

# The BELS Letter

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

Maintaining and promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences

## From the President

So much in life is about stepping up to answer the call, to lend an assist when a friend or loved one needs it, or to meet the deadline on your latest project, or to follow your heart and pursue a new position or a new hobby you are passionate about.

I wanted to take a moment to thank the BELS member volunteers who do just that: selflessly giving of their time and expertise, asking nothing in return. As I recently shared, I had reached out to several BELS members to see if they would be willing to assist us with evaluating our [list of resources](#) online and making

*Continued on page 2*



## INSIDE:

- From the President
- BELS Member Profile
- Call for Volunteers
- Former Member Survey
- BELS Recipe Swap

### *The BELS Letter*

Bryan Tutt, ELS(D)  
Managing Editor

Alex Rudie  
Publications Coordinator



# From the President

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*Continued from page 1*

recommendations as to what to retain, refresh, or eliminate that would be of benefit to editors in the life sciences. What a testament to our membership's willingness to pay it forward by responding so positively to lend their insights and ideas for this short-term project. Thank you!

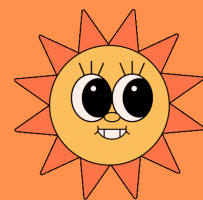
Thank you as well to the many other committee members and volunteers who contribute throughout the year, on a host of initiatives big and small. You are an integral part of helping BELS realize our shared vision of excellence.

In this month's newsletter, please make sure to read about the results of our survey of ELS-certified editors who are no longer BELS members. And for those of you working from home alongside a furry friend or two, don't forget to recognize National Take Your Cat to Work Day or National Take Your Dog to Work Day on June 24!

*Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS  
BELS President*

## BELS Member Discounts

*Discounts are shining!*



BELS has partnered with resource providers to provide 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 other non-member.

BELS member discounts include a **30% discount** on a single license of PerfectIt software. PerfectIt improves consistency, ensures quality, and saves time. BELS members also receive a **20% discount** on reference books such as *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers* and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The discount can be applied to both online and print versions of these books. Visit [bels.org](https://bels.org) and click on Member Resources to claim your discounts today!

# BELS Member Profile

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Karla D Passalacqua, PhD, ELS  
Lead, Medical Writing and Education  
Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan  
BELS Member since 2021



## How did you first hear about BELS?

If I'm remembering correctly, I think it was through a Medical Writing course that I took online through the University of California San Diego (UCSD). I seem to recall the instructor providing a list of pertinent organizations for medical writers. I know that I did a lot of online website perusing when I was in the exploratory stages of learning about medical writing, and BELS was one of the most relevant and interesting to me.

## How has BELS certification or membership benefited you personally and/or professionally?

Well, attaining the ELS certification did play a role in my having received a job promotion, so that was very nice. On a less material level, I think that the process of preparing for the exam, taking the exam, and participating in BELS online learning has given me a broad view of the field and has kept me up to date on new issues. But mostly, I think it's wonderful to be part of a professional community—this keeps me grounded and gives me a very nice sense of connection to the field.

## What gives you job satisfaction?

I work with physician trainees, clinical faculty, and medical educators who have unusually demanding schedules and difficult jobs, and I am always amazed at their incredible care, enthusiasm, and openness when I am working on projects with them—this is very inspiring to me. Also, I am an extremely curious person, so the variety of projects that I get to work on is tremendously satisfying.

