



EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Christmas 2008

A word from the editor

Welcome, Janna

Just what have we done to deserve such wonderful staff? We adored Sabine Schott when she was our secretary, fell in love with Florence.....and now have the wonderful Janna.....

The board met Janna when she joined us in Hamburg for our last meeting. She is Swedish, speaks fluent English and French and is highly efficient and a lot fun. She



Photo Kalanders Sempler

Janna Wellander

is based in Strasbourg, funded for us by Euroscience. One of the joys of having new blood on board is that often the obvious question is asked by the newcomer. Janna asked what is the purpose of EUSJA and where do we see ourselves in five year's time?

This question will form the basis of a mini seminar being planned for our General Assembly meeting. So start thinking!!

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Register now for WJSC in London this summer p2

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Editorial

Where are the bloggers?

Isn't it a shame? So many EUSJA members on the most interesting astronomy trip in the Netherlands and quite a few on the Information Communication Technology trip in Germany. More wanted to go but couldn't for different reasons. I am sure they would have loved to have received at least some impressions from these trips. Who was there? Who said what? What was curious? Even how was the social side? But there was silence in cyberspace as if nothing happened. No word on EUSJA's mailing list, none on EUSJA's blog.

Share experiences, set agendas

Of course, study trips are densely packed with presentations, meetings and talks. No time to write, no time to send messages. Believable excuses, but no true reasons. EUSJA is not an adventure travel agency. It is there to share experiences, opinions and to knit networks with science journalists all over Europe.

And last not least, study trips set an agenda not routed by politicians, administrators and science PR. They are a necessary counter weight to official news launches and deliver enough stuff to show that there is science even beyond research programs.

Thus I think it should only be fair to share the experiences of study trips with those who could not attend. Also the organisers, who put a lot of time and effort into the trips, deserve a broader acknowledgement for their scouting work beyond the few who attended the trips.

The platforms are there. Use them!

Study trips as agenda setters

Organising study trips seems to get difficult these days as sponsor money is only trickling in after the big burning of financial values. Especially as always the same sources are tapped. However, it is worthwhile – and necessary - in order to keep on setting the agenda ourselves.

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) trip to Germany, organised by an Austrian friend, is an example that sources still can be found. It is also a good example for setting an agenda, as ICT research is really under reported, taking into consideration the enormous amount of money involved: Of the 32 billion euro of the 7th Framework Program of the European Commission, 9 billion are dedicated to ICT research, which is by far the biggest budget.

Information Communication Technology biggest

Although having become familiar with far bigger numbers since the advent of the financial crisis, and being myself not a specialist in ICT, I really wonder what will be done with that money. Will the investments be worth the results? Will new ICT results change our lives again? I read, hear and see reports of single ICT successes stories, but I miss the big pictures painted by science journalists; the critical valuations as well as the visions, at least in the languages I can read and understand. I am sure, our audience is as uninformed as myself, although it has a right to know.

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Photo Kalanders Sempler

Hajo Neubert.

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION OPEN

Book now and save money

World Conference of Science Journalists 2009, hosted by the ABSW.

Tuesday 30 June – Thursday 2 July 2009, Central Hall, Westminster, London

**Pre conference workshops Monday 29 June.
Post conference trips Friday 3 July.**

See www.wcsj2009.org

At the 5th World Conference of Science Journalists in Melbourne more than 600 journalists, from over 50 countries, came together to debate hot topics in science journalism. Now the 6th World Conference of Science journalists invites you to debate, influence, share experience and excellence, develop skills, network, and enjoy all that London has to offer.

Get to the heart of UK science and technology through themed workshops,



breakfasts, lunches and exhibitions and choose from a range of trips to the UK's top science facilities.

What's On Offer? The programme is still being co-ordinated but EUSJA has a presence, of course and other highlights include:

Editors speak: What is the future for science reporting?

Threat or promise? How will the advent of podcasts, blogging and citizen journalism change the face of science reporting?

Investigative science reporting: a thing of the past?

Billionaire philanthropists: what influence do they hold on scientific progress?

Climate change: should the sceptics be heard?

The ABSW looks forward to seeing all EUSJA journalists in London and urges you to let all your members know that registration is now open with reduced rates for those reserving an early place!

