

EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Spring 2001

EUSJA on-line

Editorial

Put your PC to work

These days, when my computer's on but I'm not engaged in writing about science and technology, my PC is busy doing a bit of science on its own – some computational chemistry, to be exact. It all started when I read an article in my local paper about a research group in Oxford who are working on developing anti-cancer drugs. They were hoping to harness the spare processing capacity of idle personal computers to work on a computer-aided drug design program which models the interaction between potential drug molecules and a target protein involved in the growth of cancer. Finding positive interactions between a drug molecule and the protein could lead to a cancer cure.

Never being one inclined to download programs from the Net – and certainly not known for being able to do fancy things with my computer – I approached the idea with some caution. But because the concept was so intriguing – actually doing some science instead of just writing about it – and the cause so worthwhile, I eventually screwed up the courage to log on to their *turn to page 7*

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Bringing science to the citizens

Have you ever talked to a scientist? You would not have chosen your job if you had not. But have you ever talked to a Nobel prize winner? If you live in a country which is home to a Nobel prize winner, there is a good chance you have had that experience, too. But has your grandmother? Or have your kids?

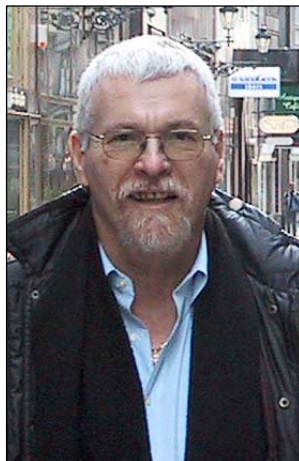
In Switzerland, many people have, thanks to events that recently took place in ten Swiss cities. As part of the *Science et Cité* festival, universities went out onto the streets. As well as exhibitions, universities arranged for scientists – some of them Nobel prize winners – to go out and discuss their work with the public at large. In Berne, for example, an exhibition highlighting forensic medicine that used a three-dimensional virtual photogrammetric reconstruction to demonstrate how detectives were able to identify the weapon that killed a girl, attracted hundreds of visitors. Not all the exhibits were so gruesome, of course. But the public loved them – and so did the scientists.

The *Science et Cité* festival experimented with unusual ways of promoting the public understanding of science, and I think it is an experiment worth copying. "Scientists are suspicious of the questions asked by society. And the public are suspicious of the answers scientists give. Our aim with this festival is to promote mutual trust between the public and scientists", said the organisers. And right they are.

However, the success of the festival also made me think more carefully about the role science journalists play in promoting public understanding of science. In a way, science writers are side stepped at events such as the *Science et Cité* festival, because scientists are talking to the public directly, rather than through an intermediary such as a science reporter. So does the very fact that people feel events such as the *Science et Cité* festival are important and necessary suggest that science journalists are not necessary? Or that we are not doing a very good job in introducing science to the public?

Not at all. There is more than one way to skin a cat, as they say – and there are many ways to popularise science. To insist that science writing, or the work of science journalists, is the only 'correct' way to get the message across is a mistake. Public understanding of science is more important than ever. And as science journalists we should view the organisers of these events as collaborators rather than competitors. Events, like the *Science et Cité* festival, which bring scientists into direct contact with the public are springing up in many countries. Long may they continue!

Werner Hadorn
EUSJA president



For more information about *Science et Cité* see <http://www.science-et-cite.ch> or contact the press office at reto.thaler@science-et-cite.ch

Protecting our rights

The ABSW's executive committee at its April meeting made a decision to give support to initiatives aimed at improving the rights of freelance writers in the UK. This followed the launch in March of the Creators' Rights Alliance (CRA), a new body that will campaign for better treatment for the numerous self-employed creators of content whose work underpins the multi-million-pound, multi-media British publishing industry.

If you're wondering why the UK might need yet another talking-shop for journalists, spare a thought for freelancers here. A typical commissioning experience goes as follows. You get a call from a hard-pressed editor in a large organisation. They need your piece to fill a slot in a particular publication, usually at a particular time. You agree a price, a length and a deadline. If you are doing your job properly, you immediately fax or post confirmation, with some small print about it forming a contract. You deliver the work, bung in your invoice and wait. Eventually you get a note saying they'll send your cheque when you've signed a form. What are you signing? Often it is a waiver of all rights to future exploitation of the work.

