

SETTING UP YOUR OWN

**SCIENCE
JOURNALISTS'
ASSOCIATION**

BARBARA DRILLSMA



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HOW TO DO IT, WHAT TO DO ONCE IT IS FORMED
AND WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR!



This booklet has been written for the WFSJ conference held in Melbourne, April 2007 by Barbara Drillsma. She is a journalist and author; board member of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations and administrator of the Association of British Science Writers.

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It is in its Constitution. The World Federation of Science Journalists is “dedicated to encourage the foundation of associations where there are none”.

This wonderful handbook on how to set up and maintain an association is a concrete manifestation of the Federation’s commitment to help science journalists network.

Science journalists love their profession, but it is tough to thrive between science and the public. No wonder that the journalists who cover science and technology are keen to meet and help each other. Informal exchanges and meetings often lead to more regular and structured interactions. Eventually, the science journalists formalize their encounters through the creation of an association.

Barbara Drillsma, who has many years of experience as a science journalist and administrator for the

Association of British Science Writers, tells us, step by step, how to create your own association in this little publication, the first of its kind. As Honorary Secretary of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations, she has had the opportunity to see the activities of many other associations across Europe. For our benefit, Barbara also provides great tips on how to keep that fledgling association alive and thriving.

This publication has also been made possible through a special grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, one of the key supporters of our programs with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) and the Swedish International Development Agency.

We hope you will use this guide to create your association, if you are at that stage. For those who are already blessed with an association, you will find excellent tips to make your existing association even more active and relevant for the science journalists in your country or region.

Without national and regional associations, there is no World Federation of Science Journalists. The vigour of the Federation rests entirely on the shoulders of its members.

This little guide will make the fledgling structures dedicated to support and represent science journalists better, at national, regional and international level.

May this guide be useful to you and your science journalist colleagues. We also welcome your comments, experiences and accomplishments to enrich the next edition.

WILSON DA SILVA, PRESIDENT

NOTES & COMMENTS

The Goncourt Brothers, two 19th century diarists once said if two Englishmen were washed up on a desert island, the first thing they would do would be to form a club. The English have great experience at creating clubs and for this reason this booklet will concentrate on the role model of the Association of British Science Writers, an organisation which, this year, celebrates its 60th anniversary.

At its peak the ABSW has had 1000 members, now with pruning out non-active members, 700 but in reality a science journalists' association or club can be formed with as few as five people. It can be an informal body, or it can be established legally right from the start but bear in mind the latter will cost money and one thing many associations have little of when they start is cash.

To begin with what is needed is enthusiasm, commitment and a desire to make an association work. The aim of this booklet is to give a basic idea of what needs to be considered when setting up a science journalists' group and to offer helpful suggestions and practical tips on how to get it off the ground.

At the back of this booklet you will find contact details of many flourishing Science Journalists' Associations. All will be pleased to offer help and advice. Some are well established, such as those in Canada and the USA, as well as European groups from Germany, Finland, Italy, the UK and France. Others are new like the Czech Republic. All have gone through the process on which you are hopefully embarking. You will also find examples of various documents relating to membership and science writing prize forms which can be used as examples for your own organisation.

The very first step is to discover just how many potential members you may be able to attract. In a small country it may be easy if the majority of publications and broadcast outlets are concentrated in one major city. In a larger, more spaced out country things spread by word of mouth are more difficult to control. Consider placing an advertisement in either the science pages of a specialist publication aimed at journalists and communicators, if there is one, or on the science pages or near a regular science column, asking for those interested in forming an association of science communicators to make contact.

Send a leaflet to editors – but be careful to stress that the intention of such an organisation is to improve standards of science journalism and to promote a network of science communicators just in case the editors think you are forming a body which

may be more demanding. There is strength in numbers! Press clubs, if they exist, could also be used. Place a notice on the members' board. Look into foreign press clubs. Many countries have informal gatherings of overseas journalists. There is no reason, if they are permanently based, why they cannot join a home country organisation. University science departments, government information offices, television and radio stations are also excellent sources of potential members as is, of course, the internet.

THE FIRST MEETING

Once you have some interest, fix a meeting. This can be a formal event or an informal gathering. Offer refreshments and provide a signing-in book so you have a record of everybody who attended and their contact details. Discuss what any member may expect from its own science journalists' association. The major benefits are the sharing of knowledge, the support of fellow members, the potential for networking and, most of all, the possibility of being able to take part in larger international meetings such as those organised by the World Federation of Science Journalists. Your association can also act as a voice. You can respond to government commissions and findings and can offer general comments about the level

of science coverage and resulting knowledge in your country.

At the first meeting you need to appoint a chairman or president, a treasurer and a secretary to take minutes. It is preferable, at first, to appoint officers who are journalists. But the problem here is that many journalists are inexperienced and frankly hopeless at administration with little knowledge of semi-official bodies. If this is the case it might be preferable to appoint a chairman from a press office or learned society, somebody familiar with the words and workings of committees. If you have sufficient interest, form a board (or committee). Think of a name and devise a logo. Once this has been done, write a press release informing the scientific world about the birth of a science journalist association. Send it to the press; university science departments; the heads of media relations at all major government departments; NGOs; businesses; and the press officers of all scientific, pharmaceutical, IT and technical industries.

The value of having a committee is that different sections of the association can be allocated to one individual to oversee. For example somebody on the committee can be responsible for organising visits, another for fund-raising and maybe another could be membership secretary. It does not mean that each officer has to do all the work – simply to see it is done.