Continued from page 1

Maybe reporting about ICT draws different attention in other countries. It would be interesting to hear how our friends in different European countries tackle the biggest European research section.

The platforms for exchange are there. Explore EUSJA's web page and use them.

World Conference of Science Journalists

The online registration for the World Congress of Science Journalists (WCSJ) is open at www.wcsj2009.org. Book now!

This is the biggest opportunity to meet science journalists from all over the world – and taking place in London, it is very easy to reach for us. No excuse not to attend! Especially as WCSJ will offer discount rates also for EUSJA members as EUSJA is a member of the World Federation of Science Journalists WFSJ.

Ethics

EUSJA, having played a major supporting role in the first World Conference 1991 and in shaping the World Federation, will have a seminar on ethics in science journalism, a continuation of the seminar series held during the ESOF conferences since 2004. This time, we will have a closer look on global and more current issues.

Ethics is a still growing concern, and EUSJA's efforts are definitely to set the agenda for a broad discourse and for raising awareness. It would be great if also our communication platforms are used to contribute to this debate.

All the best for Christmas and 2009.

Hanns J. Neubert,
EUSJA President

Is science really boring for the public?

Viola Egikova reports from Moscow

It was a main topic of the discussion among scientists and journalists organized by the Russian Science Support Foundation with the help of Russian Association of Science Writers and Journalists Intellect last October. None of us could imagine there would be so much people willing to discuss the problem, because it was maybe third meeting during the year: last October we met in with scientists Dubna, the city of physicists under Moscow, last May we invited scientists for discussion in Moscow University, the faculty of journalism. And now there was another call, and the interest for the topic was as high as if we never had the discussion. Why is the topic so much attractive for science journalists? Maybe there is a strong feeling that science journalism is in a danger?

If during previous meetings mostly journalists were speakers, this time we prefer to listen what scientists could tell us. But for the beginning we asked scientists to be objective, no need just to blame journalists. We need to understand what had happened in the country where science always was rather popular among public, but nowadays we may watch a huge interest towards false science. What is the responsibility of journalists in this situation? It was really useful, because our guest tried to analyse the situation.

Professor Michael Chernish from the Institute of Sociology belonged to Russian Academy of Science said: science in Russia was a phenomena of prestige for rather big part of the people, but now science as a way for career is not attractive any more in public's mind that means, the public doesn't respect scientists as much as it was in past time. Having a low financial support from government science in Russia is not so much successful as it was in previous years and the public tries to find any new idols maybe in sport if we are lucky for example in football or hockey. The public needs to have some fine examples of happy stories, that is why there is a low interest to science. Astronomer Vladimir Surdin did not agree: he said that he had a long experience to meet public with science popular lectures, he always knew that it was interesting for the people. But now media, mostly TV are giving examples of false science to have some profit from advertising. He said that scientists, not journalists have to speak with public about science. In



Executive Director of Russian Science Support Foundation, corresponding member of RAS, professor Maxim Yu. Kagan, press-atache of the Foundation Marina Astvatsaturyan.



Genetics professor Svetlana Borinskaya (on the right) speaks with journalists.



Editor in a Chief of the magazine Nauka i Zhizn Helena Lozovskaya and President of Intellect Viola Egikova.

the same time professor of genetics Svetlana Borinskaya was more tolerant: scientists and journalists have to work together.

This is just a small part of rather long discussion which was really useful, but in fact didn't answer the question: is science really boring for public or do we have just a policy of officials and some media representatives to pretend that public is not interested in science. Or maybe science journalists are not enough educated and enough devoted to their profession? Why are we losing science journalism? The Executive Director of Russian Science Support Foundation, corresponding member of RAS Maxim Kagan suggested continue the discus-

Continued...

sion. We agreed that it will be useful if science journalists could meet with different scientists. Deputy Director of Foundation and Vice-President of Intellect Marina Astvatsaturyan promised to organize another meeting in coming months.

One may say: it is useless if we still are staying with the questions without answers. But if it were really useless we couldn't see such a huge interest from journalists towards the discussion. Maybe it is some sort of training in what is the goal of the popularization of science? It is training not only for science journalists, but also for scientists.

