

SEJ Journal

Spring 2008, Vol. 18 No. 1

In this issue:

Tarbell: first to take on big oil

Environment books of the year

Oil on the Brain tracks crude to gas

Conference agenda sneak peek

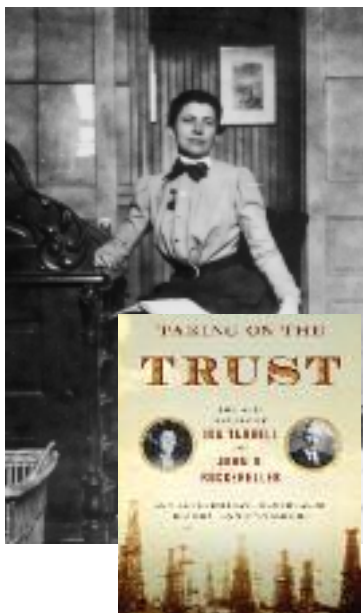
FOIA successes

A quarterly publication of the

Society of Environmental Journalists



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features

Nation's First Investigative Reporter Drilled Deep on Big Oil
by Steve Weinberg page 4

Publishing Paradox
by Bill Kovarik page 7

Market Warms to Climate Change Books in 2007
by Bill Kovarik page 11

SEJ Gains Ground for Press Freedoms, Information
by Joseph A. Davis page 12

Inside Story: Lisa Margonelli Interview
by Bill Dawson page 18

Science Survey: New Government Effort to Produce
More Data on Toxic Chemicals
by Cheryl Hogue page 9

The Beat: Long-form Stories—Enterprise & Investigative—Still Making Mark
by Bill Dawson page 13

SEJ News: Annual Conference page 14

President's Report: Don't Leave Climate Change, Environment
to "Boys on the Bus"
by Tim Wheeler page 21

E-Reporting Biz: OK, It's Time to Play the Climate Change Card
in the Campaign
by Bud Ward page 22

Media on the Move
by Mike Mansur page 23

Bits and Bytes: Web Tools Help Negotiate the Information Explosion
by David Poulson page 25

Research News Roundup: Studies Look at News Bias & Internet's
Impact on Coverage
by Jan Knight page 27

Reporter's Toolbox: Slideshows Can Highlight Big Projects,
Offer Readers More
by Casey McNerthney page 29

Bookshelf Book Reviews begin page 31

columns



COVER PHOTO

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline in winter near Fairbanks, Alaska.

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The mission of the organization is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting.

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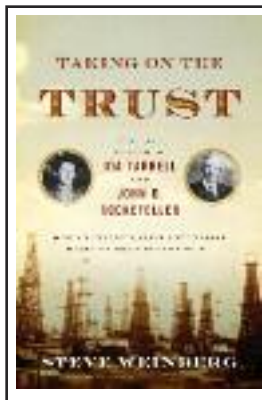
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Nation's



By STEVE WEINBERG

When Ida Minerva Tarbell began her invention of investigative reporting slightly more than 100 years ago, that two-word journalistic term so familiar today did not exist. Neither did the term “environmental reporting.”

The book that locked in Tarbell’s contribution to contemporary journalism does not look especially impressive today. It rests on an out-of-the-way shelf, one of millions of volumes in a cavernous university research library. Its green cover is faded now, after decades of steady wear, occasional abuse, and, ultimately, lack of use. It is still mentioned in early-20th-century-America history courses on campuses. But few have read it from beginning to end, all 815 pages of dense type.

This is a shame. The book is arguably the greatest work of investigative journalism ever written. *The History of the Standard Oil Company*, published in 1904, is its unprepossessing title.

The book created a social maelstrom that built and destroyed reputations, altered public policy, and changed the face of the nation. This was the era of the great robber barons. Powerful men colluded to create even more powerful monopolies. By the dawn of Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency, however, there arose a cadre of devoted journalists and publishers intent on uncovering the perfidy of the economic juggernauts, including corporate environmental degradation.

Tarbell worked as a staff writer for *McClure’s Magazine*, funded by an energetic, determined Irish immigrant named Samuel Sidney McClure. The magazine succeeded during the 1890s and into the new century against huge odds. For readers of magazines circa 2008, think of *McClure’s* as a combination of *The Atlantic*, *Harper’s* and *Mother Jones*.

A woman of formidable intelligence and character, Tarbell labored at a time when men dominated the realm of journalism. The tycoon John Davison Rockefeller, born into a broken family, had built an empire on black gold and had become the wealthiest individual of the Gilded Age. With impressive business savvy and upright character, Rockefeller served as the guiding force within Standard Oil Company, the nation’s most sprawling corporate “trust,” a term out of fashion today except as part of the word “antitrust.”

In many ways, it seems like Tarbell was destined to write the Standard Oil exposé. She was born in northwestern Pennsylvania just two years before the first major strike of underground oil occurred almost in her family’s backyard. The Drake Well was such an extraordinary discovery for its time that Ida Tarbell considered it a “sacred spot” from the moment she learned of it as a child. Indeed, she tended to romanticize the Drake Well

First Investigative Reporter Drilled Deep on Big Oil

"A woman of formidable intelligence and character, Tarbell labored at a time when men dominated the realm of journalism."

discovery and what followed from it. She would write, "Here we have demonstrations of the enterprise and resourcefulness of American men in adapting what they knew to unheard-of industrial problems, of their patience and imagination in adding by invention, by trial and error, a body of entirely new mechanical and commercial advances and processes."

Tarbell's emotional attachment to the oil region of her childhood did not compromise her accuracy when writing about it. Scholars who came after her have verified over and over the accuracy of her accounts. In the year 2000, for example, Brian Black, a member of the Pennsylvania State University history faculty, acknowledged his debt to Tarbell's research in his book *Petrolia: The Landscape of America's First Oil Boom*. "The writing and spirit of Ida Tarbell rose like a beacon guiding me beyond the romance and riches to the human and natural story available in the oil country of Pennsylvania," Black said.

(Not so incidentally, Black's own book contains graphic accounts of how the exploration leading to oil boom towns harmed the local environment, sometimes beyond redemption. "Certainly,



IDA M. TARBELL COLLECTION, PELETIER LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

Finding a satisfying niche at *McClure's Magazine* in New York City, Tarbell worked long hours as a reporter and an editor. Her portraits of Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln made her a household name and set the stage for the biggest investigation of her career.

residents of company or industrial communities are beneficiaries of a living made from harvesting resources," Black reflects, "but they are also subject to the inevitable decline of their social and natural environment. Indeed, traditionally, these earliest industrial communities have almost always been abandoned by the industries that created them. Too often a mode of production or land use moves on, and the human communities are left with nothing in a place that has become desolate or even dangerously contaminated.")

Paul H. Giddens, a history professor who became a Tarbell acolyte after meeting her at Allegheny College, her alma mater in Meadville, Pa., documented with precision her never-ending fascination with the culture of oil in books such as *The Birth of the Oil Industry*. Giddens grasped that Tarbell could never escape the influence of oil, a "strong thread weaving itself into the patterns of her life ever since childhood." Her emotional and intellectual investments in the oil culture of her youth made it impossible for her to ignore the colossus who would soon dominate the oil industry, and all of American life. Tarbell's experiences growing up in the oil region of Pennsylvania would make her confrontation with Rockefeller all the more shot

through with drama later.

Tarbell's book, which began as a *McClure's Magazine* series, brought her fame and established a new form of journalism known as muckraking. She became a model for countless journalists, and despite the passage of more than a century, her work remains an example of how a lone journalist can uncover wrongdoing. Moreover, through her exposé, Tarbell forever tarnished the peerless reputation of Rockefeller.

Reading Tarbell's exposé of the Standard Oil Company is a remarkable experience; in many ways it seems that it could have been composed only yesterday, not more than a century ago. The most dramatic of all her dramatic discoveries involved the collusion between Standard Oil and the railroads, a vital form of transportation back then. Many citizens and their elected representatives believed railroads should act in the public interest, especially given that their tracks often ran through previously public land. But Rockefeller and his colleagues at Standard Oil turned railroad officials into their minions, gaining a significant competitive advantage as the behemoth corporation shipped oil and its byproducts all over the nation and across oceans.

The strangleholds that Sam Walton's Wal-Mart and Bill Gates's Microsoft demonstrate in their business realms are reminiscent of the sway held by Rockefeller's Standard Oil. The environmental consequences of energy exploration have not changed much, either.

