



# EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Summer 2007

## A word from the editor

### Thank you, Sabine!

That Eusja now moves its headquarters from ESF to Euroscience, just a few blocks away in the medieval centre of Strasbourg, unfortunately means that we lose our faithful part-time secretary Sabine Schott

It is Sabine who for many years has been sending out invoices, updated files, prepared the accounting and organized the Eusja general assembly meetings. Thank you Sabine, for putting up with us and giving us your time and expertise.



Sabine Schott.

Photo Kaianders Sempier

The new Eusja headquarter is located at 8, rue des Ecrivains, 67000 Strasbourg, France.

Our new secretary will be Julia Epp.

Check the new Eusja website at [www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org)

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## From ESF to Euroscience

### Editorial

In the history of Eusja we have a milestone behind us. We have just had to leave our headquarters, our office at the ESF but we haven't moved far. We have managed to remain in Strasbourg and we have arranged a new contract with Euroscience, which is the non-profit European organisation behind the Esf conferences which puts so much emphasis on science communication and science journalism. Euroscience welcomed us warmly and since the start of July, has been our official host. We have also moved our website and thanks are due to Teli (and to our VP Hajo Neubert) for arranging to host the Eusja web site. The address will remain the same ([www.eusja.org](http://www.eusja.org)) and since the move we are offering more opportunities for our members to communicate with each other by signing on to the Eusja Blog on line on the internet.

I hope in our "new home" with our new host we will have a long prosperous time. This change makes a golden opportunity to surge ahead with our plans to rotate our yearly General Assemblies more cost-effectively by not holding them every year in Strasbourg. We can now wander from one place to another depending on our hosts. For example we have an offer from the Helmholtz Foundation to host our next year's Assembly in Berlin. We will confirm this in the next newsletter.

Among the 600 science journalists who attended the 5th World Conference of Science Journalists in Melbourne in April was a contingent of Eusja members. The very successful conference gave a chance to exchange ideas between colleagues from all part of the World. I hope our members read the Eusja-blog from Melbourne on our website. During the WCSJ Eusja also announced the twinning agreement with the African Federation of Science Journalists. And after ten years the next world conference will come again to Europe, namely in 2009 when the science journalist community will meet in London. This event will be a challenge for every European science journalist organisation as well for Eusja. In Melbourne the World Federation of Science Journalists changed its Board and the new President is from Europe, Pallab Ghosh from the BBC who represents the ABSW.

We had an excellent study trip this June in Switzerland, superbly organised and full of stories for the visitors and many Eusja representatives accepted the invitation to attend the Lindau Nobel-meeting. We are also facing this year hopefully even more study trips for example one in November which will be in Austria about the elite universities and the advanced science institutes.

I hope the participating associations will do their best in the ongoing Wonders 07 Project and will report about their challenges in this new form of cooperation.

**István Palugyai**  
Eusja president



Istvan Palugyai.

Photo Kaianders Sempier

# Welcome to Austria, November 2007

The Austrian Club of Education- and Science Journalists is organizing an international Congress with the theme "Elite-Universities" and "High Research Institutes". The focus is on the "Institute of Technology and Science – Austria" (ISTA) and the whole European research and technology sector. In particular the EIT-project (European Institute of Technology) will be of greatest interest.

The congress will take place in Vienna and the little city of Krems, where the Danube University is situated. It is intended that the Congress offers a forum to discuss the prospects of an EU-country – and Austria and ISTA in particular – with respect to the European policy in the fields of research, technology and innovations. In the past few years Austria has produced rapid advances in various scientific disciplines. The project of the Austrian Elite-university is also well known abroad.

The Austrian Club will take over all expenses in Austria including local transportation, food and accommodation as well as the conference fee.

More information to come on the Eusja website.



The Austrian Club Elisabeth Nöstlinger

## 2008 ASTRO-TRIP PLANNED TO THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch Association of Science Journalists (VWN) is planning an international excursion to the Netherlands in the autumn of 2008, focusing on Dutch activities in the fields of astronomy and space science. The trip will coincide with the 400th birthday of the telescope, which was invented in the Netherlands.

