

## From the Board of Directors



Somehow, we're already 3 months into 2026. But what a great start to the year here at BELS! I want to thank Steve Palmer, our Immediate Past President, for the warm introduction in January's newsletter. I'm very happy to be here and to play a role in the direction of BELS.

But I'm just one person. What makes BELS truly great is that it is made up of brilliant people who care deeply about communicating good science and practicing our craft with integrity and excellence. Many of you have already participated in one or more of our newly launched Special Interest Groups (see below). It's wonderful to see that level of engagement from our members.

Given the various sources of uncertainty in our field, such as rapid development of artificial intelligence and large language models, we find ourselves both affirming our most important principles and looking for ways to adapt to the inevitable changes to come. If you missed last week's presentation on Upskilling in the Age of AI, you can find the recording in the [Member Resources link](#) on our website. Look for more webinars and opportunities to engage with your fellow BELS members in the coming months.

BELS will continue to thrive with your participation in it. If you're as proud as I am of those 3 (or 4) letters after your name, encourage your mentees to earn them as well.

—Erica

## Special Interest Groups

This year, BELS introduced Special Interest Groups (SIGs). SIGs are an exclusive member benefit to provide opportunities for networking and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. We had more than 125 BELS members register for our first round of sessions. Here are some highlights from those meetings and goals going forward.

### Publications

Leader: Stephen Bublitz, ELS

The Publications SIG has met twice so far and has discussed several topics, including working for academics versus agencies, issues with writers using AI, marketing your services within your

institution, QC and fact-checking issues, software programs, and funding issues. We're looking forward to many fruitful future conversations. BELS members who are interested in giving a brief presentation (10-15 minutes) to kick off a discussion are welcome and should reach out!

### **Freelancing**

Leader: Melissa Bogen, ELS

The Freelancing SIG has also met twice this year. Members of this SIG come from various editing backgrounds, including academic editing, grants, ESL editing, STM journals, pharma, and med comms. The initial goals of this group are to meet other freelancers, network, and learn freelance editing tips.

### **Grants**

Leader: Kimberly Mankiewicz, PhD, ELS

The Grants SIG has met once thus far and provides a forum for editors who work on grant proposals to share strategies, challenges, and best practices across funding agencies and disciplines. The group aims to support members in strengthening grantsmanship skills, navigating sponsor guidelines and changes, and addressing issues specific to grants.

### **Editing Education: Giving and Receiving**

Leader: Karla D. Passalacqua, PhD, ELS, MWC

The Editing Education SIG focuses both on developing skills in "giving" education (e.g., how to instruct clients and authors) and "receiving" education (e.g., how to develop your own editing skills). Topics we plan to discuss include statistics and data interpretation; using AI tools; and career development, business, and leadership skills.

### **Networking by Continent**

Leader: Margaret Mathes, ELS

The first Networking by Continent meeting led to interest in creating 2 more SIGs: Networking in India and Networking in East Asia/Southeast Asia. In addition to developing BELS communities based on location, there is a need for cross-cultural collaboration in which people living in different locations can learn from their peers in other locations. If you are interested in leading a SIG in your region, please let us know.

We want to thank everyone who has participated in one—or more!—of these groups, and we hope more of you will join us for these enriching discussions. Please see the list of Upcoming Events below for information on future meeting times. And please keep your eyes open for email announcements about SIGs from BELS and the [bels@simplelists.com](mailto:bels@simplelists.com) account, where you are all welcome to engage in wider discussions. Speaking of [bels@simplelists.com](mailto:bels@simplelists.com), if you have suggestions for additional SIG topics or are interested in leading a SIG, please send an email to that address, and we'll get you in touch with the SIG leaders.

## **Congratulations to Our Newly Certified BELS Editors!**



So far this year, 10 editors have passed the BELS exam to earn their Editor in the Life Sciences (ELS) certification. Congratulations to this group of editors!

Jenani Anantharajah  
Saswata Banerjee  
Lisa Davila

Laura Hazelton Jones  
Shannalee Martinez  
Elizabeth Mooney

## Upcoming Events

Please visit the [BELS calendar of events](#) for the most up-to-date meeting schedule and information about registering for meetings. (Note: all times below are presented in Central Time.)

- March 11, 4:00-5:00 pm: Freelancing SIG
- March 26, 4:00-5:00 pm: Grants SIG
- March 30, 4:00-5:00: Publications SIG
- May 21, 3:00-4:00 pm: Editing Education SIG

**BELS**   
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

# CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

## ALL COMMITTEES!

Are you passionate about science and editing? Interested in being more involved in BELS? Join us as a volunteer on one of our committees to contribute your expertise and shape the future of BELS!

Gain invaluable experience, connect with other experts in scientific editing, and make a meaningful impact on BELS. Non-US-based volunteers are welcome!

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR COMMITTEES AND SUBMIT A VOLUNTEER FORM AT**

**[BELS.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://BELS.ORG/VOLUNTEER)**

**BELS Officers**  
**Erica Goodoff, ELS(D)**  
President

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

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Executive Director (nonvoting member)

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 Distinguished status. The examinations, written by senior life-science editors assisted by testing experts, focus on the principles and practices of scientific editing in English.