Tarbell's book played a significant role in my own career. In addition to practicing the craft of investigative journalism since 1969, I have studied it carefully—in large part because

I served as a spokesman of sorts for that branch of journalism while serving as executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE). Based at the University of Missouri Journalism School, IRE serves thousands of members around the United States and increasingly around the world. The techniques Tarbell used to gather information about a secretive corporation and its evasive, powerful chief executive taught me that a talented, persistent journalist can penetrate any façade through close readings of government documents, lawsuits and interviews with knowledgeable sources inside and outside the executive offices. Tarbell's methods have allowed me to train investigative journalists around the world while directing IRE and ever since.

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The most important of many factors that drove Tarbell year after year into the 1940s, her octogenarian decade, can be stated simply: a passion to discover and disseminate the truth about political, economic and social issues. She believed that research could lead to an approximation of Truth,

Rockefeller, who believed that his Baptist faith accounted for much of his success, strolled on Fifth Avenue with his only son, John Jr., on Palm Sunday 1915.

indeed with a capital "T."

Before her exposé of Rockefeller, she researched the lives of Napoleon Bonaparte and Abraham Lincoln. The books that arose from this research convinced her that Truth about the actions and motivations of powerful human beings could be discovered. That Truth, she became convinced, could be conveyed in such a way as to precipitate meaningful social change.



Ida Tarbell rarely relaxed, and often she felt guilty for putting her work aside. Her second home, in rural Connecticut, which she shared with her sister, provided her a peaceful retreat for writing and research away from the demands of New York City.

Tarbell's research into the life of Rockefeller convinced her that good and evil could be embodied simultaneously in one individual.

Tarbell's research into the life of Rockefeller convinced her that good and evil could be embodied simultaneously in one individual. Reducing Rockefeller to a symbol of good or evil would be a biographical sin in itself. Although Tarbell was at times ruthless when chronicling Rockefeller's life, she did not make that mistake; she did not distort his accomplishments into a sensationalistic paradigm of good or evil. In fact, she titled the final chapter of her exposé "The Legitimate Greatness of the Standard Oil Company."

Rockefeller presented a substantial challenge to Tarbell. Unlike Bonaparte and Lincoln, he was alive and at the zenith of his power. He had no intention of letting a journalist—and a mere woman at that—question the way he had amassed and used his fortune. Tarbell's biggest obstacle, however, was neither her gender nor Rockefeller's opposition, but rather the craft of journalism as practiced at the turn of the twentieth century. She investigated Standard Oil and Rockefeller by using documents—hundreds of thousands of pages scattered throughout the nation—and then amplified her findings through interviews with the corporation's executives and competitors, government regulators and academic experts past and present. In other words, she proposed to practice what today is considered investigative reporting. Indeed, she invented a new form of journalism.

The History of the Standard Oil Company influenced the U.S. Supreme Court—where the justices mandated the breakup of multinational trusts—as well as in the court of public opinion, where Rockefeller's reputation disintegrated. So far during the twenty-first century, no journalist's exposé has led to the breakup of Wal-Mart or Microsoft or led to Sam Walton or Bill Gates losing his sterling reputation as a private-sector demigod. Plenty of journalists, however, have delved into these modern-day trusts and their controlling founders, thinking that perhaps the published results will serve as the successor to *The History of the Standard Oil Company*.

Steve Weinberg's narrative about the collision course between Ida Tarbell and John D. Rockefeller; Taking on the Trust, has just been published by W.W. Norton. Weinberg wrote this essay exclusively for SEJ.

publishing

paradox

*Environment,
a hot topic,
addressed in
fewer books*



By BILL KOVARIK

The new SEJ book award, along with plans for an increased emphasis on environmental books at this year’s SEJ annual conference in Roanoke, VA, are reflections of an increasing interest in environmental book publishing among SEJ members. Yet trends in the national marketplace of ideas seem paradoxical.

Two environmental books have topped the bestseller list in recent years—Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and Glenn Beck’s *An Inconvenient Book*. (See page 11). That both would rise to the top of the market may seem to be a bit of a paradox.

But here’s another puzzle. While environmental awareness is at or near a peak, the number of new non-fiction environmental books published each year has declined. The apparent high-water mark was 2001, with 3,571 new books. In 2007, only 2,840 new environmental books were published. (See page 8).

The slight declines may be temporary, or even irrelevant, given the creativity, range and depth of recent new environmental books. In recent years, new titles have reached from the cosmic, from highly personal to social, and from individual narratives of exploration to hardnosed scientific exposition. (See Environmental Books of the Year 2007 page 8).

Slight as they might be, the numbers are a concern. It’s not just a reflection of the overall book market, according to Chuck Savitt, president of Island Press, a non-profit publisher that specializes in environmental areas.

“One would have thought, given the attention to climate and the resurfacing of environmental issues, that there would have been a lot more interest in books on the subject,” said Savitt. “Unfortunately, we haven’t seen it.”

Comparing the environmental book trends to overall trends in the book industry is not easy. The U.S. Census reports a modest one percent annual increase in overall book sales for the past few years, but the Book Industry Study Group estimates that overall book sales fell from 8.27 books per person in 2001 to 7.93 in 2006.

And according to the Department of Labor, the average American household spent more on reading ten years ago than today (\$163 in 1995 versus only \$126 in 2005).

There are various theories for the mossbacked market in environmental book publishing. Savitt believes it may be due to issue fatigue and the easy availability of reference information on the web.

Literary agent Amanda Mecke of Litchfield, Conn., thinks there might have been a peak of interest around Al Gore’s book and movie. Now, the market may be going back to more of an equilibrium point.

Photographer Gary Braasch has another perspective. “Environmental books are always a hard sell — unless you are Al Gore,” said Braasch, whose book *Earth Under Fire* takes the camera to the front lines of climate change.

“I have noticed during the Bush administration a downturn in photo requests on environmental subjects from magazines when Mr. Bush started the war,” Braasch said. “I also experienced this during his dad’s administration when the Gulf War started, and then recently a slight uptick as the news about global warming and the failures of the Bush Administration in various programs are becoming better known.”

A few bright spots stand out for environmental book publishers. Universities are ordering more environmental books, even as supplementary texts for courses outside environmental science. And environmental issues are getting more respect from reviewers at many major newspapers and magazines.

“There’s definitely an interest in climate (issues), but people are not interested in reading more books that scare them,” Savitt said. “They get enough of that from newspapers and TV and radio.”

What speaks to the market these days, Savitt and others say, are books about action and personal experience.

In short, hope sells. Some examples:

- Michael Schellenberger and Ted Nordhaus argue in *Break*

continued on next page

Through that the environmental movement must focus on building the politics of shared hope rather than fear.

- Jay Inslee's *Apollo's Fire* includes strong narratives of things businesses and communities are doing about climate.

- Penny Loeb's *Moving Mountains* presents a dramatic narrative about women leading the fight against mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia.

- And Thomas Friedman's *Green is the New Red, White and Blue*, due out next August, is expected to focus on the "greenest generation."

Personal narratives have also proven fascinating to readers. Julian Crandall Hollick's *Ganga*, about traveling along the Ganges River, and Peter Thompson's *Sacred Sea*, about a journey to Lake Baikal in Siberia, are recent examples of the environmental travel genre.

Some ideas seem natural, taking off so quickly that they become part of the language. Michael Pollan's book, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, led to a new word for local food preference, "locavore," that became the word of the year 2007 for the Oxford American Dictionary.

New 2007 books also included exposés like Mark Schapiro's *Exposed*, about the lack of US regulation of toxic chemicals and how it affects U.S. trade relations. Also in the genre of investigative journalism and history are Devra Davis' *Secret History of the War on Cancer*

and *Cape Wind* by Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb.

Inevitably, some environmental books are aimed by authors to sadden us or force us to contemplate elements of the natural world that are lost or at risk and, possibly, inspire action. David Wilcove's *No Way Home: The Decline of the World's Great Animal Migrations* describes air, land and water migrations from Alaska to the Serengeti. Similarly, Calum Roberts' *Unnatural History of the Sea* describes the decline of the seas and fisheries through history.

Finally, if you are looking for a book that will evoke depression akin to a Eugene O'Neill theatrical production, nothing this year could serve better than Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us*—a book that frankly contemplates the end of humanity and the eventual recovery of natural systems.

But wait. If hope sells, why is Weisman's book doing so well? In February 2008, it had an Amazon rank of 236.

It's the perfect paradox.

Bill Kovarik, an SEJ board member, teaches environmental journalism at Radford University.

ENVIRONMENTAL BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2007

(From the Environmental History Timeline www.environmentalhistory.org)

This list of books was not selected through any comprehensive or methodical review process but rather with the assistance of open recommendation from SEJ members on the SEJ listserv, SEJ-Talk.

