

## The Council: Looking Backward and Forward from 1987

The Council of Biology Editors observed its 30-year anniversary in 1987, and CBE Views that year included two articles about CBE's past and future. Those articles, summarized here, seem especially pertinent as the organization enters a new phase by becoming the Council of Science Editors. Note particularly the last paragraph in the synopsis of Huth's article.

### **Altman PL. Then and now. CBE Views 1987;10(1):3-6.**

Philip Altman, executive director and former president of CBE, documented that CBE "has been a vital, forward looking organization from its inception" and that "its stated purpose of educating authors, editors, and publishers to improve communication in the life sciences has been achieved" by activities that he highlighted in this brief history of CBE. Early attempts to promote effective communication practices in the life sciences had resulted in neither consensus nor action. In 1955, however, with funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), 12 biology editors met in Washington, DC, to discuss mutual problems and decided that a larger-scale conference was needed. Two years later in New Orleans, at the first Conference of Biological Editors, 46 editors with 13 observers drafted and adopted a constitution and bylaws.

At later annual meetings, members would select some topics for discussion repeatedly, such as editorial policies, new technology, copyright, scientific writing, and ethics. The recurrence of some topics led to action through other forums. For example, the first CBE publication was initiated in September 1959: The Conference of Biology Editors Newsletter. It was replaced by CBE Views, which was a quarterly until 1986, when it became a bimonthly. In 1960 the first edition of the style manual weighed in at 92 pages and was an immediate success. It was followed in 1964 by the 117-page second edition; in 1972 by the thoroughly reorganized third edition, which had 180 additional pages; and in 1983 by the fourth edition (324 pages). Scientific Writing for Graduate Students, first published in 1968,

proved extremely useful and was reprinted in 1976, 1981, 1983, and 1986.

In the middle 1960s, CBE began to form liaisons with other groups; by 1987 it had 10, including liaisons with the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the National Information Standards Organization Z39. In 1962, with funding from NSF, for the first time a group of editors from other countries were invited to the annual meeting, which resulted that same year in the formation of the Latin American Association of Editors of Biological Journals. Similar outreach efforts resulted in the parent of the European Association of Science Editors in 1965 and in the Association of Earth Science Editors in 1967. In 1979 CBE became a charter member of the International Federation of Scientific Editors' Associations (IFSEA).

On 7 July 1965, CBE incorporated. At the 1980 annual meeting, five task forces were formed to represent the different groups among the CBE membership: scientific editors, managing and technical editors, author's editors, information scientists, and publishers. In 1982 the membership voted to open CBE to all persons interested in its purposes.

### **Huth E. CBE will not be saved by grace alone, good works are needed. (Meritorious Award address.) CBE Views 1987; 10(4): 55-7.**

Although Edward Huth was considered material for the cloth by his Presbyterian minister, that apparently resulted more from Huth's tendency to sermonize than from a religious inclination. Thus, he explained, his Meritorious Award acceptance speech would be a sermon suggesting five ways for CBE to serve both future and current members better. The suggestions were presented "in order of increasing grandiosity and hence increasing improbability of our putting them into effect".

1. CBE should foster tighter and more active liaisons with particular organizations for fair exchanges to mutual benefit. For example, in the middle 1980s there was

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no available explanation of the principles of Index Medicus journal-title abbreviations, which are based in part on standards established by the International Standards Organization. Huth wrote to the National Library of Medicine (NLM), and its director of library operations (Lois Colaianni) agreed to provide the rules for possible publication in CBE Views. At about the same time NLM was concerned about deteriorating paper in books and journals, and CBE could serve NLM as a bridge to those who could help solve the problem by promoting the use of acid-free paper.

2. CBE should develop of software programs that could be inexpensive and more easily modified for local needs. For example, Huth proposed “an off-the-shelf, easy-to-use” program of CBE-published editorial forms.
3. CBE should explore the use of bar codes for journal issues and articles. The bar codes would contain bibliographic identifiers that would, for instance, greatly facilitate the development of personal

bibliographic files.

4. Huth reviewed all extant English-language style manuals for the sciences and was struck by how details in scientific style were converging and how the boundaries between the sciences were increasingly blurred. Therefore, he proposed that CBE should collaborate with other scientific or publishing bodies to write and publish a style manual for all the sciences similar to The Chicago Manual of Style.
5. Huth observed that the issues of greatest interest at the annual meetings had less to do with any of the biologic sciences and more to do with editorial matters of process and style. Therefore, he proposed that “we in CBE should seek to organize, or transform, ourselves into a single society for editors of all sciences”.



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