

AAAS Meeting to Feature Symposium Organized by CSE Representative

Massive quantities of information about science and health are available on the Internet. Organizations and businesses of all types are spending huge amounts of money, time, and effort in creating, maintaining, and promoting their sites. Although scientists and journalists have come to rely heavily on the Internet in their professional lives, is the public making use of the newly available electronic resources?

Julie Ann Miller, CSE representative to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and Carol L Rogers, of the University of Maryland-College Park, have organized a symposium to examine this question at the upcoming AAAS meeting in Washington, DC. The symposium, "Internet Bounty: How the Public Harvests Science and Health Information", is scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday, 19 February.

Speakers on the program will give a brief overview of the material available online and then describe the research that is getting under way. A variety of investigators are examining popular use of the Internet and its impact on acquisition of scientific and medical information by the general public.

Ivars Peterson, online editor of Science News, will begin the session with a tour of the scientific Web. Then, Jon D Miller, of Northwestern University, will describe who is using the Web for science and health information. Next, Sharon Dunwoody, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will present findings on users of the "Why Files", a Wisconsin scientific Web site, and Eve-Marie Lacroix, of the National Library of Medicine, will report how consumers are gathering health information from MEDLINE Plus. Finally, William Evans, of Georgia State

University, will address the topic of distinguishing mainstream and fringe science on the Internet.

The speakers will address such questions as the following: Who is visiting the many sites targeted to bring scientific and medical information—as varied as Mars exploration and influenza treatments—to nonspecialists? What are the visitors learning, and how do they use what they learn? Are they satisfied with what they find? How can people evaluate the reliability of the sites they visit? What impact is the Internet having on public understanding of science?

In coming decades, the Internet is expected to become the leading source of such information. The symposium will assess the signs that this is actually happening. 🐼

Edwards Steps Down as "Net Results" Columnist

Sally Edwards retires after this issue as the contributor of the "Net Results" column. From the December 1995 issue of CBE Views through the current issue of Science Editor, the column has guided editors in using the Internet.

The first column—ages ago by Internet standards—addressed how to obtain an Internet connection and browse the World Wide Web. Other topics in early columns dealt with federal Web sites, Web-site maintenance, Web jargon, the role of editors on

the Web, and Web searching. Additional subjects over the years have included job hunting online, differences between writing for the Web and writing for print, courses and degree programs available online, and .pdf-formatted files.

For most of her time as "Net Results" columnist, Edwards managed the Publications Group, Department of Radiology, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston. She is now the managing editor at the Health Effects Institute,

Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Science Editor looks forward to continuing to help readers make effective use of the Internet. The possibility of a new column in this realm is being explored, and articles on science editing and the Internet are welcome at any time.

CSE thanks Edwards for all she has brought to "Net Results". Her "Let's chat" signoff will be much missed. 🐼