# BELS Member Profile

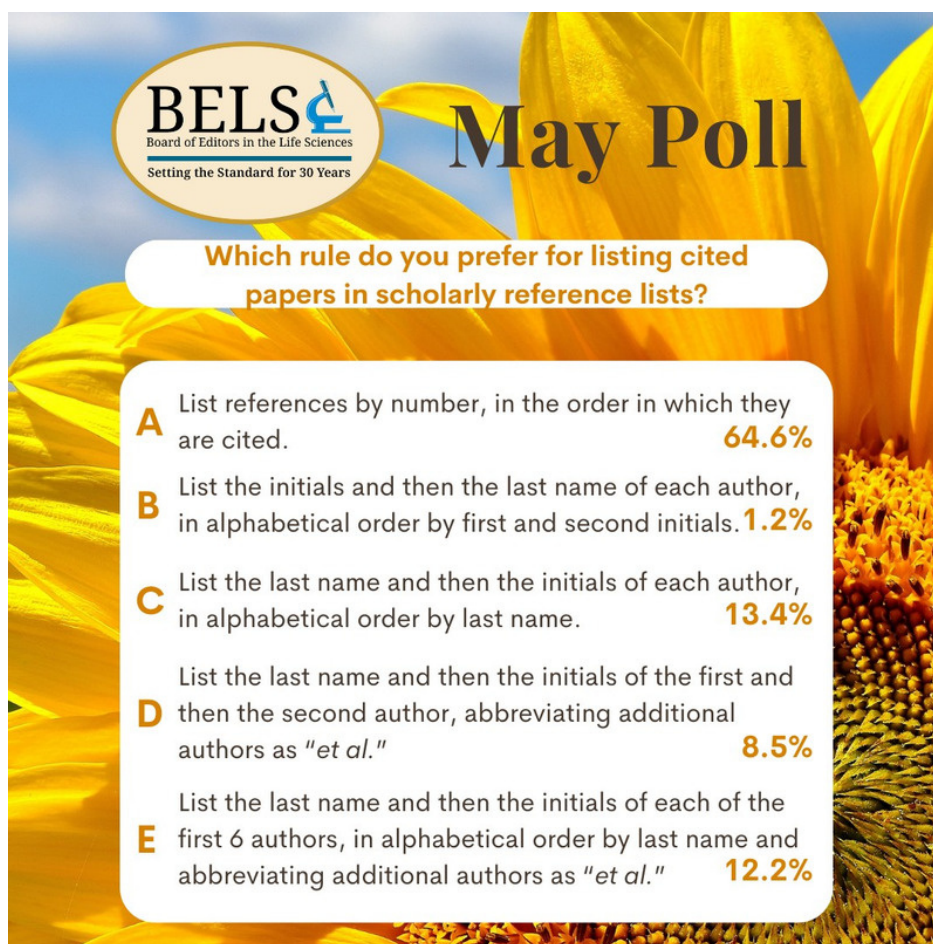
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## What is your grammar pet peeve?

I would say that a peeve of mine is the overuse of abbreviated terms. I think that quite a few writers, especially those with less experience, have the mistaken idea that every term that has something to do with a study's details should be abbreviated. When I explain the importance of judiciously using abbreviations, I usually invoke Kurt Vonnegut's advice to writers: "Pity the reader."

## Which style guide or reference book do you use most in your work?

I use the *AMA Manual of Style* a lot because most of my work involves clinical writing. But now and again I need to consult the *APA Manual* for some of the medical education projects that I assist with. As a side note, I love the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and my studies using *Chicago* were foundational in my training.



# Call for Volunteers!

Are you interested in getting more involved with BELS? Now is your chance! We are looking for volunteers. Both short- and long-term opportunities are available. Learn more at [bels.org/volunteer](https://bels.org/volunteer) or email us at [info@bels.org](mailto:info@bels.org).



**Call for  
Volunteers**

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FOR MORE INFO, GO TO

**BELS.ORG/VOLUNTEER**

OR EMAIL

**INFO@BELS.ORG**

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



# Lapsed BELS Members: Let's Get to Know Them!

Although ELS certification doesn't expire, BELS *membership* must be renewed each year. Membership means access to exclusive discounts, events, and job offerings, but some certified editors let their membership lapse. Why?

To find answers, the BELS Membership and Marketing Committee (project lead: Judith Orvos, ELS) surveyed all 1,140 lapsed BELS members. Admittedly, the response rate was very low (4%), but there's still insight to be gained. Of the 43 respondents, the top reason for letting membership lapse was retirement or no longer working as an editor in the life sciences (37%). The price of membership—\$45/year—was cited as the second most common reason (16%).

The survey also asked what would encourage renewal. From the responses, the committee made these recommendations:

- Editing-related courses at discounted rates.
- Additional discounts for editing services or products, particularly ones that aren't available anywhere else. (Check the BELS website for [current discounts!](#))
- More benefits accessible to BELS members outside the United States (e.g., event recordings). (These exist already! Log in to your member account to see [past event recordings](#).)
- More educational material in *The BELS Letter*. (What a great idea!)

What would you like to see as a member benefit? Contact us at [info@bels.org](mailto:info@bels.org) with your educational newsletter article pitch, services/products you'd like to see discounted, and any other ideas!

## Be There With BELS On!

BELS branded merchandise is now available! Now you can proudly display the BELS logo on your tote bag, mug, travel tumbler, sweatshirt, laptop case, or mouse pad. They make great gifts for colleagues, employees, friends, family, and yourself! Please visit [www.bels.org/store](http://www.bels.org/store) to order.



# What's Cooking? A BELS Recipe Swap!

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Have an amazing recipe for a special dish? Looking for a new recipe to try? Join us on Thursday, July 14, from 2-3 pm Central, to chat with fellow BELS members about your favorite cookout/summer recipes. Visit [bels.org](https://bels.org) to RSVP!

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THURSDAY, JULY 14, 2022  
2-3 PM CDT  
VIA ZOOM

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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.