

◆ A Polling of Our Past Presidents

Barbara Meyers

As we approached the 50th anniversary of the Council of Science Editors, I contacted fellow past presidents so that they might share with you their memories of and visions for the Council. Given a list of questions, they were asked to select one or two to focus their remembrances. Here are the thoughts of a few. Please look for others in *Science Editor* later this year.

From: Robert A Day CBE President 1977-1978

What do I think was the most significant change in the Council since I became a member? That's a good question, with an easy answer.

The Council, which started as a small, narrowly based organization, has during my lifetime become a large, important organization serving all the sciences.

Coincidentally, the Council was founded in 1957, the same year in which the Soviet Union put Sputnik into orbit around our Earth. Historically, those two events were of profound importance. The surprising success of the Russian space program scared the bejesus out of the US Congress, and as a result, financial support of science increased massively. With increased money came increased research, which of course meant increased publication. And the Council and its members were needed to deal with this giant surge in scientific publication.

I joined the Council in 1960 and attend-

BARBARA MEYERS was CBE president in 1997-1998. Her reflections will appear in an upcoming issue.

ed my first annual meeting in New Orleans in that year. Two years later, the annual meeting was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I remember it well because I was chair of the Local Arrangements Committee. The point I want to make here is that the total registration for the Ann Arbor meeting was 32.

In its early years, the Council members were editors and they were biologists. There were no chemists or other scientists or physicians. And, except for a few brash managing-editor types like me, only scientific editors were welcomed to membership.

But from the first, there was ferment within the organization, with many of us believing that the words *editor* and *biology* were too limiting. The arguments waxed and waned for some years until the annual meeting in Gainesville, Florida, in 1975, at which a knock-down drag-out battle took place. The "big tent" adherents won the day, and the membership requirements of the Council were redrafted accordingly. Henceforth, the Council would welcome to membership all kinds of scientists and all kinds of editors, even the "lowly copyeditors" whom some of the conservatives were aghast at the idea of admitting to membership. The thought that carried the day, however, was that a broad range of talents was necessary to keep our journals scientifically and financially strong and to prevent our journals from being reduced to unintelligible gibberish.

The culmination of all that came in 2000 when the name Council of Science Editors was adopted. Started as the Conference of Biological Editors, it became the Council of Biological Editors and then the Council of Biology Editors. Now the new name properly represents the big tent that CSE has become.

From: John C Bailar III CBE President 1987-1988

The most important role I see for the Council in future years is to stimulate and conduct research on the issues that bring us together. The Council has rarely looked outside for information, guidance, and support, despite the great need for better understanding of—and better communication about—a host of matters. One exception was the activity related to ethics and policy in scientific publishing about 15 years ago, which resulted in a book that still stands alone in its field. That work was supported by the National Science Foundation, and this and other groups may be interested in other topics.

We could use efforts focused on the economics of various means of publication, dealing with the ever-increasing volume of scientific publication; the role of journal publication in the scientific reward system; redundant publication; the use of non-commercial publications for commercial purposes (such as special issues to promote products); dealing with pressures from owners, readers, advertisers, and others; improving tables and graphics; and a host of other things. We have a lot of anecdotes about these matters but little in the way of solid data that could be used to persuade the reluctant to support change.

Some may argue that this is just not what the Council does. It should be. The benefits to the Council, its members, and the publications they serve could be great. There is no other broadly based, independent group in the field, and if we do not work on these things, it is unlikely that others will fill the gap in an acceptable way.



John C Bailar III in
1995



Robert A Day in
1979

From: Susan Eastwood CBE President 1996-1997



Susan Eastwood in 1997

When I joined the Council in 1979, it was the Council of Biology Editors (CBE). Candidates were nominated for membership and submitted to the Council short summaries of their qualifications as editors. I had been using word processors for several years at that point and was astonished to find that most members of the Council were resistant to using this marvelous technology for editing. The resistance persisted when computers became mainstream—a conservative group we were, not eager to give up putting pen to paper—but look at us now!

