

“Recorded in Nature, Revealed in Words”: The AESE and EASE Meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia

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The Association of Earth Science Editors (AESE) and the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) held a joint meeting on 14-18 September 2002 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Titled “Recorded in Nature, Revealed in Words”, the 2002 conference focused on the challenges and dilemmas that editors face in an age of digital media. What unique copyright issues are posed by Internet publication? What ethical dilemmas arise when an author publishes the same article in paper format and digital format? How do we ensure that high review standards are maintained in the “free-for-all” publishing environment of the World Wide Web? Those are several of the recurring questions that sparked discussion among conference presenters and attendees.

The first day’s events included the AESE 2002 board meeting and an icebreaker at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History. Sessions began on the next day (Sunday, 15 September) as attendees turned their attentions to ethical questions peculiar to the field of science editing.

The first session, “Ethics in Scientific Publishing”, began with Jenny Gretton’s presentation, “Fraud—Grasping the Nettle”. Gretton, honorary secretary of EASE, referred to today’s perpetrators of fraud in science as “modern-day alchemists”; fraud in science, after all, is nothing new. Citing the particular pressures facing scientists today (tenure, grants, funding from industry, and the lure of fame and fortune), Gretton focused on demands from within the scientific community that,

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albeit indirectly, encourage fraud. Tom van Loon, who is both editor-in-chief of *Geologie en Mijnbouw* and professor of geology at the University of Silesia (in Poland), brought a unique perspective to the question of ethics in scientific publishing. In “The Ethics of Duplicate Publication”,

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van Loon argued that duplicate publication might be necessary in some instances. For example, many scientists in developing countries often publish articles in national journals published in languages that are inaccessible to many of those in the international scientific community. For the articles to be accessible to a large portion of the scientific community, they would need to appear also in a globally accessible language (like English). In a case like that, duplicate publication would be ethical.

Hopping the Harbour

After the session, attendees were invited to participate in a tour of Halifax aboard a Harbour Hopper, a conspicuous amphibious vehicle that is a common sight throughout Halifax.

The afternoon session, “Refereeing in the New Millennium”, focused on problems that editors often face when dealing with review boards. Elisabeth Kessler, editor of *Ambio—A Journal of the Human Environment*, presented “Referees’ Conflicts of Interest”. Stressing the importance of the relationship between editors and referees, Kessler noted that a good referee assists both the editor and the author. The biases that often surface during a review threaten

the integrity of the entire peer-review process. As editors, we should train ourselves to spot those biases in a reviewer’s report to ensure that the process is as unbiased as possible. Shifting the focus to reviewers and the difficulties that they face, van Loon presented “Credits Required for Referees”. Van Loon argued that because reviewers are not compensated for the work they do, the peer-review process often suffers. For example, if a reviewer’s institution rewarded his or her efforts as it rewards publications, a reviewer would be less likely to give cursory attention to a manuscript being reviewed.

In the last presentation of the day, “Online Manuscript Submission and Tracking”, Richard Wynne, vice president of sales and marketing with Aries Systems Corporation, demonstrated the capabilities of Editorial Manager, a software program that manages and tracks manuscripts that are submitted online. Deployed by more than 50 scholarly journals, Editorial Manager is one of the solutions to streamlining the online submission process.

Food and Fossils

On Sunday evening, attendees were treated to a wonderful lobster dinner sponsored by Natural Resources Canada. After great food, spirits, music, and conversation, all the diners left ready to take on the next day’s events!

On Monday, John H Calder and Howard V Donohoe Jr, of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, led the group on a day-long field trip to Joggins and Parrsboro to view the fossil cliffs of the Bay of Fundy. Although the weather was cold and wet for most of the day, the participants’ perseverance paid off. The cliffs on the Bay of Fundy offer one of the world’s best examples of the rocks of the Carboniferous Period (the “Coal Age”).

Tuesday's first session, "Digital Dilemmas, Copyright Issues, and Archiving Headaches in the Digital World", found conference participants trading advice about the best way to dry soaked sneakers and jackets! The weather on Wednesday was beautiful—sunny and clear—as the editors turned their attention to publishing on the Internet.

In "Authors' Rights vs. Authors' Wants in the Real World", Aldyth Holmes (director of the NRC Research Press, National Research Council of Canada) discussed the development of NRC's policies regarding authors' rights in a digital age and what authors want now with respect to access to the publisher's archive. Authors often view the Internet as a virtually free publishing environment, and they are unaware of all the "behind the scenes" work and resources that go into getting quality articles posted and archived. Digital publishing poses many questions; as we break new ground, authors, scientists, and libraries should ensure that the lines of communication remain open to ensure that the publishing and archiving processes consider everyone's interests.

Kristina Bartlett, managing editor of *Geotimes*, presented "Geotimes.org: Finding the Potential of a Magazine's Web Site". *Geotimes* magazine is about 50 years old, and its Web site is 4 years old. The *Geotimes* Web site (which readers can access at no cost) has become a supplement to the print version of the magazine; the magazine refers readers to its Web site for more in-depth information. Although the Web version of the magazine has been labor-intensive, Bartlett and her staff have decided that it is worth it because subscriptions to the print version have increased since the magazine went online.

Digital Data and More

In "The World of Digital Data—No Arcadia There!" Marie-France Dufour turned her attention to ensuring the integrity of data when the data are in a readily accessible source. As senior geologist and director of the Geoscience Information Center of the Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS), Dufour argued that agen-

cies and institutions often underestimate the need to monitor who is accessing their data and how the data are being used. Citing two examples of institutional misuse and misrepresentation of ISGS data, Dufour maintained that agencies providing clearinghouse data to large audiences need to be especially vigilant about how their data are being presented on the Web.