Peter Annin, *Great Lakes Water Wars*, Island Press

David Beerling, *The Emerald Planet: How Plants Changed Earth's History*, Oxford University Press

Mark Bowen, *Censoring Science: Inside the Political Attack on Dr. James Hansen and the Truth of Global Warming*, Dutton

Gary Braasch, *Earth Under Fire*, University of California Press

John D. Cox, *Climate Crash: Abrupt Climate Change and What It Means for Our Future*, Joseph Henry Press

Gwyneth Cravens, *Power to Save the World: The Truth About Nuclear Energy*, Knopf

Kevin Danaher, Jason Mark and Shannon Biggs, *Building the Green Economy: Success Stories from the Grassroots*, Polipoint Press

Brangien Davis, *Wake Up and Smell the Planet: The Non-Pompous, Non-Preachy Grist (magazine) Guide to Greening Your Day*, Mountaineers Books

Devra Davis, *The Secret History of the War on Cancer*, Basic

Bill DeBuys, *The Walk*, Trinity University Press

Joseph F. C. DiMento and Pamela M. Doughman, eds., *Climate Change: What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren*, MIT Press

Josh Dorfman, *The Lazy Environmentalist: Your Guide to Easy, Stylish, Green Living*, Stewart, Tabori & Chang

John Duffield, *Over a Barrel: The Costs of U.S. Foreign Oil Dependence*, Stanford Law Books

Kerry Emanuel, *What We Know About Climate Change*, Boston Review Books

H. Bruce Franklin, *The Most Important Fish in the Sea*, Island Books

Eban Goodstein, *Fighting for Love in the Century of Extinction: How Passion and Politics Can Stop Global Warming*, Vermont

Al Gore, *The Assault on Reason*, Penguin

Peter Grose, *Power to People*, Island Press

Paul Hawken, *How the Largest Movement in the World Came Into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*, Viking

Mayer Hillman, *The Suicidal Planet: How to Prevent Global Climate Catastrophe*, Thomas Dunne Books

Gary Holthaus, *From the Farm to the Table: What All Americans Need to Know About Agriculture*, Univ. of Kentucky

New Government Effort to Produce More Data on Toxic Chemicals

By CHERYL HOGUE

We don't have a lot of information about many of the industrial chemicals that are in our air, water and soil, or those that are increasingly found in our blood.

This dearth of data often leaves audiences hanging when journalists report about pollution and biomonitoring. Too often, scientists just can't tell us what the presence of Chemical X in our bodies means.

This information is scarce in part because testing chemicals to see if they cause toxic effects — like cancer or birth defects — takes a long time and is expensive. For instance, an experiment to determine whether a substance can cause cancer in laboratory rodents costs between \$2 million and \$3 million and takes about two years to complete. The U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP), a world leader in testing chemicals, has done studies on only about 2,500 substances over the past 30 years.

But the situation is starting to change. In February, two U.S. government research agencies agreed to collaborate on new testing methods that could revolutionize the field of toxicology. These new techniques are expected to help scientists learn why some chemicals make people sick.

The collaboration, between the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Environmental Protection Agency, should produce heaps of information about tens of thousands of industrial chemicals. This, in turn, could lead to the regulation of more chemicals, invention of safer substitutes, and, ultimately, healthier people living in a healthier environment. It will also provide loads of new data for environmental journalists to use in informing the public.

The federal effort is fundamentally changing how chemicals are tested for toxic effects. The new methods rely on human cells cultured in laboratory dishes and computer technology to rapidly assess what causes toxicity in those cells. The buzzword "high-throughput" is used to describe these new techniques. It means doing lots and lots of small-scale tests really fast.

This marks a big shift from past practice. For decades, toxicologists have studied the effects of chemicals by feeding or injecting laboratory animals — mainly rats and mice — with a range of doses of a substance.

Researchers look for effects in the animals, such as weight loss or a shorter life than their peers who didn't get exposed to the chemical (the "control" animals) or those in the experiment that got a smaller dose. At the end of study, researchers examine the animals' internal organs for possible problems. In some toxicology tests, rats or mice are given the chemicals and their offspring are studied for harmful effects.

These traditional toxicology studies on animals, sometimes called *in vivo* techniques, take years to complete and are extremely expensive. Animal welfare proponents find these studies abhorrent and lobby hard to stop them.

The new methods — called *in vitro* techniques — hold promise for screening tens of thousands of chemicals for potentially toxic effects and for reducing the need to use animal testing. These procedures allow

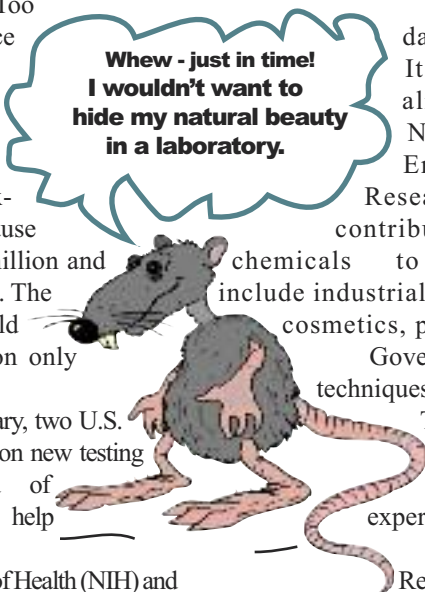
scientists to determine how genes, proteins and biological pathways are influenced, for good or for bad, by exposure to chemicals. This helps researchers to pinpoint the key steps in the development of diseases such as cancer.

The collaboration is designed to validate the new methods for toxicity testing. It will begin by focusing on chemicals that already tested through traditional means. NTP, located at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and EPA are contributing traditional toxicity data on 2,800 chemicals to the project. The compounds include industrial chemicals and ingredients in pesticides, cosmetics, plastics and herbal supplements.

Government researchers will use the new techniques to figure out why these substances are toxic. The effort will fine-tune the computerized tests and demonstrate that they are as good as, or perhaps better than, experimenting on rats and mice.

The National Human Genome Research Institute, part of NIH in Bethesda, Md., has the equipment to run the "high-throughput" tests. Until now, this NIH program has focused on testing compounds that could prevent development of diseases like diabetes or breast cancer. In the new program, the research institute will do the opposite by studying exactly how toxic chemicals disturb biochemical pathways and cause disease.

EPA expects to release the first comparisons of traditional toxicity tests and results from the new procedures to the public later this year.



Whew - just in time!
I wouldn't want to
hide my natural beauty
in a laboratory.

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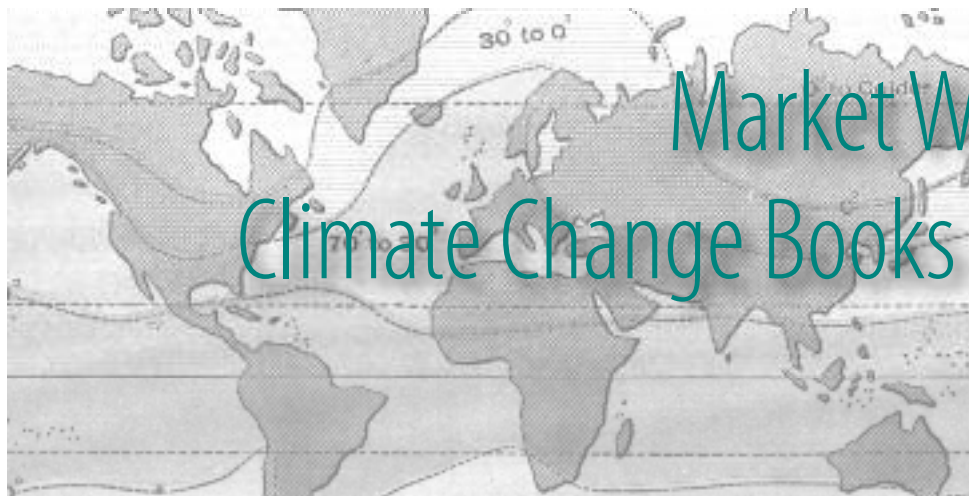
ENVIRONMENTAL BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2007

