

EUSJA News

Newsletter of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations

Winter 1999

EUSJA on-line

Editorial

Get in on the act

Amazingly, many EUSJA members have never heard of EUSJA's on-line discussion group, EUSJA-L, let alone signed on. If you are one of them, here's what you're missing.

As well as offers of work, not to mention tickets for concerts, the list has talked about the value of the World Wide Web to freelance writers, and list members have passed on suggestions for good sites to visit. If you need information on just about any subject related to science journalism, a message to the EUSJA list is an obvious place to start.

It is easy to join the list. Just send the message:

Subscribe eusja-l firstname lastname (don't forget to substitute your own name!) to the address:

<listserv@listserv.rl.ac.uk>

Once it's confirmed that you are a member of a national journalists' association, the door will open and the fun starts. *turn to page 2*

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A new wave for EUSJA?

Ensuring the quality of the information they publish should be the main goal of the specialist scientific journals, which serve as important sources of stories for science journalists. Unfortunately, the fact that a piece of research is presented in one of these journals does not always guarantee its scientific quality, however much the coverage might fascinate the public or please the researchers whose work is highlighted.

Science journalists are under greater pressure than ever before to produce stories, so they have less time to devote to in-depth research. Yet while publication in a "prestigious" journal is becoming an increasingly convenient indicator of achievement, we journalists should remember the lessons we learned about the dangers and difficulties of covering stories such as Pusztai's work on genetically-modified potatoes or the saga of homeopathy and "memory" in water.

Science journalists act not only as an interface between the scientific community and public opinion. They also bridge gaps between scientists who may not be aware of developments outside their own disciplines.

Can EUSJA support the efforts of science journalists to disseminate comprehensible and reliable information about science? There were some positive signs this year. The Second World Conference of Science Journalists held in Budapest in July offered some insights, particularly from young science journalists, about how journalists and scientists can work together better. Another useful initiative, the Parliamentary Hearing on Science Communication held in Paris last October under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the European Science Foundation, aimed to involve research organisations, business and the media in fostering the communication of information about science and technology at an international level.

EUSJA's stated purpose is "to improve communication between the scientific community and society; to promote contacts among the various member associations and among journalists engaged in reporting science and technology." With this in mind, I think EUSJA can serve as a link to encourage co-operation between the national associations.

The 16th century was the beginning of the modern age. The 21st century will see the explosion into the post-modern age. From Gutenberg to Bill Gates, enormous technical, social and cultural transformations have taken place. EUSJA too has to look to the future to support the next generation of science journalists.

Paola de Paoli, President, EUSJA

Keep in touch!

News, views, stories, announcements, ideas or even cautionary tales — they could all be of interest for the next issue of *EUSJA News*, due out in early May 2000. Send me yours by 10 April 2000. An e-mail to <ninamorgan@compuserve.com> is preferred. But you can also get in touch by phone or fax (the number is the same for both) on +44-1608-676530; or by old-fashioned post at: Rose Cottage, East End, Chadlington, Oxon OX7 3LX, UK.

Nina Morgan, Editor, EUSJA News

Dutch doubts about EUSJA

At the general assembly of the Dutch Association of Science Journalists (VWN), held on 13 October, we considered a motion to resign our EUSJA membership. Questioning the benefits of our EUSJA membership is becoming more or less a habit at our annual assemblies. Previously, the VWN board has felt they could offer some justification for continuing to pay EUSJA membership subscriptions. The present VWN board did not.

The VWN is becoming more and more frustrated by EUSJA's "performance". To us it seems that the EUSJA board fails to give direction to the association. For example, although a few issues were raised in the EUSJA board e-mail discussion list over the past six months, only a few national representatives took part in them. The e-mail discussion, we believe, was not adequately facilitated by input from the executive committee of EUSJA.

To us, the executive committee appears to have its own agenda, and takes little interest in the opinions of the board members. One example of this is their decision to use EUSJA funds to support journalists from eastern Europe who wanted to participate in the World Conference of Science Journalists in Budapest this summer although it was known that some member countries strongly opposed this.

All this does not give us confidence in EUSJA as an effective professional association. Our doubts are not new, and questions about the position and performance of EUSJA is a recurrent issue at board meetings. It is sad that this has not led to much improvement over the last few years.