Although the first small telescopes were probably constructed in the Netherlands before 1600, it wasn't until September 1608 that Hans Lipperhey, an optician from Middelburg in the southwestern part of the Netherlands, filed a patent for his invention of the telescope. The Netherlands were in the middle of the 80-year war with Spain, and Lipperhey saw his invention mainly as a military tool.



Hans Lipperhey, constructor of the first telescope.

However, word of the new instrument reached the famous physicist Galileo Galilei in Italy, who built his own telescopes in 1609 and used them for astronomical purposes, starting with his first observations of the moon on 30 November of that same year. To commemorate Galileo's first telescopic observations, 2009 has been declared the International Year of Astronomy by the International Astronomical Union.

## STICK TO PROSE

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society, is now accepting entries for the 2007 AAAS Science Journalism Awards.

The deadline for submissions is 1 August 2007. The contest year is 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007. Each category winner will receive \$3,000, to be presented at the AAAS Annual Meeting in February 2008 in Boston. AAAS will cover each winner's annual-meeting-related travel and lodging expenses.

### U.S. Categories:

- Large Newspaper
- Small Newspaper
- Magazine
- Television
- Radio
- Online



### International Category:

Children's Science News (open to journalists worldwide for work distributed via any medium).

The AAAS Science Journalism Awards recognize outstanding reporting for a general audience and honor individuals (rather than institutions, publishers or employers) for their coverage of the sciences, engineering and mathematics.

Since their inception in 1945, the awards have honored more than 300 individuals for their achievements in science journalism. Independent screening and judging committees select the winning entries based on scientific accuracy, initiative, originality, clarity of interpretation and value in fostering a better understanding of science by the public.

### For more information

To download a brochure and entry form, or to read the most frequently asked questions, please visit:  
[www.aaas.org/aboutaaas/awards/sja/index.shtml](http://www.aaas.org/aboutaaas/awards/sja/index.shtml)

The Netherlands has a rich and varied tradition in the science of astronomy. Back in the 17th century, Christian Huygens improved the telescope and discovered dark markings on Mars, a satellite of Saturn, and the true nature of the planet's ring system. Later, astronomers like Jacobus Kapteyn and Jan Oort helped to unravel the structure of our Milky Way galaxy, while solar physicists at Utrecht Observatory compiled the first detailed spectroscopic atlas of the sun. Furthermore, Oort was the driving force behind the big Westerbork Synthesis Radio Telescope and behind the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Later this year, Leiden astronomer Tim de Zeeuw will become the fourth Dutch director-general of ESO (out of a total of seven).

In the northern part of the Netherlands, Dutch radio astronomers are now constructing the revolutionary Low-Frequency Array (LOFAR), a novel-design radio observatory spread out over thousands of square kilometres. LOFAR is a 'software telescope' without any moving parts, which will nevertheless be able to observe in eight directions at once. It is expected to provide astronomers with a glimpse of the birth of the very first stars in the universe. Dutch universities and institutes also design and build sensitive spectrometers and other instruments for both ground- and space-based observatories like ESO's Very Large Telescope in Chile, and scientific satellites like Herschel and the James Webb Space Telescope.

The town of Noordwijk, close to the North Sea, is home to the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), the biggest facility of the European Space Agency ESA. Almost all ESA satellites - including the newly-designed Automatic Transfer Vehicle for the International Space Station - are being integrated and tested at ESTEC. In nearby Leiden, Dutch Space is a world leader in the field of solar panels and other space technologies.