(From the Environmental History Timeline www.environmentalhistory.org)

continued from page 8

- Julian Crandall Hollick, *Ganga: A Journey Down the Sacred River*, Island Press
- Christopher C. Horner, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Global Warming*, Regnery
- Joy Horowitz, *Parts Per Million: The Poisoning of Beverly Hills High School*, Viking
- Mark Harris, *Grave Matters: A Journey through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, Scribner
- Jay Inslee and Bracken Hendricks, *Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy*, Island Press
- Jonathan Isham and Sissel Waage, eds., *Ignition: What You Can Do to Fight Global Warming and Spark a Movement*, Island Press
- Eugene Linden, *The Winds of Change: Climate, Weather, and the Destruction of Civilizations*, Simon & Schuster
- Penny Loeb, *Moving Mountains: How One Woman and Her Community Won Justice from Big Coal*, KY
- Bjørn Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*, Knopf
- Chris Mooney, *Storm World: Hurricanes, Politics and the Battle over Global Warming*, Harcourt Inc.
- Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Harvard
- Bill McKibben, *Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community*, Holt
- Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*, Times
- George Monbiot and Matthew Prescott, *Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning*, South End Press
- John R. Nolon and Daniel B. Rodriguez, eds., *Losing Ground: A Nation on Edge*, Environmental Law Institute Press
- Michael Novacek, *Terra: Our 100-Million-Year-Old Ecosystem—and the Threats That Now Put It at Risk*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux
- Fred Pearce, *With Speed and Violence: Why Scientists Fear Tipping Points in Climate Change*, Beacon Press
- Dale Allen Pfeiffer, *Eating Fossil Fuels: Oil, Food And the Coming Crisis in Agriculture*, New Society
- Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Penguin
- Alan Rabinowitz, *Life in the Valley of Death: The Fight to Save Tigers in a Land of Guns, Gold and Greed*, Island Press
- Trish Riley, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Green Living*, Penguin
- Callum Roberts, *An UnNatural History of the Sea*, Island Press
- Elizabeth Rogers, Thomas M. Kostigen, *The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time*, Three Rivers Press
- David de Rothschild, *The Live Earth Global Warming Survival Handbook: 77 Essential Skills To Stop Climate Change*, Rodale
- William Ruddiman, *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate*, Princeton University Press
- David Sandalow, *Freedom From Oil: How the Next President Can End the United States' Oil Addiction*, McGraw Hill
- Debra Schwartz, *Writing Green*, Apprentice House
- Mark Schapiro, *Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products and What's at Stake for American Power*, Chelsea Green
- Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*, Houghton Mifflin
- Fred Singer, *Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1,500 Years*, Rowman & Littlefield
- Henrik Svensmark, *The Chilling Stars: the New Theory of Climate Change*, Totem
- Peter Thompson, *Sacred Sea: A Journey to Lake Baikal*, Oxford University Press
- UN Development Program, ed., *Human Development Report 2007: Climate Change and Human Development—Rising to the Challenge*, Palgrave Macmillan
- Peter D. Ward, *Under a Green Sky: Global Warming, the Mass Extinctions of the Past, and What They Can Tell Us About Our Future*, Collins
- Thomas Raymond Wellock, *Preserving the Nation: The Conservation and Environmental Movements, 1870-2000*, Harlan Davidson
- Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us*, Thomas Dunne Books
- David Wilcove, *No Way Home: The Decline of the World's Great Animal Migrations*, Island Press
- Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb, *Cape Wind: Money, Celebrity, Class, Politics and the Battle for our Energy Future on Nantucket Sound*, Public Affairs.
- E.O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, WW Norton & Co.

continued on page 23



Market Warms to Climate Change Books in 2007

By BILL KOVARIK

In 2006, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* dominated *The New York Times* best seller list. But in 2007, Glenn Beck's swaggering rebuttal, *An Inconvenient Book*, topped the same list with the idea that climate change is "the greatest scam in history."

While Beck's book has little chance of outselling Gore's book over the long run, the paradox illustrates a larger problem in the environmental publishing industry: serious science is a hard sell.

Joseph Romm, author of the 2006 book *Hell and High Water*, worried in a *Grist* post a few months ago that the deniers "are winning the war of words."

So, how true is that? How are those 2007 climate books doing?

We checked the Amazon sales ranks and the LexisNexus newspaper hits and TV mentions. We came up with the following list. It seems that Romm is partly right – climate deniers are still getting a lot of attention. But the picture is mixed.

One thing to notice is that the skeptics and contrarians may be selling more books, but they aren't getting as much media attention as scientifically oriented authors. The sustained discussion seems to be taking place around the actual science rather than the debunkers of science. Beck, Lomborg, Singer and others seem to be appealing to a shallow audience pool.

CLIMATE BOOKS 2007

(For Amazon sales ranks, low numbers are best; for LexisNexus newspaper and transcript mentions, high numbers are best.)

BOOKS BY SKEPTICS AND CONTRARIANS:

Glenn Beck, *An Inconvenient Book: Real Solutions to the World's Biggest Problems*. (119 Amazon, 196 newspapers, 230 TV transcripts)

Bjørn Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming* (1,377 Amazon, 19 newspaper reviews, 9 TV transcripts)

Fred Singer, *Unstoppable Global Warming: Every 1,500 Years* (3,267 Amazon, 82 newspaper reviews, 2 TV transcripts)

Henrik Svensmark, *The Chilling Stars: The New Theory of Climate Change* (19,305 Amazon, 6 newspaper reviews, 0 TV transcripts)

SCIENCE-BASED CLIMATE BOOKS:

Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006 book, Feb. 2008 rank)

(4,097 Amazon, Tens of thousands of reviews and transcripts; too many to count)

David de Rothschild, *The Live Earth Global Warming Survival Handbook: 77 Essential Skills To Stop Climate Change* (14,906 Amazon, 30 newspaper reviews, 31 TV transcripts)

George Monbiot and Matthew Prescott, *Heat: How to Stop the Planet from Burning* (21,528 Amazon, 8 newspaper, 1 TV)

Jay Inslee and Bracken Hendricks, *Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy* (22,247 Amazon, 151 reviews, 7 TV)

Chris Mooney, *Storm World: Hurricanes, Politics and the Battle over Global Warming* (43,906 Amazon, 48 newspaper reviews, 7 TV)

Eugene Linden, *The Winds of Change: Climate, Weather, and the Destruction of Civilizations* (51,849 Amazon, 48 reviews, 4 TV)

Gary Braasch, *Earth Under Fire* (55,599 Amazon, 13 reviews, 0 TV)

Kerry Emanuel, *What We Know About Climate Change* (69,685 Amazon, 12 reviews, 0 TV)

Bill McKibben, *Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community* (99,735 Amazon, 22 reviews, 1 TV)

Jonathan Isham and Sissel Waage, eds., *Ignition: What You Can Do to Fight Global Warming and Spark a Movement* (107,596 Amazon, 20 reviews, 0 TV)

John D. Cox, *Climate Crash: Abrupt Climate Change and What It Means for Our Future* (122,960 Amazon, 3 reviews, 0 TV)

Joseph F. C. DiMento and Pamela M. Doughman, eds., *Climate Change: What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren* (143,681 Amazon, 1 review, 0 TV)

Mayer Hillman, *The Suicidal Planet: How to Prevent Global Climate Catastrophe* (603,000 Amazon, 0 newspapers, 0 TV)

WINTER 2008 CLIMATE BOOKS IN PRINT:

Robert Henson, *The Rough Guide to Climate Change*, 2nd Edition (Amazon, 31,480)

Fred Pearce, *With Speed and Violence: Why Scientists Fear Tipping Points in Climate Change* (Amazon 32,000)

Bill Kovarik, an SEJ board member, teaches environmental journalism at Radford University.



SEJ Gains Ground for Press Freedoms, Information

By JOSEPH A. DAVIS

SEJ's efforts to roll back some of the government secrecy that has made reporters' jobs more difficult over the last decade won some ground since last year.

Working through its First Amendment Task Force, often with other journalism groups, SEJ's advocacy of open government posted successes on a variety of fronts. In fact, SEJ has often led the way for other groups.

Sunshine Week 2007 Audit Project

Every March, journalism and open-government groups celebrate "Sunshine Week" — a beehive of projects promoting better public access to information. In 2007, the national project was an audit of state and local government compliance with emergency planning disclosure requirements under EPCRA, the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act.

EPCRA requires every community to have a "Local Emergency Planning Committee," which must draw up a plan for chemical emergencies and disclose it to the public on request. Under the audit project, reporters from more than 100 news media outlets across the country visited their local LEPCs and asked for a copy of the emergency plan. The audit found that only 44 percent of LEPCs nationwide were following the law on disclosure <http://www.sunshineweek.org/sunshineweek/audit07>.

The idea for the project came from SEJ's WatchDog Project, and SEJ worked with groups like the American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government, who coordinated the nationwide network of project volunteers. The upshot was many more local emergency responders becoming more aware of their disclosure responsibilities.

FOIA Update Bill Enacted; Implementation Next

Five years ago, when the Freedom of Information Act was under attack and new exemptions were multiplying in the name of homeland security, the fight was to keep FOIA from being eroded. The idea of actually strengthening it seemed like a pipe dream. Yet after almost three years of legislative effort, a FOIA-strengthening bill originally introduced by Sens. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) went the distance and was signed into law by President Bush on New Year's Eve 2007.

The bill was modest in its ambitions — although it did establish some mild penalties for agencies who do not meet the 20-

day deadline for responding to FOIA requests. (Agencies who blow the deadline can't collect search or copy fees.)