NOTES & COMMENTS

Right from the start you will need some money – even if it is only needed to pay for advertisements, leaflets and room-hire fees, somebody will have to pay up. If you have absolutely no funds at all, you will have to ask for them. If your country has a National Science Council this would be worth a first call as would your government's Science Ministry, especially if an election is looming and votes and good will are needed. The British Council is always worth approaching too. It may not be able to provide instant money but can point you in the right direction and could even offer to lend a room for the inaugural meeting.

THE CONSTITUTION

Rules, regulations and laws governing the establishment of organisations vary from country to country.

In the UK for instance, the ABSW has no legal or charitable status. It is simply a private members' club. It has a constitution, bank account and at the end of each financial year its accounts are audited and presented to members at the Annual General Meeting. EUSJA, the European Union of Science Journalists Associations also has a constitution but under French law, has to have this constitution lodged with the legal and commercial section of EUSJA's bankers. The Canadian Association has had to register its name to obtain a company number before it could open a bank account. If you are not sure, a call to your local Chamber of Commerce or even your bank, should clarify the situation.

A constitution lays down the rules by which the organisation will be run. It is easy to become bogged down when preparing a constitution, just look at the trouble the EU is in trying to get its constitution approved by all member states. Keep it as short and simple as possible. It should detail the name of the association and specify its aims. The ABSW's objective, for example, is to "further the special interests of science writers and broadcasters in the UK and to maintain standards of professional conduct on the part of science journalists in keeping with the highest traditions of science, authorship and journalism." The constitution should give details of how officials

will be appointed and determines the length of time they will hold office. Officers can be a president or chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer and international representative. It is advisable to appoint officers for three years as it is difficult to achieve much in one year and then have to hand over to somebody new to start the familiarisation process. The constitution should also describe what the purpose and objectives are of the association, the criteria for membership and should state that an annual general meeting will be held each year.

It is also advisable to state in the constitution how many times a year the executive committee should meet. Some countries meet monthly, others every two months. And don't forget the business of a quorum, the smallest number of people who should be present at an executive committee meeting. In the UK this number is four.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR MONEY

From the start it is important to keep strict financial records. If you ever seek sponsorship or grants you may be asked to show your "books" or financial transactions. Nobody is willing to invest in or support an organisation which is not completely open about its accounts.

Once you have sufficient interest to launch an association, calculate just how much money you will need to operate for a year. Can you manage with members handling the administration or are you going to employ a dedicated person to do this? If it is the latter, you will have to pay a wage, national insurance and maybe even contribute to a pension fund. Again, in the UK, the ABSW has one part-time administrator, working two days a week. She works from the offices of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Her pay and legal matters are covered by the BA but reimbursed by the ABSW. At EUSJA, the administration is handled by an employee of the European Science Foundation. She works on average two days per month on EUSJA affairs and her salary is covered, as a means of support for EUSJA by the ESF. It is worth looking at whether any official, already functioning body in your country may be willing to “lend” an administrator and in some cases, cover the cost of his or her work.

Open a bank account and specify that any cheques issued must be signed by a minimum of two approved people. Agree who will be able to sign cheques. If you have an administrator, he or she should be approved to sign with the chairman, president or treasurer being the other.

THE COST OF MEMBERSHIP

How much to charge for membership is the next question. When starting out it is important to get the membership used to the idea that subscriptions can rise every year in line with whatever price index is appropriate. It is vital that an association can run its basic functions from its members' subscriptions. Do not succumb to the temptation to keep fees too low by relying on subsidies from sponsors which can so easily be withdrawn.

In the UK there are three categories of membership. Full membership, open to all full time science journalists, be they reporters, editors, broadcasters, freelance writers and programme makers, is available for £40. Associate membership covers public relations people and information and media officers at scientific establishments and universities. Associates are charged £36 per year. The difference in category means that only full members are allowed to vote in decision-making matters aired at the Annual General Meeting. Sometimes foreign trips and study tours are made available and full members take precedence over associates when places are limited. The third category is student membership. This costs £20 and is offered to students who already have a first degree in science and who want to become full time science

journalists. They may be studying on an MSc media course, writing for student newspapers or holding internships. The ABSW fees are relatively low and will rise next year but it is advisable to try and keep membership costs low so you attract members. All members, whatever category they are applying for, have to pay a one-off £5 joining fee. This helps tremendously for a new group, towards administration costs.

How fees are paid is again a difficult area. Because of its status, the ABSW cannot collect money directly from its members' bank accounts. Members can pay by standing order or bank transfer but many prefer to pay by cheque and sometimes cash. When to collect subscriptions is another area which needs thought. Do you want your membership year to run from January 1st to December 31st and ask members to pay at the start of each year? Is this fair for people who join, say in November or December? Or do you want members' subscriptions to be due exactly one year after they join? The latter is the fairest option but the most difficult to administer.

An established organisation with money behind it will be able to offer members benefits. But a new organisation will find this difficult so you must decide whether or not you will charge members for attending meetings, briefings and social events if you have

not managed to raise any sponsorship for financial support. If you are going to charge a nominal fee for attending events try and keep the annual membership subscription low.

NOTES & COMMENTS

HOW DOES FASEJ OPERATE AND FINANCE ITS OPERATIONS?

Using the funds collected by Kopiosto ry, copyright organisation for authors, publishers and performing artists, The Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists (FASEJ) distributes grants to promote the professional competence of scientific editors and journalists and to further other scientific communications activities.