Content becomes commodity

What you believed was a sale of one use of your opus now becomes a land-grab. They'll publish as planned but then hold onto your material to be reused for their own profit any time in the future, in any medium, without reference to you. It's a dirty trick, but how do you resist when there are bills to pay? You're alone with the problem and many individuals capitulate. 'Content' has become 'commodity'. Words, photographs, graphics, movies and audio are all up for sale. Look at the Web; it is stuffed with recycled material which cost its publishers very little.

The UK and Europe

Legislation in the UK operates in subtly different ways from other parts of Europe, where both authors' rights and their creative works are protected in law – at least in principle. The ruling concept there is an author's inalienable right to be identified as such, and to control and benefit from their work.

In the UK and the USA thinking about creative rights centres on the idea of copyright – a tradable commodity. Supporters of this approach argue that copyright is protected by law like any saleable goods. They say authors are free to negotiate exactly what use of their work they will permit and what fee should be paid.

To subscribe to the EUSJA-L e-mail discussion list send the message: *subscribe eusja-l* *firstname lastname* (don't forget to substitute your own name!) to the address: [<listserv@listserv.rl.ac.uk>](mailto:listserv@listserv.rl.ac.uk)

They claim that any attempt to grab additional rights could be pursued in the Courts either by an action for breach of contract or theft, or under legislation dealing with unfair contract terms. Few authors have succeeded.

Grabbing all rights

Increasingly media organisations in the UK are demanding all rights, for ever, everywhere, and in media still to be invented. The right to be identified as the creator of the work and to have it treated with respect can also get lost.

A few national newspapers have agreed fairer practices but most organisations continue to use their clout to stock up with material for future publication. Even the self-righteous BBC is an offender. So are the universities; they are mounting a legal challenge to the level of payment book authors receive for photocopying their work. If they succeed, writers in the UK will be handing a heavy subsidy to academia, without the right of challenge.

Writers unite

The newly-formed Creators' Rights Alliance is an independent grouping of representative organisations covering the creative waterfront. They include writers, directors, composers, photographers and designers working for print, broadcasting, film, and web publication. It is the first attempt to co-ordinate all creators' interests under one pressure group.

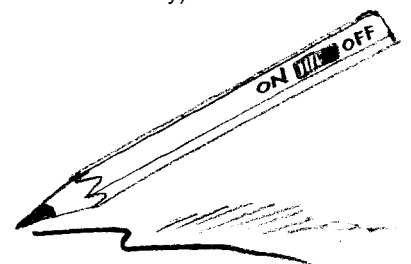
The chairman of the CRA, David Ferguson says he plans that the new body should act only as a bridge between interests. "We don't intend to get involved in the detail of this issue, only with the unity question", he said. CRA has already piloted an information video laying out the case for proper creators' rights, aimed primarily at training and education establishments.

A EU directive on copyright protection will come into force in the UK next year. If fully implemented it would shift the UK towards the European idea of an inalienable author's right incorporating both copyright and moral rights. But there are fears that it will be watered down to appease commercial interests.

This is a crucial issue in the UK. The ABSW is not a trade union, so will not join the CRA, but it intends to lend the strongest moral support. What's happening in your country?

Mike Harrison, ABSW
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(who retains copyright and would like to thank Rik Smits of the Dutch Freelances Association for his careful and detailed reply to a request for information about the status of authors' rights in his country)



Visit Ireland

Ireland is undergoing an IT revolution – and we invite you to come and see for yourself this September.

It has been ten years since the Irish Science & Technology Journalists Association hosted an EUSJA study trip. A lot has changed since then, and we're now proposing to host another visit to take place from 19–22 September.

Since the last EUSJA visit took place, Ireland has experienced rapid economic growth, fuelled by a combination of circumstances, including substantial foreign investment, particularly by US high-tech companies; social consensus between government, employers and the trade union movement; the availability of skilled low-cost labour; and EU transfers.

To whet your appetite, here are just some of the highlights about what's been happening.

A growing software industry

A thriving indigenous software industry has emerged during this period – a number of companies have already established global leadership positions in their respective markets. Others at earlier stages of their development are striving to do so. Dublin is now an international hub for software development and has attracted inward flows of both skilled developers and finance. Exports of indigenous companies will reach almost USD 1 billion this year.

A global e-commerce hub

The government has also adopted several policy measures in order to position Ireland as a global e-commerce hub. The current national programme for government (2000–2006) proposes massive increases in spending on research and development in order to push Irish industry further up the value chain. Over the duration of the programme the government proposes to spend EUR 2.471 billion on the country's research, technological development and innovation capacity. Individual elements of the programme include a EUR 711 million technology foresight fund, which will be devoted to building critical mass in niche areas of information technology and biotechnology. The government has billed this as the single biggest R&D investment in the history of the state.

