



The BELS Letter

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Looking Forward: From the President

As you may have heard, 2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS). Our organization has successfully operated since 1991 entirely through volunteer efforts and, some would say, steadfast dedication to the vision of its founders a quarter century ago. Nonetheless, the organization has had its share of challenges over the years, and in an effort to provide better stability and stewardship to BELS, the Executive Council (EC) under the past several presidents has worked to build the support and structure necessary to keep BELS strong for the next 25 years—and beyond.

At the fall 2015 EC meeting in San Antonio, the EC officially signed on with a management company, Association Development Services, Inc. (A.D.S.), based in St. Paul, Minnesota. Core services offered by A.D.S. include

- administrative and financial support,
- board development,
- meeting management,
- marketing and communications,
- education, and
- certification program development and management.

With A.D.S. now officially on board, BELS will have a dedicated staff to help manage membership information, maintain financial records, assist with exam logistics,

develop communications, support exhibit and marketing activities, and provide experience and insights that will support BELS strategic planning and strengthen its certification program for editors in the life sciences. See page 2 for more details about our A.D.S. partners. Technology is another key area for BELS that will be strengthened with the contributions of A.D.S. staff and resources. A new membership database and management software, MemberClicks, is being implemented in the first quarter of 2016, as is an updated, redesigned website.

But these are not the only changes you will see for BELS in the coming year! Enhanced communications, resources, and member benefits are in the planning stages. Now is a great time to become more involved and join a BELS committee (stay tuned for a call for volunteers with a website form listing opportunities and what each involves).

With help from A.D.S., the EC has now added monthly teleconferences to its regular schedule of twice-yearly meetings, allowing the business of BELS to be conducted more easily and efficiently. In addition, our sights are squarely set on developing a strategic plan for BELS and establishing a working plan to strengthen and support the certification program for editors in the life sciences. This work will



Thomas Gegeny, MS, ELS
BELS President 2015-17

include evaluating the current outline of content areas covered by the exam for possible changes, improving processes for analysis of data such as item (question) performance from examinations, and assessing the certification program with an eye toward current certification standards and best practices. The possibility of expanding the program (for instance, introducing a recertification option) will also be explored.

As you can see, exciting developments are in store for BELS! Stay tuned for more announcements and updates, including information about our 25th anniversary celebration to be held in the fall.

The BELS Management Team



Association Development Services (A.D.S.), was incorporated in 1997 by Sheryle Hazard with a focus on development and implementation of member service programs for associations. In 2008, Sheryle teamed up with Michelle Sok to relaunch A.D.S. as a full-service association management company. A.D.S.

currently boasts staff experience spanning local, regional, national, and international associations of varying sizes and professions and offers managerial and administrative services that can be tailored to BELS's needs.

The A.D.S. staff has extensive, well-rounded experience in a multitude of office and skilled disciplines including meeting planning, website development, communications, accounting services, and membership and certification programs.

Meet your BELS Staff (all staff may be reached at the BELS phone number 651-925-5528, via info@BELS.org, or at the individual email addresses, shown below):

Sheryle Hazard, CAE, serves as BELS Executive Director and works with the BELS Executive Council to oversee all operations. Email: shazard@associationdevelopment.com

Anne Lacher serves as the Office Manager and Membership Specialist. Your main contact with Anne will be in relation to BELS membership (eg, new members, renewals, member benefits, member contact information updates, and retention programs) and committee volunteer management. Anne also oversees general office and administrative procedures. Email: alacher@associationdevelopment.com

Alisha Lechner is the BELS Accounting Specialist and along with the BELS Treasurer handles financial oversight and reporting, banking, investments, and tax reporting. Email: alechner@associationdevelopment.com

Rachel Reich (pronounced "rich") serves as Communications Coordinator. Rachel's specialties and passions are website development and maintenance, social media, and survey development. Remarkable changes to the BELS website and social media presence are coming soon thanks to Rachel's hard work. Email: rreich@associationdevelopment.com

Cara Anderson is the Event & Education Coordinator who specializes in all things related to BELS's meetings (including BELS booths at AMWA and CSE meetings), and the certification program. She manages these huge responsibilities well with a high degree of organization and energy. Email: canderson@associationdevelopment.com

Lisa Sherman is the Publication & Marketing Coordinator and works with various BELS volunteers and committees to keep members apprised of the organization's activities. She is also responsible for graphic design projects, public relations, and project management. Lisa wears many hats and is an excellent resource in all these areas. Email: lsherman@associationdevelopment.com

If you have a question related to your BELS membership, these A.D.S. staff members will be there for you!

BELS Membership Meeting in Denver

Are you attending the Council of Science Editors annual meeting in Denver this May? The spring BELS Membership Meeting will be held in conjunction with this conference. Details coming soon via email, BELS.org, Facebook, and Twitter – so stay tuned!

