

CBE Views: A Look Back

Martha M Tacker

“The Conference of Biological Editors, now in its third year of existence, is perhaps entering a critical stage in its life.” So began the first issue (September 1959) of the

NEWSLETTER

CONFERENCE OF BIOLOGICAL EDITORS

From this brief glimpse, we can see that much has changed and little has changed in the 40 years since publication of those words. We are now the Council of Science Editors (CSE), and we no longer put out a mimeographed newsletter in Courier typeface. We also see that our most recent name change was not the first in CBE and that “entering a critical stage” has a long history in our association.

Fortunately, CBE Views and its predecessor have been there to chronicle matters of importance to CBE, its members, and life-science publishing. In anticipation of the day when CBE Views itself would become a predecessor, Editor Barbara Gastel invited me to prepare this retrospective—invited me probably for two reasons. First, having been active in CBE for over 20 years, I’ve lived through much of the history of the Views. Second and more important, thanks to my pack-rat nature and the generosity and diligence of CBE Archivist C Grace Gurtowski, I have what is undoubtedly the most complete set of CBE Views not in a musty cardboard box. So, as we enter a new critical stage, one marked by the redesign and renaming of our publication, please join me in leafing through the CBE Newsletter and CBE Views.

An Editor for Editors

Of necessity, a publication reflects the interests, talents, and energy of those who put it together, and especially of the editor. The Newsletter and the Views have ben-

Editors of the CBE Newsletter and CBE Views

Years	Editor
CBE Newsletter	
1959 - [?]1962	Fred R Cagle
[?]1963 - 1969	Robert E Gordon
1969-1974	Karl Heumann
1975	David Frost
1975-1978	Bernard Forscher
CBE Views	
1978-1979	Bernard Forscher
1979-1980	Evelyn S Myers
1981	Margaret Broadbent (interim editor)
1981-1986	Stephen R Geiger
1987-1991	Gisella Pollock
1991-1993	Sharon Boots
1993-1994	Alan Brush
1994-1998	Martha M Tacker
1998-1999*	Barbara Gastel
Continuing as editor of Science Editor	

efited from the talents and dedication of some remarkable editors (Table) who rose to the challenge of editing a publication for editors. Initially, the Newsletter was edited by the secretary of CBE. It seemed to be a one-person operation, but I suspect that those busy scientist-CBE secretary-Newsletter editors had unnamed volunteer typists to help.

Over the years, aspects of production have fallen into the laps of various volunteer members listed on the masthead as associate editor, editorial assistant, copyeditor, and proofreader. We even benefited from the longtime volunteer production assistance of a nonmember, Joan Reilly, who served as proofreader or production editor from 1987 to 1995, when production was moved to a department of our management company. By 1997 the Views routinely consisted of 36

to 40 pages, and so two new positions were created and filled by volunteer members. Manuscript Editor Norman Grossblatt and Publication Manager Grace Darling gave the editor more time to focus on content. At its inception, the plan for CBE Views was also to have an advertising manager and a subscription manager. Those positions were filled only intermittently during the ensuing 20 years; they remained for the most part a figment of the editor’s wishful thinking.

The creation of CBE Views in 1978 was accompanied by creation of an editorial board, whose members were expected to invite submission of manuscripts and to review manuscripts before publication. In addition, CBE Views editors have enjoyed the help of specialized editors whom they recruited, persuaded, and coerced to become part of the Views editorial staff.

On rare and wondrous occasions, the Views editor needed only to accept the unsolicited offer of a member to become part of the staff. In 1987 Karl Heumann became the first book-review editor and Blaire Mossman became the first associate editor. In 1992, as a consequence of the growing number of CBE annual-meeting sessions to report, Editor Sharon Boots created the position of annual-meeting editor and Blaire Mossman was the first to fill it, formalizing responsibilities she had assumed for some time; C Grace Gurtowski was appointed associate editor. In 1995 and 1996 the editorial staff swelled considerably when I recognized the great value of being able to count on copy for each issue independently of the flow of submitted manuscripts. It was my good fortune to have six contributing editors who provided the core copy for each issue.