The first concrete outcome of this initiative is the establishment of Media Lab Europe in Dublin by MIT Media Lab, which is receiving part of its funding through this initiative. This forms the hub of a planned Digital Media District, which will be based in the historic 'Liberties' area of Dublin's south inner city.

Identifying priority areas

Science Foundation Ireland has been established to identify priority areas for IT and life sciences research among universities and third level research institutes. These bodies have been encouraged to attract world-class scientific talent to Ireland, with the promise of substantial research funding. The first project proposals

that will be supported under this initiative are currently being assessed.

Meet the actors

Over the next seven years, the level and – presumably – the quality of scientific and technological research in Ireland is expected to increase substantially. We invite you to meet some of the actors that will be involved in all of this. We propose to focus the visit primarily on developments in IT and biotechnology, and on related policy measures. For logistical reasons, we plan to concentrate on activities in the Dublin region, where four of the country's seven universities are based.

Further programme information will be available through national EUSJA delegates soon.

Cormac Sheridan
<cormac@newsmail.ie>
Irish Science and
Technology Journalists
Association, ISTJA



Cormac himself.

Nace DIVULC@T, la primera web que une reflexión y divulgación sobre Ciencia, Tecnología e Internet

Reúne a algunos de los mejores divulgadores y periodistas científicos de habla hispana

DIVULC@T es el primer portal vertical de habla hispana que une en un solo espacio reflexión y divulgación sobre Ciencia, Tecnología e Internet (CTI). En él podemos encontrar desde la noticia más puntual y de última hora hasta el texto de reflexión más profundo, pasando por todo tipo de artículos, entrevistas y directorios de enlaces sobre CTI. Su dirección es:
<http://www.divulcat.com>

¿Quiénes forman DIVULC@T?

El Consejo Editorial de DIVULC@T es un auténtico 'dream team', todo un lujo reunido en un mismo sitio: periodistas científicos de medios de comunicación de primera línea, divulgadores científicos premiados por su labor, responsables de webs de divulgación o expertos en comunicación y periodismo científico.

¿Por qué DIVULC@T?

La Ciencia y Tecnología (C y T) es el 'gato negro' del que todo el mundo parece huir. Sí, es cierto, cada vez vemos aparecer más C y T en los medios, pero sigue siendo insuficiente. Resultado: una población ignorante, mal informada y reacia a la C y T, lo cual es preocupante

en una sociedad marcada por el progreso científico-tecnológico: "hoy día, una persona culta y con capacidad crítica no puede ser un analfabeto científico-tecnológico", en palabras de Alex Fernández Muerza, creador y editor de DIVULC@T.

Por otro lado, DIVULC@T quiere ser el gato negro que traiga 'mala suerte' a los 'iluminados', astrólogos, médiums y demás 'profesionales' de las paraciencias que tanto daño están haciendo a la gente crédula con su palabrería.

En definitiva, DIVULC@T aprovecha los contenidos desarrollados por sus autores para 'engatusar' con el mundo de la divulgación científico-tecnológica al público internauta: C (Ciencia) + @ (Internet) + T (Tecnología) = comunicación científico-tecnológica por Internet

Para más información:

Alex Fernández Muerza
<divulcat@divulcat.com>

Up and running

A new science agency gets off the ground

A year ago, members of the Russian association of science writers and journalists took the first steps towards establishing InformNauka, a Russian science news agency. Now I'm happy to report that InformNauka is up and running.

InformNauka is a professional science agency – and the first to be set up in Russia. After just a year in operation, it is already a popular source of science information for science journalists, newspapers, magazines, TV and broadcast programmes and on-line newspapers. InformNauka has quickly become a first port of call for those who want to know what's happening in the Russian science world because it's the only place where journalists can access current and detailed information about the latest Russian science. The agency can also put journalists in touch with the Russian scientists behind the stories.

In setting up InformNauka, we had to overcome number of difficulties. Traditionally it has been difficult to compile science news in Russia because many Russian scientists avoid contact with journalists. But because InformNauka was established in association with the well respected magazine, *Chemistry & Life*, many scientists are coming round to the view that InformNauka offers advantages for both scientists and journalists.