In Finland there has been a collective management of copyrights of photocopying since 1970's. Kopiosto administers licenses for photocopying copyrighted material in all fields, conducts surveys and studies on photocopying, and collects and distributes remunerations to copyrights owners. In 2006 Kopiosto distributed to FASEJ almost 250 000 euros. The total amount of photocopying copyrighted materials at schools, in universities and institutes as well as in the public administration have been growing during last years. So FASEJ can expect also a growth of remuneration from Kopiosto.

FASEJ organises study trips to places and sites of interest to its members, as

well as seminars and training sessions to promote their professional skills along with other types of meetings. FASEJ has organised annually one or two study trips abroad from 1989: to all Scandinavian and Baltic countries, Russia, France, England, Germany, Scotland, Hungary, Japan, USA, Chile and Australia. The size of the groups is from 10 up to 50 persons.

FASEJ distributes grants for its members for about 100 000 euros annually.

FASEJ also distributes the annual Science Journalist Award of 5 000 euros. Since 1998 the award has been given to two broadcast journalists, a newspaper journalist, a magazine journalist, an internet editor as well as two editor-in-chiefs and an editorial staff of a popular science magazine.

The tools for internal and external communications include a mailing list, a forum, an Internet site with a virtual office and the Tiedetoimittaja ("Science Editor/Journalist") magazine. The membership card is also a press card giving to members of FASEJ a 25–30 % discount of long distance bus and train tickets.

A desk, telephone (could be a mobile) and computer are essential items. A simple data-base and financial package like Excel are also desirable. Some databases allow you to note on each member's record when their annual subscription is due. This is a useful tool if you decide to charge members an annual subscription from their join date. Using the "office assistant" option on your email, have an automated message informing people when you are in the office and obviously do the same with the telephone answer machine.

You will need an email address, an application form for members to complete and a welcoming letter informing them of office hours, who to contact with queries or suggestions and asking for further information about their work and career for possible inclusion in a "New members" section of any newsletter. A web

site is also useful. This can be used for potential members to download application forms and also to keep members up to date with any events.

It is not important to have a dedicated office. The running of an association can be done from somebody's home or by having a desk in a serviced office building. This could be useful for sharing equipment like telephones and fax machines and will help in operating expenses as stationery etc., can be bought in bulk at cost price and shared between the other office sharers. It is not advisable to spend money on hiring an office simply to look good. Give yourself a year or so before considering moving to your own premises.

WHAT THE ADMINISTRATOR SHOULD DO?

The office administrator should be responsible for all banking and processing of membership. He or she should send out forms to potential members, collate and prepare them for presentation to the committee for consideration and write to the candidate when a decision on membership approval or not, has been reached. It is important to get into the good habit of keeping records of everything is spent. The administrator should do this on a weekly basis and hand the information to the committee's treasurer who should

prepare regular financial statements for meetings of the executive committee.

The administrator is also the person to whom potential sponsors will speak. In an ideal world your administrator should be a science journalist or at least a person with a thorough understanding of the world of science journalism so he or she is familiar with names, terminology and what a science journalist needs. At first, when money is in short supply, you may find yourselves sharing the job between committee members. As your finances grow the post of your association's administrator may be ideal for an older science journalist who is working less or a freelance with not enough work to make a full salary.

ABSW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Please send a cheque for the full amount to the ABSW. £40 Full, £36 Associate or £20 Student.

PLUS an extra £5 one off joining fee. Unsuccessful applications will be refunded.

TITLE AND FULL NAME	
EMPLOYER (Freelance-state print, radio TV etc)	
ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE Can this be included in our membership handbook? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	POSTCODE
TELEPHONE	
MOBILE	
FAX	
EMAIL	
WEB	
BRIEF DETAILS OF RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS OR EXPERIENCE	
CATEGORY OF MEMBERSHIP APPLIED FOR (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> FULL Journalist <input type="checkbox"/> ASSOCIATE PR / Press Office <input type="checkbox"/> STUDENT

I declare that the above information is correct and if elected I agree to abide by the rules of the ABSW

SIGNED	DATE
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NB: In the absence of supporters, applicants should provide examples of their published/broadcast work.

PROPOSED BY	SIGNED	DATE
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SECONDED BY	SIGNED	DATE
--------------------	---------------	-------------

The ABSW is a fellowship of science writers, broadcasters and communicators. Our purpose is to help individuals enter the profession and to progress in their careers.

We aim to promote the highest standards of journalism by encouraging flair and bravery; to foster a mutually supportive community and to provide a forum for new ideas to develop and flourish

Please tick the fields that interest you (for the membership list):

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Physics / Space / Astronomy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Biology / Health / Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Agriculture / Food | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Chemistry / Biotechnology / Pharmaceuticals | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Electronics / Computing / Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Earth Science / Oceanography | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Science Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please send us a short paragraph about yourself which may be used in our publication "The Science Reporter".

BIOGRAPHY

NOTES & COMMENTS

Unless you have extremely wealthy members who do not object to paying for activities, events cost money so from the outset try and think of sponsorship. Not all activities are expensive.

Science cafes are a cheap and fun way of meeting people. Invite one or two scientists, think of a topic, maybe based on their research and hold an open meeting in a café, restaurant or bar. Association members and members of the public can listen to the speakers, ask questions and meet other like-minded people. After the event write a few paragraphs and send a report to the science pages of newspapers and local radio. All publicity is good publicity so get your name known.