Changes in the Look and Frequency

The CBE Newsletter started as a typed, single-spaced set of stapled mimeographed pages (see cover). The second issue (October 1959) declared that CBE “intended to issue a Newsletter at no regular intervals but whenever some material of interest to members is ready and timely.” By 1973 the Newsletter had picked up a masthead, an issue number, and a two-column format and was being published with some regularity three to five times a year.

By 1977 it was clear, according to former President and Executive Secretary Philip L Altman, “that the content of the Newsletter required the more formal structure of a magazine or journal, and so an editor was appointed and CBE Views was created.”¹ Bernard Forscher, the Newsletter editor at that time and the first who was not also the CBE secretary, was appointed the first editor of CBE Views. The newly appointed editorial board explained that the name CBE Views was “related to the concept of the purpose of this publication: to improve communication within CBE and to provide a source of information for and a medium for exchange of information among people working in the field of scientific journal

publication” (November 1977).

The new quarterly publication took on the look of a magazine, with a 7 X 10-inch page size, a self-cover, and volume and issue numbers. With the new name, the cover displayed the new CBE logo, designed under the direction of Editor Bernard Forscher. He described it as “a pen in a flask in a circle. It says that the written word (the pen) has a central place in science (the flask) and that CBE encompasses (the circle) all aspects of the function of the pen in science. Having a logo says we are claiming identification as a distinct entity, that CBE is.”² Inside CBE Views, the format was a mixture of one and two columns per page with a

*The CBE Newsletter
started as a typed, single-spaced set of stapled mimeographed pages.*

variety of fonts used for titles and headings. Each issue was printed in a different color of ink with the cover a lighter shade of that color.

When Evelyn Myers became the editor in 1979, the Views took on more trappings of a magazine by acquiring a glossy cover in bright blue and black. Each cover highlighted an article with a short title or a relevant map, graph, or photograph. The pages decreased slightly to 6 X 9 inches and had a clean, one-column format for the articles and a two-column format for the “CBE News” section. This format continued under the editorship of Stephen R Geiger.

In 1987, however, the format of CBE Views came full circle to the larger 8½ X 11-inch page size and became a bimonthly publication under the editorship of Gisella Pollock. As she later explained, this change was made “to accommodate standard commercial ads, as well as house ads for the growing number of CBE books.”³ The designed self-cover displayed the entire

table of contents, and the pages inside were typeset in two or three columns. This format remained virtually unchanged through the November-December 1999 issue, the last issue of CBE Views. The bimonthly schedule started in 1987 with a February-March issue rather than a January-February issue because, according to Editor Pollock, there was no copy ready for a January-February issue and skipping an issue to start with March-April wasn’t acceptable. “It has been my aim”, she wrote in 1989, “to bring the actual completion date to the early part of the month and eventually to move into a January/February, March/April, etc. progression.”⁴ This elusive goal was finally met with the January-February 1997 issue.

Content That Kept Editors Informed

From its inception, CBE Views has served the purposes set forth by the first editorial board, which saw “this magazine as serving both as a house organ for CBE and as a magazine of general interest to those in publication work” (November 1977). In fact, the content of the Views predecessor, the Newsletter, had also served those dual purposes. Various issues of the Newsletter focused on the annual meetings. Some issues gave the program and registration information, such as the March 1960 issue, which reminded all to make their hotel reservations for the CBE meeting at the Wade Park Manor Hotel, Cleveland, Ohio, “for the special rates of \$8.50 single; \$12.50 double” (those were the days). Other issues presented synopses of talks and reports of business conducted at the latest annual meeting or by committees between meetings. In addition, most issues also contained items of interest to biology editors that had obviously been gathered by the editor from a broad range of sources. In those freewheeling early days of photocopying, pieces from other publications were often cut and pasted into the Newsletter, some identified as “Stolen from such-and-such journal.” Cartoons and clip art brightened the pages.

The Newsletter had no formal sections other than the occasional letters column,

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list of new members, and “Publications of Interest”, which listed, without comment, scientific articles written by members and articles on scientific communication. But perusal of those issues quickly reveals themes of interest that persist even today:

Reports of the annual meeting: The May 1964 annual meeting appears to be the first reported in detail in the Newsletter. (The first may have been the 1963 annual meeting, but the relevant issue is missing from my collection.) The reports of sessions were unattributed synopses probably written by the Newsletter editor, reprints of papers presented at the meeting, and synopses prepared by the presenters. I had a sense of déjà vu while reading through the early reports, including the one from a 1976 meeting session titled “The Scientific Literature System Is Obsolete”.

