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BELS *Letter*

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Editor

Donna Tilton, ELS
dtilton@mindspring.com

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Welcome to the BELS Web Site!

Flory Nye-Clement, ELS, BELS Webmaster

This article is a brief introduction to the BELS website (www.bels.org) for both new and long-established users.

Who's Behind it All?

As webmaster, I'm the single point of contact for inquiries about BELS from the public, prospective employers, prospective candidates, and current members. I answer all the questions I can, and if necessary I forward questions to the appropriate member(s) of the Executive Council. For your convenience, there are links to me throughout the Web site; you can reach me at webmaster@bels.org. My doughty henchwoman, who does the actual IT work of maintaining the site and who makes changes to it at my request, is Dawn McCarra Bass. (Dawn is also the BELS email list manager.)

The Home Page

Our home page presents a short overview of BELS and the three credentials we offer. (Didn't know there are three? Check it out!)

Site Structure

Each page on the site is structured to allow easy access to other areas of the site through the column of buttons on the left side of the screen. These offer links to the BELS roster, the Executive Council page, the freelancers' listing database, certification information, diplomate examination information, frequently asked questions, the Members-Only Area, and related sites (as well as a link back to the home page). Following are brief explanations of these areas of the site.

BELS Roster

This section of the site lists all BELS members, past and current, along with their types and years of certification.

Executive Council

This page lists the officers, both elected and appointed, who administer BELS, along with the expiration year of each officer's term. Committees

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BELS Web Site, continued from page 1

and liaisons with other professional organizations are also shown on this page.

Search the Database

The purpose of the database of freelance ads is to give prospective employers an easy way to find BELS-certified editors. By entering the criteria desired, they can limit the search results to editors who meet their requirements.

All current BELS members are entitled to have their freelance services listed in the database. If you would like to be listed, just look through the available fields shown on the Search the Database page and email me the information you want posted. I will set up your listing and let you know when it's done.

Certification Information

On this page, general information about the certification examination is presented in a question-and-answer format to help prospective candidates understand the certification process. At the bottom of the page is a schedule of upcoming examination dates and locations.

Diplomate Exam

This page briefly discusses the prerequisites for taking the diplomate examination and provides a link to the Diplomate Registrar.

FAQ

Have you ever mislaid your username or password for the Members-Only Area? Have you wished for a "digest" version of the BELS email list (there is one!)? Are you moving, changing jobs, or changing your email address? Is your employer looking for more BELS-certified editors? Frequently asked questions relating to these and other (very) common issues are answered on this page.

Members Only

Who has access to this area? Only active BELS members are allowed to use this part of the site. To gain access, you must have the abovementioned username and password, which are assigned by the webmaster (that's me).

What's in there? Pages in the Members-Only Area present the BELS Bylaws; the Membership Directory, which contains full contact information for each current member; and the job listings.



Changing your contact information. The Members-Only Area includes an automated way to notify BELS of changes in your contact information. Just click the link at the bottom of the Membership Directory page to bring up the BELS change-of-information form. When you click "Submit," the form is sent to the Registrar, who will incorporate the changes into the next print directory, and who will also forward the changes to me. In turn, I will ensure that the Web site is updated as needed.

Job listings. Information about ad placement is given at the bottom of the Job Listings page. Anyone, whether a BELS member or not, can submit a job listing following the procedure described. Active BELS members may list open positions within their own businesses free of charge. However, there is a charge (which is quite reasonable) to list open positions within our employers' companies or other entities. Whenever a new job is posted to this page, I send an announcement to the BELS email list. (If you choose not to be on the email list, remember to check this page periodically for new job listings.)

Still Have Questions?

If you still have questions after reading this brief introduction, please feel free to email me at webmaster@bels.org. I'll do my best to answer them for you.

New Year's Resolutions for Writers and Editors

Just before Christmas I asked BELS members to come up with New Year's Resolutions. The responses are below. Donna Tilton, ELS, Editor, BELS Letter

Kim Berman, ELS

I was looking at a quotation that I try to keep in mind while editing, and came up with this resolution:

I resolve to construct sentences that are grammatically correct and NOT clumsily worded!

The quote is "This is the sort of English up with which I will not put." It is attributed to Winston Churchill as a marginal comment against a sentence that clumsily avoided ending with a preposition.

Flo Witte, ELS

My resolution is this: I resolve to learn to say no!!!