To commemorate Lipperhey's invention of the telescope, and to prepare for the International Year of Astronomy, the Dutch Association of Science Journalists (Vereniging van Wetenschapsjournalisten in Nederland, VWN) is now planning an international excursion for European colleagues, probably in late September 2008. Participants will visit major facilities like LOFAR and ESTEC, a number of smaller institutes and universities, a telescope symposium in Middelburg, etcetera. Lectures by ESO's director-general Tim de Zeeuw and Nobel laureate Gerard 't Hooft are also planned, as well as visits to both the oldest operational planetarium in the world and one of the newest high-tech planetariums in Europe. Of course, VWN will be more than happy to assist you in case you might want to extend your trip to the Netherlands to visit institutes in completely different areas of research.

More details will become available over the next months. Meanwhile, if you have any suggestions or queries, let me know by sending an email to [mail@govertschilling.nl](mailto:mail@govertschilling.nl). We look forward to meeting you in September 2008!

Govert Schilling is an internationally acclaimed astronomy writer and the president of the Dutch Association of Science Journalists (VWN)

## Irish science journalists run podcast training workshop

**If you've been listening to the Guardian Science or New Scientist podcasts, then you'll know how popular podcasting has become in science journalism, and how a podcast can complement the online edition of a print publication.\***

In Ireland, however, science journalists and publications have yet to make the leap into podcasting. Some conventional science radio programmes are available in podcast format, of course, and one Irish health journalist does produce a regular consumer health podcast . . . otherwise, you'll look long and hard to find any podcasts about Irish science and technology.

One reason is that Irish science journalists are predominantly a print brigade – the downside of having easy access to good science programmes on BBC radio and television is that there is little science in the Irish broadcast media, and hence many of us are relatively unfamiliar with broadcast equipment and technology and radio techniques. So, to provide an introduction to broadcasting, and prove just how easy it is to produce and publish a podcast, the Irish Science & Technology Journalists' Association (ISTJA) organised a one-day training workshop for members this spring.

The training was provided by one of our own – health journalist and broadcaster Aileen O'Meara, who produces a regular health podcast, see: <http://www.vhi.ie/podcast/index.jsp> – and we were able to avail of recording and editing equipment and facilities at Dublin City University (DCU), thanks to another member (Brian Trench). The workshop was generously supported by a State-funded project, Discover Science & Engineering ([www.science.ie](http://www.science.ie)), which is keen to see more science in the Irish media.

The day began with an introduction to the historical development of this new online broadcast medium, and its uses in journalism and science communication; followed by a discussion of interview techniques and styles, and a review of the hardware and software options available for recording, editing and uploading podcasts to the web.

Participants were given recording equipment (minidisk and Uher recorders), and then paired with volunteer interviewees – science graduate students at DCU – for an interview. The resulting material was edited, packaged into a file and uploaded to an online hosting website. By the end of the day, we'd all recorded and edited a short interview and saved it in podcast format.

It was a successful, enjoyable and useful day's training, as well as a pleasant opportunity to network. A dozen

Continued...

members had applied for the workshop, but the usual journalistic deadlines intervened so that only six could attend on the day. However, half of those six now plan to add a podcast to their publication website and/or blog.

We hope to repeat the workshop in the autumn for those who missed the spring session, and will probably extend the net to include science communicators and information officers and others who might be interested. Thanks to the equipment and facilities at DCU, the day was relatively easy to organise – and if any other EUSJA associations are interested in doing something similar, we'll be happy to share the benefit of our experience.

\*Apologies for being familiar with only the English-speaking publications and podcasts – maybe the next EUSJA newsletter could include details of science podcasts from around Europe?

Mary Mulvihill, ISTJA

Hear: The Quantum Leap (<http://www.rte.ie/radi>)

## Europe à la carte

# Kitchen science

Once asked my then quite young son if he could cook a meal. "I'm studying chemistry," he said. "If there is a recipe, I can follow it. All scientists can cook!" And he did. We on the board, know that many of our colleagues, particularly those with a scientific background are enthusiastic cooks and food plays a large role in their lives. With this in mind we are starting a new slot in EUSJA News aimed at such foodies.

Cherry Dobbins, a food writer from Cyprus will, in each edition, bring us a short culinary history and recipe from each of our associations. She starts this month focusing on our newest member – Catalan – and hopes we will try out some traditional Catalan catering next July when we visit Barcelona for ESOF 2008.