Briefings – in the UK, briefing lunches, were once a popular activity. Each month a restaurant was booked and an eminent scientist, government min-

ister or official from a research council was invited to join members for an “off the record lunch.” Each member paid for his or her lunch, the guest speaker’s lunch was paid for. The aim of briefing lunches, particularly in the early days of a science association is two-fold. It allows members to meet decision-makers and important people from the world of science and it also alerts such people of the existence of such an association. It is good to make the lunches “unofficial” This means that the guest feels able to speak freely without worrying about being quoted out of context. Any journalist who feels the guest has a story to tell can make arrangements later for a one-to-one interview. Unfortunately in the UK such briefings, although popular, have ceased simply because of the pressure on science journalists, particularly those in full time employment. The days of long lunches appear to be over.

Social events – choose one evening per month and let members know that on this evening the association officials will be in a particular café, bar or restaurant and invite members to join them for refreshments, chat, exchange of ideas or simply networking. Ask members to bring along anybody else who may be keen to join and don’t forget to have membership forms available. Quizzes are another good way to involve the membership as are sporting events. Univer-

sity science departments often have their own social calendar and it may be a good idea to suggest a challenge “Science journalists versus science students”

Science cafes, briefings and socials are inexpensive, other activities require a backer.

VISITS

Major industries, particularly pharmaceutical, have budgets to spread the word of their work. Many are more than pleased to invite a group of science journalists to visit their factories, headquarters or research centre. They will give presentations of their research, have question and answer sessions and issue press packs. It is usual for such organisations to pay for travel and if necessary, accommodation costs of their visitors.

It is important that if such a visit is arranged that you present the host with a list of exactly who is attending and who they work for. If a freelance, list some of the publications they contribute to. Do not make rash promises or guarantee that all visitors will be able to file stories from the trip. They won't. Explain that often the personal contacts and background information collected is valuable source material for the future. But if anybody does write a story or broadcast a piece, make sure a copy or transcript

is sent to the host. And don't forget those membership forms. Sign up the media relations person as an associate member.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

It is surprising how many science journalists say they do not really need to attend workshops but once persuaded, gain a great deal from them. A workshop is aimed at professionals, not amateurs. One of the most popular, particular for freelance journalists is “How to pitch a story” or in other words, how to sell a story to an editor. For this you need to invite along a commissioning editor from a newspaper, specialist magazine and a broadcast outlet – radio or television. Allow them say ten minutes for a short talk and then open the session up to members to ask questions.

Another subject which proves popular is “How to manage your financial affairs as a freelance journalist.” Again you need an expert to start the ball rolling. It is well worth a call to your country's main tax office. Explain what you are doing and invite them to send along a representative who understands freelance earnings.

“The latest technology” including pod casts, blogs and Skype is yet another subject area worthy of a

workshop as journalists must keep up to date with new methods of communication. For this it should be relatively easy to gain some sponsorship, even if it is enough for a room hire, refreshments and free notepads and pens from an IT consultancy; mobile telephone company or computer store. Manufacturers or importers of the latest technology are also worth approaching.

Once you get used to the format of workshops they can be arranged quite easily and quickly. Whenever you invite experts to address the attendees always ask if they are in a position to offer any sponsorship money or know of any other commercial interest who may contribute. The proceedings of any workshop can be written up into an informative leaflet (good to give out to new members) and either given away or collated, printed and sold for a profit.

SCIENCE FESTIVALS

Gaining in popularity, science festivals are a good venue to make your organisation known to a wider audience. If there is a press centre, register with it. If not you can suggest your members run a press centre. You need to have information of all events and contact details of speakers and presenters. Transcripts of any important speeches or abstracts of pre-

senters' talks should be photocopied and made available to journalists. If your organisation is running a press centre for the first time, do make sure your name is on all publicity material. This is useful, not only for getting yourselves known but may help in the future when trying to attract sponsorship. "Look our members ran this" you can point out.

Make sure you have ample publicity material about your own organisation available in the press centre. Have one member dedicated to signing up others and don't forget to collect the nominal one-off joining fee. Take a receipt book too!

SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR

A number of science journalist associations hold an annual event awarding one scientist the accolade of being voted by members "Scientist of the Year". The Hungarian association does this and it is one of its most popular activities. Members are invited to nominate a scientist whom they believe has made the largest contribution to the country's scientific profile and then to vote for a short-listed list. It is not essential to offer a prize for the successful scientist. Often the glory of winning is sufficient. Schemes like this are not expensive to run, can attract sponsorship once established and gain important links and re-

relationships between working scientists and working science journalists.

IGNOBLE AWARDS

Perhaps a little light-hearted an event for a new association to become involved with but one which can be developed is an annual award or accolade from members for the worst, oddest or most off-beat science story to be published or broadcast. Further information about these awards, which can generate a great deal of publicity, particularly the light-hearted copy loved by tabloid newspapers, can be obtained from: <http://improbable.com>. The organisers of these awards can be contacted and you could offer to host an evening to publicise the nominated odd science stories from your country – or your members can nominate them!

INTERNSHIPS

Internships are an American import, not in great evidence in the UK but growing in popularity throughout the rest of Europe. They give a young journalist or an aspiring student, the chance to work on a publication to gain experience, usually for little or no remuneration. In the UK, magazines like Nature and

Science offer internships details of which are on the website and publicised in the Science Reporter.