Annie Almstedt, MA, ELS

My resolution - that would have the most positive effect on my life all year round - would be to staple those office supplies receipts to blank papers that I keep in my accounting book, the DAY I BUY THE SUPPLIES!

Cindy W. Hamilton, PharmD, ELS

I will comply with AMWA's new position statement on the contributions of biomedical communicators to scientific publications, which is reproduced below. For more information, including a letter that can be sent to editors of journals that do not acknowledge our contributions, go to www.amwa.org.

"The American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) recognizes the valuable contributions of biomedical communicators to the publication team. Biomedical communicators who contribute substantially to the writing or editing of a manuscript should be acknowledged with their permission and with disclosure of any pertinent professional or financial relationships. In all aspects of the publication process, biomedical communicators should adhere to the AMWA code of ethics."

Donna Tilton, ELS

My New Year's Resolution is to not agree to keep helping out at my former job after I start a new job. I have done this three times in my career already. Since January 5 I have been working two full-time jobs, which is my only excuse for being so late on the newsletter!

For those of you who are interested in participating in the birding venture at the time of the BELS/CSE meeting, please be sure to let Ann Donaldson know by March 15.

Her email address is morann@aol.com.

BELS Proctors Needed

Kim Berman, ELS

Obtaining BELS certification is a big goal for many editors, and recognition of this achievement by our peers and employers is often great. You know the value of certification and what it could mean to editors in the scientific community who are working to reach that goal. Why not help BELS to increase the number of certified editors by proctoring an exam? The time requirements are minimal (you are giving up half a day), the task is not arduous (we have a handbook that spells out all the steps), and you'll get to represent the organization in a way that is much more personal than the simple addition of "ELS" after your name on your business cards.

The week before the exam, you receive "the box," which contains pencils, calculators, timers, Fed Ex labels, and assorted other items you might need. You also receive the exam booklets, answer sheets, and questionnaires. On the day of the exam, you arrive at the test site 1 hour early. (Most exams are from 1 to 4 pm.) You make sure the tables and chairs in the room are set up appropriately, learn how to adjust the temperature in the room, and locate water pitchers and glasses and the restrooms (one thing leads to another...). Once a registrant arrives, you verify his or her identity with a picture ID and check the name off the master list before handing out the exam booklet and questionnaire.

The proctor handbook provides the complete script to be read to the registrants. You carefully note the starting and ending times of the exam verbally and on the blackboard, and the exam begins. Several times an hour, you walk quietly through the room to make sure each registrant is



completing the answer sheet in the appropriate manner (for example, not circling answers in the exam booklet). At regular intervals, you announce, verbally and in writing, the time remaining. At the end of the exam, you collect all the exam booklets, answer sheets, and questionnaires. As soon as possible, you mail these items to the Registrar and the box back to the Exam Supplier using the enclosed Fed Ex labels.

Each exam is staffed by 2 or 3 proctors, so you share these duties with your fellow proctors. We always try to have at least 1 experienced proctor on site, and either the President or Registrar is always available by phone during the exam for any emergencies. (We have very few emergencies.) You're usually through about 30 minutes after the exam ends.

BELS editors who have proctored the exam in the past have remarked on the ease and simplicity of completing the task, the enjoyment of meeting potential new members of the organization, and the pleasure of spending time with BELS editors that they only know from email correspondence. Please consider volunteering when we send out the call for help; your efforts will be greatly appreciated by the Executive Council. If you have any questions about the proctoring process or would like to volunteer to proctor future exams, please contact **Leslie Neistadt, ELS**, at neistadt@hughston.com.

Thanks to our 2003 Proctors!

March 2003, San Francisco: Susan Eastwood, ELS, Flory Nye-Clement, ELS

May 2003, Pittsburgh: Kim Berman, ELS, Leslie Neistadt, ELS, Ann Sullivan, ELS

June 2003, Bath: Kathleen Lyle, ELS, Valerie Siddell, ELS, Ruth de Wijs-Christenson, ELS

June 2003, San Francisco: Susan Eastwood, ELS, Flory Nye-Clement, ELS

September 2003, Miami: Kim Berman, ELS, Karen Burkey, ELS, Eleanor Mayfield, ELS, Melanie Ross, ELS

October 2003, Boston: Kim Berman, ELS, Tom McVarish, ELS

Congratulations to the Newest BELS Members who passed the Exam in Boston, Massachusetts on October 18, 2003

Patricia A. Boyle, ELS
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Jenith A. Charpentier, ELS
Worcester, Massachusetts