Barbie Drillsma



Crème Catalan.

# WARMED BY THE SUN

## Let's cook catalan

When you think of Spanish food you probably think of oranges or 'tapas'. However, the country has a heritage rich in a cuisine that reflects its history. The Moorish re-conquest of southern parts of Spain brought to the kitchen herbs and spices, such as coriander, cumin, saffron, cinnamon and cloves. The Moors also planted almond groves. Later the discovery of the New world introduced chocolate, vanilla and paprika.

As a result of their neighbour, Portugal, there are sweet oranges. The first orange tree, brought by Vasca da Gama, can still be seen in the garden of Count de Saint-Laurent. All the sweet orange trees in Spain are reputed to come from it.

The province of Catalonia, on the north-east coast, is proud of its cuisine. High quality fresh ingredients are readily available in this area and the Spanish prefer to keep the emphasis on the quality and prepare the food simply.

Grilled fish such as swordfish, tuna or mullet, freshly plucked from the Mediterranean Sea is served plain or with a straightforward sauce, such as the Catalan Garlic and lemon Sauce described below.

Fresh salads and vegetables are lightly dressed with oil and vinegar. A meal is finished with a bowl of fresh fruit rather than a dessert. Sweet dishes, such as the Catalan Cream, are served in cafes and bars as a mid-morning or afternoon treat.

### Catalan Cream

A classic sweet dish served in many cafes and bars.

1litre full cream milk  
1 vanilla pod  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 lemon – grated zest only  
8 egg yolks  
125g sugar  
3 tbsp. cornflour  
8 heatproof ramekins  
100g caster sugar for topping

1. In a saucepan place the milk, vanilla, cinnamon and lemon zest. Bring to the boil and allow to simmer for 10 minutes. Set aside to cool for 20 minutes.

2. In a bowl, beat the egg yolks with the 125g of sugar and then add the cornflour and beat well to remove all lumps.



Highlights of Europe: Barcelona. Drawing by Kaianders Sempler.

3. Remove the cinnamon and vanilla from the milk. Add a tablespoonful of the milk to the egg and beat in.

4. Pour the egg mixture into the pan with the milk, whisk well and place over a low heat. Whisk or stir well whilst gradually heating it till it becomes a thick custard. It must not boil or it will curdle. If necessary remove from the heat for a minute and continue whisking.

5. Divide the custard into the ramekins and leave to cool. When cold store in the fridge to chill.

6. Heat the grill to its highest setting and adjust the tray so that the ramekins will fit with the tops as close as possible to the grill.

7. Sprinkle the sugar over the custards to completely cover the mixture, without being too thick.

8. Place under the grill to just caramelize the sugar. Watch carefully and as soon as it is melted remove from the heat.

9. Allow to cool before serving so that the topping forms a brittle crust.

### Catalan Lemon and Garlic Sauce

This popular Spanish sauce is poured over vegetables, grilled fish or meat. Use the quantity of garlic that suits your taste-buds. You may not need the slice of bread if you want a thin sauce. If you do not have a mortar and pestle, use the end of a rolling pin in a small pudding basin or start the mixture with an electric grinder.

4 – 12 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed  
salt  
juice of 1/2 lemon  
200ml. extra virgin olive oil  
1 slice fresh white bread, crust removed and crumbled

1. Pound together the garlic with a good pinch of salt in a mortar.

2. Mix in the lemon juice. Gradually add the oil, whisking well.

3. If the resulting sauce is not as thick as you would wish, add the breadcrumbs gradually, pounding them into the mixture, till you reach the required density.

**Cherry Dobbins**



Teli members in 1930.