When we posted our misgivings about EUSJA on the EUSJA board e-mail discussion list we noted some interesting responses. The Association of British Science Writers sympathised with our point of view. They too said they are "seriously unhappy" with the way EUSJA is working now, and cited reasons such as lack of democratic decisionmaking, the actions of the current executive committee and the fact that EUSJA continues to collect subscriptions from its members without proposing firm spending plans.

The Finnish representative, Jussi Nuorteva, described the discussions about EUSJA that took place within the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists a few years ago. The Finns eventually opted to stay in EUSJA because of the opportunities it offers for contacts with European colleagues. During their deliberations, Jussi reported, the Finnish association considered questions about the changes and improvements necessary for EUSJA to reach the goal of enhancing co-operation on both a European and world-wide basis.

Dr Walter Baier from the German association suggested that it's not enough to ask what EUSJA can do for individual members. Instead, all members should ask what they can do for EUSJA. And EUSJA, as an organisation, should in turn, come up with some answers about what it is, and what it could or should be.

EUSJA vice-president Istvan Palugyai criticised the

lack of VWN representation at the Budapest conference (although a few Dutch journalists did attend the conference independently), pointing out that, in his view, co-operation is a better option than isolation. He also welcomed suggestions on how to enhance EUSJA's performance.

We took all these responses into account when we discussed our EUSJA membership at the VWN assembly, and you will probably be glad to know that the VWN decided to stay within EUSJA, at least for the time being. We think that an organisation that aims to help European science journalists meet and work together is a good thing. However, the message from the VWN members is also clear: reform is needed on many fronts. We'd like to give EUSJA another chance and we think it's up to all the EUSJA members and the executive committee to take up this challenge.

Harm Ikink, VWN Secretary and temporary EUSJA representative, <IKINKH@compuserve.com>

Italians in America

In April this year a group of 30 Italian science journalists travelled across the United States in search of interesting science. With visits to places such as Stanford University, the Livermore Labs, the Salk Institute, Scripps and the Palomar Observatory on the agenda in California, followed by trips to places like the Fermi Labs in Chicago, the MIT Artificial Intelligence labs in Boston and Lucent Technologies in New Jersey, among others, they could hardly fail to find it.

The visit, which ended at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington DC, also offered a unique opportunity to discuss problems in science communication and science policy, and to compare and contrast the situations in Italy and the United States.

This was a multidisciplinary journey of a lifetime that took us to places where significant discoveries had been made and gave us all the chance to meet a wide range of innovative and versatile scientists whose work is bringing real benefit to humanity.

UGIS organised our visit to give Italian journalists a chance to really widen our horizons. If trips like this were organised at a European level, just think how many more journalists could benefit!

Marialuigia Bagni, UGIS

... Get in on the act

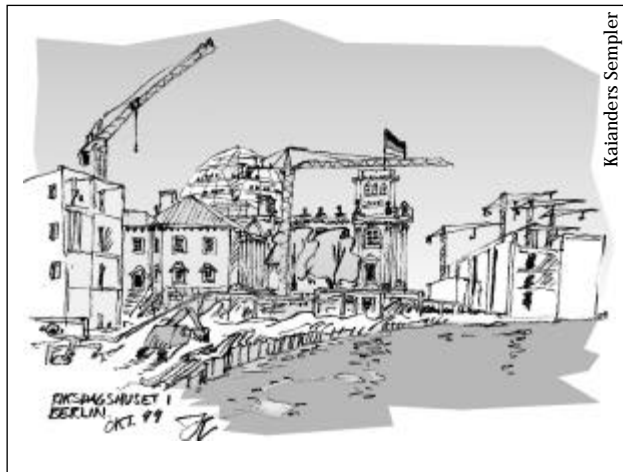
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More than 200 farsighted members of EUSJA have already signed on to EUSJA-L. For several years now we've been part of an international gossip, discussion and information-sharing network. Why not join us?

And while you're at it, check out the EUSJA website at: <<http://www.esf.org/eusja/>>. There you will find useful tips for science journalists, as well as a page of pointers to members' sites. To get your site added to the list, send details to Michael Kenward at <michael.kenward@dial.pipex.com>.

Back to our beginnings

TELI, EUSJA's German member organisation, went back to its Berlin birthplace to celebrate its 70th anniversary. And in true literary fashion, it celebrated not with a birthday cake and candles, but by



Building a future: Berlin, scene of a conference to mark the 70th anniversary of TELI

joining with erstwhile rivals the Wissenschaftspressekonferenz (WPK) to organise a conference to discuss the general theme of the future of science journalism.