Meritorious Award presentations: The Meritorious Award (now the Award for Meritorious Achievement) was first given in 1969. From the beginning, the Newsletter published the introduction of the award recipient and the acceptance address for most presentations. The introductions and acceptance addresses are invaluable sources of historical information about CBE and about scientific publishing.

Statements of policy on scientific publishing: Publication of thoughtful, knowledgeable statements by CBE committees was started in the Newsletter. Early statements by the Editorial Policy Committee, then chaired by Lois DeBakey, included those on binding practices, book reviews, and a topic of enduring interest, “The Editor: Role, Functions, Responsibilities, and Administrative Arrangements”.

Scholarly articles: What appears to be the first original scholarly article (which I define as treatment of a topic in depth and grounded in previous scholarship with references) published in the Newsletter appeared in the April 1974 issue: “Fiscal Considerations for Scientific Society Publications: An Overview”, by Robert A Harte, manager of the Journal of Biological Chemistry and former CBE president.

CBE publications: The progress of the

CBE style manuals and other publications has been communicated to members through the Newsletter and the Views. The first issue of the Newsletter, in September 1959, reported that “the hard-working Committee on a Style Manual for Biological Journals, under the Chairmanship of Dr. J. Roger Porter, is pushing diligently towards the completion of the manual.” The September 1960 issue announced that “the style manual, a major achievement of CBE, is published. Price is \$3.00.” The November 1968 issue announced a new CBE publica-

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tion: “Scientific Writing for Graduate Students—the handbook produced by the Standing Committee for Graduate Training in Scientific Writing [chaired by F Peter Woodford] is expected from Rockefeller University Press in December. Comments on the project (of which the handbook is only a part) from the scientific community at large have been extremely favorable. Once again, CBE has led not only biology, but all of science in a forward step toward the improvement of communication.”

When CBE Views was started in 1978, the editorial board envisioned two types of editorial matter: regular sections (columns) and articles. The latter were to be unsolicited or “will be written on invitation (coercion) from members of the Editorial Board.” (At least the approaches to article recruitment haven’t changed over the years.)

Editor Bernard Forscher formalized existing columns with titles: “Letters from the Editors”, “Who’s New in CBE”, and “The Book Corner”. Although volume 1 relied on reprints of articles published elsewhere (duly footnoted with “Reprinted

from . . .”), original pieces began to appear with greater frequency and ranged widely in topic from the 1976 Copyright Revision Act to editing articles about recombinant DNA to using the dash (the punctuation mark, that is). A “How We Do It” column started with Marilyn Pliska, copyeditor for the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, describing how she estimated the length of a printed article from the typescript.⁵ In the second issue, CBE Chairman Robert A Day (the CBE president was called the CBE chairman in those days) wrote a piece called “Reflections of a CBE Graybeard”.⁶ In the third issue an interview with Bentley Glass, former CBE chairman and Meritorious Award recipient, was the first in a series of “biographical and historical interviews, featuring other early chairmen of CBE, whose philosophies and personalities shaped and encouraged the expansion and variety of membership which has resulted in the CBE we are all familiar with today.”⁷ On one occasion, an omission caught the eye of readers: The pages of the June 1978 issue had no numbers. Fortunately, a generous reader responded to the editor’s request for material for the Views by sending him a list of numbers from 1 to 18 to be used in the next issue. That was most useful, inasmuch as the December 1978 issue presented subject and author indexes for that year, the only indexes published until this feature was resurrected for volume 21 (1998) by Editor Barbara Gastel.