Jennifer P. Hellwig, MS, ELS
North Scituate, Rhode Island

Virgi L. Hepner, MFA, ELS
Brookline, Massachusetts

Jennifer L. Hollenstein, MS, RD, LDN, ELS
Boston, Massachusetts

Kristin L. Odmark, ELS
Groton, Massachusetts

Patrick Runkel, MA, ELS
Asheville, North Carolina

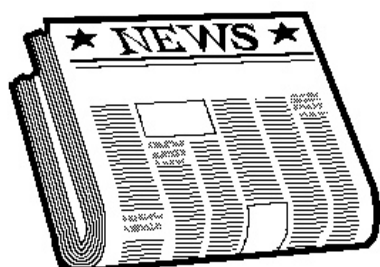
Laurie L. Sullivan, ELS
Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts

Lori Thomae, MTPW, ELS
Westford, Massachusetts

Donna Curtis, Treasurer of BELS, asks that you please remember to send BELS business correspondence to the following address:

BELS
PO Box 173
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

The post office recognizes BELS or BELS, Inc. or Board of Editors of the Life Sciences, Donna Curtis, or any combination of these for this PO box. This PO box is only for BELS and will ensure that BELS correspondence is not overlooked.



Bad Spelling Doesn't Pay

The New York Times recently published an article that, among other things, talked about how bargain hunters can often find treasures on Ebay because the seller has misspelled the name of the item. Diligent searchers of "camras" and "labtops" are able to win low bids on these items.

BELS Serves Summarized Q&A From the BELS Mailing List Server
Barbara Schwedel, ELS

Welcome to my last BELS Serves column. It has been great fun and hopefully informative, but other commitments beckon. Anyway, here are very brief summaries of some recent discussions—many thanks to all who participated!

Best Medical Acronym/Abbreviation Reference Text

Nathalie Bacon asked for favorite medical acronym/abbreviation reference textbooks or CD-ROMs. In addition to two possibilities mentioned by Nathalie herself (*Stedman's Abbreviations, Acronyms & Symbols*, 3rd edition, and *Dictionary of Medical Acronyms and Abbreviations*, 4th edition, by Jablonski), BELS members cited several sources.

Becky Krumm recommended Jablonski "...for my 'authoritative' source (i.e., I'm more likely to allow the use of an abbreviation that I don't know if I find it in there)...," but advised "...I like Neil M. Davis (*Medical Abbreviations: 14,000 Conveniences at the Expense of Communications and Safety*, published by Neil M. Davis Associates...) for having a lot of abbreviations, whether they are accepted or not, to help translate alphabet-soup manuscripts."

Eleanor Mayfield likes Davis as well and indicated that it comes with a 2-year, single-user license for the Web version of the book, which is updated monthly. She noted, "The 11th edition (...24,000 Conveniences...) has recently been published and is available (for \$24.95) at <www.neilmdavis.com/>."

Penny Hoeltzel cast a third vote for Davis and also finds the Web sites <<http://medstract.org/>> and <http://www.media4u.com/abb/medical_abbreviations.htm> helpful.

Devora Mitrany recommended <www.medilexicon.com>, and **Bobbie Reitt** noted, "Another reference I find very useful is Sloane's *Medical Abbreviations and Eponyms*, published by Saunders..."

"Condition"

A BELS member inquired, "What do you think of 'condition' as a word referring to anything that can go wrong with a heart? Is it too vague for a scientific article?...I want to include disorders, diseases and abnormalities." **Miriam Bloom**

provided the first response, "I believe the usual term is 'pathology'." **Mark Goodwin** agreed, but **Paula Robbins, Kendall Wills Sterling**, and a couple other members disagreed, most of them citing the *AMA Manual of Style*, 9th edition (p. 255) and/or the *CBE Style Manual*, 6th edition (p. 115), the gist being that "pathology" refers to a science rather than specific items. Paula suggested substituting the phrase "pathologic condition," and Kendall noted, "...A cardiac condition is not the same as cardiac pathology. Yes, you do see it used that way, but it's jargon, at least in my book. Depending on context, you might substitute 'abnormality' for 'condition,' if you find the latter objectionable. Or," suggested Kendall, "Use 'pathologic' as an adjective, to make it clear that this is not a normal or desirable state." By the way, while I was completing this column, a similar question appeared on the mailing list, i.e., "...what's the difference between a disease and a disorder?..." Maybe we'll see the ensuing discussion summarized in a future BELS Letter.