During the 1980s, ethics in research, reporting, and peer review was a pressing issue and one the Council met head on. I think the Council's work during the 1980s and 1990s was instrumental in establishing a climate in which the government now provides incentive and funding for institutions to educate graduate students and postdoctoral fellows about the importance of ethical research practices for both science and their personal career interests and to give these trainees the tools they need to manage a laboratory, conduct well-designed basic-science studies and clinical trials, and write responsible research reports.

Shortly after I joined the Council, membership was opened, and the Council began to grow and diversify. While I was president, CBE, acknowledging the multidisciplinary character of science, moved toward becoming the Council of Science Editors—extending our diversity and reaffirming our commitment to fostering excellence in all of scientific reporting.

From: Tad Parker CSE President 2000-2001



Tad Parker in 1998

A very memorable moment in my membership in the Council occurred when I was a brand-new member at the 1983 joint meeting of the Council of Biology Editors (CBE), the Society for Scholarly Publishing, and the International Federation of Scientific Editors Associations in Philadelphia. I was standing in the upper balcony of the Egyptian Gallery in the Museum at the University of Pennsylvania observing the banquet crowd below (back when we had banquets) when I spotted Christopher Johnson waltzing Della Mundy (I think) throughout the aisles of statuary. They were whirling and swooping through the gallery as though they were the only people present. This would have been wonderful except there was to be no dancing, and the hall was completely full of the 800 attendees! What a wonderful introduction to the idiosyncratic nature of CBE members.

The most significant (and controversial) event in my history with the Council was the changing of the name of the society from the Council of Biology Editors to the Council of Science Editors, which happened just before my watch as president. The breadth and depth of member involvement in that research and recommendation were monumental. The decision to change the name to become more inclusive was courageous. The implementation and outreach to disciplines of science beyond the life sciences continues today.

It will take additional focus, dedication, and hard work to realize the goals set forth by the Scope and Mandate Task Force in its report to the Board in 1997. The desired expansion of membership demographics is continuing and has not reached the full potential to bring a wider slice of the scientific community to our rolls and mutual benefit. 🐼

CSE Presidents

Fred R Cagle	1956-1957
H Bentley Glass	1957-1959
Milton O Lee	1959-1961
J Roger Porter	1961-1963
Gabriel Lasker	1963-1965
Carlton M Herman	1965-1966
Vernon Bryson	1966-1967
Marcus Rosenblum	1967-1968
F Peter Woodford	1968-1969
John O Corliss	1969-1970
Robert A Harte	1970-1971
Franz J Ingelfinger	1971-1972
Philip L Altman	1972-1973
Edward J Huth	1973-1974
Karl F Heumann	1974-1975
Margaret Broadbent	1975-1976
Eli Chernin	1976-1977
Robert A Day	1977-1978
H Edward Kennedy	1978-1979
Erwin Neter	1979-1980
Margaret Foti	1980-1981
Jeffrey Watson	1981-1982
David Frost	1982-1983
Lyle R Heim	1983-1984
Paul J Anderson	1984-1985
Arthur Freeman	1985-1986
Elizabeth M Zipf	1986-1987
John C Bailar III	1987-1988
Douglas A Fisher	1988-1989
Arly Allen	1989-1990
Kathleen Case	1990-1991
Barbara E Drew	1991-1992
Bruce P Dancik	1992-1993
Martha M Tacker	1993-1994
Bradley Hundley	1994-1995
Drummond Rennie	1995-1996
Susan Eastwood	1996-1997
Barbara Meyers	1997-1998
Pat Huston	1998-1999
Blaire Mossman	1999-2000
Tad Parker	2000-2001
Tom Lang	2001-2002
Annette Flanagan	2002-2003
Michael Held	2003-2004
Faith McLellan	2004-2005
Richard Horton	2005-2006
Monica Bradford	2006-2007