Like any science news agency, InformNauka needs good science writers. To ensure a steady stream of new talent, twice a year we run science writing studios – where scientists and postgraduate from different Moscow Universities and Research Institutes are offered the chance to get some training in the art of science writing. Of the approximately 40 people on each course, we are usually able to offer a few the chance to write for InformNauka. As a result, after three courses, we now have more than 20 new correspondents writing for us. For scientists, joining the agency offers them the opportunity to continue with their own science research and at the same time keep up to speed with the latest

Russian science news in chemistry, physics, biology, medicine and social sciences.

There is no public money available in Russia to support a science news agency. Instead, the staff sell science news stories to other leading mass media outlets in Russia to finance the agency's activities. And for the last year or so, InformNauka has been providing a weekly digest of Russian chemical news for the UK chemical webzine, *Chemweb*.

Although we still can't afford to translate all the news into English, some of our stories are available in English on our website <<http://www.informnauka.ru/eng>> and on AlphaGalileo <<http://www.alphagalileo.org>>.

All and all, InformNauka has provided many benefits for Russia. For a start, it has put many Russian scientists into contact with investors and scientific colleagues all over the world. But don't just take my word for it. Visit our English language Russian science news web-site: <<http://www.informnauka.ru/eng>> and find out for yourself what's happening in the world of Russian science.

*Viola Egikova, Russian Association for Science
Writers and Journalists Intellect.*
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Getting into good habits

Foreign feedback is important

In his editorial in the Autumn 2000 issue of EUSJA News, Walter Hadorn highlighted to value of international visits. This struck a chord with us in UGIS (the Italian Association of Science Journalists) because it is something we have been doing for many years. We like to arrange visits abroad which allow us to meet our foreign colleagues, establish personal contacts with scientists and scholars and visit universities and research centres. Recently, various UGIS groups made two-week visits to the places of interest in the USA and Israel. We also organised visits to CERN, in Geneva and to EU Joint Research Centre sites in Karlsruhe, Germany; Geel, Belgium; and Petten, the Netherlands. As well as promoting the exchange of knowledge, the visits help to keep science journalists – particularly freelancers – up to speed on the latest developments.

We feel these visits are very worthwhile, but we acknowledge that they do require a lot of effort to arrange, both on our part and on that of our hosts. So like all good guests, we like to thank our hosts. And we do this by compiling a collection of articles and reports written by the participating journalists. We know this feedback is much appreciated. Even criticism, if constructive, is useful, because if participants remain 'silent' about what they got out of a visit, the organisers are left to wonder whether it is worthwhile to continue to go to all the trouble of organising visits.

At the end of last year, UGIS, compiled a booklet of collected articles written by journalists who participated in the foreign visits. Aside from the providing a useful record of our impressions about the things we saw and the people we met, the booklet also serves as an excellent 'visiting card' to introduce our organisation abroad. Until



Paola de Paoli

we run out, we're happy to make copies (in Italian) available to EUSJA members too. To request one, contact the UGIS technical secretariat by fax on: +39 02 48195367; or email: <teresella@iol.it>

Paola De Paoli, UGIS
<teresella@iol.it>

Free or for a Fee?

Where does goodwill end and exploitation begin?

Some mornings I count my e-mails and sigh. And then I select: urgent, interesting, need to know, action required.... Sometime in March I received a mail from an unknown marketing and communications person based in Germany. We need your assistance!! screamed the heading. My correspondent proudly presented himself as a business consultant specialising in technology marketing. He has a client in the microelectronics business who sounds VERY important. And he needs help collecting data such as names and addresses – information that will be of great assistance in his marketing survey. The information he requires is detailed and specialised, and I'm not the one to provide it. But... I have colleagues who might. The work involved will require time, brains and experience to complete and the marketing and communications person is going to make a profit out of it. So, I reply: what's your budget?

Silence from the other end. I expected that – I'm not naive. This is when I start to enjoy myself and begin to act like a sarcastic schoolteacher. I re-open negotiations by explaining the difference between assistance as a form of service provision (and thus rewarded) and assistance as a form of help (as in your house is on fire). And I explain about double standards: his service to his client requires a fee, but he thinks our service to him should come for free. And that's not fair, is it?

But it seems that I've not understood the guy very well. He says he 'just' asked for some information as a colleague. However, I don't count marketing and communications consultants as my colleagues. Even when he rephrases his request it still amounts to the same thing: we should be happy and honoured to be of service to a man who will make money using our specialised – but free – information. No way.

As EUSJA members let's draw a firm line and fight for solid remuneration for our work. Many of us are freelancers. Information is our stock in trade. We develop our knowledge in order to be able to perform our jobs well. Therefore when people request our services we expect to be paid for them. In future we should be happy to discuss the level of fees – but should never have to discuss WHETHER a fee will be offered.