Viola Egikova,
President of Russian Association for Science Writers and
Journalists Intellect.
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WHOOOPS! Spanish Association Tells the Postal Service They've Got It Wrong

In December 2006, the Catalan Association for Scientific Communication (ACCC) submitted an application to the Spanish Postal Service (Correos) for a stamp to be issued, dedicated to Joan (John) Oró (1923-2004), a Catalan biochemist that spent his professional career in the USA and was a pioneer in the experimental studies on the origin of life. His most brilliant achievement was probably his synthesis of adenine — a component of nucleic acids— in the laboratory in 1959. He also studied organic compounds found in meteorites, and worked for NASA in the Apollo and Viking projects. Many organizations and institutions supported the ACCC application to Correos, and the stamp was released on June 2, 2008.

Merce Piqueras tells us what happened next!

“Correos duely released a first-day envelope on which the scientist was supposed to be represented in a drawing. Guests at the First-Day Ceremony, held at the University of Lleida (Lleida was Oró's hometown) received one of those first-day envelopes with the stamp and first-day stampmark. When I saw the envelope, at first sight I thought the artist that had made the drawing must have been an apprentice. In fact, the man represented there looked very different from Oró.



Who is who? Stanley L. Miller, 1930–2007, and Joan Oró, 1923–2004.

Suddenly, however, I recognized the man behind that face, wearing those thick-framed glasses. He was not Joan Oró, but Stanley L. Miller (1930-2007), the biochemist that became famous at 23, when he first synthesized amino acids in the laboratory in an experiment that became classic and is known as the Miller-Urey experiment (Urey was his thesis director).



Mercè Piqueras, spotted the mistake.

Although I had known both scientists well, I could not believe that such a mistake was possible. I wondered whether it was my eyesight that was failing. Finally I decided to ask Oro's widow and daughter. They were so thrilled and touched by the release of their beloved husband and father's stamp that they had noticed nothing wrong until I asked them to look carefully at the drawing on the envelope. Both of them agreed; that man was Miller! But they found all that amusing, as I did, and did not complain. It was indeed a mistake. Oró and Miller had been close friends and they had even collaborated in some research projects and co-authored several articles.

I wrote this story in my blog and added the scanned envelope, and the following day Correos Director phoned Oró's widow to apologize for the mistake and informed her that they were withdrawing the wrong envelope and would soon release a new one with his late husband's face on it. He added that unfortunately the news had been spread on the Internet...



Corrected Oró stamp.

I understand that the Director of Correos considered the mistake of the artist inexcusable. Those that got to know Oró and Miller and knew about their close friendship may have thought so too. However, it is good to think that unwittingly Correos united them for the posterity on that envelope.

Mercè Piqueras



LANGE JAN
I MIDDELBURG,
ZEELAND.
OKT 08, JK

Highlights of Europe: Middelburg, the Netherlands. Drawing by Kaianders Sempler.

Eusja trips and events

The Telescope 400 years

It is the 28th September 1608, and we participate in the Eusja trip to what was formerly known as the northern parts of Spanish Netherlands. Since more than three decades a bloody and devastating war is being fought between free Dutch forces and the Spanish army. Both sides having suffered heavily, prince Moritz of Oranje and Nassau has now taken the initiative to a ceasefire and invited the Spaniards to a peace conference in den Haag.

Not only the commander of the Spanish army, a stout

italian nobleman by the name of Ambrogio Spinola, but also diplomats and emissaries from the courts all over Europe have arrived. Prince Moritz has just treated us to an overwhelming and delicate lunch, and the spirits among the guests are high. But our host has yet a surprise for us. He rings his glass with a spoon and calls for attention.

"Dear guests", says the prince. "It is my pleasure to inform you that a spectacle-maker from Middelburg in our southernmost province Zeeland recently made an astonishing invention. He has constructed a tube through which distant things appear as if they were near. Let us go up onto the tower roof, and mr Hans Lipperhey will himself demonstrate his magnifying "kijker", his wonderful looking-tube."

Continued on the following page.



Participants of the 2008 Telescope trip in the Netherlands.

Up in the tower the spectacle-maker awaits us. In his hand he holds a foot-long tube, which he hands to the prince with a courteous bow.

"Who would like to look first?" asks Prince Moritz.

"Maybe you, general Spinola? Just point the tube at some object in the distance, and look into it from this end."