It may be possible that your science association has amongst its membership, an editor who would be in a position to offer such an internship, making one more benefit for your members. How any suitable intern is selected is usually down to the publication but there is no reason why an association cannot hold some sort of competition or filtering system and offer a few candidates for consideration. Many schemes lead to interns being offered permanent positions. Another form of internship is with organisations like the Max Plank Institute in Germany. This company offers the chance for a science journalist, with a science background, to spend time working with a scientist in the laboratory. This has two-way benefits. A working journalist can keep up to date with the latest innovations and techniques and can also learn to appreciate any difficulties a scientist may have in communicating his work to the world.

INTERNSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships for internships can be a very successful activity. In Québec, the Bourse Fernand-Seguin (the BFS) has been the springboard for dozens of successful careers in science journalism. It is entirely managed by the Québec Association of Science Communicators (ACS). See: <http://www.asc.qc.ca>.

ACS created the BFS internship in 1981 to honour the most famous Québec science journalist. The main objective was to interest young people to opt for careers in science journalism.

Fernand Seguin had brought such fame to his employer, radio and TV broadcaster Société Radio-Canada, that the scholarship enjoyed immediate support from the francophone arm of the main Canadian broadcasting organization. ACS was also successful in raising funds from the Québec Government, important research organizations and several private corporations. For the last few years, two 16,000\$ CAD awards have been offered annually. The most prestigious magazines and newspapers have joined Société Radio-Canada to welcome the interns.

The winners of the internships are selected through a science writing contest. Such a contest depends on a cadre of experienced volunteers and the recurrent support of key sponsors and host organizations for the interns. Each year, the writing contest requires some six to seven months of work. The first year is by far the most demanding. The team needs to specify objectives and criteria for accepting and evaluating the entries.

Candidates for the BSF internship must write six to ten pages on a scientific topic. The article must be supported by a description of the background research, a letter explaining why the candidate is interested in the internship, and a CV. Candidates need to be Canadian citizens or permanent residents, aged between 18 and 30; supporting documents are required. Established communicators and journalists are not allowed. Every year, the jury examines some 30 to 40 dossiers. Many candidates reapply.

The success of the BFS internship rests on its donors and host organizations for the internships. Again, the first year is the toughest. Afterwards, continuing with the same donors and host organizations is

nearly automatic. Still, it is important to continue to seek new donors and partners to grow the scholarship amount, increase visibility and guarantee long term viability of the program.

Sponsors need to be confirmed very early, since donors will ask that the promotional material (brochure, flyers and ads in the media) carry their logo and name. It usually takes one or two months to produce the flyer. This includes time for writing, layout, approval and printing. Again, it is much easier the following years.

With a brochure on hand, the writing contest can be launched and advertised. It is now time to recruit the members of the jury. Since the candidates should be allowed a few months to research and write their articles, this time can also be used to complete the jury. Five or seven people are good numbers for a jury – even number pre-empts some problems. Members of the jury need to have the criteria on hand well ahead of receiving the articles. It is also crucial to make sure they understand the criteria. The BFS jury has included scientists, communicators and journalists.

Such a program requires a budget at

least twice the amounts of the scholarships for the flyers, brochure, posters, awards ceremony, and management. If the contributions of partner organizations (free publicity, meeting rooms, computers, video equipment, and cocktails) are included, the real budget is closer to four or five times the amounts that awardees receive.

Serge Lepage, ACS Vice-President and BFS Coordinator

Maintaining good communication with members is easy whilst numbers are small. The problems arise when your membership grows. There are two basic ways of keeping in touch – the internet with a web page or direct mailing. The ideal way, however, is with your own publication.

Newsletter or magazine – in the UK we have a bi-monthly newsletter for members called “The Science Reporter” which is professionally printed and distributed. It is a costly business and now it is established there are plans to invite learned societies and companies to “sponsor” an issue. In return for paying all printing and postage costs, the sponsor can have its logo on the front page and space in the magazine to advertise itself. There is no need, especially in the early days, to have such a grand publication. The Science Reporter started off life as a type-written, pho-

to-copied and stapled together magazine! A newsletter or magazine can include news of members and have a list of the latest members to join. It can have comment pieces, a diary of events and be used to communicate any forthcoming visits, briefings and study tours. Of course it should also include write ups of any activities that have taken place. On line magazines are becoming more fashionable, especially as more of us are considering the cost to the planet of using so much industry and newsprint to communicate our news. Global Footprints are the buzz words. There is no reason why you cannot concentrate on having your own regular publication, on-line and simply print off copies when you need to use them for publicity or fund-raising purposes. And don't forget to include advertisements in your newsletter, advertisements which can be paid for! If you have a web site make sure your newsletter is pasted on to it and linked to other science journalists' associations so everybody knows what is happening across the scientific writing world.

WEB PAGE AND MEMBERSHIP EMAIL CHAT LISTS

When members join your association make sure they supply email addresses. This is obviously so you can contact them but also, if you have your own web

page, these email addresses can be linked with permission from members and a fee to commissioning editors looking for specialist writers and broadcasters. This is a useful tool both to offer and to receive. It is a real bonus for members looking for work and can be seen as a service or benefit of membership. This service can also earn you money. If an advertiser was to place an advertisement in a newspaper he or she would have to pay. You can therefore charge a small fee for posting any job offer on the site. Of course, here you must be flexible, particularly when starting out. Have a sliding scale of charges. A major pharmaceutical company looking for a freelance editor should be charged more money than a member looking for help with research or editing. A good tip is to ask for advertising rate cards from the sort of publications your members would turn to when looking for work and halve the rates. This is a selling point when trying to sell advertising. “We are half the price of The Daily Newspaper and we have a captive audience!”