During the conference four panels were set up to discuss different aspects related to the future of science and journalism. One concentrated on discussions about the consequences of technology development for society. Others concentrated on ethics and the society of learning; media and the society of learning; and journalism and the society of learning. The conference programme ended with visits to a number of research institutes.

The conference was open to science journalists from all over Europe. The response to the conference was enthusiastic and exceeded all expectations. Around 200 journalists from 20 countries took part. More gratifying still is that the conference broadened the future possibilities for better co-operation between TELI, WPK and other organisations that support journalists writing about in science and technology in Germany.

● See the new TELI web pages at <http://www.teli.de/>

Dietmar Schmidt

[<dietmar.schmidt@verwaltung.uni-muenchen.de>](mailto:dietmar.schmidt@verwaltung.uni-muenchen.de)

Getting a world's eye view

As a Russian scientist, now turned science journalist and working for Echo of Moscow, one of the first private radio stations in the "new" Russia, the chance to attend the World Conference of Science Journalists in Budapest last July meant a lot to me. For a start, it offered me a rare opportunity to see how science journalists in other countries work, and to compare my own activities with theirs.

What surprised me most were not the differences between us, but the similarities. Although the journalists taking part in the discussions to set out a conference declaration expressed many different points of view and worked in many different ways, they all believe that science journalism plays a crucial role in educating and informing people everywhere.

I thought I was alone in having to continually work to persuade the listeners and the powers that be at the Echo of Moscow of the importance of science in our daily lives. But at the conference I found that every science journalist, whether they work in Nepal or in the United States, complained of the same problem. And I learned that there are plenty of journalists happy to give me practical help and advice.

Even the conference materials – the booklets and papers journalists usually throw away as soon as they get to their hotel rooms – were helpful. When I looked through them I found lots of useful information. For example, I now know when and where the next meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) will take place, and who will be there. It would be wonderful if I could get there too.

After Budapest, the conference continued to live on for me. An American journalist I met there got in touch to ask for help in contacting Russian scientists so he could get first-hand information about the near-accident on the Mir space station. Then I had the chance to meet an American scientist who had come to discuss a controversial foetal therapy technique with his Russian colleagues. And thanks to what I learned at Budapest, I've become a daily visitor to many science websites I would never have known about. It's an experience that has really opened up my world!

Marina Astvatsaturian, Intellect, <mast@echo.msk.ru>

Information/technology

Innovation on-line with CORDIS

Want to find out the latest information about EU research, development and innovation activities? A good place to start is the CORDIS website at <http://www.cordis.lu/>.

CORDIS is a free web service which offers easy access to timely and comprehensive information on EU research, development and innovation activities all over Europe. The site aims to serve as a public gateway to the wide world of European research, development and innovation activities offered by collaborative European R&D.

With specialised services for journalists to help you keep up to speed on the latest European R&D news about general policy, programme implementation and calls for proposals, and a searchable database to help you find experts to provide background information on a wide range of topics, it's certainly worth a look. Information is available in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

For more information contact Anne-Claire Schmidt at CORDIS, [<a.schmidt@cordis.lu>](mailto:a.schmidt@cordis.lu).

Hands-on experience with EICOS

Every year, EICOS, the European Initiative for Communicators of Science, invites journalists to get their hands dirty with real science by taking part in its Hands-on Laboratory and Extended Assignments programmes.

The next Hands-on Laboratory will take place at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen, Germany, from 6-13 May 2000. Journalists will have the opportunity to spend eight days working with scientists on actual projects in molecular biology using state-of-the-art techniques, discussing public understanding of science issues with the researchers and colleagues, making new contacts and enjoying the atmosphere of Göttingen and its surroundings. There is also an option to spend up to a further two weeks on an "extended laboratory assignment" in selected laboratories at the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen as well as other leading research institutions in Europe.

All programme costs, including travel and accommodation costs, are paid by EICOS. Professional journalists, including freelancers, from any European country (including Israel) and working for any print or electronic media can apply. No science background is required, and general journalists with an interest in science research are also encouraged to apply. The working language is English. The deadline for applications is 1 February 2000.

Interested? Contact Dr Dorothee Wegener, Forum für Wissenschaft und Technik, Heinrich-von-Stephan-Strasse 1, D-37073 Göttingen, Germany, tel +49-551-5472732, fax +49-551-5472727, e-mail <wegener@fwt.de> for further information and an application form.