President Bush signed the bill without any statement or ceremony, after his Justice Department and Office of Management and Budget had opposed many of its provisions.

SEJ was one of many journalism groups who helped inform people about the bill and called on the record for Congress to pass it.

But more effort may be required to force the executive branch to implement the new law. The bill's sponsors and journalism groups complained that Bush's 2009 budget proposed moving the FOIA "ombudsman's" office from the National Archives to the Justice Department, saying Justice had been an advocate for less disclosure. Congress may ignore Bush's request, but it could cause delay in getting the ombudsman's office up and running.

Photography Fees and Permits in Parks

The Interior Department's efforts to require permits and fees for news photography in parks got a warning shot across the bow from the House Natural Resources Committee in December 2007 — largely at SEJ's instigation.

SEJ President Timothy B. Wheeler testified before the committee, chaired by Nick Rahall (D-WV), saying Interior's proposed rule for "commercial filming" represents an unwarranted infringement on journalists' ability to cover natural resource issues on public lands. Other groups also testified with concerns about the proposed rule, including the Radio and Television News Directors Association and the National Press Photographers Association.

The Interior Department has not finalized the rule. But SEJ leaders are hopeful that SEJ's comments — along with the hearing — will prompt Interior to revise it.

Farm Bill Secrecy on Animal ID System

SEJ's First Amendment Task Force won another success — at least a temporary one — in defeating language in the Farm Bill that would have made it a crime to publish the address of a feedlot.

The language was meant to cloak in secrecy almost all information in the National Animal Identification System — an ill-starred federal effort to track food cattle, pigs and poultry from cradle to grave. The system is ostensibly meant to keep the public safe from diseases like Mad Cow (or its human version). But when

continued on page 30

Long-form stories - enterprise and investigative - still making marks

By BILL DAWSON

Layoffs and buyouts. Orders for shorter stories. Proliferating blogs. MoJos (that's "mobile journalists" for the uninitiated) hunting for breaking news.

That's not all there is to American newspapering in 2008, of course, but such developments seem to foretell a future for newspaper journalism that's dominated by the quick and the terse.

In an ideal world, a greater emphasis on immediacy and concision wouldn't necessarily mean a reduction in newspaper stories and projects that are labor-intensive, long-form, in-depth, explanatory, context-heavy, investigative, or some combination of those qualities - in a word, enterprise.

Even so, no newspaper journalist - or any thinking person who's aware of the current ferment in American newspapers, for that matter - should doubt that such a reduction, if it's not already happening, could well be on the near horizon if current trends continue.

Enterprise work costs money. Sometimes, it's money spent on stories and projects that just don't pan out. Money that could be spent on snippets of streaming video or other website features to lure the eyeballs of potential customers away from YouTube and MySpace and the myriad other manifestations of the New Media that newspapers now compete with for an audience.

Regardless of whether enterprise reporting in newspapers is or is not on the wane, such journalism continues to show up in a variety of forms - in unexpected, as well as predictable, places.

In the Winter 2008 issue of *SEJournal*, The Beat presented evidence of an apparent upsurge in various kinds of magazine journalism on the environment. This installment focuses solely on investigative and other enterprise journalism with a hard-news edge, produced recently by one traditional magazine and a diverse array of other Old and New Media outlets working the broadjournalistic territory beyond the pages and Web sites of daily newspapers.

It's no surprise that *The New Yorker* would be weighing in with a long explanatory piece explaining and weaving together the complexities of measuring carbon footprints, setting up carbon-trading systems, reducing tropical deforestation, and more in its Feb. 25 issue.

The magazine is synonymous with long-form non-fiction, after all, and some of the most memorable environmental

reporting to appear anywhere has been published in its pages over the years by writers such as **John McPhee** and **Elizabeth Kolbert**.

The Feb. 25 climate change story, "Big Foot" by **Michael Specter**, ranges from the British supermarket chain Tesco's project to put carbon labels on all its products, to the floor of the Chicago Climate Exchange, to a discussion of how logging in Brazil and Indonesia might be reduced.

The article features arresting passages such as this one: "Possessing an excessive carbon footprint is rapidly becoming the modern equivalent of wearing a scarlet letter. Because neither the goals nor the acceptable emissions limits are clear, however, morality is often mistaken for science."

It's probably fair to say that a long investigative piece on Sen. James Inhofe, the Oklahoma Republican who called manmade global warming a "hoax," would not be expected by most people unfamiliar with it to turn up on a website called *The Daily Green: The Consumer's Guide to the Green Revolution*.

That assumption would be underscored by a cursory glance at the animated succession of headlines on the site's home page, which recently included "Green Remodeling," "Green and Gorgeous," and "30 Days to Green Your Diet."

But assumptions can be dangerous, as all journalists know. *The Daily Green*, a product of Hearst Digital Media, published a report on Jan. 11 that dug well beneath the surface of the assertion by Inhofe's staff in late December that "over 400 prominent scientists from more than two dozen countries recently voiced significant objections to major aspects of the so-called 'consensus' on man-made global waring."

Examining the names that accompanied that claim the *Daily Green* investigation concluded that the ranks of the 400-plus individuals included "economists, amateurs, TV weathermen and industry hacks." Extensive annotated lists of the "prominent scientists" were included in the presentation. The main story was written by **Dan Shapley** and prominently credited research by **Mark V. Johnson** of AOL's *Propeller.com*.

CNN describes its hour-long program "CNN: Special Investigations Unit" as a "long-form investigative series" that features "CNN's top correspondents delivering in-depth hours on pressing issues currently in the news." *continued on page 24*

Beat story urls

The New Yorker article:
<http://tinyurl.com/32aoum>

The Daily Green article:
<http://tinyurl.com/2g8kh4>

CNN story transcript:
<http://tinyurl.com/2z4gzt>

CNN blog:
<http://tinyurl.com/ysn3gg>

Circle of Blue project:
<http://tinyurl.com/34xvc5>

Schneider blog:
<http://tinyurl.com/33c26t>

Center for Public Integrity story:
<http://tinyurl.com/2x2982>

SEJ's Annual Conference

Wendell Berry, Bob Edwards among confirmed speakers

The agenda for SEJ's 18th Annual Conference — Oct. 15-19 — continues to develop as a number of stars in the journalism community have committed, including legendary author Wendell Berry and former NPR Morning Edition host Bob Edwards.

Berry, the noted fiction and non-fiction author and widely acknowledged conscience of the region will join SEJ attendees on Sunday, Oct. 19, to read his work and discuss the writing life during the morning craft session. Joining him will be Ann Pancake (author of *Strange As This Weather Has Been*), Erik Reese (*Lost Mountain*) and others, including many SEJ authors.

Another speaker familiar to SEJ members: Edwards, host of the Bob Edwards Show on XM satellite radio. Before moving to XM, Edwards spent 24 years as host of NPR's Morning Edition. He will moderate the opening plenary session on Friday, Oct. 17, on the use of coal as an energy source.

Experts on all sides, including Don Blankenship, the outspoken and controversial president of Massey Energy (invited), American Electric Power CEO Michael Morris, and *Big Coal* author Jeff Goodell will debate whether coal, which provides slightly more than half of this country's electricity, should have a role in America's energy future. Panelists will debate the effectiveness of carbon sequestration; mining's toll on workers, mountains, streams and forests; and whether the U.S. should find a way to wean itself from this fuel.

A breakfast plenary session will address the environmental justice movement. Since its inception in the 1980s in North Carolina, the movement has drawn attention to the inequitable environmental risks that many African American communities have long been forced to bear. In Appalachia, these same inequitable risks have been borne by poor white communities. Noted expert Robert Bullard will lead a diverse panel discussing where the movement came from and where it's headed.

SEJ's annual awards ceremony will honor some of the most important environmental stories of last year. Co-hosts for the presentation will be Philippe and Alexandra Cousteau of EarthEcho International, ocean explorers in the tradition of their grandfather Jacques Cousteau, and Jeff Burnside, SEJ board member and reporter at WTVJ NBC 6 Miami.

Among concurrent sessions running on Friday and Saturday will be computer labs and craft workshops offering hands-on experience with audio, video, podcasting, mapping, and turning data into stories. Other sessions will cover mobile media, search engine strategies, blogs, social media, citizen journalism, crowdsourcing and entrepreneurial media projects.

Eight tracks of concurrent sessions will bring experts, advocates, policymakers and others together to discuss coal, energy, climate, water, land, environmental health and the nation, and will also include craft sessions like freelancers and book



SEJ conference manager, Jay Letto, stands in front of the J-Class train at the Virginia Museum of Transportation, the site of the 2008 conference Saturday evening get-together.

publishers pitch-slams and many how-to sessions, from Energy 101 to being your own FOIA lawyer.

