

Southwest Chapter News

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March Meeting: The Challenges of Biomedical Publishing on the Internet

Tuesday, March 13, 2001, Houston, Texas

You are invited to hear an exciting presentation on the latest advances and trends in Internet publishing for the biomedical sciences. Learn about the world of online, peer-reviewed journals and the many changes that continue to affect authors and editors of biomedical research. What is the future of published research? Will print journals one day become obsolete? What guarantees the permanency of electronic journals? Is there a difference between publishing research in a print journal or in an online-only journal? Whether you are a student or faculty researcher, librarian or communications specialist, you will not want to miss this informative and valuable lecture.

Bill Silberg is Vice President and Executive Editor for Medscape, Inc., a leading Web provider of clinical content and information services. Medscape, a long-standing Web portal for health and medical professionals, merged in mid-2000 with MedicaLogic, the leading maker of electronic medical records. Medscape is a clinical information company dedicated to improving healthcare through the development of Internet portals and Digital Health Record (DHR) applications that provide a wide array of relevant and trusted

healthcare information to individual, small group and network healthcare providers, the pharmaceutical industry, and consumers.

Bill is responsible for all Medscape content developed for physicians and other health care professionals, including continuing medical education programs. He joined Medscape in 1999 after spending 13 years at the American Medical Association (AMA), the last four as Editorial Director for Medical News and New Media at *JAMA*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Before that, he served as Deputy Editor of *American Medical News*, the AMA's weekly socioeconomic newspaper for physicians, and as the AMA's Science News Editor. Prior to joining the AMA, Bill spent

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- What:** Talk with Bill Silberg
When: March 13, 2001 5:30-8:00 p.m.
Lecture starts at 6:30 p.m.
Where: UT School of Public Health
Auditorium in Houston
Cost: Lecture is free!
Dinner: Members-\$12/Guests-\$13
RSVP for fajita dinner to Tom Gegeny at
(713) 527-8219 by March 5, 2001.

McGovern Award Honors Walter J. Pagel

The 2001 John P. McGovern Award for excellence in medical communications was presented to Walter J. Pagel, ELS(D), Director of Scientific Publications at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, at the annual banquet on January 18. The award ceremony was well-attended, with over 70 AMWA members and guests present to honor Mr. Pagel and hear his lecture on how to engage readers in scientific writing.

Pagel began his lecture by stating that Sergeant Friday had it wrong: it ISN'T just the

facts (Ma'am!) that make good scientific writing. Articles that reveal important facts but that don't have a good story make "dull reading and a sleepy audience." Pagel offered a few theories about some trends in medical writing that have led to less-engaging scientific writing, including the IMRAD method of organizing papers (ie, Introduction, Materials/Methods, Results, and Discussion); editorials in the 1980s on how much of a scientific paper was worth

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New Mexico Branch Members View Medical Archives

Janet Johnson, historical archivist and curator, was the speaker for a recent brown bag lunch lecture at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center Archives. The medical archives contain a diverse collection of resource materials and artifacts involving the history of medicine and health in New Mexico.

Johnson explained that the collection began as a series of interviews with senior physicians in the state. These oral histories were research for a commemorative publication to observe the New Mexico Medical Society's centennial year in 1986. Johnson was appointed archive manager. There are now nearly 200 oral histories in the archive, which has grown to include interviews with nurses, Doctors of Osteopathy, and medical administrators.

Johnson said some highlights of the collection are histories of the physicians who came to New Mexico in the tuberculosis era and those of New

Mexico's first women physicians. Other interesting entries include some Civil War era reports by the Surgeon General regarding battle injuries. The collection houses extensive records of a New Mexico tuberculosis sanitarium, and information on the early astronaut-testing programs that took place in New Mexico at the Lovelace Clinic.

Johnson documents news of local current events that are medically significant, including HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, DWI, and incidents of plague and rabies. Johnson explained that the archives contain extensive information regarding Hanta virus outbreaks. She was proud to tell us that officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention utilized the archive while in the area during the first wave of Hanta virus outbreaks.

Johnson said the physical artifacts in the archive are numerous and diverse, including "vintage instruments, microscopes, scalpels and dreadful looking

implements." Among other artifacts, are physicians' bags, early pharmaceuticals, and a midwifery kit.

After the lecture, several attendees toured the climate controlled archive offsite storage area. One telling artifact from the tuberculosis era was a sidewalk brick that had been manufactured with the slogan "Do Not Spit on the Sidewalk" inscribed in it.

Johnson is committed to the importance of locating historic material and keeping it available to the public. "Because the medical landscape changes so rapidly, things are easily forgotten," she said. All materials are available for use by the general public. Although the materials are not circulated, some may be photocopied. For more information, contact her at: jhjohnson@salud.unm.edu.

Southwest Chapter Professional Profile: Judith Hurley

Southwest Chapter News (SCN): Where do you work, and what is your title?

Judith Hurley (JH): I am a health care researcher (Associate Director of the health outcomes research division of the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute) and I do freelance writing in nutrition and health.

SCN: What are your primary responsibilities?

JH: As a researcher, I develop and write funding proposals, study protocols, and scientific papers for publication and serve as an investigator. On a freelance basis, I do the fun stuff—consumer and text books on nutrition, brochures for nutritional supplement companies, continuing education programs for health professionals, and consumer magazine articles.

SCN: What is your educational background?

JH: I am a registered dietitian with a bachelor's degree in foods and nutrition and a master's degree in health educa-

tion.

SCN: How did you become involved in medical communications?