# Ethics in Science

## To whom are science journalists accountable?

A historical view across Europe and outlook

**"Journalism and PR become increasingly blurred and mixed up, but they remain two different professions", states firmly Thomas Leif, the president of Germany's Network Research. And he adds his criteria for good journalism such as: Journalists work independently, seek for truth, respect dignity; journalists use all available sources, and journalists distinguish between facts and opinions.**

**Finally, "journalists don't get involved in PR", he adds, which has caused a fierce debate and has been contested as unrealistic. What are the facts?**

James Cornell, president of the International Science Writers' Association (ISWA), has issued similar warnings for a number of years. In the United States, he regrets, the most capable science writers are switching sides because they can't make a living off the little money media outlets pay them as opposed to PR agencies. And the statistics are striking: The number of PR workers has risen from 120 000 in the 1990's to 160 000 nowadays.

Germany is very much alike: 50 000 journalists are being counted, almost as many as the PR work force comprises which ranges between 30 000 and 50 000. According to a survey, 45 out of 105 journalists aren't sure whether journalism and PR are two different jobs. 50 percent of the general news distributed by the German News Agency dpa

are based on PR; 66 percent of the scientific news of all German news agencies rely on PR. And altogether, sums up the German Science Magazine "Bild der Wissenschaft", PR materials are the third most important source after personal informants and the internet.

The German Science Journalists' Association (WPK) and the Swiss Organization of Science Journalism (SASJ), both EUSJA members, wanted to get more details on this entanglement and have surveyed their membership. Indeed, the results indicate conflict. Journalists, for example, write for company brochures and offer these articles to the media as well. There should be more transparency, suggests WPK: Journalists who cover a certain range of PR topics should not "recycle" them and offer them to the media, at least they should explain the sources. The study summarizes: 20 percent of journalists admit that they mix journalism and PR, 40 % know of colleagues who practise this. At the end, the WPK comes to a very firm conclusion: Journalism is accountable to the public and the common good whereas PR is dependant on the particular interests of clients.

This controversial subject was a topic at the World Conference of Science Journalists last April in Melbourne. Wolfgang C. Goede, the EUSJA representative of the German Association of Science Writers (TELI), opened another chapter in the discussion about ethics by looking into the history of his organization during the Nazi era. Basically, this was a followup of the his article in the EUSJA anniversary book "The Twenties – Exiting Times in Germany" (<http://www.pm-magazin.de/media/1/1108/2500/17844.pdf>).

Journalists are somehow like onions. They have many different layers, but in the core most of them share common values like for example serving the public, enlighten citizens and explain the world. Depending on their culture, political and religious convictions as well as socio-economic strata journalists approach their work





Wernher von Braun.

The German engineer Wernher von Braun was engaged in constructing the "Fliegende Wunderwaffe", the rocket V2. When it destroyed parts of London in 1944, Braun went on record with the sentence: "But I wanted to fly to the moon." Thousands of prisoners died during the rocketry project. After the war the V2 constructor was taken to the United States. There he could continue his rocketry

tests and thus became the mastermind of the flight to the moon and space flight in general.

The prestigious Max Planck Society (MPG) investigated its own history and concluded in 2005: No scientist had been forced, everybody went along voluntarily. More than 50 percent of the biologists employed by the imperial research institutions (Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute) joined the Nazi party. The leading protagonist for eugenics was Konrad Lorenz, who in 1973 was honoured with the Nobel Prize.

Dr. Susanne Heim, head of the MPG commission concluded: Scientists are highly vulnerable to intellectual and moral corruption. "Opportunities will be used if they promise more influence and success." For science journalists this will most likely hold true as well.

Science journalists have a special responsibility in a world which is increasingly shaped by science and technology. This causes problems and risks which science journalists clearly must address. As a guideline the categorical imperative can be employed: In their daily work science writers envision a world which fosters ecological, social and humane sustainability – or in the Kantian sense: "Write so as if the maxim of your writing should become a natural law." Other professions have laid out their ethical obligations in codes such as the Oath of Hippocrates and symbols like Caduceus. The basis for an ethical code in science journalism is the preamble of the World Federation of Science Journalists' (WFSJ) constitution which states:

"Science journalists must be thoughtful critics and commentators, linking the world of science and technology to the daily life of ordinary persons, clarifying the processes of research and discovery, and making the public aware of the social, economic, and political context of science and technology, and its impact on society."