Under Editor Evelyn Myers, the editorial was named “Viewpoint”. Reports of annual-meeting sessions were written by designated reporters. In 1980 the reports appeared for the first time in a section titled “Annual Conference Reports”. The days of relying on reprinted articles passed. Original articles included “Ethics and Publication: The Journal as Mentor”, by Barbara Z Renkin;⁸ my article “Author’s Editors: Catalysts of Scientific Publishing”;⁹ and “Graduate Editorial Fellowships—An Idea Whose Time Has Come”, by Bentley Glass.¹⁰

The new “CBE News” section corralled the “Letters from the Editors”, “Who’s New in CBE”, news about CBE board and com-

mittee activities, and other news of interest. A long-running column first appeared: "Nomenclature Notes", by Murrie Burgan; and the page-filler "The Bug Collection" (what's bugging you?) was launched with my harangue about the use and misuse of "utilization".¹¹ The Views was, however, sent back to the drawing board, literally, when John Corliss pointed out that the illustration for "The Bug Collection" was not truly a "bug";¹² the Views replaced it with the entomologically and etymologically correct stink bug.¹³

The next editor, Stephen R Geiger, continued development of the Views as a source of thoughtful original analysis and commentary. Some articles helped readers stay up to date with technology, such as the 1982 article "Manuscripts on Tape", by Bradley Hundley,¹⁴ then journals manager of Rockefeller University Press and later CBE president, who described the installation of a system for accepting and processing authors' manuscripts on magnetic tape. Other articles continued to explore facets of being an editor, such as "Editors and Fraud", by Marcia Angell,¹⁵ and "Eight Rules for Achievement of Diplomacy in Journal Management", by John O Corliss.¹⁶ And fortunately for CBE, articles documenting CBE's history began to appear in 1981 with "The Council of Biology Editors: A 25-Year Chronology of Events", by former President and then-Executive Director Philip L Altman,¹⁷ and with "CBE Members: Facts and Figures", by Douglas A Fisher,¹⁸ who in 1984 was chair of the Membership Committee and former CBE president.

During Editor Geiger's tenure, the new "In Vivo" column presented commentary on a broad range of topics by former CBE President and Newsletter Editor Karl Heumann. Geiger also started a column, "Worth Reading", that contained brief reviews of articles published elsewhere. In 1985 Geiger initiated the "Dialogue" section with the question, "Will full-text publishing bypass the need for the secondary services?"¹⁹ Geiger also edited the first focus issue, which addressed ethics in science and publication and drew from

presentations at a 1981 annual-meeting session.²⁰ He also published the first issue to have a guest editor, although not so called; then-Editorial Board member and now CBE President Blaire Mossman coordinated the 1985 issue that presented reports from the first joint meeting of CBE and the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) in 1984.²¹

Along with overseeing major changes in format and publication frequency, Editor Gisella Pollock further developed the internal structure of the publication. She organized a major section, "Features", that contained short essays, announcements, and the columns—"Letters", "Nomenclature Notes", and "The Book Corner". This last was edited first by Karl Heumann, then by Pat Morgan, and later by current Science Editor Editor

***Guest editors were invited
to coordinate the focus
portions of some issues.***

Barbara Gastel. New columns included "Management Brief", by AJ Ladman; "Comments on Manuscript Editing", by Bernard Forscher; "International Notes", and "Workshops, Seminars, and Symposia". Pollock also initiated a column prepared by a CBE committee. The CBE Public Affairs Committee, then chaired by Morna Conway, started the "Issues . . . Issues . . . Issues!" column to keep the members "apprised of pending legislation, developments in public policy, and so on." One item in the first column was the committee's response to a request that CBE file an amicus curiae brief in a case that asked, among other questions, "Should an editor of a refereed scientific journal be held to a higher standard of conduct than an ordinary media defendant?"²² (The committee declined to enter a brief in that case.)

Readers continued to benefit from articles that helped them meet the challenges of scientific journal editing, including a debate between Jay Siwek and the team of former CBE President Drummond Rennie

and Lisa Bero about controlled-circulation journals.²³ In addition, a series of eight articles that came to be titled "Careers in Scientific Writing, Editing, and Publishing" covered a breadth of careers, including book publishing, biomedical-journal editing, marketing, and science writing. In 1987, Philip Altman continued to chronicle CBE history with "CBE: Then and Now".²⁴ Although not so titled, how-we-do-it articles continued with such topics as "Integrating Teaching of Scientific Communication into Teaching of Science: Examples from Some Biology Courses", by Eugene H Schmitz,²⁵ and "Book Reviewing: Confessions, Commendations, and Cravings of an Addict", by Barbara Gastel.²⁶

