OK – write it short and be sceptical”. They also said: “it sounds like those papers have suffered a sense-of-humour bypass”, which was pretty spot on, I think”.

Not everyone’s desks were so understanding. To the question “how free did you feel to ignore the story?”, answers varied; but everyone I spoke to agreed that any freedom they may have enjoyed was eroded – or removed – by the broadsheets going big. It may well be that their tactic won Sheldrake and co. a lot of coverage they would not otherwise have enjoyed.

Julie Wheldon (Daily Mail), whose piece drew Highfield’s criticism for being too positive, says she would have preferred not to cover the story. She describes the resulting piece, “with a bit of counter-comment tacked on” in Roger’s words, as “the most qualified I have ever written for the Mail, where the general rule is “don’t knock your own story””. Julie also questions the professed outrage

at the lack of counter-comment at the briefing. “Isn’t it our job to be the sceptics?” she asks. “And the truth is there was no “row”. In a way, I think, they lied to their readers.”

Dick Ahlstrom (Irish Times), writing in a different market, was able to rise above the whole thing. “I just thought the flimsiness of the evidence hardly justified the conclusions, so I ignored it.” Pallab Ghosh (BBC TV) also deployed the bargepole – though BBC Breakfast, on which he frequently appears, wasn’t able to resist Sheldrake’s claims after all the newspaper coverage. And so I woke up on Thursday to the sight of Bill Turnbull and Kate Silverton interviewing both Sheldrake and French.

Some of the critics were, I hear, surprised by the critical context in which their quotes were put. Roland Jackson, Chief Executive of the BA, was clearly not taking the “row” too much to heart. He told me: ‘I was a bit surprised at the tabloid approach taken by some of our more reputable newspapers so I’ve decided to switch to the Sun. At least they printed a decent telepathy quiz.’

For Helen Haste it provided a juicy new example of media dynamics to include in the science communication course she runs at Bath University. Pallab, too, discovered an unexpected up-side to the whole sorry debacle. “I was initially outraged when I saw that the BA had given a platform for telepathy” he told me. “But once I found out that it had wound up Roger Highfield, I saw that it was a really good idea, and was all for it.”

Ted Nield
chairman ABSW

PS. As a result of this story-fixing the BA received unprecedented coverage of its festival in the newspapers...

First science festival in Moscow

FOR AS LONG AS WE HAVE KNOWN VIOLA SHE HAS WANTED TO SEE A SCIENCE FESTIVAL TAKING PLACE IN RUSSIA

“It has been a cherished wish for many years and it came true! The first Russian Science Festival took place in Moscow from 27 to 29 of October. And I am proud to say it was a great success,” writes Viola Egikova.

“Thousands of visitors poured into Moscow University to meet scientists from research centres across Russia. They enjoyed lectures with translations via the Internet, presentations, exhibitions, discussions, excursions, science cafés, competitions, interactive games with robotic system, the list is endless. For three days we spoke about mathematics, physics, chemistry, biotechnology and archeology.

“It was very important to the organisers that the Festival received greetings from the Government of the Russian Federation and the Parliament. We were delighted that the Mayor of the city visited the Festival and suggested to support it in the future. We were very happy to host a number of foreign guests including Prof. Geoffrey Boulton from Edinburgh University in the UK; The Ambassador to Moscow, Dr. Anthony Brenton and officers of the British Council in Russia. The opening of the Science Festival was the top news on TV programmes. And there was a spectacular fireworks display during the first evening to greet our first festival.

“Moscow University is the oldest, biggest and most highly recognised research and educational centre in Russia. It has a very vigorous and wise staff: there was no need to sell them the idea of the festival, people from the University trusted the idea and did their best to bring the Science Festival idea to Russia.



A proud festival committee.



Photo E Dontsova

“We had a very small budget and we were a very small team. And I think we would have got nowhere without the help of our scientists who were really brilliant. And first of all I have to thank the Rector of Moscow University – academician Victor Sadovnichij. He has done more than anybody else could do to organise and support our Science Festival. And I have to thank our foreign colleagues who helped by sharing their experiences with us. Many thanks to Barbie Drillsma, Sue Hordienko, Anna Nolan, Cormac Sheridan, Peter Rebernic and others.

“Six months ago if you had asked the public in Moscow about the idea of a Science Festival they were puzzled but now it has happened I’m happy to say that many of those who were very skeptic became real fans of the festival. We heard very often during the days of our Festival: “When will the next one be? We are eager to participate!”

Viola Egikova,
Russian Association of Science Writers
and Journalists Intellect.



– Now watch closely. Nothing here, nothing there...

