

Maintaining and promoting editorial proficiency in the life sciences

From the President

I have exciting news to share! Please join me in welcoming our new President-Elect, Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS. She earned her ELS in 2000 and brings a wealth of experience as a former AMWA President and current Chief Communications Officer at UF Health, the University of Florida's academic health center. She begins her term immediately and will assume the presidency January 1, 2022. Welcome, Melanie!

For the certified ELS members who attend the AMWA Medical Writing and Communications Conference, we found

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The BELS Letter

Karen Stanwood, ELS
(with Eevee)
Managing Editor



Alex Rudie
Publications Coordinator

From the President

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out recently that this conference will be held virtually October 27–29, 2021. While we won't be able to host our traditional BELS breakfast this year, we are planning a virtual event for our members. Watch this space for more information.

April was the third month that we've offered computer-based ELS examinations. Our list of new certified editors appears on page 8. In other news, our updated bylaws were approved by our membership on April 23, 2021. Also, don't forget to complete our membership survey by **May 19**. Your feedback is invaluable to the future of BELS!

Finally, this month marks our 30th anniversary! Having been incorporated in 1991, BELS gave its first certification examination on May 4, 1991.

*Kristina Wasson-Blader, PhD, ELS
BELS President*

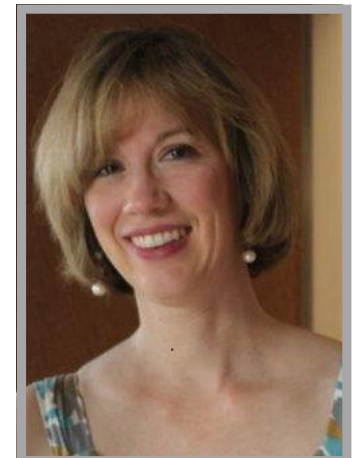
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Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS, Chief Communications Officer, UF Health

A nationally recognized medical writer, editor, and communications strategist, Melanie Fridl Ross, MSJ, ELS, is the chief communications officer for UF Health, the University of Florida's academic health center. Melanie oversees marketing, external communications, crisis and issues management, strategic communications and public affairs, web services, and creative services.

In addition, she is an adjunct instructor at UF's College of Journalism and Communications, where she has taught news reporting for the past 17 years. She also serves as

senior producer of the consumer health series *Health in a Heartbeat* and *Animal Airwaves*, which both air on public radio affiliates across the country.



She is a past president of the American Medical Writers Association and also a member of the Association of American Medical Colleges' Group on Institutional Advancement, the National Association of Science Writers, and the Association of Health Care Journalists. Melanie earned her bachelor's degree in American culture and a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University. She has been a BELS member since 2000.

Ask the Editors

The New York Times published [this article](#) on April 9, “Are You Confused by Scientific Jargon? So Are Scientists. Scientific papers containing lots of specialized terminology are less likely to be cited by other researchers.” Of course, the full story is more complicated, but you might find some good food for thought to share with clients. The full study is available [here](#). (I haven't read it yet.)

Hope you enjoy!

Amanda A. Morgan, ELS

Thanks for sharing. I work for an editing company as a trainer for junior editors. To improve comprehension, I implore the editors to describe what they have understood from the manuscript/section/passage/sentence/phrase in simple words.

I was inspired by the ELI5 (Explain Like I'm Five) threads on Reddit, of course. This has helped to make the junior editors understand the importance of breaking the jargon cycle.

As editors who primarily work with English as a Second Language (ESL) authors, I feel we should make the author queries/margin comments the most accessible they can be by using the least amount of editing industry jargon. I guess it is also time for us to guide our clients/authors to using more accessible prose in their research papers!

*Krishna Kumar Venkitachalam,
MBBS, MS, ELS*

Ask the Editors

This summer, I will be leading a discussion with a group of seasoned editors on how to work with ESL authors. Do you have favorite tips or resources that I could share? Thanks!

Naomi L. Ruff, PhD, ELS

Here are some quick tips:

1. Make revisions as best as you can without potentially changing the meaning.
2. Know your author's preferred editing style and titrate your intervention levels accordingly. Some ESL authors like extensive intervention and fewer margin comments, whereas others like only-necessary intervention and detailed margin comments detailing the editor's thought process.
3. Leave as little as possible for the ESL author to do in terms of revisions when they review the edited manuscript; if there is an alternative revision option, provide it in margin comments.
4. When writing to the authors (raising author queries), be clear and descriptive. Avoid complex vocabulary or excessive idiom use because these may not be 'available' or 'accessible' to ESL authors.

5. Look out for potential mistranslations and literal translations, even if when you are working on editing assignments. I remember a manuscript from a French author in which '(operation) theaters' were mentioned as '(operation) stadia.' It took me a while to figure what the author meant. :)

6. This applies to all editors: Do not assume that authors are similarly literate (as you are) in computer/word processing technology.