Looking Back: The Birth of BELS

by Norman Grossblatt, ELS(D)

It all began back in the early 1980s. A few of us life-sciences manuscript editors would sit around in the lobby area or cocktail lounge after a day's sessions of the annual meetings of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) and the Council of Biology Editors (CBE; now the Council of Science Editors), complaining about what we saw as the poor quality of the work of some editors we knew and wondering what could be done about it. We weren't appointed by anyone; we weren't in a position to (and didn't want to) license anyone; we were just a bunch of know-it-alls who had been in the profession for a long time and thought that some other editors were not doing right by their authors.

CBE at the time had an Author's Editors Committee, which held more-or-less informal meetings during the annual meetings, and some of us sat in on those gatherings, making noise. In 1985, the people running the annual meeting, in Chicago, arranged for a few of us to use a room in the meeting hotel for an hour. We didn't have a formal program for our hour, and it had little publicity beyond a notice on the general annual-meeting bulletin board that invited anyone interested to attend an informal meeting of author's editors. About 25 people showed up. We had several tables set up, each assigned a subject related to the work of author's editors, and the subject of one of the tables was certification of editors. People sat at whatever table appealed to them; we told them that after a half-hour they could change tables. About half the group chose the certification table for the first half-hour, and most of the rest chose it for the second half-hour.

During the hour, suggestions for certifying editorial quality included everything from a short interview to a full college program in manuscript editing. That's when we knew that there was interest in certification!

Over the next few years, CBE formed a Certification Task Force under the aegis of the Author's Editors Committee and eventually changed the task force to a subcommittee and then a full committee. We consulted with a lawyer about various issues. We wanted to avoid being sued by unhappy test-takers, of course, and were told that if we treated all applicants alike and honestly, used blind scoring, and had a stated appeal process, we shouldn't have trouble in that regard. (Interviews with a dozen other certifying bodies bore that out: treat everyone fairly and you're extremely unlikely to be sued, and if you are sued, you're extremely unlikely to lose the suit.) We've never been sued. Our lawyer also drafted articles of incorporation for us. And we consulted with a testing expert who had been associated with the Educational Testing Service, who taught our test-writing group how to write multiple-choice questions.

We didn't know how many manuscript editors in the life sciences there were—maybe 2,000?—let alone how many would be interested in being certified, whatever they might think that meant. But we forged ahead.

As for the nitty-gritty of creating a certification program, we generally learned by doing. One member of our committee, Susan Eastwood, created what we came to refer to as the yellow document, a roughly

40-page hyperdetailed explication (on yellow paper) of a certification program, and that was the skeleton of what eventually became the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences program.

By 1989, our test-writing subcommittee, led by Walter Pagel, had constructed an examination of 154 questions, and it was time to try it out. In that year, at a joint meeting of CBE, the Association of Earth Science Editors, and the European Association of Science Editors in Rochester, MN, about 80 editors volunteered to help us by sitting for our exam—without a fee and for no credit. Soon after, we gave the exam to another 20 editors. So we had a sample of around 100—and now it became clear that we had a lot of work to do. The exam was too long, the possible answers not always well compiled, the time allowed too short, and on and on.

All the committee members then subjected themselves to the exam at home, evaluating the individual questions for quality, difficulty, and suitability. The test-writing subcommittee assembled all the comments and then met in New Orleans, where subcommittee members went over the exam piece by piece, reviewing questions for utility, pertinence, correctness, editorial quality, and difficulty—whether regarding the question's wording, possible answers, or choice of best answer. If the group was not unanimous in approving a question, that question was discarded. The result of that meeting was an exam of 107 questions (yes, about one-third of the questions were discarded).

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The last big bump in the road came in May 1990. At its annual meeting in Orlando, FL, CBE told us that it would no longer support the activity of the certification committee. Without official explanation, the committee was disbanded. The 10 members of the committee who were attending the meeting sat around the hotel pool for a few hours that afternoon, wondering what we should do besides wring our hands. Eventually, we decided to go it alone: we would pool our own resources (each contributing as much as a future candidate would have to pay for both levels of credential—certification and diplomate status), hire a lawyer, get incorporated, rewrite our exam to avoid copyright problems (CBE had paid for the development of the exam and wanted to keep it), and

aim for a first sitting of the exam for certification in May 1991, at the next CBE annual meeting. Bobbie Reitt developed and implemented a process for vetting and registering candidates for certification. And that’s how it came to pass that BELS certification examination no. 1 was taken by 23 editors on May 4, 1991, in Denver (the site, coincidentally, of the BELS 25th anniversary celebration, in 2016).

As of the end of 2015, BELS has given 153 certification exams and has certified 1,247 editors from 22 countries.