Under Editor Sharon Boots, the "Features" section was renamed "Departments". In response to concerns that interaction seemed to take place only at the annual meeting, Editor Boots developed the concept of an interactive column to address "all types of problems that our members face while carrying out their professional responsibilities." The result was "Solution Corner", edited by Della Mundy; the first problem was determining the criteria for authorship of a scientific paper.²⁷ Articles addressed a range of concerns, from "What's an Author? And So What (In Legal Terms)?", by Julie Miller,²⁸ to "Keys to Success on Copyediting Tests", by Elizabeth Whalen.²⁹

Editor Alan Brush retained the internal organization of the Views: "Viewpoint", "Articles", "CBE Annual Meeting Reports", "Departments", and "CBE News". The articles continued to focus on highly relevant issues, for example, "An Editor's Survival Guide to Crisis Management", by former President John C Bailar III,³⁰ and "The Rhetoric of Research", by Richard Horton.³¹ Readers of a section titled "From the Editors of Scientific Style and Format" also enjoyed a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the preparation of the new CBE style manual, edited by former CBE President Edward J Huth.³²

Under my own editorship, the "Departments" section expanded from

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“Letters”, “CBE ReViews” (formerly “The Book Corner”), and “Solution Corner” to include several new columns: “CBE InterViews”, by Domenic Fuccillo, “Net Results”, by Sally Edwards, “The Word Watcher”, by Lorraine Loviglio, and “The Lighter View”, by Barbara Cox. The “Articles” and the resurrected “Dialogue” section were devoted to peer-reviewed substantive analysis of issues important to science editors. The “Features” section was brought back as the place for brief essays, descriptions of personal experience, and other short items. Focus issues became more frequent, both to provide readers an in-depth analysis of various facets of an important topic and because I found that manuscripts were more forthcoming when I could suggest a topic than when authors were invited to submit a manuscript on any subject of their choosing. In addition, guest editors were recruited to coordinate the focus portions of some issues, to bring their own expertise and contacts to bear on the topic, and to lighten the manuscript-soliciting task of the editor. Editorial Board member Roxanne Young headed a quality-control committee that analyzed and sought to improve the accuracy and consistency of a publication by and for editors.

Current Editor Barbara Gastel initially retained the format and most of the internal organization that she inherited. Even so, she put her imprint on the Views with a new column, “Views Afield”, by Lynn Dirk, which reviewed articles on science editing and allied topics that appeared elsewhere. Articles continued to keep readers informed about technology: “Managing Editors and Digital Images: Shutter Diplomacy”, by Michael T Rossner, Michael J Held, G Paul Bozuwa, and Alec Kornacki;³³ about current issues: the “Dialogue” on the dismissal of George Lundberg as editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, coordinated by Jason E Moore;³⁴ about

how-we-do-it: “A System for Reviewing Software in Scientific Journals”, by Kevin Ahern;³⁵ and about matters critical to the future of the organization: “Strategic Plan for the Council of Biology Editors”,³⁶ which brings us back to the reason for this retrospective.

The Strategic Plan described CBE’s mission—to promote excellence in the communication of scientific information—and CBE’s purpose—to serve members in the scientific, scientific-publishing, and information-science communities by fostering networking, education, discussion, and exchange and to be an authoritative resource on current and emerging issues in the communication of scientific information. One step proposed to accomplish this mission and purpose was to broaden membership to all sciences—a step that was approved by the members and resulted in our name change to Council of Science Editors. With the renaming of the organization and the movement of its focus to a new level, the time was right to do the same with the publication.

The Chronicle Continues

Like CBE in 1959, CSE in 2000 is “entering a critical stage in its life.” CBE moved through that initial critical stage and flourished, and I expect CSE to move through this critical stage and flourish. Over the years, CBE Newsletter and CBE Views were there to chronicle matters of importance to CBE, its members, and life-science publishing. I expect Science Editor to do the same for CSE, its members, and scientific publishing. The first issue of this new chronicle is in your hands. 🐼

Martha M Tacker, of Biomedical Communication Services, provides biomedical editorial and writing services and leads workshops in biomedical communication. She is a former president of CBE and edited CBE Views from 1994 to 1998. If you have any issues of CBE Newsletter

published between 1960 and 1975, please let her know: Martha Tacker, 704 - 228th Avenue NE, PMB 623, Redmond, WA 98053; telephone 425-836-3284; e-mail mttacker@prodigy.net.

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