WSFJ mentoring project in Africa is now up and running

The week before the Esf2006 conference in Munich 12 mentors from all over the world, three regional coordinators and one general manager gathered in Munich to launch the new project. The goal is that

each mentor should guide and share their skills with four African science journalists over internet during two years time. Six of the mentors are from Eusja.

After a crash course in Munich, four young African journalists – mentees – were assigned to each mentor.

The mentoring project is divided into three groups; one anglophone, one francophone and one for the Middle East. It is sponsored by the Canadian, British and Swedish agencies for foreign aid. Director is Jean-Marc Fleury, former employee of canadian IDRC. Continued...

The mentor group in Munich takes a break.



Photo K S

Mysterious Rotating Garden in Munich

Strange things happened to the participants of the WFSJ mentor program during their July meeting in Munich

Anyone who has seen wellknown things in a park suddenly change places knows how disturbing it is. Shouldn't there be a bench here? Wasn't that lamppost over there standing right here a moment ago? And where have the trees gone? No wonder MacBeth felt discomforted when Birnam's wood started marching.

But, as always, there is a scientific explanation.

In 2000 the Italian concept artist Vito Acconci created a work of art called "Courtyard in the Wind" for the garden of Technisches Rathaus (the municipality offices, where WFSJ held their sessions) in Munich. The artwork consists of a giant rotating turntablelike contraption in the ground where bushes, trees and lampposts slowly move around.

The power to make this overgrown carousel turn comes from a wind turbine on the building's roof, and it takes one hour for the garden to complete one full circle. KS



Photo K S

– Strange. Wasn't there a bench here a moment ago?



Photo K S

– Aha. So that's why.

The first meeting between mentors and mentees took place in Nairobi in November. At the same time the city hosted the world climate conference, COP, which gave everyone an opportunity to practice their skills and bring home interesting stories.

Unfortunately, due to visa problems, twelve people from the program were denied entrance into Kenya. The mentors and mentees from Iraq, Kameroun and Jordan spent three days at Kenyatta international airport waiting in vain for clearance from Kenyan authorities. Finally they decided to return to their home countries.

A number of scientists, invited to give speeches at the climate conference, were also stopped by Kenyan immigration.

Kaianders Sempler



Photo Christina Scott

Members of the francophone group, cooling their feet in Nairobi.

Esof2006: "Spot the spin!"

What a record: One quarter of the 2154 attendants of the Euroscience Open Forum in Munich were journalists. And they left their marks, not only by filing 600 articles and broadcasts on the conference topics. Nearly a dozen of totally 90 Esof workshops dealt with the state of the art of science journalism.

Some scientists who gave lectures in half empty halls must have looked enviously at Eusja's seminar on "Science journalism under the microscope" which drew a huge crowd. Barbie Drillsma, Hajo Neubert and Kaianders Sempler raised tough questions like which research results are newsworthy and how to enhance relations between scientists and journalists.

Many answers were offered by both sides, but the most compelling one gave Kathryn O'Hara, Canadian professor for science journalism, at the Teli seminar "Bringing science to the people": Our job is to figure out the contexts of research, investigate whose money the researchers use, whether the results make sense, how the public benefits from them. "Spot the spin!" she told her audience, "science journalism is an important tool of democracy."

Jim Cornell, ISWA president, explored in his session the deteriorating quality of science journalism and asked whether a new style, for example more storytelling could avert the threats.

Another angle took the WPK which is alarmed about the increasing entanglement of journalism and public relations and wanted to know: "Between business and bribery – how independent is science journalism?"

No question, journalists violate ethics when they write about a subject in the press and simultaneously promote it in company brochures. The daily highlight began at 6 pm when BBC radio broadcaster Quentin Cooper opened the science beergarden. He was the Esof star: Charmingly and disrespectfully at the same time, he interviewed the speakers of the day about their presentations and involved the audience in an utmost entertaining and informative manner – compliments!

Five highly interesting days in mid July in the tropical Bavarian capital closed very appropriately with the Teli Night of Science Writers which featured the famous Swedish big band "Mårta and the Cadillacs" – scientists and science journalists playing peacefully together.

Wolfgang C Goede
Teli, Germany



Wolfgang Goede addressing the masses at Esof2006 in Munich.



5th World Conference of Science Journalists

Welcome to Melbourne!

Join your colleagues from the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania at the 5th World Conference of Science Journalists in Melbourne, Australia, 16-20 April 2007.

The conference will bring hundreds of journalists together from over 50 countries – helping science journalists build the international links you will need to report effectively on the impact of science on health, agriculture, business, the environment, in fact on all aspects of society.

Competitive scholarships are available for working journalists – with priority for developing and emerging countries. Application information is on our website.