Speaking their language

Basque language science has a champion: the Elhuyar Association. Elhuyar aims to write about science and technology in Basque, to help Basque scientists and workers to use Basque language, and to promote awareness of scientific articles written by Basque scientists.

The association was formed in 1972 by a group of engineering students at Navarra University in San Sebastian. It takes its name from the famous Basque surgeon Elhuyar, whose sons, Joan Jose and Fausto, achieved international fame for their discovery of tungsten at Bergara in the Basque Country.

The association's early days were far from easy. Franco's censorship was still in force, and Elhuyar had to rely on the official protection of the Real Sociedad Vascoganda de los Amigos del País to survive. And even when democracy returned to Spain, Elhuyar still had a fight on its hands to promote Basque science.

When Adolfo Suárez, the Spanish president of the day, declared that nuclear physics could not be discussed in either Basque or in Catalan, P. M. Etxenike and R. H. Ritchie, two scientists living in the United States, responded by publishing their research results in

Basque. Their article, *loi Lasterren Wake Potentziala Egoera Solidoan*, first appeared in 1978 in issue 17 of the Elhuyar magazine. The same article was later published in the prestigious journal *Physical Review*.

Elhuyar finally achieved legal status in 1980. In 1984 it was classified as an Association in the Public Interest by the Basque Government.

When the Elhuyar magazine was launched in 1974, its aim was to introduce the Basque language into the world of science. But by 1981 its objective had changed. The editors realised that people were no longer buying the magazine because it was written in the Basque language. Instead they were buying it for the interesting material it contained.

Nowadays, Elhuyar works in many different fields including education – the association produces textbooks, CD-ROMs, encyclopedias and translations – and communication. Elhuyar collaborates with some of the Basque media, and it also helps to promote the use of the Basque language, above all, in science communication. As a result it works with a number of Basque public institutions and companies to organise courses and lectures. Elhuyar also sponsors an annual award for Basque-language science communication.

Our aim, says Iñaki Irazabalbeitia, Elhuyar president, is to "try to strengthen communication and labour fields, without forgetting the education field". There are still some holes left when it comes to science communication in the Basque world, but Elhuyar members are confident that they will be able to fill them.

Alex Fernandez, *Elhuyar*, <ivasca@sarenet.es>

EUPRIO? Never heard of it!

If you've never heard of EUPRIO, you're not alone! Many science journalists have no idea what EUPRIO is. But we'd like to change that because we see many opportunities to work together with our journalist colleagues. So who are we?

EUPRIO is the European Universities Public Relations and Information Officers Association. Founded in 1986 with the support of the European Commission, EUPRIO is made up of around 300 university press officers, public relations specialists, university administrators and others concerned with communication. As well as working to improve contacts among members, we address issues about professional quality and publish a bulletin two or three times a year. We also hold an annual conference which journalists are welcome to attend.

EUPRIO members are keen to make contact with science journalists because we think university press officers and journalists have a lot to offer each other. We are well aware of the job you do for us in helping to promote the public understanding of science and bring science stories to the notice of the general public, and we hope we can help you by putting you in touch with the contacts you need.

To find out more about EUPRIO, contact me at the e-mail address shown below, or take a look at our website <<http://info.au.dk/euprio/index.htm>>, which includes a list of press officers around Europe. On the website

you'll also find information about our next annual conference to be held in from 7-10 September 2000 in Lecce, Italy. The theme is *University communication: torn between academia and business*. We hope to hear from you!

Rolf Guggenbuehl, <guggenbuehl@sl.ethz.ch>

Filling up the Word Pool

Thinking of setting up a website? Here's how

I had a great idea for a website containing information about children's books and tips for children's writers. I knew my background in writing, teaching and mothering gave me the capability to write it. But what I didn't know about were the problems involved in producing a good website. I soon learned.

The first step was to decide which of the many computers that make up the World Wide Web should store my pages. Like most people, I have space provided free with my Internet connection but the restrictions on its use sent me looking for commercial web space instead. After searching the net we eventually settled on a local company because their site was fast (and they were the only ones who offered us lunch!).

