

◆ Highlights of the 52nd Annual Meeting: “Show Me the Data—The Science of Editing and Publishing”

Diane M Sullenberger, Chair
2009 Program Committee

On the Monday before the CSE Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA, US President Barack Obama addressed members of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC, and said, “I want to be sure that facts are driving scientific decisions—and not the other way around.” “Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been before,” he stressed. His sentiments were echoed days later, when CSE’s commitment not only to excellence in the research that fills the pages of the scientific, technical, and medical publications that its members edit but to excellence in the profession of editing and publishing as a whole was clear in the wealth of data presented at the annual meeting.

The keynote and plenary speakers were lively, engaging, funny, and provocative. Keynote Speaker Elizabeth Loftus, distinguished professor, University of California, Irvine, led a packed ballroom off to a fast-paced, data-filled, and thought-provoking start as she discussed her work in debunking repressed-memory accusations and poking holes in eyewitness testimony. She challenged the audience with a quiz in which they were asked to identify a series of faces. She succeeded in getting half the audience to identify the wrong face by carefully manipulating their choices during a previous quiz. She then detailed her “recipe” for how to implant false memories: make a potential event plausible, create a belief that the event happened, and embellish that belief with sensory detail. The power of misinformation to implant false memories left many attendees curious and chilled.



Speakers Elizabeth Loftus, Sarah Tegen, and Barbara Gastel

Those who had never had the pleasure of attending the annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony were regaled in Monday’s plenary lecture with stories of the research behind the prizes by Marc Abrahams, editor and cofounder of *Annals of Improbable Research*. After describing Ig Nobel Prize-winning research published in scientific journals, such as how slime molds solve mazes and how contents of an archaeological dig site can be scrambled by the actions of a live armadillo, Abrahams invited attendees to nominate research in their own or other journals for future Ig Nobel Prizes. Abrahams was thanked during his talk for bringing humor to science publishing, particularly for attracting young people to science.

In Tuesday’s plenary lecture, Luis von Ahn, assistant professor, Computer Science Department, Carnegie Mellon University, admitted to inventing CAPTCHAs, those annoying, blurry words you have to retype online to prove you are a human, not a computer. He

described the rise of CAPTCHA sweat shops, in which spam companies hire humans, largely in developing countries, to type CAPTCHAs. He detailed his dilemma over the fact that roughly 200 million CAPTCHAs are typed every day and discussed his quest to use this human effort for good. Through reCAPTCHA, digitized and computer-unrecognizable words from the Internet Archive, such as articles from *The New York Times* dating back to 1851, are presented as CAPTCHAs for humans to solve. He also described “how to use humans cleverly” through his ingeniously addictive ESP game (www.gwap.com/gwap) that tags images for search engines.

Some of the 28 concurrent sessions, such as “Conflict of Interest: Issues, Policy, and Practice”, were so popular that extra chairs were brought in and people made themselves comfortable on the floor. From hands-on sessions that gave insider tips on how to set up a freelancing office to theoretical sessions that

described the factors that influence a person's decision to agree to review manuscripts and how to conduct an experiment to find a better outcome, the meeting offered something for everyone.

Another well-attended session was the "Report from an Authorship Retreat". The session summarized the discussion at a retreat held on the previous night on authorship; the goal of the retreat was to make progress in defining authorship among the sciences. Items of consensus included these: editors should require authors to identify their contributions to a work, contributors not listed as authors should be identified (in the acknowledgments), and accountability is key. Less clear were how to indicate individual contributions to a work and whether it is acceptable for authors to be accountable for only the parts of the work that they themselves did. CSE will grapple with the thorny issues raised in the session for fur-

ther white-paper revisions.

The five international scholars (recipients of CSE scholarships), four from Nigeria and one from Nepal, added depth and breadth to the meeting by asking questions, networking, and explaining the issues that they face in their daily work.

The second annual CSE poster session featured seven fascinating presentations on journal readability, trends in authorship, incorrect journal references, improving submission-to-publication timing statistics, evaluating a reviewer-grading system, visibility of journals after inclusion in the *Web of Science*, and tracking the growth and use of journals. [Editor's note: For abstracts of the posters, please see pages 111–114 of the July–August 2009 issue of *Science Editor*.] The poster presenters were willing to discuss their research in detail and inspired others to begin their research projects to present at CSE next year.

And, finally, if you missed an important session or missed the meeting entirely, thanks to the efforts of Web Editor Seth Beckerman, we can "Show You the Data": the presentations are available online at www.councilscienceeditors.org/events/2009_presentations.cfm.

Read More about the Annual Meeting Sessions

For reports on sessions of the 2009 CSE annual meeting, please see the Annual Meeting Reports sections of this issue and the next two issues of *Science Editor*. Special thanks to Jamie Holaday and Bernard Appiah for recruiting the reporters and compiling the reports.