Thursday tours continue to be conference favorites among attendees, this year traveling to nine extraordinary destinations in the Appalachian mountain region for hiking, kayaking, or learning about energy issues like wind, nuclear and mountaintop removal mining.

The tour line-up for the Roanoke conference

Almost Level I: Cutting Down Mountains for Coal

Larry Gibson's piece of Kayford Mountain used to be the lowest peak for miles. Now it's the highest. There's no better place to see the effects of mountaintop removal coal mining — a practice that is feeding a growing demand for coal and leveling wide stretches of Appalachia.

What Are Forests Worth? What Are They For? Can We Sustain Them?

The Southern Appalachians provide a rare look at the changing face of America's forests. The tour will look at how foresters, community groups and others are spurring a new take on sustainable forestry; the U.S. Forest Service's struggles to balance recreation demands with timber operations; invasive species literally eating away Appalachian hillsides; and emerging "niche" forest products that could bolster rural communities.

Rural Energy: Wind, Hydro and Development in the Highlands

Virginia's Western Highlands are some of the most pristine rural mountain regions left in the Eastern U.S. Bath and Highland Counties are among the least populated east of the Mississippi, with county seats of fewer than 300 residents. But, like much of the rural U.S., these counties face new development pressures from energy industries and vacation home speculators. Highland County, with only a \$7 million annual budget, has approved a \$60 million wind power project. Construction is set for this year, and if built, it will be the first industrial wind power facility in the state of Virginia.

Healthy Food Shed

In the wake of global warming concerns and food-borne illness outbreaks with mounting evidence pointing toward industrialized agriculture, consumers are starting to pay attention to how their food is raised and how far it travels. Farmer, writer and speaker Joel Salatin is the poster child of the local food and farming movement. The tour will visit Salatin's 550-acre diversified Polyface Farm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and show why his spread is, in the words of Michael Pollan, "one of the most productive and sustainable farms in America."

A National Treasure at Peril — the Blue Ridge Parkway

Why are the Blue Ridge Mountains "blue"? The tour will travel

continued on page 17

SOCIETY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISTS
18TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
 October 15-19, 2008



WHAT TO DO

1. Register on-line at www.sej.org/go/conference2008.htm
2. Credit card customers may fax forms to: (517) 485-4178
3. Mail conference registration and check payable to SEJ to:

Convention Management Services, Inc.
SEJ Conference
500 Business Centre Drive
Lansing, MI 48917
USA

Early discount postmark deadline is **Aug. 15, 2008**.
 Walk-in registrations are welcome at the full rate.
 Registration can be confirmed only when payment is received.

Cancellation Policy: If you cancel your registration in writing by Sept. 15, 2008, you will receive a full refund less a \$50 processing fee. No refunds for cancellation requests received after Sept. 15. Non-attendance does not constitute cancellation. Mail or fax your request for cancellation to Convention Management Services Inc.

Questions about registration? Call (800) 878-5131 (US) or (517) 485-2309

Please fill out **both** sides. Some sessions require pre-registration with additional fees. See brochure or visit www.sej.org for details.

Dr. Mr. Ms. (circle one)

Name	Title		
Name as you want it to appear on your name tag	Publication or Organization		
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SEJ Members

Member rates apply to SEJ members only. SEJ membership is restricted to journalists, professors, and students. Please visit www.sej.org or contact the SEJ office at (215) 884-8174 or sej@sej.org about eligibility and to receive an application. Membership applications submitted after Sept. 1, 2008, may not be processed in time for the conference. Please see below for subscriber and non-member registration rates.

Member registration fee total: \$ _____
 Membership renewal fee total: \$ _____

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member conference registration fee (by 8/15/08) | \$190 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$235 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single day — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$110 |

CURRENT MEMBERS may renew with registration. Renewals only! To apply for membership, see above.

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member Dues (renewals only!) | \$45 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Canada Dues (renewals only!) | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mexico Dues (renewals only!) | \$30 |

SEJournal Subscribers

Subscription rates

Rates are for *SEJournal* subscribers only. To become a subscriber, include subscription fee for your category. Each subscription includes conference discounts for up to three people. (SEJ members, please use section above.)

Subscription fee total: \$ _____

Subscribers' registration fees

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate subscription (10% off nonmember annual conference fee) | \$200 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government subscription (30% off nonmember annual conference fee) | \$80 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non profit* subscription (30% off nonmember conference fee)
*annual budget of more than \$1,000,000 | \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> University subscription (50% off nonmember annual conference fee) | \$55 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small non profit* subscription (50% off nonmember conference fee)
*annual budget of \$1,000,000 or less | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual* subscription (50% off nonmember conference fee)
*personal payments only are valid | \$45 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By 8/15/08 — Corporate conference registration fee | \$900 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$990 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$360 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$405 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By 8/15/08 — Non profit/government conference registration fee | \$700 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$770 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$280 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$315 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By 8/15/08 — Individual, university, small non profit registration fee | \$500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$550 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$200 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$225 |

Subscriber registration fee total: \$ _____

Non members/non subscribers

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> By 8/15/08 | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 | \$1,100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Day — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$400 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After 8/15/08 — Please specify which day: Oct. _____ | \$450 |

Students

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student rate | \$75 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|

Subtotal this page: \$ _____

To complete your registration, please fill out the back of this form.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

Ticketed Events Requiring Pre-registration (No Extra Fee):

Please check all that you plan to attend. Pre-registration and tickets are required to attend. Bringing a guest requires additional fee.

	I plan to attend	...with guest(s)
Wednesday Dinner Reception	<input type="checkbox"/> \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$35 for each guest)
Friday Network Lunch	<input type="checkbox"/> \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$25 for each guest)
Saturday Lunch and Plenary Session	<input type="checkbox"/> \$0	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$30 for each guest)

Meal Preference (SEJ cannot guarantee dietary options will be available at every event.) Vegetarian Vegan Dairy Free Gluten Free

Guest name(s) (please print) _____ Total Guest Fees \$ _____

Events Requiring Pre-registration (Extra Fee):

(For Thursday tours, indicate a first, second, and third choice. **Do not** add money for second and third choices.)

Thurs., Oct. 16	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
1. Almost Level 1: Cutting Down Mountains for Coal	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. What Are Forests Worth? What Are They For? Can We Sustain Them?	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Rural Energy: Wind, Hydro and Development in the Highlands	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Healthy Food Shed	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. A National Treasure at Peril - the Blue Ridge Parkway	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Old River, New Challenge	<input type="checkbox"/> \$55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Journey Down the James	<input type="checkbox"/> \$55	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The Appalachian Trail - Land with a Past	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Nuclear Power from Ore to Volts	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Events

- Wednesday Workshop: Climate Change and our Energy Future in Rural America
- Saturday Breakfast Plenary Session: Environmental Justice and the Poor
- Saturday Night Party: All Aboard!
- Sunday Bestsellers Breakfast *
- Post-Conference Tour: From the Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay (Sun. Oct. 19 - Wed. Oct. 22)*

Self	Guest(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$25 for each guest)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$35 for each guest)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> (Add \$25 for each guest)
<input type="checkbox"/> \$325 (includes Sunday breakfast)	

* if you are attending the post-conference tour, do not pay for the breakfast. It is included with your post-conference tour fee.

Subtotal Additional Ticketed Events \$ _____

Subtotal this page: \$ _____

PLEASE GIVE TODAY

SEJ's 21st Century Fund is a special endowment designed to safeguard SEJ's future by buffering it against the uncertainties of yearly fundraising. Please make a tax-deductible contribution in whatever amount you can afford.

For more information about the SEJ's 21st Century Fund, visit www.sej.org.

I would like to make my tax-deductible contribution to SEJ's 21st Century Fund.
\$ _____

Thanks!

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Check enclosed

Mail to:
Convention Management Services Inc.
SEJ Conference
500 Business Centre Drive
Lansing, MI 48917

Make your check payable to:
Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ)
U.S. funds only.

Subtotal from front \$ _____

Subtotal from back \$ _____

Contribution \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Credit Card payment

For **Visa**, **MasterCard**, or **American Express** payment, fill in your card number and expiration date. Your signature is required.

Card number	Expiration date	
Name as it appears on card (please print)	Date	Billing zip/Postal code
Signature		

How did you hear about SEJ's 18th Annual Conference?

- SEJ Web site SEJournal Direct Mail
- E-Mail announcement Word of mouth TV Week
- Display Ad (please list source): _____

THANK YOU FOR REGISTERING FOR SEJ'S 18TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE!

A confirmation form will be mailed to you upon receipt of your registration. Please check the brochure or www.sej.org for information about the program agenda; our host, Virginia Tech; lodging and transportation; conference exhibitors; and more.