Spinola takes the tube and puts it to his eye. A startled shiver goes through his body, and he mutters something that sounds like an Italian oath. After a minute he hands the tube back in thoughtful silence.

One after another the prominent guests look through the tube. Everyone is amazed over the view.

"Fantastic!" cries an emissary from Florence. "I can see the clock on the churchtower in Delft!"

"Incredible!" says an observer from the court of Venice. "I can even see the hands of the clock!"

But general Spinola looks worried. "My prince", he says, "This puts warfare in a completely new light. With this instrument you can spot our troops long before we can see yours".

"Do not worry, general", answers the prince with a smile. "I shall of course give strict orders that our troops withhold their fire until you are ready for battle."

But the good spirits did not last for long. The following day the negotiations broke down, and all the guests left for their home countries. With them they brought no hope of imminent peace in Europe, but instead the news of a new optical instrument that could revolutionize warfare. Within a year, the knowledge of the magnificent "kijker" and details about its construction had been spread to all countries in Europe.

A member of the Venetian senate, a man called Paolo Sarpi, contacted his good friend Galileo Galilei, and hurried to tell him about the marvellous instrument. Galileo was thrilled, and immediately ordered a large number of differently ground lenses to do experiments on his own. In August 1609 Galileo had constructed a tube with a magnification of eight, twice as much as that of Lippershey. And in November the same year another one which magnified as much as 20 times.

In the evening of the 7th of January 1610 he pointed his tube towards the heavens, and immediately discovered that four moons circled the planet Jupiter.

But that is another story.

Kaianders Sempler

Admiring the Dutch genius

It was a trip with so many powerful points. Though for me it began with a nightmare. A nightmare about telescopes which I will not tell you any details of. Fortunately during that first-of-my-life night in the Netherlands I was waken up... by a mosquito! Can you imagine that Dutch mosquitos are still operational in late September? A few moments after I had closed my eyes and returned to the dream world I was woken up again. This time by other tiny creatures – raindrops banging on the metal gutter.

The hospitable Netherlands. Land and sea actually. I had a chance not only to learn that had it not been for the Dutch invention of the telescope Galileo would not have discovered the four moons around Jupiter, but also to admire the pure genius of the Netherlands' engineers who had built the dams of Zeeland. The system protecting the coast against the North Sea is truly a masterpiece.

I was also stunned by the skills of the Netherlands' chefs. The dinners they prepared for us were always delicious (with a little help from red wines).

During one of those wonderful dinners - this time on a barge - I was told that the Amsterdam canals are three meters deep - one meter of water, one meter of mud, and one meter of bicycles...

I left the bicycle country happier than before. Full of good memories. Even though all the trip I was trying to charm the rain and wind to go away and come back some other day. It was raining, it was pouring, and some of the visitors were even snoring from time to time. But what the hell! It was a trip to remember!

Tomasz

Telescopes, giant telescopes and thousands of telescopes...



Photo Kaianders Sempler

The Dutch astronomy tour

took us on a journey through time and space. From the invention of the telescope in Middelburg 400 years ago to the modern state-of-the-art radio telescopes in Westerbork and the flat farmland in the eastern part of the country. But can a radio telescope really look like a bunch of tiny sticks with small metal boxes on top in the middle of a deserted field, as in the picture below? Can you really see something

with that? Shouldn't a radio telescope consist of a line of giant metal dishes, like in the picture above? Well, that depends, we learned. The sticks have small radio receivers on them. But there are thousands of them. Placed in groups all over the countryside, and connected with fiber-optic cables. This giant but astonishingly simple setup is called LOFAR, the Low Frequency Array. When finished, it will have receivers not only in the

Netherlands, but it will stretch its arms to France, Germany, England, Denmark and even to far away Sweden. Together, the receivers will form a telescope so powerful that it that will see the first matter that formed after the Big Bang. All with the help of powerful computers at the university of Groningen.

Kaianders Sempler



Photo Kaianders Sempler



WHY DO WE HAVE A HUGE FEAST AT CHRISTMAS?

No matter what you are all doing, raise your glasses to EUSJA!

The birthday of Jesus of Nazareth is celebrated throughout the Christian world, but not necessarily on the same day or in quite the same manner. The only three similarities are worship, family gatherings and overeating.