This email list is essential as it can keep members up to date with events, job offers and gossip. It will enable your members to seek assistance, e.g. “who can give the name of a good freelance tax accountant?!” “What is indemnity insurance and do I need it?” “Where can I buy a second hand digital camera”

as well as allowing them to discuss professional matters and look for work.

When setting up a web page or internet list again the secret is “keep it simple” It is here you need to bring in the experts unless you have any competent IT people on your membership list. Again, if money is short, consider asking whether you can offer free advertising on your site for the company creating it, in return for a reduction in fees.

The highlight of the ABSW's calendar is its annual science writing awards, regarded by many as the Oscars of the science writing world. In January each member is sent an application form and set of guidelines advising them how to submit entries. (see appendix). A few months later the entries are short-listed by a judging panel and a further judging session held to determine the final winners. As it is a long process often with more than 300 entries received it is advisable to have one person with overall responsibility for the whole event, in charge.

The prizes, usually individual cash prizes of £2000, are presented during a gala evening held in the summer. All ABSW members who submitted entries are invited. Occasionally entries are received from non-ABSW members. This is allowed and of course they are encouraged to join the association but if there

is too much demand for places at the gala dinner, members come first.

SPONSORSHIP

The whole event costs around £80,000 and has to be sponsored from start to finish. A quick calculation shows that each category costs approximately £10,000. Money is needed for printing and distributing letters and forms, advertising the event, paying judges expenses, hiring a grand function room, the drinks and dinner and of course, the prize money. It is such a huge undertaking that in the UK the organiser of the awards is also paid on a commercial basis.

Traditionally cash rich pharmaceutical companies sponsor the science writing awards, now regarded as the most prestigious prize in science journalism. And here let me say although the awards say “Writers” there are categories for broadcasting, film-making and a category which is open to anyone who is promoting science in a novel way.

The awards are so high profile that there is little difficulty in attracting sponsorship. It is also relatively easy to find well-known judges and to invite a guest speaker. Nobel laureates, Government ministers and last year in the UK, Sir David Attenborough have given short talks and presented the cheques to

the lucky winners. The UK's prize-giving ceremony is held at a prestigious venue. Space permitting, all ABSW members who have entered are invited to the event which consists of drinks and canapés, followed by a sit-down dinner, during which the guest speaker says a few words before announcing and presenting the prizes.

The possibility for sponsorship is high with a scheme such as this. However, it is preferable to have overall sponsor. Of course when a new association is starting up and has no reputation to use as bait for sponsors, it may be difficult to find one company willing to provide all of the money. One way around this is to look for individual sponsors. Maybe companies would be willing to provide cash or goods for individual categories. In the UK a new award was introduced last year – the Young Broadcaster Award, now known as the New Voice Award. In addition to a cash prize, the winner receives an internship at the BBC and for the first time, this year, a Flashmic, a digital recording microphone. The possibilities are endless – office equipment, laptops, recording apparatus, – and could include travel money to allow the winner attend an international event or meeting.

JUDGING

The actual organisation of such a scheme is time-demanding. There is no need to produce a glossy brochure to announce the awards as your target audience will hear about it either through your newsletter, email list or by word of mouth. Produce a simple entry form which explains the categories and don't forget to ask for a number of photo-copied entries so they can be distributed around your judges. It is most annoying to receive just one copy and have to do it yourself. Keep the judging process simple. Have no more than four judges. If you have a huge number of entries share them out between the judges, with two judges receiving the same entries. Give the judges guidelines describing just what they should be looking out for. Accuracy, clarity and excellent writing are the major points. If a subject area is too complicated or specialised for one judge do not be afraid to ask for the opinion of an outside expert. If a story or broadcast is exclusive or generated from skilful research this too should be recognised. Once a set of judges has decided on a short-list it should be exchanged with the other judges who will also have produced a short-list. It is advisable to have an independent chairman of the judging panel – maybe an editor, government science minister or

a foreign correspondent based in your country – to step in if there is a tie or disagreement.

Each country that runs an awards scheme has its own idea on whether or not entrants should pay to enter. At the ABSW we see it as another benefit for members and don't charge. We also receive entrants from non-members which we accept. We do, however, send out a membership form and these non-members usually join. If space is limited at the awards ceremony those entrants who are ABSW members are guaranteed a place before entrants who are not members. Some countries charge a small administration entrance fee. This could be useful in the early days of such a contest. It could certainly be added together and offered as a prize. As the contest grows in stature so will the sponsorship. The fee could be dropped and the prize money increased.

THE AWARDS PROGRAM OF THE CANADIAN SCIENCE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION (CSWA)

Every year, Canadian science writers and journalists are showered with awards. The text below is an adaptation of reports on the awards program by the person who chaired it for the last 5 years, André Picard, from the Globe and Mail.

The CSWA awards have existed since 1972. Currently the Association offers three PRINT awards (news/short features under 1250 words; news/features under 3000 words; feature articles or series 3000 words or more), three RADIO awards (news/features less than 10 minutes; features/documentary 10-30 minutes; feature/documentary/series over 30 minutes), and three TV awards (same categories as radio). All awards are \$1,000 CAD. The Association also offers three Science and Society Book Awards for authors of children's books, youth books, and general audience books. These prizes are funded by sponsors but do NOT carry the sponsor's name. Their representative can hand the prize to the winner at the annual awards banquet.

On top of that, CSWA administers another 19 sponsored awards including Canada's Energy Efficiency Media Award and L'Oréal Canada's Award for Excellence in Science Journalism. All these carry the name of the sponsors. They are not offered by the Association but 'administered' by the Association for the sponsors.