The ethical obligation could be expressed by an appropriately designed label or trademark which, for example, could be a world in balance.

Goede's presentation can be downloaded at <http://www.teli.de/veranstaltungen/2007-wcsj/2007-wcsj.html>



Wolfgang Goede

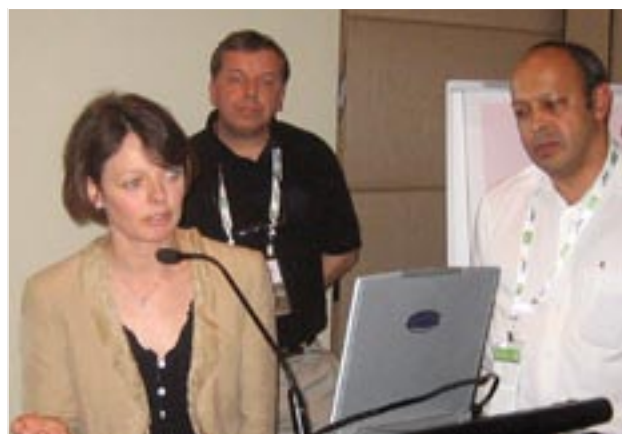


Photo Kalanders Sempler

Julie Clayton and Pallab Ghosh from the ABSW presenting the English bid in Melbourne.

## The ABSW will host the next World Science Journalists' Conference in the UK 2009

We know that Australia is a long way away and expensive to reach but nobody can use this excuse for not attending the next WFSJ conference in 2009 as it will be held in easy-to-reach London!

In Melbourne, the ABSW successfully bid to host the conference, facing tough competition from our Italian colleagues at UGIS who wanted the conference to be staged in Trieste. It was a close call but the ABSW triumphed and celebrations understandably went on well into the night.

The conference bid was put forward by the Association of British Science Writers, in partnership with the UK-based International Institute for Environmental Development; the journal Nature and scidev.net supported by a host of other associations, organisations and government bodies.

Work has already started on planning to make this, the 6th world conference, the biggest conference yet and the organisers, led by Julie Clayton hope it will bring together almost 700 journalists from across the world. The proposed programme will feature key scientific issues such as climate change, biodiversity, the environment and disease, and will have a strong emphasis on career development and training, aimed at newcomers to the business as well as the more experienced science journalist.

In addition the conference team plans to organise tours of scientific research centres, is planning an entertaining social calendar of events and will be running structured networking sessions.





Photo Kalanders Sempler

London calling for 2009.

Special focus will be given to increasing the representation of journalists and scientists from developing countries in Africa, Asia the Middle East and South America. It is hoped that dedicated fund-raising activities will be held to raise money to pay for assisted travel and accommodation for many delegates with plans to raise funds for travel and accommodation. It is also hoped to keep registration fees low.

Julie Clayton, conference director and scidev.net consultant, said, "we shall have the best of the UK's science media exchanging ideas with science journalists from around the world, plus top scientific research for them to report on. We hope to see as many delegates as possible from developing countries."

Diran Onifade, African regional coordinator for the world federation of science journalists peer to peer mentoring programme, said, "London, being the capital of the commonwealth and a universal city, brings the world conference of science journalists closer to most of the world like never before."

"I am sure the conference being in London will command an unprecedented interest among science journalists in Africa."

ABSW chair, Ted Nield said, "it's a great opportunity to welcome the world of science journalism back to the home of the profession."

The fact that the ABSW bid to hold the conference was all down to the enthusiasm and drive of ex-ABSW chair, Pallab Ghosh, the BBC's science correspondent. It was

Pallab who convinced the AB SW that it stood a chance of raising funds, gathering support and ultimately winning the bid. At the Melbourne meeting, Pallab was voted, president of the WFSJ.