Hope these help!

*Krishna Kumar Venkitachalam,
MBBS, MS, ELS*

My tips for ESL authors applies to all authors: Reword jargon, clichés, metaphors, figures of speech, and similes. Search Google for examples.

Melissa L. Bogen, ELS

BELS Gallery



Here's a photo of my “Fig. 1 and Fig. 2” tea towel, a holiday gift from a favorite client a couple of years ago. I figure BELS members are among the very select set of people who will truly get the joke! (Image needs to be turned sideways to run ‘landscape.’)

Rebecca M. Barr, MS, ELS

Send your BELS Gallery photos to info@bels.org

BELS Featured Members



BELS
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

MEMBER PROFILE

*John D. McDonald, MA,
DTM, ELS*

Owner, Verax Services
jdmcdonald@veraxservices.ca

Year of ELS certification:
2014

Grammar pet peeve:
'not only...but also'



BELS
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences

MEMBER PROFILE

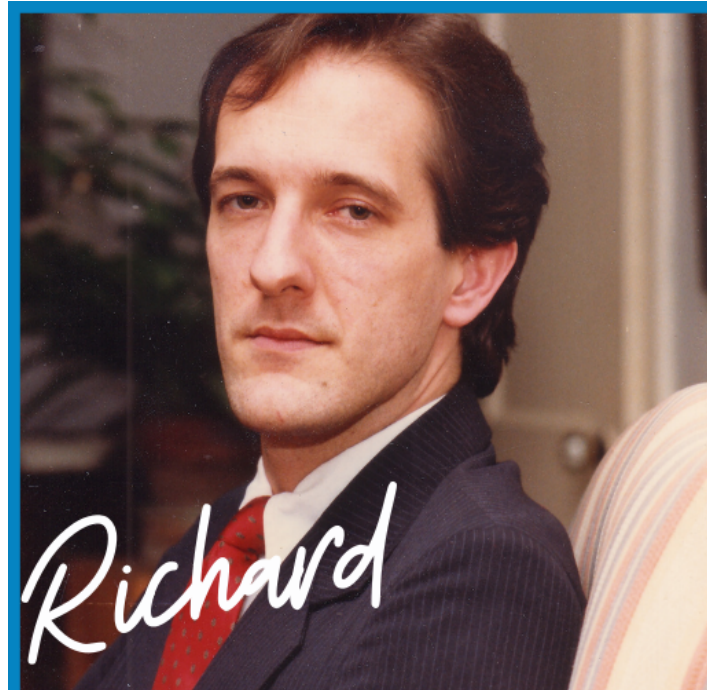
Rebecca Luttrell, ELS

Manuscript Editor
American Medical Association

Year of ELS certification:
2008

Grammar pet peeve:
sentences that begin with
'Due to'

BELS Featured Members



BELS
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences
MEMBER PROFILE

Richard A. Noegel, ELS

Retired
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

Year of ELS certification:
1994

Grammar pet peeve:
just ONE?!



BELS
Board of Editors in the Life Sciences
MEMBER PROFILE

Claire F. Levine, MS, ELS

Scientific Editor, Johns Hopkins University
Department of Anesthesiology and
Critical Care Medicine

Year of ELS certification:
2002

Grammar pet peeve:
referring to patients as 'settings' and
generally forgetting that every disease
comes with a patient attached

New Certified Editors

Trupti Rajendra Agrawal, ELS
Elizabeth Angel, ELS
Moumita Biswas, ELS
Rhiannon Bugno, ELS
Vineeta Darade, ELS
Namrata Dave, ELS
Erica Dsouza, ELS
Sriramya Gade, ELS
Colette Galet, ELS
Aleisha Gardner, MS, ELS
Thomas Geoffrey Lewis
Hawking, MSc, ELS
Miriam King, RN, ELS
Rajashree Kori, ELS
Regina Z. Lilly, MD, ELS

Sanali Odapalli, ELS
Jennifer Anne Oliver, PhD, ELS
Karla D. Passalacqua, PhD, ELS
Mikir Patel, ELS
Praveena Lakshmi Ramanujam, ELS
Grishma Ramaswamy, ELS
Varshini Madras Ramaswamy, ELS
Emilia Raszkievicz, ELS
Jenny Susan Sabu, PharmD, ELS
Jayantrao Shinde, ELS
Priti Bipin Shringarpure, ELS
Edwina Thomas, ELS
Elissa Wagman, ELS
Colleen Maria Walacavage, MA, ELS
Kayla R. Zehr, PhD, ELS

CONGRATULATIONS

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Christine F. Wogan, MS, ELS
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John D. McDonald, MA, DTM, ELS
Board Member at Large

Non-voting Board Member
Sheryle Hazard, CAE
Executive Director

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.