The conference will expose you to current stories, issues and people in Australian and world science. We will reveal Australian science issues: will the Great Barrier Reef survive climate change; the investment in new big science facilities: a new research reactor opening April, Australia's first synchrotron; and steps toward the Square Kilometre Array – a billion dollar telescope proposed for either Australia or South Africa.

The conference will feature lively discussion on the challenges facing science journalism:

- the impact of the web, of blogs and podcasting,
- the role of journalism,
- the politicisation of science, and
- the biasing of scientific information.

There will be workshop sessions to help you build your skills.

Climate change

The conference comes as we see the first signs of a long drought lifting in southern Australia – some farms have seen more rain in January than in the whole of last year.

The bushfire threat has receded for now. This fire season has seen 12,000 square kilometres burn in Victoria alone. By April we should see the first signs of recovery.

The dry lakes of central Australia are also filling – a once in a decade event that will bring an explosion of birds and plants to the dry heart of Australia.

Is this climate change or just natural variation?

Find out more about these and many other Australian and international issues at the conference.



Photo K S

Niall Byrne in a cheerful mood.

Networking

Share your ideas and build contacts with colleagues in other countries – and in the process help build the global network of science journalists.

Melbourne's hotels are very competitively priced by US and European standards. Read more on our web - www.scienceinmelbourne2007.org.

The Australasian Medical Writers Association will partner with us in Melbourne. Their involvement ensures we will have a strong stream of medical reporting discussions and professional development.

This is the biennial conference of the World Federation of Science Journalists. The Federation will have a strong presence and will be contributing a stream of activities specifically addressing the needs of developing country science journalists.

Join us for a science adventure in Melbourne, Australia.

Niall Byrne
Conference director

For more information, go to www.scienceinmelbourne2007.org or contact the conference managers on +61 3 9645 6311 or e-mail: journalists@wsm.com.au

THANK YOU FINLAND!

At the risk of sounding like a compere from the Eurovision Song Competition, the Eusja board must say a huge thank you to the Finnish Association for organising our 35th anniversary celebrations in Helsinki.

The two day event was sponsored by the Academy of Finland and Tekes. Tekes is the main public funding and expert organisation for research and development in Finland and an outline of its work and descriptions of some of the projects they sponsor were described in an afternoon seminar, attended by 20 Eusja delegates. There is an excellent website – <http://www.tekes.fi> – where you can download background material on the innovative, high technology work being carried out in this small but highly productive country.

This event, part study trip, part social occasion was superbly executed. We met a number of high-profile scientists and managers being welcomed by Anneli Pauli, vice president, research at the Academy of Finland.

And it was the Academy which arranged a wonderful meal for us to raise our glasses to 35 years of Eusja and to launch “The Barriers Are Down”, a booklet edited by Barbie Drillsma and published by Vesa Niinikangas. Two Finnish journalists – Liisa Vihmanen from YLE, the national broadcasting company, and Vesa Vanhalakka from the morning newspaper Aamulehti – were our host and hostess, and there was beautiful a capella singing from the Chorus Oodi.

The whole anniversary event ran smoothly with every detail attended to. It is no wonder Finland is known as one of the most competitive and innovative countries in the world. The Finns’ eye for detail and the thorough manner in which they face tasks is unequalled.

Thank you Finland!

Barbara Drillsma
ABSW



Photo Wolfgang Goerde

Eusja board with first copies of The Book.

Academics Sex up Science

Three British university academics are poking fun at the very subjects they once studied in an attempt to re-invigorate an ailing discipline. With the aim of inserting the fun back into science the team has created a satirical online magazine NULL HYPOTHESIS – The Journal of Unlikely Science. You can access it at: <http://www.null-hypothesis.co.uk>

The trio mix off the wall scientific research with a satirical look at the scientific establishment, prompted by reports that the UK risks being knocked off its perch as a world leader in science, engineering and technology due to a lack of interest in science from young people.

With titbits like “did you know that termites eat wood twice as fast whilst listening to rock music?” and “in a study of what people found funny, women were much more likely to laugh at someone choking to death than men” the site is proving quite an attraction.

It’s a funny old world

It appears that the country with the highest suicide rate in Europe is Lithuania. Social scientists and medics are at a loss to understand just how many people in Lithuania want to end their lives. Now a British comic, Alan Davies has come up with a novel solution. “Why not collect together all the suicide notes?” he asks. “They could be collated and studied and it could be seen if there is any common factor – like the food.” And he adds, “They could even be published as a booklet, it might save others from killing themselves.”