About the Author: Norman Grossblatt is a founding member of BELS and has been recognized for his service to the profession of manuscript editing by the Council of Science Editors and

the American Medical Writers Association. He currently serves as BELS Councilor for diplomate examination development. He recently retired from his position as senior editor at The National Academies, where he worked for 52 years. Before his service at the Academies, he was an editor in the Nuclear Power Department of the Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company for 4 years.



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Upcoming BELS Exam Sites/Dates

DATE	LOCATION	MEETING	REGISTER BY
Saturday, March 12	Houston, TX	AMWA Southwest Chapter	Registration is closed
Saturday, March 12	Manila, Philippines - St. Giles Makati Hotel		Registration is closed
Sunday, May 15	Denver, CO	CSE	April 24
Friday, June 10	Strasbourg, France - School of Medicine		May 20
Friday, June 10	Indianapolis, IN - The Columbia Club		May 20
September 2016 <i>exact date TBA</i>	Seoul, South Korea		
October 5	Denver, CO	AMWA Annual Meeting	September 14
November 1, 2017	Orlando, FL	AMWA Annual Meeting	October 11, 2017



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Nota Bene

Gus Adapon, MBA, ELS, has moved from Shanghai to Taipei and joined the Taiwan biotech company, OBI Pharma. He is responsible for Investor Relations.

Kim Berman, ELS, is completing her fourth year as an adjunct associate professor at George Washington University's School of Medicine & Health Sciences, supporting their graduate program in the Department of Clinical Research & Leadership. She has also recently moved from freelancing to a full-time position as a Senior Medical Writer at PPD, Inc. A freelance medical writer/editor for the past 20 years, Kim is overjoyed at not having to chase potential new projects!

Lyn K. Chesna, MA, ELS, has been named managing editor of the journal *P & T* (Pharmacy and Therapeutics). She began her tenure in January 2016. Ms. Chesna previously worked for the American Association for Cancer Research as editor of "Programs and Proceedings" (2009-2015).

Nancy Hemphill, ELS, FAAO, was recently named a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry. Editor-in-chief of *Primary Care Optometry News* for the past 20 years, Ms. Hemphill achieved Fellow status in recognition of her leadership in the profession and after submitting and defending a paper detailing the optometry profession's continuing progress toward achieving a uniform scope of practice in the United States.

Stephen N. Palmer, PhD, ELS, became president of the AMWA at its annual meeting in October 2015. Also, earlier in 2015, he succeeded BELS member Marianne Mallia as manager of the Section of Scientific Publications at the Texas Heart Institute.

Sylvia van Roosmalen, ELS, reports that SENSE, the Society of English Native-Speaking Editors in the Netherlands, celebrated its 25th anniversary with a conference in Utrecht this past November.

Nancy Dew Taylor, PhD, ELS, announces the arrival of her most recent book of poetry, *Taking Flight*, published by Ninety-Six Press. The poems include several about Alexander Wilson, our first American ornithologist, some of his friends, and the ironies of their killing thousands of birds in order to study them. There are some "plain" poems about birds and a section on the ivory-bill. Dr. Taylor reports that she is happily retired, but misses seeing her BELS friends.

Mark Vrabel, MLS, AHIP, ELS, notes two recent publications:

- Vrabel M. Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Oncology Nursing Forum*. 2015;42(5):552-554. doi:10.1188/15.ONF.552-554.
- Vrabel M. Oncology Nursing Society. In Colditz GA, ed. *Encyclopedia of Cancer and Society*. 2nd ed. 2015. Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publications, Inc.

Welcome, New Members!

Exam #153 San Antonio, TX September 30, 2015

Kayla Allen ELS
Irving, TX

Alexandra V. Andreeva, PhD, ELS
Cowley, Oxford
United Kingdom

Colleen Briars, ELS
Chicago, IL

Lucia Brunello, PhD, ELS
Columbus, OH

Joanne P. Christopher, MA, ELS
Blue Bell, PA

Yvette M. Edmonds, PhD, ELS
Richmond, VA

Omar Fabian, MS, ELS
Austin, TX

Pamela D. Fairbank, MA, ELS
Cibolo, TX

David Karhu, ELS
Saint-Lazare, QE
Canada

Carrie Lancos, ELS
Columbia, MD

Keith A. Laycock, PhD, ELS
Memphis, TN

Kathryn Ondricek, ELS
Houston, TX

Sunita Patterson, ELS
Asheville, NC

Suzanne M. Pratt, DVM, ELS
Portland, OR

Joan Redding, MA, ELS
La Vernia, TX

Michelle Rizzo, ELS
Yardley, PA

Michelle Swick, PhD, ELS
Houston, TX

Dawn Louise Thiselton, PhD, ELS
Richmond, VA

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