Lizet Kruyff,
VWN, The Dutch Science Journalists Association
<c.beijersbergen@net.HCC.nl>

Science journalism and the Internet

Scholarships available!

A short course on Science Journalism and the Internet is being planned for autumn 2001 by the European Journalism Centre, in Maastricht, Netherlands. The course's two main themes will be Internet research for science reporting, and science news publishing online. The course is targeted at science journalists with some, but not advanced, competence in the use of the Internet for research and for publishing.

Thanks to support from the EUSJA board, scholarships will be available for some participants from central and eastern Europe. At the time of going to press, the European Journalism Centre is seeking financial support from other sources in order to be able to offer more scholarships and keep fees down. For confirmation of the dates and programme, keep an eye on <<http://www.ejc.nl>>

Brian Trench <brian.trench@dcu.ie>
Irish Science and Technology Journalists Association,
ISTJA

Food for thought

If you're interested in food-related topics, here's something to get your teeth into.

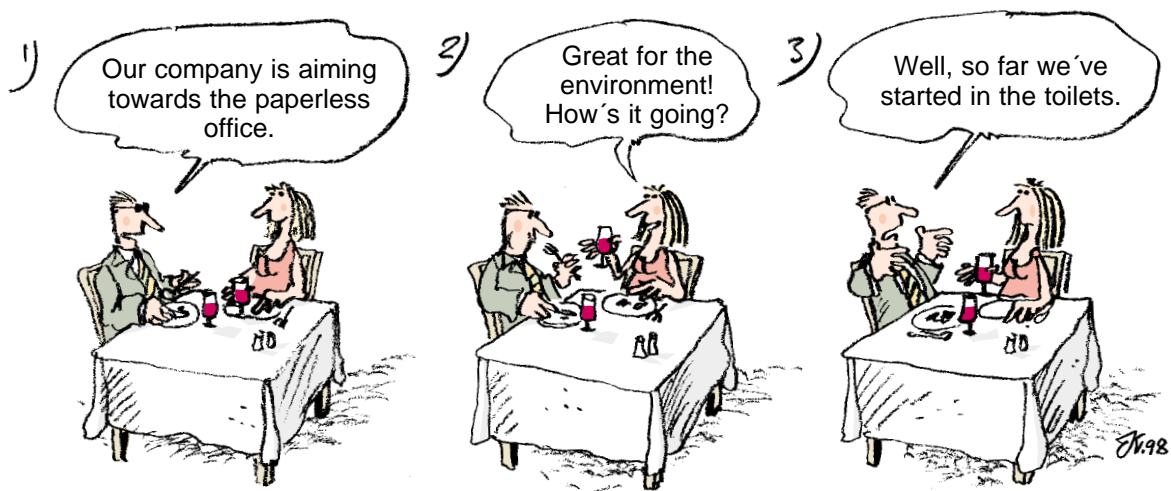
The European Food Information Council (EUFIC) is an autonomous, non-profit organisation which provides science-based information on food and food-related topics to health and nutrition professionals, educators, consumers and the media. EUFIC's goal is to enhance the public's understanding of nutrition and food safety, thus raising consumers' awareness of the active role they can play in food related issues, such as encouraging safe food handling and choosing a well balanced healthy diet.

If you need information about food-related issues, we'd like to be your first port of call. We distribute information about food-related issues throughout Europe by mail and through the Internet. All the material we produce is based on peer-reviewed scientific surveys and research. It's all copyright-free, and so long as the source is credited, we encourage journalists, editors and publishers to reproduce it in their own publications.

As well as *Food Today*, a newsletter published every six weeks in five European languages, which features articles on food, nutrition, food safety and the application of new technologies in the food chain, we also produce *EUFIC REVIEWS*, and brochures with tips on healthy eating and lifestyle aimed at both children and adults.

Webs wonderful

Our main website <http://www.eufic.org> went online in August 1999 and we now have more than 22 000 user sessions a month. All of our publications can be consulted or ordered free of charge on the website. And we also offer



extras, like a biotechnology database.

In addition, we recently set up a new nutritional website for children <www.coolfoodplanet.org>. This fun and highly interactive website aims to help children build healthy habits and choose a well-balanced healthy diet. In order to eliminate any language barriers, we have constructed the site in the four major European languages and hope that other language versions will follow this year.