Pope Julius I in the fourth century decided upon December the 25th as the feast date. This was probably had much to do with the festival of the pagan sun god, Saturn, on the 17th to 24th of December in Italy. The winter solstice was celebrated elsewhere with feasting and dancing. Julius probably realised that it would be easier to transfer these celebrations than stop them.

The Russian Orthodox Church, unusually, celebrates Christmas on January 7th. It moved the date in accord with the Julian calendar when Pope Gregory XIII set up the Gregorian calendar in the 16th century. The feasting or Holy Supper starts when the first star shows in the night sky on Christmas Eve. This is Lenten feasting with no meat. There are 12 dishes representing the 12 Apostles and many foods are symbolic. For instance the special bread, Pagoch is broken into chunks, dipped into honey and then garlic to represent the sweetness and bitterness of life.

In France Réveillon is celebrated after Midnight Mass on December 24th/25th. There is a goose or turkey with chestnuts, a black or white pudding and whenever possible rare and expensive foods such as truffles and foie gras.

England is famous for Christmas feasting which comes after the morning worship. The main course is usually goose or turkey with stuffing, sauces and garnishes. This is followed by plum pudding and mince pies. The legend is that each Christmas, peasants had to pay their local lord a bird for being allowed to keep poultry. The lord had to provide a meal for his tenants on Christmas day and so fed them back their poultry.

In Italy Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December. There are no traditional foods as such but the meat

is usually white and never includes pork. However in Cyprus a pig will be slaughtered well beforehand and used to make a variety of dishes for the festive table, including a smoked ham called hiromeri, lountza which is salted loin and zaladina which is pieces of pork preserved in a citrus jelly and sealed with a thick layer of pork fat.

In Mexico Christmas lasts for weeks. It begins on December 16th with nine days of processions re-enacting Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and the erection of Nativity scenes. Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is customary throughout the country but the feasting that follows varies from region to region

The following recipe comes from the Chihuahua region and is served with new potatoes and grilled corn on the cob. It also works well with chicken or slices of pork loin.

Pechuga de Pavo a las Brasas (Grilled turkey breast)

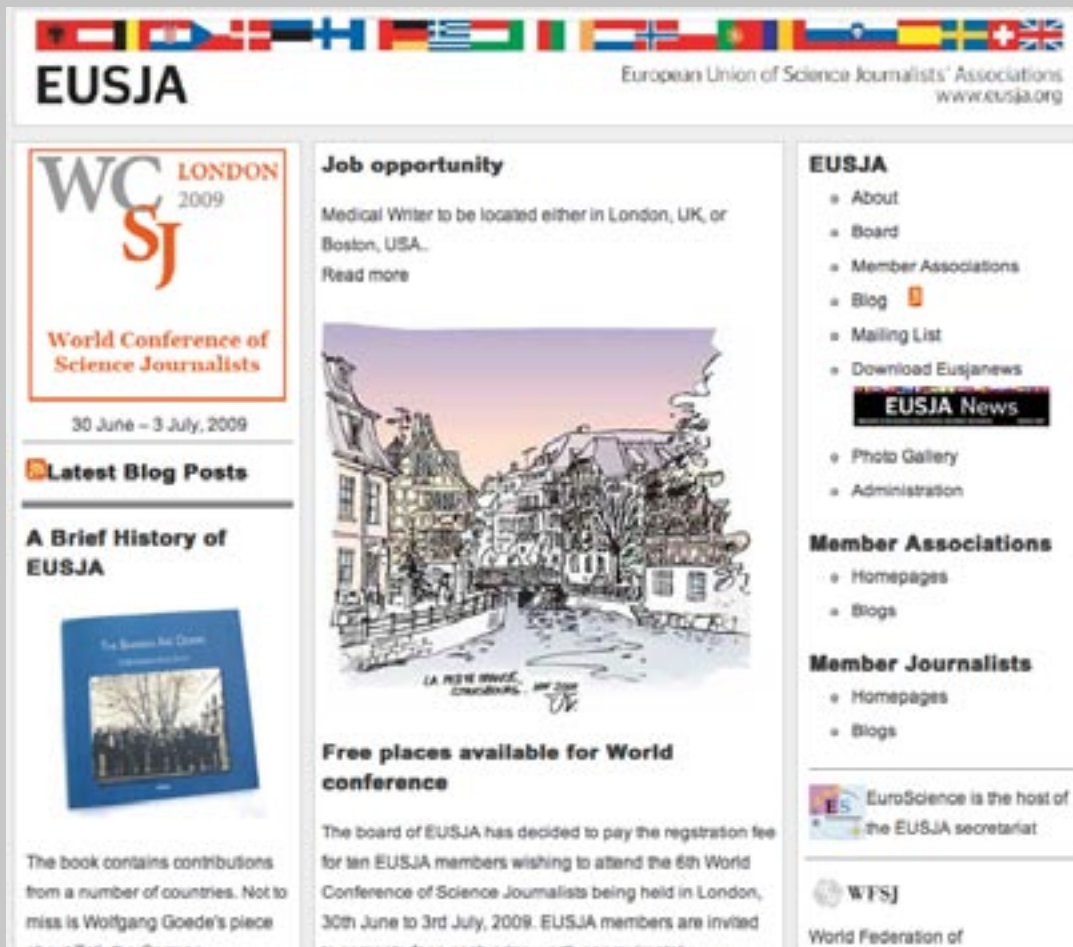
4 turkey breasts
vegetable oil
salt and pepper
150g butter
1 large eating apple, sliced thinly
3/4 cup apple brandy
1 cup cider
1 cup double cream