With our space rented and our domain name registered, all we had to do was design the site. There is, we discovered, a big difference between publishing in print and publishing on the web. It's called compatibility. With print, everyone who picks up the page sees exactly the same text, pictures and layout. With the web, what people see depends on the computer and browser they use. There is no point in designing an all-singing, all-dancing site for a high resolution display if most of your readers use elderly computers with small screens and don't want to wait five minutes for your animated penguin to download.

With the help of a good book on design and hours spent just looking at other people's pages, we came up with the golden rules for our site. Keep it simple; keep it fast; keep it friendly. And keep it still – animation is distracting if you are trying to read text.

The end result of our efforts is The Word Pool. View it at <<http://www.wordpool.co.uk/>>. If you write for children or have children of your own, have a look and get involved. The site includes a discussion group for children's writers and I always welcome suggestions for books to review.

Diana Kimpton <Diana@wordpool.co.uk>

Meeting of the minds in Paris

Leading European science journalists, including several EUSJA Board members, were among those giving evidence to the Council of Europe's Science and Technology Committee at a parliamentary hearing on scientific communication and European media, held in Paris on 11-12 October 1999.

With Clive Cookson of the *Financial Times* and Claude

Birraux, Vice-President of the Committee, acting as moderators, the parliamentarians, who'd travelled to Paris from as far afield as Iceland, Spain and Poland, seized the opportunity to swap roles with the journalists and ask rather than answer the questions.

Among the speakers were EUSJA President Paola de Paoli, who discussed the role of science journalists; Clive Cookson and EUSJA Board Member Jussi Nuorteva, who both underlined the need for better training of scientists in communication techniques; and Istvan Palyugai, organiser of this year's World Science Journalists' Conference, who highlighted the numerous difficulties faced by science journalists in the post-Communist states of central and eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, Patrice Lanoy, President of the Association of French Science Journalists, struck a more philosophical note. He stressed that it is in the interests of "democratic debate" that the voices of "real people", and not just those of the experts, are heard on issues of science as much as on any other social or economic issue. And here, he said, the media has a central responsibility to create the framework for this debate.

Other discussion topics at the two-day meeting included the impact of the Internet on scientific communication, the role of on-line press centres such as AlphaGalileo, and the rising costs to the science system of the current "publish or perish" culture. The former editor of *Nature*, Sir John Maddox, called for a reduction by a factor of three in the current number of specialist scientific publications. Gert Noorman predicted that academic publishing houses such as his own, Elsevier, would be Internet companies in a few years' time. And Robert Cailliau, co-inventor of the World Wide Web, called for Europe to invest urgently in providing greater bandwidth for the region's Internet users in order to not fall further behind the United States.

The proceedings of the hearing are due to be published by the Council of Europe shortly and will be available via the ESF website at <<http://www.esf.org/>>.

Andrew Smith, <asmith@esf.org>

West goes East

The Ireland/Slovenia exchange, part 2

You don't have to be a science writer to understand the importance of establishing good communications with a network of colleagues in other countries. At the 1998 Board meeting delegates agreed to support an East-West exchange between journalists from Slovenia and Ireland. Last February, EUSJA paid the airfares for two Slovenian journalists to travel to Ireland for what turned out to be a very successful and productive visit (see *EUSJA News*, Spring 1999, page 2). In September, EUSJA paid the fares for two Irish journalists, Anna Nolan and Dominic Phelan, to visit Slovenia in return. As with the Irish visit, the two stayed in the homes of Slovenia journalists.

As a staff writer for the magazine *Irish Computer*, Dominic's main interests lay in matters related to the information society.

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... West goes East

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In contrast, Anna was interested in finding out about Slovenian science policy, the general economic situation and in visiting the nuclear power plant at Krsko in south-east Slovenia.

The two were treated to a hectic week that included meetings with officials at the National Council of Science and the Ministry of Science and Technology to discuss the breadth and scope of Slovenian research and development in science and technology; a chance to witness how Slovenia responded to politically motivated accusations from neighbouring Austria about supposed dangers associated with the "eastern" technology used in Slovenia's Krsko nuclear power plant; and a visit to an area of virgin forest in southern Slovenia to find out about the tradition of sustainable development in this area, dating back to the 19th century. And those were just the highlights.

Although "small is beautiful" could be said to be the most obvious link between the two countries, the exchanges visits showed up many other similarities in terms of size and problems faced. With so many benefits gained on both sides, all involved agreed this was an experiment in international understanding well worth EUSJA support.