EUFIC's priority for 2001 is food safety. Consumers in Europe are currently questioning the origin, composition, quality and safety of their foods and responding to this demand, EUFIC is in the process of building an interactive food information site in partnership with Wageningen University. The emphasis on this new web site will be on how food is produced and how this affects its safety and quality. The site will be multilingual and offer a question and answer service. The first part of the website should be on-line in December 2001.

Growing demand

The growing appetite for sound, balanced information on food safety, quality and nutrition among the public at large, means that EUFIC certainly has its hands full. We'd welcome the help and input of others dedicated to excellence in science reporting and are looking for science writers to help us in our work. To find out more, please get in touch.

Annette Jung, <ajung@eufic.org>
European Food Information Council

Sad statistics...

One of Eusjas most important objectives – indeed, one of the reasons EUSJA was established – was to encourage exchange visits between National Associations and journalists from other countries. Unfortunately, as a result of the economic crises of the 1990s, these invitations have become rarer and rarer. But many of us think it would be great to try to revive this good old tradition.

But was it so good? A look at the statistics documenting which associations were the most active in organising visits, presents a rather disillusioning picture.

It appears that many of the larger associations seem to have forgotten this important means of contact altogether. However, there are exceptions ...

The numbers speak for themselves. The greatest number of events (29) took place before 1989. Between 1990–1995 11 events took place. The figure dropped to 10 between 1996 and 2000.

During that time, the greatest number of events (9) were organised by the Italian association, followed by Germany (8), and Belgium and Switzerland (4 each). Unfortunately, the Belgians seem to have become almost completely inactive since they organized 3 events between 1974 and 1989. The same applies to our largest (and locally probably most active) association, the Association of British Science Writers (ABSW), which last organised a visit in 1990. Since then, they have issued no invitations. Countries that have issued only one invitation, or none at all so far include Estonia, Norway, Slovakia and Slovenia. Ideally each National Association would try to host an EUSJA visit trip at least once every five years. So, please, give the president of your own association a little push...

Werner Hadorn
<wernerhadorn@compuserve.com>

In the pipeline

EUSJA events to look forward to

The year 2002 should be a busy one for EUSJA. Several associations are planning to host events.

- The Swedish Association is hoping to host an event during 2002
- The Dutch Association plans to organise a visit during spring 2002
- The Swiss Association plans to invite EUSJA colleagues to attend Expo.02 in May or June 2002. The exhibition will take place in the region of the three lakes, Biel, Murten and Neuchatel.
- The Finnish Association is planning to host a visit in August 2002

More details will appear nearer the time.

Want to work in Sweden?

Exchange opportunities on two Swedish newspapers

Ny Teknik, Sweden's leading technology weekly with a circulation of around 150 000, and the Stockholm-based paper *Aftonbladet*, the largest circulation evening daily in Sweden, are looking for foreign science writers interested in joining them for a week or two on an exchange basis.

If the prospect of spending some time in Sweden sends a tingle down your spine, Erik Mellgren at Ny Teknik <erik.mellgren@nyteknik.se> or Eva Barkeman at Aftonbladet <eva.barkeman@aftonbladet.se> would like to hear from you.

Kaianders Sempler
<kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se>

Goodbye for now

I've edited EUSJA News for four years now, and it's time for a change. This will be my last issue, but the newsletter will continue under a new editor. An excellent candidate has come forward, and I am happy to leave the newsletter in such good hands. Details will appear on the EUSJA e-mail discussion list soon. If you're not already signed up for the list – you should be! To subscribe send the message: subscribe eusja-l firstname lastname (don't forget to substitute your own name!) to the address: <listserv@listserv.rl.ac.uk>

Nina Morgan, ABSW
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Put your PC... Continued from page 1

...website <<http://members.ud.com/download>>.

And so far, so good – once I set the 'preferences' to 'screensaver only' (click the check mark icon on the information panel). During the last week, my computer has spent 4 hours, 14 minutes and 57 seconds of its spare time testing a molecule known as PEONY00182660 against a protein target known as superoxide-dismutase. If the molecule my computer is working on turns out to be a winner – I hope I'll be the first to write about it!

Nina Morgan
<ninamorgan@compuserve.com>

Who's in charge?

Who's in charge of your national association? Don't know? See the EUSJA website <<http://www.esf.org/eusja>> for a full list of the Presidents of all the national associations, complete with contact details. On the picture below you can see what the Eusja board looks like. From left to right: Istvan Palugyai, Werner Hadorn, Marialuigia Bagni and Kaianders Sempler.



Kaianders Sempler



Highlights of Strasbourg 2 - the European Parliament building.

EUSJA assembly members

Planning a journey? Your colleagues in Europe can help

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