

“Not Another Laundry List of Membership Benefits . . .”

Barry Davis, Chair
Stacie Lemick, Vice-Chair
CSE Membership Committee

If you were to contact any random trade or professional association, we would wager that something resembling the following would likely arrive in your mailbox some time next week:

- “Members of X Association enjoy
- X Association magazine or newsletter.
 - A discount on the X Association annual meeting.
 - Full access to the X Association Web site.
 - An X Association membership directory.
 - Networking opportunities.
 - Continuing education . . .”

We would also wager that this exercise could be repeated daily with a new, random membership organization yielding a similar laundry list. (If you actually attempt this exercise, please do share the results with us.)

We’re all members of organizations that could be plugged into the predictable and obligatory member benefits list above. CSE, in all fairness, cannot be excluded from that group of organizations, inasmuch as we ultimately lay claim to the standard benefits of membership.

The value of your membership in CSE, however, is grounded in what we feel to be the uniquely substantive nature of CSE benefits. A list of reasons why anyone should remain or become a member of any group does not inherently address why any of the items constitutes a reason. That is, perhaps, why we membership people have too often ignored the fact that the *offering* of products and services is not what renders them beneficial.

We hope this article offers at least some level of qualification for the CSE incarnation of member benefits of three types, as well as introducing new members to the value of their membership in the Council.

CSE Annual Meeting

Like most organizations, we have an annual meeting and a registration discount for members. So where is the CSE difference?

CSE’s annual meetings embody an unparalleled balance of sessions and education covering digital and traditional editorial and publishing topics. Our focus on the individual editor (as opposed to organizations) yields sessions addressing shifts in common language usage, the implications of English bias in the sciences, and information design as it pertains to editors. We do not, however, neglect the broader context of science editing. Our annual meetings provide a forum to learn about scholarly publishing in a substantive manner. Seemingly contrary to the scholarly publishing marketplace environment of the last 3 to 4 years, there are valid issues requiring discussion that do not involve the words *digital*, *change*, *paradigm*, *full text*, or *new world*—metaphors for an environment that doesn’t seem quite so new anymore. This year’s annual meeting sessions addressed such topics as relationship issues among editors, publishers, and authors; economics of research libraries; and how scientists read.

Our CSE short courses (offered at the annual meeting) address publishing as the craft it still is. Moreover, these courses are peculiar to particular job titles. This level of personalization is quite rare in a group the size of CSE.

CSE Publications

All groups have publications representing various levels of usefulness to the community they serve. CSE offers an industry standard—*Scientific Style and Format*, a definitive, established resource without which many an editorial office reference collection would be incomplete.

Unlike many organizations, CSE does not offer a newsletter to members as a benefit of membership. There is no glossy four-color magazine either. We feel that *Science Editor* more accurately represents the types of publications that are copyedited, managed, and published by our members. It functions as a journal for CSE.

More recently, we developed the CSE GuideLines Series. With subject matter of particular relevance to people who are new to scholarly publishing (for example, *The Publication Process at Biomedical Journals*)

and other specialized information (for example, *Editing Grant Proposals* and *Levels of Technical Editing*), these CSE publications fill a void in publications about our comparatively small industry of scientific, technical, and medical publishing.

Web Site

CSE’s Web site (www.councilscienceeditors.org) is of value to CSE members and prospective members in several ways.

First, prospective members can learn about CSE and what it offers.

Second, members can use our online membership directory to identify their colleagues for networking purposes. The directory is available to all members in print, but the ability to conduct a fielded search establishes the directory as a dynamic resource.

Third, networking (as defined by some form of sponsored interaction among members) is offered by all member organizations. We offer a form of networking through our Web site that can be bluntly described as “finding a new job”. The most visited portion of our Web site is an online, searchable job data bank. Users can identify specific opportunities that match their desires.

Fourth, the CSE Web site offers all members the opportunity to effect change in our field. Our Editorial Policy Committee exists to establish guidelines and policies addressing the many ambiguous issues involving ethics and procedures in editing and publishing. Those visiting the CSE Web site can submit comments for the committee’s review. Materials from the CSE Task Force on Authorship also appear on the Web site.

We could certainly offer more information about CSE, but we would then be in danger of providing the very laundry list we resolved to avoid. As members of CSE, we interpret the overriding benefit of membership in the Council as follows: We are committed to especially substantive programs in the contemporary, often cluttered environment of scholarly publishing.

We welcome comments and feedback with respect to your interpretations of the value of CSE membership.