Conference continued from page 14

along lush ridgetops that were over-forested in the 1900s to the most photographed site on the parkway, Mabry Mill. The early 1900s community-gathering place today operates as a restored gristmill, sawmill and blacksmith shop. As the parkway approaches its 75th anniversary, however, America's Favorite Scenic Drive faces environmental issues and federal budgetary shortfalls resulting in 57 unfilled staff positions. Air pollution emanates from coal-fired power sources, the mighty hemlocks are dying, and flourishing development blocks scenic views.

Old River, New Challenge

The New River, a misnomer if ever there was one, is one of the world's oldest rivers. It's also among the most beautiful. We'll paddle canoes 6-8 miles past towering cliffs and rolling meadows. At the put-in, ecologists from Virginia Tech will conduct an electro-fishing demonstration and provide a brief presentation of the New's diverse aquatic species. After taking out, we'll drive a short distance downstream to where the local power company is planning to landfill coal-fired power plant ash in the floodplain of the New. Speakers will address the controversial issue of managing coal combustion residues. Note: mild whitewater rapids are on this run. Basic canoeing skills are preferred.

Journey Down the James

This tour will track the E. coli and nutrient trail from mountain farms to the Chesapeake Bay on a canoe journey down the James River. Nutrient and sediment runoff impacts water quality for everyone and farming in the mountains affects the bay hundreds of miles downstream. Attendees will paddle down about 10 miles of river, through farmland and pristine forest. This trip is suitable for beginners, but expect to be on the water between four and six hours with several breaks.

The Appalachian Trail – Land with a Past

Like great chunks of the Appalachian Trail that goes from Georgia to Maine, the roughly 11 miles of the trail's Catawba Ridge section pass over land that once held buildings. The jewel of this ridge is a rocky overlook, McAfee Knob, federally protected since 1987. The trail protection project marked a backwards progression of sorts, from developed to backcountry—a reclamation of industrial and residential lands. Attendees will hike the trail to McAfee Knob and see the Catawba Valley below, which is slowly being invaded by houses.

Nuclear Power from Ore to Volts

There are five stages in the life of nuclear power: Mining, processing ore, enrichment of uranium to commercial or weapons grade, fuel fabrication, and utilization in a nuclear power plant. This tour covers the nuclear cycle with visits encompassing three of these stages. We'll visit a 1,000-acre farm, once owned by Thomas Jefferson, and now proposed as the U.S.'s first uranium mine outside the Southwest. Next, we tour a fuel fabrication facility and a full-scale nuclear plant training center, owned by the French nuclear giant AREVA NP, Inc. We'll watch an actual production run from delivery of the enriched uranium through to the 12-foot-long nuclear fuel rods that power the nation's 104 commercial reactors. At the training center, we will see the inside of a nuclear power plant, with full-sized cutaways of steam generators, reactors, and other equipment.

Further details on the tours and sessions for SEJ's 18th Annual Conference will be posted on www.sej.org as they become available. Please check the website often for updates.

Watch www.sej.org

Conference concurrent session line-up

THE CRAFT

- The Freelance Pitch-Slam
- Covering Tragedies and Disasters
- Environment Reporters of the 21st Century
- Book Publisher Pitch-Slam
- Energy 101: A Primer for Reporters
- TV and the New Media
- Covering Climate Change Without Getting Whiplash
- The Dating Game: Connecting Scientists and Journalists
- How to Be Your Own FOIA Lawyer
- Getting the Goods: Using Court Records for Environmental Investigations

COAL

- Coal Around the Globe
- Carbon Sequestration: Silver Bullet or Black Hole?
- Almost Level: Mountaintop Removal Overview
- Beyond Coal: Strategies for Appalachian Reclamation and Renewal

ENERGY

- Must We Grow? Conservation, Green Lifestyles and Alternative Energies
- Take Two: Nuclear Power Reconsidered
- Biofuels: Beyond the Steel Cage Debate
- Is Energy Independence Green? Liquid Coal, Tar Sands, Natural Gas and More...

THE CLIMATE

- Close Quarters: Can Controlling Population Growth Help Stabilize the Climate?
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- After Tomorrow: Can We Adapt to Climate Change?
- Climate Change and Emerging Legal Challenges

THE WATER

- Are the Oceans Already Lost?
- Water Quality from the Headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay
- Dams: Past, Present and Future
- Ends of the Earth: Polar Science and the Environment

THE LAND

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- Suburban Decay: The Sub-prime Mortgage Mess as an Environmental Story

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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- Women's Environmental Health Issues
- Toying with Toxics: Childhood Exposure to Chemicals
- Workers and the Environment: Asbestos and Other Occupational Hazards

THE NATION

- Environmental Policy, Public Opinion and the Election
- Broken Bridges and Straight Pipes: Aging Infrastructure and the Environment
- Environmental Justice and the Economy: From Cap-and-Trade Concerns to Green-Collar Promises
- The Clean Air Act's Unfinished Business

Details of People's Lives

Freelancer Lisa Margonelli reveals how focusing on people's stories can reveal a complex story beyond the facts.

By BILL DAWSON

Lisa Margonelli is an Oakland, Calif.-based freelance journalist, a fellow of the New America Foundation, and the author of *Oil on the Brain*, a book that describes "petroleum's long, strange trip to your tank."

Margonelli has written for publications including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Wired*, *Business 2.0*, *Discover* and *Jane*. She was a recipient of a Sundance Institute Fellowship and an excellence in journalism award from the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists.

Recently issued in paperback, *Oil on the Brain* earned wide praise when it was first published in 2007. Reviewers' comments included this one by *The Washington Post's* Juliet Eilperin:

"Before reading Lisa Margonelli's *Oil on the Brain*, I never would have called the process of energy production 'fascinating.' But this thoroughly engrossing and entertaining book travels to the heart of Texas and across continents to show exactly how the gas in our tanks gets there – as well as its financial, social and environmental costs."

Q: Tell me a little about yourself – especially how you decided to become a journalist and writer.

A: I grew up in rural Maine and I've always been interested in oral histories—from family stories to Studs Terkel's books. In college, I used oral histories as often as I could when doing work in history and American Studies. After college, I moved to Japan and spent the next four years in Asia. While there I felt that news and magazine accounts oversimplified what I saw and heard.

When I returned to the U.S., I got an internship at Pacific News Service writing about the Pacific Rim and immigration. I immediately loved reporting and I continued to use oral histories in my work. I worked on a collection of oral histories of immigrant kids, then used the same approach to write about health, technology, economics, and Eastern European filmmakers, among other things. "Oil on the Brain" also used people's life stories to give a portrait of the oil supply chain.

Q: You've said your interest in oil, as a subject for your writing, dates to a magazine assignment in 2001 to cover Saddam Hussein's birthday party in Iraq. And you've said the

idea for the book arose as a result of a subsequent reporting trip to Alaska for another story, when you looked down from your airplane on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Please elaborate on how those seeds grew into a book examining, as the subtitle says, "petroleum's long, strange trip to your tank."

A: The months of April to June of 2001 were very surreal. First I went to the bizarre birthday party in Iraq— where oil determined everyone's destiny—and then to Alaska, where a group of native Americans in a remote town called Arctic Village was trying to keep oil development out of ANWR (the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge)—and prevent oil from becoming part of their destiny.

I had seen the Alaska pipeline before, but this time I saw it as a giant straw connecting me and my pickup truck in San Francisco literally to the ends of the earth. I wondered how I could use so much oil and know so little about the stuff – its chemistry, geology, economy, politics, culture. I had the beginnings of an obsession, and at first I decided to write articles about oil that were unexpected – for example, what does an oil spill look like to a scientist? Then I thought maybe I'd write a travel book about oil-producing countries, but the more I researched it became obvious that a book about oil needed to be a full story connecting the gas pump to the cultures at the other end.

I wrote a long proposal that involved both history and a fair amount of travel. When the publisher bought it, they said, "You know you can't start in 1850 – it needs to start now." So my proposed first chapter was out the window. I realized that an obvious beginning was the gas station, which was quite close by, and offered, I hoped, a portrait of the gasoline consumer. From the gas station, the book evolved into an exploration of the supply chain.

Q: Book editors often want authors of non-fiction to present what's called "an argument." This is a concept that may be unfamiliar to some newspaper reporters and magazine writers who want to try their hand at book writing. Does your book make an argument? What is it? Was it a premise you started the project with, or something that grew from your reporting?

A: I didn't start with an argument. I started with a lot of questions, and a feeling that there was a bigger story in oil than an argument that it was either good for the economy or bad for the environment. I really set out to find stories and ideas that I hadn't



Enliven Book on Oil Production

heard before – in particular, things that made me uncomfortable. Once I'd found those stories, I realized that I'd found an argument within them: Oil costs far more than we pay at the pump.