"Our aim is to build on the tremendous success of previous meetings and to work with our colleagues in the UK and internationally to create a conference that will continue to promote the highest standards of science journalism across the world," said Pallab.

"As the punk band The Clash said: London's Calling, lets all get on board and make this a conference never to be forgotten."



Photo Kalanders Sempler

Brand new world federation president Pallab Ghosh, UK, together with former president Veronique Morin, Canada.

# Off the Scale

Ted Nield\* bewails the popular persistence of “the Richter Scale”.

One of the things that separate scientists from journalists is this. Scientists go through life learning more and more about less and less. We on the other hand tend to learn more and more about more and more – and then forget it all. Finding ourselves daily adrift in a sea of uncertainty, buffeted by a perfect storm of information from all points of the compass, we have tendency to cling desperately to things that we think we know. One of those things is “the Richter Scale”.

Every one of us has written “An earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter Scale has struck the island of Sumatra....” at some stage in our careers. But why?

Because first of all, it’s wrong. Seismologists no longer use the Richter Scale, defined in 1935 by the famous Californian nudist Charles F Richter (1900-1985) and Beno Gutenberg (1889-1960) of the California Institute of Technology (CIT). Although the idea of a logarithmic magnitude scale was first developed by Richter and Gutenberg, it was designed for measuring the size of earthquakes in southern California, and it used fairly high-frequency data from nearby seismographs. What eventually became known as the “Richter” magnitude was originally called “Local Magnitude” or ML. As more seismographs were set up around the world, it soon became apparent Richter’s method was strictly valid only within certain frequency and distance ranges. Like many things from California, it possessed certain magic characteristics.

New magnitude scales that extended Richter & Gutenberg’s original idea were developed as the number of recording stations worldwide increased. These include body-wave magnitude (Mb) and surface wave magnitude (Ms). Each is valid over a particular range of frequency and type of signal, and within its own parameters is equivalent to “Richter” magnitude. But because of the limitations of all three, in 1979 a more uniformly applicable scale, known as “moment magnitude” (Mw), was developed by two other CIT scientists, Tom Hanks (no, not that Tom Hanks, another one) and Hiroo Kanamori. For very large earthquakes, Mw gives the most reliable estimate of earthquake size, and this is the measure that is today always misreported as “the Richter Scale”.

OK – so much for the science bit. But ask yourself this - even if scientists still used Richter, what real information would be conveyed by mentioning him? Forecasters may speak of Celsius and Fahrenheit, but only because there is a choice. Moreover, being correct and writing “An earthquake of Magnitude 7.8 has struck the island of Sumatra” is four words shorter. The chance to achieve correctness and concision at the same time ought to be welcomed by journalists everywhere – if only because the two coincide so rarely. Lastly, by not using the word

“scale” we avoid fostering the assumption, almost as mistaken as it is universal, that “the Richter Scale” has a top. (Or for that matter, a bottom. If this confuses you, just remember that the saying: “logarithmic plots are a device of the devil” is attributed to Richter.)

It is my theory that most of us cannot resist saying “on the Richter Scale” because like the epic poets, journalists rely heavily on repeated stock phrases – clichés, in other words. Moreover, the public expects it. We are seeing a conspiracy between journalists wishing to sound knowledgeable when we are not, and the public, which likes to flatter itself that it knows something, especially when it doesn’t. Let’s stop.

**Ted Nield**

**\*Editor, Geoscientist and Chair,  
Association of British Science Writers (ABSW)**

## Odds and ends

# OUR TASTY SECRETARY NEEDS URGENT HELP!

If you could see me now – and believe me you wouldn’t want to – you would think I had chicken pox or had morphed into a Dalmatian dog!

Whilst some of you have been basking in a heat-wave, we in the UK have been drowning. Thousands of people have been made homeless by extraordinary floods and in the North of the country it has rained continuously. Here in London it has rained, followed by spells of clammy, sticky heat and this has, I believe, led to my strange appearance. I am being bitten by some murderous insects that are thriving on the humid, damp atmosphere.