1. Heat the grill to hot.
2. Rub each breast with oil and season to taste.
3. Grill the breasts for 3 or 4 mins on each side until just cooked through. Check by pricking – the juices should be clear, not pink.
4. Melt the butter in a pan and sauté the apple slices for 3 minutes.
5. Add the apple brandy, bring to the boil and allow to reduce by half.
6. Add the cider and bring back to the boil.
7. Remove from the heat, stir in the cream, pour over the breasts and serve.

Cherry Dobbins



Pechuga de Pavo a las Brasas – a Mexican winter delicatessen.



www.eusja.org

The Eusja website has got a new and nicer look

You have probably already seen it by now, that our website has been changed to look more up-to-date. The idea is to have the same basic design on all pages. Also, we have tried to make the structure as simple and self-explaining as possible.

In the middle column are the latest news – information about study trips and other events. Check that out first.

In the righthand column we have the links to pages giving information about what Eusja is, a list of the board members and the national delegates. There are also links to all the national associations, how to connect to the Eusja mailing-list, how to download all issues of EusjaNews from 1997 and onwards and to a photo gallery. The last link, "Administration", gives you the Eusja constitution and the minutes from the three last general assembly meetings. There you will also find the regulations stating how associations in Eastern Europe can apply for financial support to events.

Kaianders Sempler

General Assembly

The 2009 Eusja General Assembly will take place in Trieste, Italy, 12–15 March.

The Agenda for the General Assembly will be published in due time on the Eusja website. Preliminary programme:

12 March: Arrival, buffet dinner

13 March: Study trip (also joined by UGIS members): ICGEB (International Centres of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology head quarter in Trieste), INFN (Italian National Institute of Nuclear Physics, Department of Astrophysics), OGS (Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics)

14 March: From 10:00 to about 18:00: EUSJA General Assembly. From 20:00: Farewell dinner

15 March: Departure

A big Thank-You to Paola di Paoli, who did all the organizing and fund-raising.



Odds and ends

WHAT? MORE YOUNG SCIENCE JOURNALISTS?

A popular option in the UK for students who complete a science degree is to look to science communication courses. Over the past six years there has been a growth in the number of universities offering MSc courses in science communication. Supporters say it gives young wannabe journalists a good start, critics say there are already too many freelancers on the market looking for work and not enough jobs to go around for existing hacks.

At the ABSW (Association of British Science Writers) so great was the demand for information about science journalism that we have started a new category of membership – student – and run a series of training workshops and briefings. A mentoring programme is now being investigated.