Goran Tenze, Slovenian Association of Science Journalists, <goran.tenze@rtvslo.si>

Getting the health message across

Evidence-based journalism in health matters: is it a realistic goal or just a dream? This is one of the underlying questions being asked in an ongoing project at the Institute for Public Health in Oslo, Norway, where Professor Andy Oxman and colleagues are working on a project which aims to investigate the barriers health journalists meet when reporting on medical matters.

Only a few decades ago medical journals seemed to be an extension of the academic ivory tower. Now times have changed. Interest in medical issues is increasing. But bringing the best research to the attention of a wide public, including the general public, is not easy. Both researchers and medical journalists cite many problems.

The Norwegian project has already set up a couple of focus group discussions in Sweden and Britain. Project members are now conducting telephone interviews with health journalists to identify the problems they face. Lack of knowledge and space, along with commercial constraints – such as the need to sell newspapers – appear to be common concerns. Many reporters have also asked for training in the art of critical appraisal, Internet-based support or simply crash courses in statistics or epidemiology. A network of approachable experts also features on many journalists' wish lists.

The information gathered from the interviews will be used as a basis for designing a trial programme to help health journalists. The programme will probably take

the form of a week-long training course to be held in Oslo in the late spring of 2000. For more information contact Professor Andy Oxman, Institute of Public Health, Postboks 4404, Torshov, N-0403 Oslo, Norway, tel +47-220-42-200.

Anna Larsson, Swedish Broadcasting Company, Stockholm, <anna.ekot@starport.se>

A new international association?

Do we need more associations? We journalists are independent creatures, and after the soul-searching about the future of EUSJA (see *Dutch doubts about EUSJA* on page 2 of this issue), most readers will probably groan at the idea of yet another, even larger, international grouping. But that's what's been proposed by 146 science writers and broadcasters, representing 29 countries from Nepal to the USA. The proposers were delegates to the Second World Conference of Science Journalists, a meeting held in Budapest in July in association with the UNESCO World Conference on Science.

The proposal was part of a declaration voted by the meeting which called for science journalists to pay more attention to "the process, politics, ethics and relations with society" and "means of production" of modern science. It also called for journalists to take more account of science's international dimensions and report "on and from countries and cultures other than their own".

It was in this spirit that the Budapest meeting called for a World Federation of Science Journalists' Associations – though the title was left open – whose objective would be to increase global journalistic contacts and sharing of experience on such matters. The Federation ought also to be able to offer some assistance in their work, and perhaps training, to journalists in the poorer countries.

A pilot group was established with the aim of establishing the Federation and I was somewhat dumbfounded to be elected as its secretary. But having since recovered, I would very much appreciate your help and suggestions for the use of such a Federation, and for any possible sources of funding.

Robert Walgate, ABSW, tel/fax +44 1923 840 173, <urtheory@dircon.co.uk>

A sideways look

World famous in an attic in Berlin

Being a science journalist has its good sides. In the past I went on my fair share of EUSJA press trips throughout Europe. Sometimes they were interesting, and sometimes they were a bit hard to stomach because of all the sales talk you had to digest.

But once in a while I found a precious stone – like this lonesome warrior battling away for the sake of uncorrupted science in an attic in Berlin. I think it was in 1982 I encountered him. *Hou me te goede*, this one

must have been particularly well known (although not to empty-heads like me), and with apologies to all the science historians amongst you, I've forgotten his name. But buried away in some big institute, this Professor Famous Anonymous welcomed us to a room furnished with antique school desks, where famous scientists like Debye and Von Laue had once sat. Out of respect, I remained standing.

I can't even clearly recall what it was he was trying to tell us, but it had something to do with his theory that perfect crystals do not exist in nature. And he took us into a darkened room where young researchers were conducting experiments involving lasers to prove that he – this scientist in the attic – was the only one in the world who was right.

All this sticks in my memory – that scientist in that attic of a big building in the still-divided city of Berlin. “*Allemaal flauwekul* – it's all rubbish”, said a Dutch colleague from a respectable quality paper as we left. But people like that scientist make the biggest impression on me.

Oh Sacred Science, we earthlings are not allowed to trespass Thy Holy Laws under penalty of exclusion. And we science journalists accept those sacrosanct laws. We are sure, aren't we?

Arno Schrauwers, VWN, <schrauwers@avd.nl>

Do you have an eye for news?

