From the President

So far, July has been a bit of a disaster for me. Well, not just me—the entire city of Houston, where I live. Tropical Storm Beryl took a jog away from its predicted path, strengthened into Hurricane Beryl, and hit us like a cement truck. My wife, our house, and I survived intact, thankfully. But some siding was ripped off our garage, and a limb that fell from the tall pecan tree in the backyard literally flattened our back fence.

That was just the beginning. As of this writing, more than half the city is without power, including my house. As a result, lots of traffic lights are out of commission, which resulted in my car getting hit in the middle of an intersection. And because of that, I had to take the bus to work today—a
bus that got me to work an hour late because of problems on the roads.

The whole affair seems a perfect illustration of how problems can spiral. When one big problem comes along—say, a sudden, urgent project with a short deadline—it can throw many other things out of whack. Your other projects need to be rescheduled, and the people for whom you are doing those projects must be notified (preferably in the way that is least damaging to your working relationship with them). Your personal life and obligations may fall by the wayside, leaving social debts that you will have to repay later. You may neglect the things you normally do to take care of yourself.

I suppose we should remember that while there are a lot of things we can’t control when disaster strikes, we need to focus on the things we can do. Like making the most efficient use of our time, and bringing our best coping mechanisms to bear to keep excessive anxiety at bay, and thus avoid making mistakes that could worsen our situation unnecessarily.

Peace, everyone.

Steve Palmer, PhD, ELS
BELS President

Check Out These Sizzlin’ BELS Member Discounts!

BELS has partnered with resource providers to offer valuable members-only discounts on products and services that help make your job easier. These offers are exclusive to BELS members and should not be shared with any non-member.

BELS member discounts include:
- 30% discount on a single license of PerfectIt software
- 20% discount on reference books from The University of Chicago Press
- 20% discount on Draftsmith AI, offered by Intelligent Editing New in 2024!
- $50 discount on a single-user perpetual license for EndNote 21 New in 2024!

Visit bels.org and click on Member Resources to claim your discounts today!
Summer Book Chat

Members-only Professional Development Event

SUMMER BOOK CHAT

TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024
6-7 PM CDT VIA ZOOM

Join the BELS Professional Development Committee as we talk about some of our professional-development-related summer reads (they're fun books... Trust us!).

Claire Levine, MS, ELS, Barbara Gastel, MD, ELS(H), and Stephen Bublitz, ELS, will share some intriguing books that will pique your interest. Come for the recommendations and have a plan to share a few of your own! The session will end with an informal discussion of great books on editing, language, or self-development.

REGISTER AT BELS.ORG
Summer Book Chat

Join the Professional Development Committee in an intriguing discussion of some professional-development–related summer reads pertaining to editing, language, and self-development. Register here.

When: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 (6:00–7:00 PM CDT)

This event is free and open to BELS members.

Stephen Bublitz, ELS
Stephen Bublitz is a BELS board member and Co–chair of the Professional Development committee. He cut his teeth as a copyeditor at a large non–profit geophysics publisher in Washington, DC; after a decade–long foray into freelance editing, he is currently a senior medical editor at a MedComms agency that specializes in publications. He currently resides in the metro Detroit area and is a foster parent, musician, Lego enthusiast, and recreational pugilist.

Barbara Gastel, MD, ELS(H)
Barbara Gastel, MD, ELS(H), is a professor at Texas A&M University, where she directs the graduate program in science journalism. She also teaches in the University of Chicago certificate program in medical writing and editing.

Claire Levine, MS, ELS
Claire Levine earned a BS in biology from the University of North Carolina and a master’s degree in pharmacology from the University of Cincinnati. She worked as a technician in biomedical research laboratories for approximately 15 years, during which she began editing journal manuscripts and grants for her bosses and the postdoctoral fellows. In 2002, she received her BELS certification and in 2004 left the lab for good to become a full–time scientific editor. Claire worked as an editor at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine for 18 years before deciding to try working at a medical communications agency in 2022. She missed working directly with the scientists, so a year later, she left the agency to start freelance editing.
Member Spotlight

Judith M. Orvos, ELS
President
Orvos Communications, LLC

How did you first hear about BELS?
I first learned about BELS when I was editor of Contemporary OB/GYN. My boss told me about the organization and the certification.

Why did you pursue BELS certification?
I wanted to establish more credibility as a medical editor.

How has BELS certification and membership benefited you?
I believe that certification and membership has enhanced my marketability and opened doors to professional opportunities that otherwise may have been closed. When they are hiring, some employers look for BELS certification on a resume as a mark of distinction.

BELS Virtual Members-Only Social Event

Get Your Creative Juices Flowing!

Thursday, August 15
5 pm CDT via Zoom

Interested in unleashing your creative side?
Come share your favorite creative activities with fellow editors. The event will be split into two parts: virtual art activities and creative hobby show and tell.

Come relax with us!

Register at bels.org

Register
Monthly Poll Results

In last month’s poll, we asked you to select which of the following you would decree if you were “Ruler of English.”

- Each sentence shall contain no more than 3 commas!
- The only expression containing a slash shall be “and/or”!
- If a 1-syllable word will do, don’t add a syllable!
- If 1 word will do, don’t add a word!

A total of 65 responses were recorded. At 66.2% (43 votes), the most popular answer by far was “…don’t add a word!”; conversely, at 6.2% (4 votes), the least popular answer was “…no more than 3 commas!”.

Judging by these responses, editors (and perhaps readers in general, as respondents are not necessarily BELS members) are most annoyed by extra words that may not be needed and least annoyed by multiple commas (which might improve a sentence or allow a sentence to contain additional information). Poll respondents were almost equally annoyed by slashes between words (15.4%; 10 votes) and by words longer than 1 syllable (12.3%; 8 votes).

Head over to bels.org for this month’s poll, where we’ve asked you to tell us which of the listed substitutions you like best.

Stay cool this summer with BELS merchandise!

Proudly display the BELS logo on your tote bag, mug, travel tumbler, sweatshirt, laptop case, or mouse pad. BELS merchandise items make great gifts for colleagues, employees, friends, family, and yourself! You can also ship directly to the recipient. Visit www.bels.org/store to order.
Monthly Poll Results

If you were Ruler of English, which of these might you decree?

June 2024 BELS Poll Results

- Each sentence shall contain no more than 3 commas! (6.2%)
- If 1 word will do, don’t add a word! (66.2%)
- If a 1-syllable word will do, don’t add a syllable! (12.3%)
- The only expression containing a slash shall be “and/or”! (15.4%)

Credit Tracker Now Available

We are pleased to inform you that the Credit Tracker for the Certification Maintenance program is now available on the BELS website. Remember to visit the website for an overview of how the tracker works. As always, reach out to us using the “Contact Us” feature if you have any questions.
The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was founded in 1991 to evaluate the proficiency of manuscript editors in the life sciences and to award credentials similar to those obtainable in other professions.

Potential employers and clients of manuscript editors usually have no objective way to assess the proficiency of editors. For their part, editors are frustrated by the difficulty of demonstrating their ability. That is why both employers and editors so often resort to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. The need for an objective test of editorial skill has long been recognized.

To meet that need, BELS developed a process for testing and evaluating proficiency in editing in the life sciences. The Board administers two examinations—one for certification and one for diplomate status. The examinations, written by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.