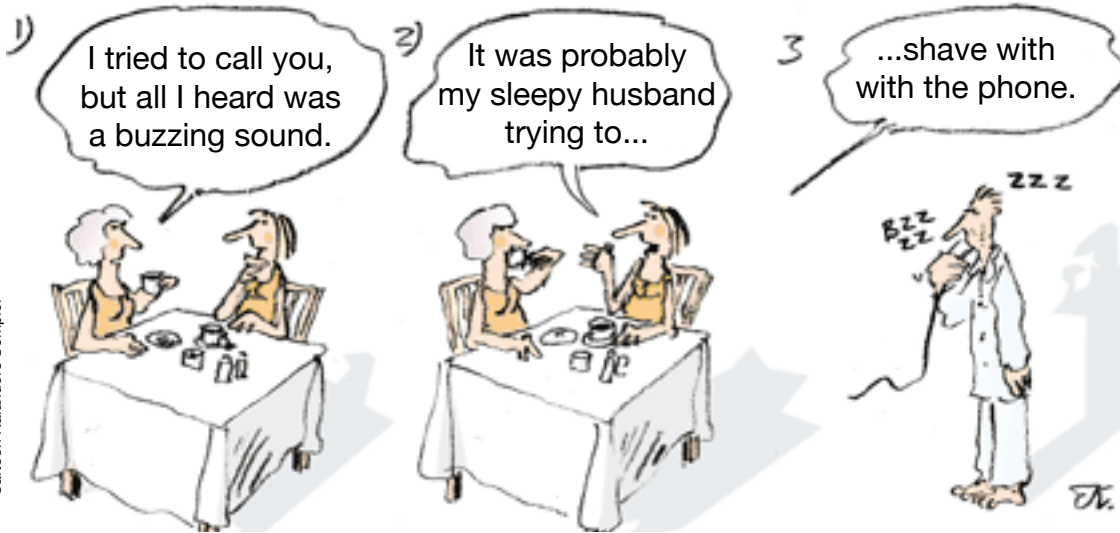
Have you heard the one about...?

In the UK, journalists call the summer break “the silly season”. This is the time when news editors, with staff off on holiday or queuing in airports scratch their heads looking for copy to fill their pages. And surprise, surprise – it appears to be science based stories that they search for.

As a truly empirical experiment it would be interesting to note if the same sort of stories circulate across Europe. One of the most often repeated stories is “Outbreak of Cat Fleas....” This is splashed across the headlines each summer during a hot spell.

We have also just had a story telling us that cows have regional accents, just like humans. At the start of the summer we had massive publicity for self-timing eggs – eggs that let you know when they are cooked. (They are marked with thermochromic invisible ink which shows up black the second the eggs are ready). And then there is the true holiday favourite – how to get drunk and not have a hangover. This only works if you take an experimental pill which dislodges ethanol from the brain.

Think back and let us know if this is a truly British phenomenon or happens across Europe too!



CHEAP PLACE TO STAY IN LONDON

Travelling to London and looking for somewhere inexpensive to stay for a night or two? Try our Hon Sec, Barbie Drillsma who has a large house with spare bedrooms now her family have flown the nest.

The house, in NW London, is easily accessible for the centre of the city, particularly good if you are flying from Luton or Heathrow, and is near a tube line.

Barbie charges £55 for bed and breakfast, and if she's in a good mood dinner is thrown in too!

Editors for this issue of EusjaNews have been Barbara Drillsma <absw@absw.org.uk> and Kaianders Sempler <kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se>

If you think that this issue of EUSJA News appears to have much UK-based material on its pages, then you are correct. But this should not be happening. This is a publication representing a score of countries and everybody should be contributing. This is your voice, please use it. The next issue will, if we receive enough material, be published in the summer. Email contributions to: absw@absw.org.uk (Barbie Drillsma), or kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se

The handy leporello, the Eusja information leaflet, folds twice. It can be ordered from Eusja secretariat.

EUSJA
– European Union of Science Journalists' Associations.

“Your network to science reporting throughout Europe.”

www.eusja.org

What do we do?
Eusja acts as a network between science journalists throughout Europe. Our aim is to facilitate gathering of information, promote discussions on topics related to journalism and to open a forum for broader reporting on European science.

Study trips in Europe
The national associations in co-operation with Eusja regularly organize international study trips in their countries for science journalists. The aim is primarily to visit interesting science and research institutions that would otherwise be closed to journalists, but also to bring science journalists from different countries together. Four to five events take place every year, where one or two journalists are invited from each country.

East-West exchange
Eusja also promotes and finances exchange between science journalists from eastern and western Europe.

Who finances Eusja?
Eusja is financed by its member associations, but receives website and secretariat facilities from ESF – the European Science Foundation – in Strasbourg, France. Eusja is fully independent of any political and/or social parties or interests.

LA PERTE FRANCE - NOV 2001 STRASBOURG

Eusja 2007

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