1. WHY AWARDS?

Initially, the awards were created (1) to honour good science writing, (2) to attract members to the Association, and (3) to make money for other activities of the Association. The sponsor of a \$1000 prize pays more than \$1000. The additional money generated by the Awards Program is so important that it allows CSWA to afford a full-time Executive Director. Finally, (4) the awards give the Canadian science journalists an excuse to have a nice dinner at their annual meeting.

The CSWA Awards were, for a long time, prizes for journalists, by journalists; it was the ultimate honour, to be recognized by peers. But at some point the line between prizes to promote good journalism and prizes to promote a specific corporate agenda got blurred. The Canadian

Science Journalists now have the Canadian Nuclear Association's award for the best writing in the field of nuclear technology. Jamieson Vitamins had a prize for the best story about vitamins! "These prizes, according to André Picard, are designed to influence what we are writing." Nevertheless, the CSWA Awards Program is well administered, well judged and well respected. It continues to have an aura of independence, and it has credibility.

2. WHAT TO DO?

Several approaches can be examined. First, an association can take the purist line and refuse to accept corporate money and sponsors. It allows bragging: "awards created by journalists for journalists and are not encumbered by conflicts of interest." The downside: only a very limited number of prizes worth a paltry and requiring a steep entry fee. Second, an association can stop the hypocritical fence sitting and have overt corporate sponsorship of all awards. All prizes can be put for bidding and sponsors put their name on the prizes. But the association should have long-term contracts to ensure some measure of continuity. Third, an association's

awards program can strike some balance between those two extremes.

3. WHAT CSWA HAS LEARNED?

Go back to basics. Have a lot fewer and more general prizes: one prize - best science article - in print, radio and TV (maybe a newspaper and magazine category). Keep awards for books. Maybe create a student writing award and a "girls in science award". Find a way to honour Public Information Officers, who make up a large part of several associations' membership. Prizes should be more than \$1,000. They should accept sponsorship, but not be directly associated with a sponsor. The association should charge an entry fee to authors, but that fee should be waived for members of the association.

A wall should be established between the select, prestigious journalism prizes offered directly by the Association and the corporate sponsored awards designed to generate articles on specific causes. Specific contracts can be created with these organizations to make sure the rules are clear: minimum five year commitment and no interfering with judging. Part of the deal can be creating Web sites for

each award - with a link from the association's site. Each corporate prize should be clearly distinct from the Association's own prizes.

A specific portion of the Executive Director's time can be allocated to this corporate activity, whose purpose would be raising funds for the association's operations.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF AN AWARDS PROGRAM

- Make sure sponsors cover the costs of administering the prize and use the prizes to fundraise for the association. In Canada, sponsors pay \$2,500 CAD to sponsor a prize while the winner gets only \$1,000 in prize money. The difference covers the travel for the winner, administration costs for the awards and the banquet.
- Sponsor-specific prizes (these are prizes that carry the name of the sponsor) should cost the sponsors much more, in Canada sponsors pay at least \$5,000. They get essentially the same thing for their money but they have their name much more prominently displayed.
- Sell tables at the awards banquet to corporate sponsors for \$1,000. For this price, they get a renowned science journalist at their table and the right to drone on at length when presented an award.
- agree on a clear, concise statement of why award prizes to guide in your deliberations
- make a clear decision on whether or not to have sponsor-specific awards because that will influence a lot of related decisions
- decide on categories of prizes: print, radio, TV, books and sub-categories: based on

length, on subject, best information officer, writing by girls; and on their names.

– should there be an entry fee? should the fee be different for members and non-members?

– create and distribute awards pamphlets, news release and Web site

– **Format:** how entries can be submitted: cut and paste on paper; tear sheets, PDFs, printouts from databases?

– **Timing:** if the awards are to be announced in May and the prizes given in June

at the banquet, deadline for submission should be end of January.

– **Jury:** select and contact your members of the jury long time ahead

– **Winners:** advertise your winners as much as possible, with at least a press release or a web page

– **Association:** promoting membership in the association with a letter to all contestants. PROMOTE, PUBLICIZE, PROMOTE: nothing worse than no candidacies for a prize



The screenshot shows the website for the Canadian Science Writers' Association (CSWA/ACRS). The header includes the organization's name in English and French, and the tagline "Excellence in Science Communication in Canada". A navigation menu on the left lists various sections, with "AWARDS" highlighted. The main content area features the heading "Canadian Science Writers' Association Awards" and a sub-heading "List of most recent (2006) award winners, announced June 2007". Below this, it mentions "Science in Society Journalism Awards" and provides information about the awards, including a deadline for entries of February 1, 2007.

Canadian Science Writers' Association
Association canadienne des rédacteurs scientifiques
CSWA/ACRS
Excellence in Science Communication in Canada

HOME MANDATE LINKS MEMBERSHIPS Excellence in Science Communication in Canada

ABOUT US
CONTACT US
JOIN US
AWARDS
COMING EVENTS
JOB BOARD
NEWS
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NEWSLETTER (SCIENCE LINK)
WHO'S WHO
MEMBERS DIRECTORY
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
WEB RESOURCES

Canadian Science Writers' Association Awards

List of most recent (2006) award winners, announced June 2007

Science in Society Journalism Awards

The Canadian Science Writers' Association offers print, radio, and television awards annually to honour outstanding Canadian science journalism in short and long format categories.

Entries must have been published or broadcast in Canada in the 2006 calendar year.