JH: I've held several positions in health and nutrition over the years—university teaching, directing public health programs, consulting for government agencies, health plans, and hospitals, and now conducting epidemiological and outcomes research. Each job has required me to write in new ways for new audiences, from low literacy photonovellas (think health education delivered via comic books) to consumer nutrition books sold in Wal-Mart stores to scientific proposals and papers that undergo peer review.

SCN: How has AMWA helped your career or professional development?

JH: I've enjoyed the local networking opportunities and the *AMWA Journal*. The monthly job newsletter has been an appreciated source of freelance work. If we can get some of the AMWA writing courses to New Mexico, I think many of us would take advantage of them.

SCN: Where would you like to be in 3 years? (professionally or in general)

JH: I'd like to spend less time researching and more time writing, especially about the burgeoning research on diet, phytochemicals, botanical medicines, and chronic disease.

SCN: What is the best advice someone gave to you about your career?

JH: My technical writing instructor in college frequently admonished us to 'cut dead wood.' I use that advice daily.

SCN: What advice would you give to someone just starting out in your field?

JH: Develop a portfolio of writing in different styles and for various audiences. Volunteer to write for newsletters, local newspapers, and associations to gain experience and meet mentors. Read widely and critically, dissecting what the author has done and noting why it works or doesn't.

AMWA Southwest Chapter Meeting Schedule 2001

Date	Event	Location
February 21	New Mexico branch meeting: "What clients expect from contract writers"	American Society for Radiologic Technology in Albuquerque, NM/brown bag lunch
March 13	Bill Silberg, Executive Editor of Medscape "The challenges of biomedical publishing on the Web"	The UT School of Public Health Auditorium/Dinner catered by Pico's
May 15	Round Table discussion on careers in medical writing	Baba Yega Restaurant in Houston, TX/ Dinner



March Meeting

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three years as Associate Director of Public Affairs for the University of Chicago Medical Center. He began his career with UPI, a news wire service, spending seven years as a reporter, editor and bureau chief in the United States. He is a graduate of Cornell University.

This lecture is a free event sponsored by the Southwest Chapter of the AMWA, in cooperation with the University of Texas Houston School of

Public Health Library. Dinner will be available one hour prior to the lecture; reservations must be made by March 5, 2001. The cost is \$12.00 for AMWA members and \$13.00 for non-members. A catered "fajita feast" by Pico's will include beef, chicken, and grilled vegetable fajitas, with black beans, tortillas, guacamole, pico de gallo, and queso. Soft drinks are included. Space is limited. Use the attached registration form and make checks payable to AMWA Southwest.

Directions: The UT School of Public

Health is located at 1200 Herman Pressler. To reach it from Fannin St., turn east on Holcombe Blvd. and proceed to Bertner. Park in Garage #2 which is on the north side of Holcombe at Bertner (hourly rates apply). Cross Holcombe and proceed south on Bertner past the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. The UT School of Public Health will be the tall building on your left at the corner of Herman Pressler and Bertner. The Auditorium is on the ground floor.

McGovern Award

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reading; and the poor writing skills of medical students who thus needed systematic and formulaic approaches to writing.

The primary assumption underlying these systems is that all that really matters is that the discovery be added to the world's database of scientific knowledge and the citation be added to the author's curriculum vita. It is Pagel's thought that mechanical papers like these do harm to science and medi-

cine by "emphasizing its drudgery and hiding its creativity." Good papers *can* come from a systems approach to writing, however, Pagel continued, as long as the author recognizes that facts are not enough to carry an effective article. If an author tells the story behind the discovery and uses techniques of lively writing, it will probably not be boring. Pagel then went on to describe some tools for enlivening scientific writing:

- 1) Unveil verbs disguised as nouns.
- 2) Prefer the specific to the general.
- 3) Respect the reader's intelligence.

4) Engage the reader in the solution.

5) Respect the patient's humanity.

The last part of Pagel's lecture was devoted to what he believes is the most important consideration in scientific and medical writing (besides the discovery itself)—the story of the research. Typically, authors do not set the study in context or show an understanding of how they got to where they are in the discovery. "We should ask the reader to walk along with us as we set out to prove a hypothesis or determine which treatment is most effective," said Pagel. He then presented several excellent examples of engaging scientific writing from published articles and grant applications, each of which captured the audience's attention and drew us into the story.

Complete articles on Pagel's lecture will be published in upcoming issues of the *AMWA Journal* and *Science Editor* (the journal of the Council of Science Editors). Be sure to look for them!

www.amwasouthwest.org

Southwest Chapter News is now available online! From our homepage, click on News to access PDF files of back-issues.

Bookmark it!



Congratulations!

Janet Yagoda Shagam, PhD had 2 articles awarded Distinguished Technical Communication, 1 of which was awarded Best of Show, by the Phoenix Chapter of Society for Technical Communication (STC).

The Life Sciences Data Archive, a NASA website (lsda.jsc.nasa.gov), has won the Best of Show award in the Austin Chapter STC competition. **Jane Krauhs** has been a member of the site development team since 1996. She is employed by Wyle Laboratories.

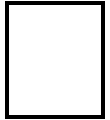
AMWA Southwest Chapter News

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Southwest Chapter News



Meeting Reservation Form

**The Challenges of Biomedical Publishing on the Internet
With Bill Silberg**

Tuesday, March 13, 2001, at the UT School of Public Health Auditorium
1200 Herman Pressler., Houston, TX
Members \$12; Guests \$13

Name:

Daytime Phone:

Guest Name(s):

Please send your reservation form and check, payable to AMWA Southwest, to Tom Gegeny at 1205 Banks St, #1, Houston TX 77006 by March 5. For further information please contact Tom Gegeny at (713) 527-8219.

Please RSVP for dinner by March 5, 2001.