Seeking European science writers

ESCRS *EuroTimes* is published by the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, a non-profit organisation established in 1991 to provide a forum for communication, education and co-operation between ophthalmic surgeons, primarily in Europe, but also in other parts of the world.

EuroTimes reports on developments in surgical techniques and equipment in ophthalmology and highlights the surgeons making these developments possible. Our coverage includes the whole range of ophthalmic surgery but there is a special emphasis on cataracts. We've been going for five years now, and publish 44 pages tabloid size, 8 times per year. The publication is received by 16 000 doctors.

I am the Managing Editor of *EuroTimes* and I am seeking to recruit freelance science or medical writers to work with us on a regular basis. In addition to our coverage of surgical techniques we would like to run stories regularly on other issues of interest.

We are looking for more writers from different European countries who can submit articles in English. We are based in Dublin, Ireland, but would like to recruit writers from continental Europe and from Scandinavia.

If you want to find out more, or see a sample copy of the publication, contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Carol Fitzpatrick, Managing Editor, ESCRS EuroTimes,
10 Hagan Court, Lad Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland
<carol.fitzpatrick@agenda-comm.ie>*

Sites to see

AlphaGalileo, Europe's free one-stop shop for science, engineering and technology news, now has over 1000 registered journalists able to access embargoed news stories from over 600 European universities and research institutes. We also provide e-mail alerts that put a summary of new releases directly onto your PC. And registered users get access to an address book of European science press offices, with phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Join the service by registering at <<http://www.alphagalileo.org/>>, or ask for further information from the organisers at <site.editor@alphagalileo.org>.

● Find out what's on show in science, industry and technology by checking out the new ECSITE (European Collaborative for Science, Industry & Technology exhibitions) website at <<http://www.ecsite.net/>>.

A second look sideways

News release: new element found

The heaviest element known to science was recently discovered by chemists. News of the discovery has been circulated by an anonymous correspondent on the Internet.

The element, tentatively named Administratum, has no protons or electrons and thus has an atomic number of 0. But it does have 1 neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice-neutrons and 111 assistant vice-neutrons, giving an atomic mass of 312.

The 312 particles are held together by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called morons.

Since it has no electrons, Administratum is inert. However, it can be detected chemically as it impedes every action with which it comes in contact. According to the discoverers, a minute amount of Administratum causes a reaction that would normally occur in less than one second to take four days.

Administratum has a half-life of approximately three years. It does not actually decay but instead undergoes a reorganization in which assistant neutrons, vice-neutrons and assistant vice-neutrons exchange places. Some studies have shown that atomic mass actually increases after each reorganization.

Research at other laboratories indicates that Administratum occurs naturally in the atmosphere. It tends to concentrate in government agencies, large corporations and universities, and can usually be found in the newest and best-appointed buildings.

Chemists point out that Administratum is known to be toxic at any concentration and can easily destroy any productive reaction where it is allowed to accumulate. Attempts are being made to determine how Administratum can be controlled to prevent irreversible damage. Another element, Committeium, may be able to neutralise Administratum by issuing voluminous and irrelevant reports.

EUSJA Board Members

Planning a journey? Your colleagues in Europe can help

President

Paola de Paoli
Viale Ezio 5, I-20149 Milano
tel/fax: +39-02-437-476
e-mail: teresella@iol.it

Vice-president

Istvan Palugyai
Népszabadsag, Bécsi ut. 122-24
H-1034 Budapest
tel/fax: +36-1-318-7506
e-mail: palugyai@nepszabadsag.hu

Honorary Secretary

Werner Hadorn
Büro Cortesi, Neuenburgstrasse 140
CH-2505 Biel-Bienne
tel: +41-32-322-0911
fax: +41-32-322-1056
e-mail: WernerHadorn@compuserve.com

Treasurer

Marialuigia Bagni
via Orti 14, I-20122 Milano
tel/fax: +39-02-55-19-42-28
e-mail: mlbagni@micronet.it

EUSJA Secretariat

Sabine Schott
EUSJA, 1 quai Lezay-Marnésia
F-67000 Strasbourg
tel: +33-3-88-76-71-34
fax: +33-3-88-76-71-80
e-mail: eusja@esf.org
www: <http://www.esf.org/eusja/>

Austria

Martin Haidinger
Argentinerstrasse 30a, A-1040 Wien
tel: +43-1-50-101-18166
mobile: +43-664-1009874
fax: +43-1-50-101-18825
e-mail: martin.haidinger@orf.at