Last Licks

Norman Grossblatt alerted mailing list readers to a recent study ("Going, Going, Gone: Lost Internet References," *Science* 2003 Oct 31;302:787-8), in which internet referencing was systematically examined in more than 1000 articles published from 2000 to 2003 in the *NEJM*, *JAMA*, and *Science*. A key finding was "...in articles 27 months old, 13% of Internet references were inactive."

Norman commented, "Not necessarily peculiar to BELS...and not necessarily something to start a list discussion about, but I think something we should all be interested in (and possibly worried about)..."

Frances DeStefano responded, "You may be interested in the LOCKSS program..." Frances continued, "The title means 'lots of copies keep stuff safe...'" Stanford University's LOCKSS model, which includes free cache software, enables local (e.g., by a library) control (read "preservation") of certain journal content that has been found on the Internet. More information about LOCKSS is available at <<http://lockss.stanford.edu/>> or by

emailing Vicky Reich, Director LOCKSS Program, at vreich@stanford.edu.

Finally, I wish my replacement, unnamed as I write this column, best of luck, and look forward to participating in future mailing list discussions!

Fine Print

The opinions here belong to the people cited and not necessarily to BELS or any employer.

Book Review

Paula Robbins, PhD, ELS

Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms and Cultures by Chris McManus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002)

I am one of the 8.6% of women and 11.6% of men who are left-handed, so I have always been interested in learning about the causes of my difference from the majority of humans. Fortunately, my first grade teacher was herself left-handed, so I and my fellow southpaws were encouraged to write with our left hand; our desks were placed in a line different from the others so that the light from the window shown over our right shoulders. This treatment differed from that of earlier generations, who were often punished or ostracized for using their left hand.

Chris McManus' engagingly written book provides the reader with the results of the latest research on handedness as well as more information on symmetry and asymmetry in nature than I would have believed was available. Clearly, much research has gone on over the last 20 years, making previous books on the topic written several decades ago entirely obsolete. The ideas that left-handedness was not genetic or that it was caused by birth trauma are demolished by the data that McManus provides. He also challenges many other myths, such as that left-handers die at a younger age.

The author begins with a historical look at nineteenth century discoveries about symmetry: the finding of people with situs inversus, whose bodily organs were reversed, and Paul Broca's

discovery that the left side of the brain is usually responsible for language. McManus then reviews the cultural and linguistic meanings of right and left and the philosophical difficulties in describing left and right. The details of biology are discussed, from the general symmetry of the body's gross anatomy to the sub-microscopic look at the asymmetry of molecules. One chapter described a genetic model that accounts for how handedness is inherited and can run in families, even though one identical twin can be right-handed and the other left-handed. He also describes other lateralities in our behavior of which we may not have been aware.

In another chapter, McManus shows that the right and left hemispheres of the brain differ in many ways. Handedness and language dominance are associated, and the same genetic model can be used to explain each. This model also suggests that there is increased cerebral variability among left-handers, which may account for the anecdotal reports that talent in such fields as music, art, or mathematics is more likely to appear in left-handers.

McManus also examines social conventions about laterality, such as driving on the right or left and writing from left to right or vice versa. He also explains how the terms "right" and "left" to describe one's political position came about. Although, historically, it began with seating in the French National Assembly, this spatial designation is now used throughout the world and seems to have some basis in logic and connection with the prevailing idea that "right" is the norm and "left" is the marked form.

The author's final words provide an interesting summary. "Perhaps now we have some explanation of why left and right simultaneously intrigue and yet repel us. Symmetry is a fundamental property of the vertebrates and many other animals, and is readily detected by even quite simple organisms. It is beloved of humans, who cover so many artefacts with complex symmetrical patterns. Finally, it is a powerful tool for understanding mathematics and the physical world." I found his book to be a fascinating review of many concepts of which I had been unaware.

BELS Examinations for 2004

| Date | Location | Meeting | Register by |
|------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| March 7 | San Francisco, | AMWA Pacific Coast Conference | February 15 |
| March 20 | Princeton, NJ | | February 28 |
| March 20 | Chicago | | February 28 |
| May 13 | Vancouver | Council of Science Editors | April 22 |
| July 3 | Sydney, Australia | | June 12 |
| October 20 | St. Louis, MO | AMWA | September 29 |

BELS Letter

Hughston Sports Medicine Foundation
Attn: Donna Tilton, ELS
6262 Veterans Parkway
Columbus, GA 31909