Acceptance Address: Editing Science Editor. A Look Back

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Heartfelt thanks for this award. I especially treasure this recognition because it is given by science-editorial peers and because previous recipients include science editors I especially admire, such as Edward J Huth, Robert A Day, and John C Bailar III.

Giving this talk was unexpected. This year, as usual, I nominated some Science Editor staff members for Council of Science Editors awards—and hoped to be in the audience applauding. I looked forward to the first CSE annual meeting in a while for which I would not prepare a talk or chair an Editorial Board meeting. Indeed, I briefly considered not attending the CSE meeting this year. (Soon, though, I recognized that the thought was merely part of the prodding to a cold.)

So, what to discuss in this acceptance address? In keeping with the e-mail from Awards Committee Chair Ana Marusic, who conveyed regrets that she would miss this year's CSE meeting (volcanic ash from Iceland had disrupted her recent travel and so depleted her travel budget), I will focus on highlights of my years editing the CSE periodical.

My editorship began in 1998, when CSE was still CBE (the Council of Biology Editors) and its periodical was still the (quite substantial) newsletter CBE Views. I was told that the editorship normally runs one or two 3-year terms. Now, after four terms, I am pleased to convey the publication to my successor. (See page 175 for information about the new editor, who had not yet been named at the time of the annual meeting.)

During the search for a new editor, the selection committee asked me whether I had advice for my successor. My advice was simply this: Have fun! Indeed, as a long-time colleague of mine often says: “People rarely succeed at anything unless they have fun doing it.” If I have achieved some success as editor of the Council’s periodical, it is largely because I found the activity enjoyable. The following are some aspects that I have especially enjoyed.

Looking Back: Some Highlights

I took over the editorship from Martha M Tacker, editor of CBE Views from 1994 to 1998. Martha and her predecessors had developed a periodical I highly admired, and Martha oriented me splendidly to my new role.

On assuming the editorship of the Council’s periodical, I dreamed of changing its format from that of a newsletter to that of a magazine. Then, when the Council announced that it would expand in scope from CBE to CSE, I felt that a logical time for this transition had come. And so in January 2000, when CBE became CSE, CBE Views became Science Editor. I thank those who participated in naming and designing Science Editor. I also thank Martha Tacker for writing, as the cover article for the first issue of Science Editor, an article tracing the history of the Council’s periodical.

For me, working with the editorial staff and Editorial Board has been an especially enjoyable part of the editorship. I have learned much from these skilled and thoughtful colleagues, and I deeply appreciate the time and expertise that they have volunteered. Although these colleagues are too numerous to recognize individually here, let me note a few who have contributed especially extensively.

Four people have served with me throughout the 12 years of my editorship. They are (in alphabetical order) Norman Grossblatt, manuscript editor, who has edited essentially every word in the publication; Tiffany D Inbody, designer, who has designed every issue; Poly M Potter, who initially served on the Editorial Board and now has long been covers editor; and Roxanne K Young, who as quality-control ace has consistently taken a major role in reviewing proofs. Also deserving particular recognition are the CSE members who, individually or in pairs, have served in the time-consuming role of publication manager, which entails administrative tasks, proofreading, and more. They are (in chronologic order) Grace Darling, Jane C Wiggs, David E Nadziejka, Leslie E Neistadt, and Caroline M Simpson. Special thanks also are due to Seth R Beckerman, who as the Council’s Web editor during most of my editorship provided great assistance and support.

When approached about becoming the editor, I was asked to submit a proposal. A main item I proposed was instituting internships, in keeping with the Council’s educational mission. In my dozen years as editor, more than 20 graduate students or early-career professionals have been interns at CBE Views or Science Editor. I have enjoyed working with the interns, who have come from Texas A&M University (where I teach) and elsewhere. The internship stipends—we joke that the interns are the only paid members of the editorial staff—have helped support students and recent graduates, and most of the former interns are pursuing careers in science editing or other aspects of science communication. Followup information on many of the interns appears in the May–June 2010 issue of Science Editor.

Over the years, I have enjoyed commissioning feature articles for Science Editor and helping to shape them. Among articles or groups thereof that especially stand out in my mind are the following:

- The articles Science Editor has published on formats for Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese, Arabic, Korean, Indian, and African names (topics increasingly
relevant to science editors as scientific research and publication are increasingly international).

• “Science Editing and Caregiving: Experience and Guidance,” which was promoted by the observation that caregiving duties had often delayed submission of articles for our pages and which seemed to elicit considerable appreciation.

• “Senior Editor Takes to the High Seas”, which described a science editor’s experience on a scientific expedition of the Ocean Drilling Program.

• Historical articles, including those on the first decade of BELS (the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences), the first 25 years of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals, and Rachel Carson’s career as a science editor.

Another source of pleasure has been the development of new departments or columns in Science Editor. I am grateful to Cheryl Iverson and Roxanne K Young for suggesting what came to be known as the Other Than Editing department: profiles of science editors who have avid and often distinctive outside interests. Other new departments have included Unbound (in which Elizabeth L Fleischer and guest authors explored the then-new realm of open access); The Word Hawk, in which Bob Johnson addressed aspects of language; Between Author and Editor, in which Contributing Editor Stephanie Deming and others consider the author–editor relationship from varied standpoints; and Peer-Renewed, featuring poems chosen by Contributing Editor Mary E Knattend.

I have especially enjoyed matching potential topics with prospective authors or contributing editors. The continual search for topics and contributors has helped to keep me attentive and engaged. So has the search for cover art—typically a collaborative effort with Covers Editor Poly M Potter and Designer Tiffany D Inbody. Finding the images has been great fun, and they seem to have given readers pleasure.

Looking Ahead
So, what is ahead for me and for Science Editor?

On hearing that I was leaving the editorship, some people have asked me, “Oh, are you retiring?” No, barring medical necessity, I have no intention of retiring any time soon. Others have asked, “What will you do with all that free time?”—to which I am tempted to reply, “Oh, do you mean hours 60 to 80 of the work week?” As a university faculty member for whom new activities keep materializing, I am still likely to have plenty to keep me busy.

However, I do expect to have a little more free time. Possible uses of the time include the following: Clean my office. Sleep more. Clean my office. Write more. Clean my office. Exercise more. Clean my office. Spend more time with family. Clean my office. Become even more engaged with AuthorAID (www.authoraid.info, a project to help researchers in developing countries write about and publish their work). Clean my office. Read more for pleasure. Clean my office. Finally watch some television again. Clean my office.

As for Science Editor, I hope the publication can look forward to the following:

• A new editor who brings creativity, commitment, and congeniality to the endeavor—and who views the role as fun.

• Freedom for the editor to take initiative.

• Continuation of the precedent of maintaining current strengths and developing new ones.

• Our support for the new editor.

Finally, let me thank all who have helped to make my years as editor of the Council’s periodical productive and enjoyable. These include the Board and staff of CBE Views and then Science Editor; the Council members and others who have written for the publication; our interns; the Board of Directors and headquarters staff of the Council; our printer; administrators and staff members at Texas A&M University; and, of course, our readers. Finally, I thank my husband, Thomas I Vogel, for his support and for his patience during the many weekend and evening hours that I devoted to the editorship. Again, my thanks to all.

References