Belgium

Françoise Wolff
Focus Research, Boulevard du Triomphe 63
B-1160 Bruxelles
tel: +32-2-647-77-13
fax: +32-2-647-31-57
e-mail: focus.research@euronet.be

Denmark

Rolf Haugaard Nielsen
Bjornsonsvej 79, st. th., DK-2500 Valby
tel: +45-3617-3309
fax: +45-3617-0639
e-mail: haug@post4.tele.dk

Estonia

Indrek Rohtmets
Horisont, Narva Rd 5, EST-200102 Tallinn
tel: +372-2-44-33-70
fax: +372-2-44-43-85
e-mail: horisont@datanet.ee

Finland

Jussi Nuorteva
Research Council for Culture and

Social Sciences, Academy of Finland
PO Box 99, FIN-00501 Helsinki
tel: +358-9-7748-8223
fax: +358-9-7748-8388
e-mail: jussi.nuorteva@aka.fi

France

Sophie Coisne
49 rue de Tolbiac, F-75013 Paris
tel/fax: +33-1-01-45-86-35-76
e-mail: scoisne@club-internet.fr

Germany

Dietmar Schmidt
Connollystrasse 28/II, D-80809 München
tel: +49-89-21-80-34-23
fax: +49-89-33-82-97
e-mail: Dietmar.Schmidt@Verwaltung.
Uni-Muenchen.de

India

N C Jain
Indian Science Writers' Association
B-II 6/6, New Minto Road Apartments
IND-110002 New Delhi
tel: +91-11-335-48-42

Ireland

Cormac Sheridan
4 Home Villas, Donnybrook, Dublin 4
tel: +353-1-660-4987
fax: +1-708-810-6897
e-mail: csheridan@tinet.ie

Israel

Razi Guterman
Biet Sokolov, 4 Kaplan St
IL-64734 Tel Aviv
fax: +972-3-695-14-38

Netherlands

Harm Ikink
Postbus 564, NL-3800 AN Amersfoort
tel: +31-33-433-00-99
fax: +31-33-433-00-89
e-mail: IKINKH@compuserve.com

Norway

Kjell-Gunnar Heimark
Norwegian Meteorological Institute
Boks 43 Blindern, N-0313 Oslo 3
tel: +47-22-96-30-00
fax: +47-22-96-30-50
e-mail: kjell-gunnar.heimark@dnmi.no

Poland

Walerian Ignasiak
Glos Wielkopolski
Oss. Wladyslawa Lokietka 6/3
PL-61-616 Poznan
tel/fax: +48-61-82-27-857

Russia

Viola Egikova
Association of Science Writers and
Journalists 'INTELLECT'
Horoshovskoe Shosse 50-98
RU-123007 Moscow
tel: +7-095-256-51-22

fax: +7-095-259-63-60
e-mail: egikova@mospravda.ru

Slovakia

Lubomir Lenoch
Stefanovicova 3, SL-81106 Bratislava
tel/fax: +421-7-497-117

Slovenia

Goran Tenze
Radio Slovenija, Tavcarjeva 17
SI-1550 Ljubljana
tel: +386-61-175-24-23
fax: +386-61-175-23-15
e-mail: goran.tenze@rtvslo.si

Spain

Manuel Toharia
Ginzo de Limia 55, E-28034 Madrid
tel/fax: +34-1-378-05-95
e-mail: mtoharia@technologist.com

Sweden

Kaianders Sempler
Ny Teknik, S-106 12 Stockholm
tel: +46-8-796-65-67
mobile: +46-705-44-81-71
fax: +46-8-613-30-28
e-mail: kaianders.semler@nyteknik.se

Switzerland

Rosmarie Waldner
Arosastrasse 4, CH-8008 Zürich
tel: +41-1-382-09-08
fax: +41-1-382-21-22
e-mail: 100606.756@compuserve.com

United Kingdom

Nina Morgan
Rose Cottage, East End, Chadlington
Oxon OX7 3LX
tel/fax: +44-1608-676530
e-mail: ninamorgan@compuserve.com

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Editor: Nina Morgan
tel/fax: +44-1608-676530
e-mail: ninamorgan@compuserve.com
Layout: CopyWrite
tel: +44-24-7667-2597
fax: +44-24-7669-1226
e-mail: charles@writer.demon.co.uk