Merriane Hackathorn, editor at the Ohio Geological Survey (OGS), rounded out the session with "Free But Not So Easy: Digital Data from the Ohio Geological Survey". As a government agency, OGS is required to provide inexpensive access to a lot of data in a timely manner. Like many other organizations, OGS has adopted Adobe's portable document format (PDF) and ESRI's shape file format (SHP) to deliver documents and map files to the widest audience possible.

The last session of the day, "Communicating via Web Pages", focused on how scientific publications can best make use of Web pages for their particular audiences. In "Letting the Bells and Whistles Work for You", Jennifer Pattison Rumford—electronic publications specialist for the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP), Texas A&M University—used the ODP and *Palaeontologica Electronica* Web sites to illustrate how scientific sites can effectively use the "bells and whistles" of Web design (for example, pop-ups, animation, QuickTime movies, 3D, rollovers, and sound). To design the most effective pages, Web designers need to know their audiences and be sensitive to cultural differences in their design elements.

Later in the session, in "Enhancing Public Access to Geological Data, Maps, and Publications through Innovative Web-Based Technology", Carol Ruthven—manager of communications and technology transfer at the Kentucky Geological Society—discussed Web access to maps and other publications archived by the society. In addition to maps and geologic data, the society's Web site contains tutorials for using online data and a search engine. Jennifer Bates, of the Geological Survey of Canada, also discussed user access of Web-based materials, pointing out that



DESTINATION HALIFAX

Aerial view of Halifax.

designing a government Web site presents a Web designer with a set of rules and regulations that the designer must take into consideration to create a well-constructed, easy-to-navigate site. In the session's final presentation, "Web Publishing in the U.S. Geological Survey—Some Examples of Geological Publications", Terry D'Erchica, of the US Geological Survey (USGS), discussed Web design from the point of view of giving publications a consistent "look" so that users and USGS can ensure that official, approved versions of publications appear on servers.

Rules for Writing?

On Wednesday, participants had an opportunity to share advice about developing effective presentations and unique ways to communicate scientific information to audiences of specialists and nonspecialists.

Jean Richardson, market research specialist with Lakefield Research, kicked off the "Nobody Told Me There Would Be Rules for Writing" workshop with a talk about designing effective PowerPoint presentations. In "Powerful PowerPoint Presentations", Richardson used geologic

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examples of effectiveness in color, size, and professional standards. Inviting the audience to participate in the slides' revisions, the talk focused on various design techniques that will enhance audience retention of information. Pamela Daddow, report specialist with the USGS Yucca Mountain Project, continued the focus on the audience in "Posters that Catch and Keep Attention". The first goal of a poster, according to Daddow, is to catch the viewer's attention. Once the viewer stops to look at the poster, then the presenter must think about how to communicate scientific content in a user-friendly manner.

Mary-Margaret Coates, a contract editor and technical writing teacher at Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado, delivered the final two presentations of the session. In "Citations and References: Slaying the Dread Documentation Dragon", Coates discussed the "headaches" of documentation, which is often the most problematic part of a technical paper. Poorly chosen references and sources that are difficult to locate can undercut an author's credibility. Coates suggested various checks and crosschecks to ensure that readers and authors easily understand references. In "Publish That Dissertation!" Coates provided guidelines for graduate students who are attempting to find a publisher for their theses or dissertations. One of the most important steps to publication is finding the publisher that best matches a dissertation's content.

The presenters at the day's second session, "Interactive Outreach Projects", shared experiences in dealing with field trips, open houses, and museum tours. Evelyn Inglis, an editor with the Geological Survey of Canada and the out-

going AESE president, presented "Open Houses Coast to Coast", a discussion about some of her successes in reaching the public. In "Linking Rocks, Landforms, Geological Processes, Mineral Resources, and Plate Tectonics for Interpretive Work in Nova Scotia", Howard Donohoe (one of the field trip leaders on Monday) described some interpretive walks that geologists with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources have developed to get

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people interested in local geology sites. Liz Brosius, who works in the Editing and Public Outreach units of the Kansas Geological Survey, discussed some of the difficulties in communicating geologic information to a general audience. Since fall 2000, the survey has sponsored successful geology field trips and has found them to be among its most valuable educational outlets. Stephen Archibald, manager of interpretation at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History in Halifax, shared some of the museum's public success stories in "We're Cooking Insects Down at the Museum".

In the final session of the conference, "Science for Nonscientists: Spreading

the Word So They'll Listen", presenters turned their attention to science writing for a popular audience. Brian Hoyle, president of the science writing and editing company Square Rainbow Limited, discussed ways that writers can write for a popular science audience. Rather than looking at popular science writing as "talking down to the audience", Hoyle encouraged writers to use clear communication to convey a healthy respect for both their subject matter and the popular audience. Finally, in "Writing Science for the Real World", Tom van Loon argued that one of the reasons governments are not eager to invest money in scientific education is that science and its benefits are not communicated effectively to nonscientists in the "real world". Because writing science for the general public was looked down on for so long in universities, many people who understand science well are hesitant to write for a general audience for fear that they won't be taken seriously by their colleagues. Fortunately, that is changing as universities are beginning to understand that communication with the general public about the value of science is necessary.

Presentations and activities at the 2002 AESE-EASE meeting in Halifax provided participants with new insights into old problems (for example, how to keep readers interested in science) and sparked discussions about issues peculiar to the digital world (such as archiving and copyright for Web-based publications). Those in attendance welcomed the opportunities to think about important questions together. 