Mosquitoes, for example, were once unheard of in Britain but we do get them. We apparently have a plague of killer Harlequin ladybirds which are eating aphids and our friendly ladybirds. They are also eating humans. What is feasting on me I have no idea. I never see or hear them. It is only when I scratch and itch, have to stay in the house as my feet swell up so much that I cannot put shoes on and I have constant fevers coupled with vivid dreams that I know something has got me.

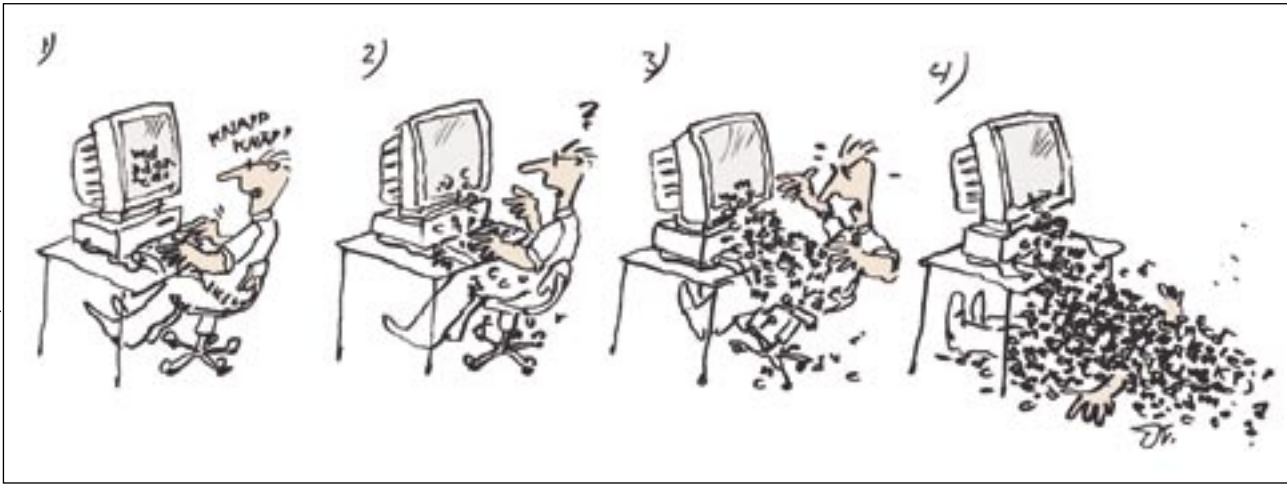
But what do I do to deter these cursed things? This is why I am appealing to my European colleagues to pass on their advice, old

wives’ tales, and latest medical, homeopathic or natural remedies. I want to deter all creatures from feasting on me. I hate heavy insect repellents whose chemicals affect me. I hate Marmite so cannot eat that for its vitamin B content which apparently offends mosquitoes. I put lavender, citronella and tea tree oil on myself when I venture into the garden but I am still attracting



Photo Kalanders Sempier

The honorable secretary before the attack of the killer mosquitoes..



Editors for this issue of EusjaNews has been Barbara Drillsma <[absw@absw.org.uk](mailto:absw@absw.org.uk)> and Kaianders Sempler <[kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se](mailto:kaianders.sempler@nyteknik.se)>

these blasted things which obviously think Christmas has arrived early when they see, smell or taste me. What else can I do?

Come on folks. We are a community. We are friends. You cannot let me suffer any longer. Pass on your advice. Help me to enjoy summer (when it arrives) walk in my garden; enjoy the great outdoors without swelling up and waking up with unsightly bumps and blotches. If it is any help for your diagnosis I am blood group A positive, eat a healthy diet and as far as I know, have no medical conditions or problems. Email me at [absw@absw.org.uk](mailto:absw@absw.org.uk).

**Thanks, Bumpy, blobby Barbie**

## 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!

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



# Eusja 2007

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