ENTRIES FOR THIS AWARD ARE NOW CLOSED
The deadline for entries was February 1, 2007.

You can find the CSWA awards at: <http://www.sciencewriters.ca/awards/index.html>



With a membership approaching 900, the Association of British Science Writers exists to improve the standard of science journalism in the UK, and to help those who write about or broadcast science and technology stories. It organises briefings with prominent scientists and policymakers, arranges visits and has an extensive social calendar. Forms for membership, which costs £40 per year, can be downloaded from www.absw.org.uk

The ABSW is grateful to its supporters, and particularly Syngenta, without whose support the Science Writers' Awards could not take place.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Work broadcast or published (excluding books) between 1st January & 31st December 2006 is eligible for the Awards.
- Ten copies of the entry and entry form must be submitted. Please do not mount paper entries.
- The judges reserve the right to reallocate an entry to a category different from the one in which it has been entered.
- The judges reserve the right to withhold an Award in any category.
- Only one article, clip or programme per category may be submitted by an entrant.
- Entrants can enter different items for different categories. However, a separate entry form must be completed for each entry (photocopies are acceptable).
- The role of the entrant in the origination of the entry must be stated on the entry form and any collaborators must consent to the submission of the entry.
- Nominations may be made by members of the ABSW, editors or those engaged in a scientific discipline, and members of the judging panel. Nominees must be aware of the nomination and verify their role in the entry.
- Unfortunately entries cannot be returned.

Syngenta ABSW Science Writers' Awards for 2006
Parliamentary Science Communicator of the Year Award

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

I am submitting this entry on my behalf
 I am submitting this entry on behalf of a group

OR

I am nominating _____ (for this Award)

My title (Mr/Ms/Dr etc) & name _____
 My correspondence address _____

My email address _____ My telephone number _____

Have you heard of the ABSW? _____ If yes, in what capacity? _____

Please indicate which of the following best describes your entry/nomination:

CAMPAIGN (eg work involved in campaigning on a particular science-based issue. This may be work with a particular charitable group or under the auspices of an All-Party Group)

CONTRIBUTION IN THE CHAMBER (eg participation in a Parliamentary debate or a series of Parliamentary questions on a science-based issue)

SELECT COMMITTEE (eg contribution to a Select Committee inquiry on a science-based issue)

ARTICLE(S) WRITTEN (eg published article on a scientific issue)

OTHER CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

DESCRIPTION OF ENTRY AND REASON FOR CONSIDERATION:
 This section **must** be completed. Please provide details of the entry or nomination below and attach copies of the relevant Hansard pages, committee transcripts, articles or other supporting materials. Please summarise why you/your nominee should be considered for this Award. Please continue on a separate A4 sheet if necessary.

Why should you/your nominee be considered for this Award?

Declaration: The information submitted is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed _____ Date _____

Please see reverse for submission instructions

NOTES & COMMENTS

The World Federation of Science Journalists' Associations is actively looking into the possibility of twinning small and new organisations with those that have been successfully been in operation for a number of years. This will involve two associations linking for mutual benefit. At first your "twin" will be able to offer and advice on practical matters. It may be able to offer individual mentoring or arrange that a journalist from your country spends some time working on a publication in its country. And of course, this arrangement can work both ways. Later on in the relationship, exchange visits and study tours for larger numbers may be possible. One of the big pluses for twinning is that each association will be able to offer contacts and the names of scientists who could be useful for any journalist working on a particular story or doing research in a particular area.

It is early days of the WFSJ's twinning project so it is advisable to keep in touch via the association's web site and to speak with other science journalists' associations who are already linked with others.

Stay independent. A science journalists' association should not hold any strong political views. Individual members can, of course, but an association is a collective body created to look after members' interests and to improve the standard of science journalism throughout the country. Once this is known and realised by government, commercial and academic bodies your association should flourish. But occasionally the association may be approached to comment on a topical story or debate. A company or government department – even an advertiser – may want to say “endorsed by the country's science journalists.” It is not advisable to be drawn into these debates and endorsements. Remain fiercely independent and non-committal, this way you achieve gravitas.

Do not run before you can walk. If you are a new

association do not be tempted to try and imitate all the activities of larger, more established groups. Make sure you have a sound administrative system in place and concentrate on gathering members. Once this has been achieved then you can begin to consider raising sponsorship and expanding activities.

Do not be shy of asking for help. The aim of the WFSJ is to foster and support science journalist associations throughout the world. Its officers and supporters are experienced in the ways of such associations and are more than willing to find answers to any problems that may arise. It can also offer speakers and in some cases, visitors and mentors to help get things going.

Do not hold on to office for too long. It is tempting and completely understandable that those who set up and form an association see it as “their baby” and want to hold on to power. Remember that new blood is always needed and new members, once they fully understand what the organisation is about, will have their own ideas to contribute. It is here that elections every three years or so for a new committee will be useful although it is always a good idea to retain at least one person each election to continue for an extra year to help the new team. If you have a category for young or student members you could invite a representative of say the under 25’s to join

the committee and represent the emerging science writers. This person would be a natural to progress to holding office on the committee after becoming familiar with the workings of the association.

NOTES & COMMENTS

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Barbara Drillsma, who has many years of experience as a science journalist and administrator for the Association of British Science Writers, tells us, step by step, how to create your own association in this little publication, the first of its kind. As Honorary Secretary of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations, she has had the opportunity to see the activities of many other associations across Europe. For our benefit, Barbara also provides great tips on how to keep that fledgling association alive and thriving.

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