One of our newest members is 22 years old Jacob Aron, a maths graduate from Bristol. He is now enrolled on to a year long science communication course at Imperial College. Over now to Jacob to tell us why he decided on the course and what he hopes for the future:

“Although I studied maths at university I have always enjoyed writing in my spare time, so when I found the science

communication MSc at Imperial it seemed like the perfect career for me. The course is set up to allow an overview of science communication; not just straight journalism, but also PR, museum curating, and even science fiction. As I’m still working out what are I want to move into, this broad approach was more appealing to me than the sister MSc (science media production) which is more broadcast focused.

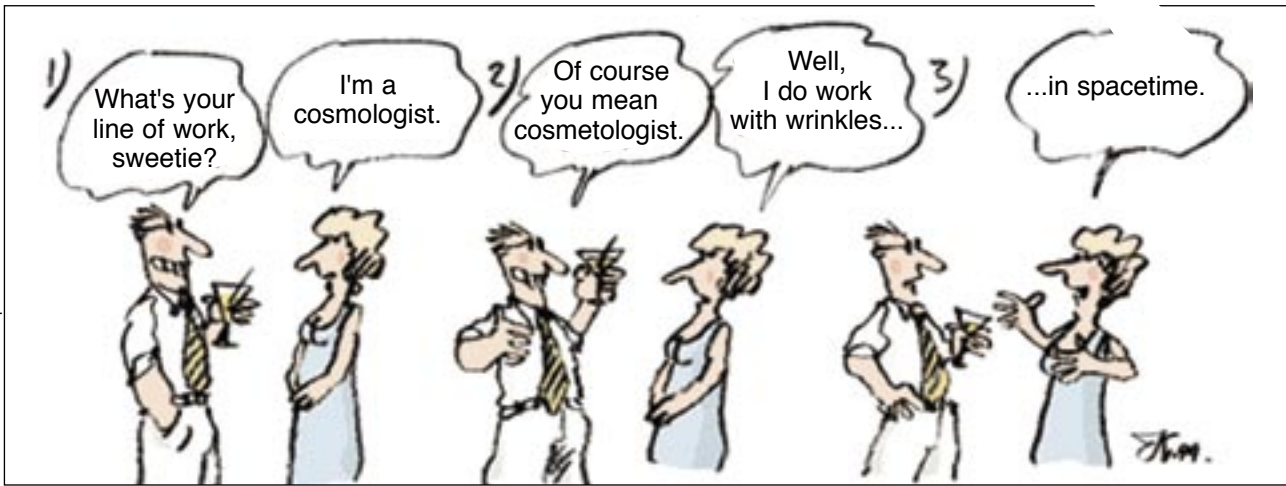


Jacob Aron, student.

“Going in to the course, I was concerned about the availability of jobs, especially considering I would be in direct competition with my forty-odd classmates once graduating. My fears were quickly put to rest however, as Imperial say that 60% of graduates end up in directly related science communication jobs, whilst 80 to 90% in total find work in PR and related areas.

“Without studying science communication, I’d be hard pressed to land any of these jobs. Looking at my CV an employee sees a maths degree and a stint working in a bank; not traditionally the makings of a good writer. The MSc is helping me to hone my skills and experience working in a range of media. Hopefully, I’ll be able to find a job come this October – and it’s not like the banks are recruiting these days anyway!”

Barbara Drillsma



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

Yet another odd aspect of the English language:

If your feet smell and your nose runs you are built the wrong way around!

Needed by Eusja board members

Now this should cool down board meetings. Scientists at Edinburgh University in Scotland have developed a helmet to cool the brain by about 4 degrees centigrade via the dense network of vessels that carry blood to the grey matter. Reducing the temperature of the brain cuts the metabolic rate of brain cells and their need for oxygen. This in turn reduces the risk of brain damage in the event of heart attacks.

If you see us walking into the General Assembly in Trieste wearing funny hats you know the reason why!

The 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 commercial parties or

What is Eusja?
Eusja is a not-for-profit umbrella organization for national science journalists' associations in Europe. Eusja has today (July 2006) 23 member associations. The Eusja secretariat is situated in Strasbourg, France, where the national delegates meet once a year at the general assembly.

Contacts
You will find our website with contacts, resources, mailing-list etc at <http://www.eusja.org>
There you will also find links to the member reports from and news

LA PERTE FRANCE, STRASBOURG, NOV 2001

PALAIS DE L'EUROPE, STRASBOURG, 11.11.2001

Eusja 2008

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