In the U.S. we pay subsidies to the oil industry, of course, but we also have to pay for kids with asthma, environmental damages, military costs in the Middle East, global warming, and in lost future opportunities. Our confused sense of oil's domestic cost has kept the political logjam over CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards and energy policy static for decades. Overseas, the costs of oil are higher – human rights, poverty, corruption, war and a feeling of hopelessness.

I came to believe that because the oil market is global, environmental damage and human rights abuses now are transmitted directly to the cost of gasoline at the pump. You can see this happening when Nigerian youths attack an oil installation and the gas price jumps here. Because of this and because of global warming, among other reasons, we need to completely re-understand oil's cost in a more holistic way. We need to make big changes. I wanted to tell this as a visceral story, rather than an argument, and the book format allowed me to do that.

Q: A few practical questions that may be helpful to aspiring book writers among *SEJournal's* readers: Was it hard to sell the book idea to a publisher? Your reporting lasted a staggering period of almost four years and took you on journeys totaling 100,000 miles. How did you pay for this daunting enterprise? Doing other writing during that period? Book advance? Fellowship? All of the above?

A: Many editors were interested in the proposal, but only one bid on it, which meant I didn't really have the money to do the traveling I'd initially proposed. I decided to keep doing a column I did for the *San Francisco Chronicle* online, try to get magazine assignments when I could, and to go as cheaply as possible.

In China, Venezuela and Nigeria I stayed for more than a month, figuring that time would allow me to understand what was happening at a deeper level. My favorite hotels were \$15 a night, and the cheapest was \$6. Fortunately, I was really obsessed with the process of getting entry to petroleum installations, and with ferreting out the complexities of the story, and that made the financial strain less of a slog than it really was.

At one point I wrote 5,000 words about asphalt for *Bicycling Magazine*, which funded me for a few more months. In the fall of 2005, the New America Foundation gave me a fellowship, which allowed me to focus on writing for the next year or so. The fellowship also asked that I comment on policy, rather than just criticizing it. That task, which was unfamiliar to me as a reporter, but required some of the same skills, added to the final book.

Q: New America gives financial backing to journalists and scholars in pursuit of its mission "to bring exceptionally

promising new voices and new ideas to the fore of our nation's public discourse." What kinds of writing do you do as a fellow, and what other responsibilities, if any, go along with that status? The list of your publications on the foundation's website includes a lot of op-ed pieces, and I know you were a guest blogger on oil last year around the time your book was published in hardback.

A: My official title is Irvine Fellow in the New America Foundation's California Program. Since 2005, my task has been writing about how alternative energy and efficiency may be beneficial and may bring surprises to California in particular and the world in general. I see this state as a laboratory that is hashing out the policies around greenhouse gases while the state's scientists and financiers try to start some of the more outré solutions. I've also done some work on policies that might promote energy efficiency. I see my job as writing about these issues with complexity. I'd like my writing to start conversations. I write long reported features as well as shorter op-eds. I've found that moving



GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

from what I've always done – criticizing the effects of policies – to actively looking for policies that work (or might work) has been rewarding to me, both as a writer and as a citizen.

Q: *Oil on the Brain* received a lot of favorable reviews and became, as the new paperback edition's cover proclaims, a national bestseller. Were you mainly a magazine writer previously? What were the topics you wrote about before getting interested in oil? Any of them related to environment or energy?

A: I've always written longer, magazine-type articles. Since 1998, I've supported myself as a freelancer by writing about health, tech business and culture, human rights and people's attitudes towards money (for a column I did for *SFGate* [the *San Francisco Chronicle's* website] in 2003-2004). And also: girl bank robbers, society matrons, Eastern European filmmakers and water pumps used by Kenyan farmers. I had done a book-length collection of stories of young immigrants for a non-profit press, as well as a long

collection of unpublished essays for a fellowship from the Sundance Institute. I was at a point where I wanted to write something long and complicated and satisfying.

I hadn't written about energy or the environment so I tried to use what I did well – reporting on the details of people's lives and their choices. That worked for oil geology, the world oil market, and also for the grisly relationship between oil politics and environmental destruction. There is a story in the book about a village in Venezuela next to a petrochemical plant that dominated villagers' lives. The flares were so loud they spoke only by shouting, and they had children with birth defects hidden in their houses – all reflecting a larger political story around oil and land and people in Venezuela. I'm not sure how I would have approached the issue if I'd been trained in energy or the environment. Probably it would have been a very different book.

Q: Were there lessons you learned from particularly acute (and/or unexpected) challenges in doing your book – as compared to writing shorter journalism – which you think might be instructive or helpful for *SEJournal's* readers?

A: With a book, you have a lot of time to bang your head against the wall, which can bruise your head, but it can also cause the walls to crumble. With shorter journalism, you usually don't get the assignment until you've got permission to interview the source, which means it's easy to get refused, particularly if you work for a publication that makes the gatekeeper skittish.

With a book, you can literally take years wearing down the people who give permission to enter places like the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, refineries, and, say, Iranian oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. I found that time was really on my side. I could pester gatekeepers, wheedle them, and barrage them with faxes until they gave in.

I was writing the book during four years of tremendous change in the oil market and it was hard to figure out what was just a passing concept and what was really a trend. It forced me to do very close reporting in country, and to do hundreds of interviews afterwards. Then I had to work to show how small trends might become larger. I learned a lot on the job.

Q: Your book has been praised for the artful telling of dozens of stories about individuals you encountered on your oil-related travels, and for the way you combined those narrative accounts with compelling renditions of lots of statistics. Was this hybrid approach a hard one to pull off? Any advice for other writers about weaving together very different kinds of material?

A: Combining stories with statistics allowed me to move from the personal and specific to the universal and then back to the specific. Done right, it builds dramatic intensity. The hybrid required a lot of writing and rewriting and also re-researching. In some cases I fantasized about statistics and then tracked them down – like the note in the first chapter about how much gasoline

vapor escapes from gas stations in California daily. I didn't know whether that figure existed, but I called around and finally the (state) Air Resources Board explained how to find the numbers in their database. I chased other numbers for weeks and never found them.

It's hard to organize those facts and stories. When I was reporting a chapter I used a single notebook and took all interview notes chronologically in the book. Often I'd find 20 minutes or so during the day to free-associate in the notebook as well, which added some of the weirder details. I collected other facts and papers either in folders on my computer or in plastic bins with lids. Before I wrote I read the whole mess, particularly the notebook, and then typed parts of the notes and the facts into a long file. When I wrote I used the comments function to note sources. I tended to write and cut and write and cut until I'd found the scenes I was trying to write. I'm 100 percent certain you can find a more efficient way to do this.

Q: Do you have other advice or tips for journalists who want to try to move from shorter-form writing into the book world?

A: If you have an obsession with a topic that you think is important, you should definitely try to write a book. Managing the obsession and the finances can be difficult, but books reach a thoughtful audience and affect them more deeply than magazine articles do. Books can raise people's consciousness around an issue, laying the groundwork for political change. We need that.

Before I started the book I met an old lubricating oil salesman in Oil City, Pa. During the 1950s, he had printed a series of motivational sayings on pale blue card stock. He gave me one that said "By the yard it's hard but by the inch it's a cinch." I hung it on my wall and it was actually true.

Writing requires many hours in front of the computer, which gave me shoulder cramps. I found that I could massage the muscles by leaning against a tennis ball that was against a wall. That increased my productivity, such as it was. If you're going to write a book – and you should – find yourself a tennis ball.

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of SEJournal.

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Don't leave climate change, environment to "boys on the bus"

By TIM WHEELER

Have the news media become bored with global warming already? It was one of the top news stories of 2007, thanks in large part to the Nobel-winning labors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and former Vice President Al Gore. But as presidential contenders slogged through the snowy caucuses and primaries in their quest for the White House, the topic barely registered in news coverage of the campaigns. It almost never came up in televised debates.

It's not that the presidential contenders don't have anything to say about global warming. But so glaring was the lack of attention paid on the TV networks to their climate positions that the League of Conservation Voters started an online petition demanding that talk-show hosts and debate moderators stop ignoring an issue that even the candidates seem willing, if not eager, to talk about.

The sad truth is that climate seems not to be that hot among political journalists and pundits. Perhaps they're just following the public opinion polls. A Pew Research Center survey at the beginning of the year showed that the economy is voters' top concern these days, eclipsing the war in Iraq and a slew of other issues. Interestingly, Pew found a real partisan split over global warming, with 47 percent of Democrats ranking it as a top priority for the president and Congress, compared with just 12 percent of Republicans.

The Society of Environmental Journalists is dedicated to enhancing the visibility as well as the accuracy and quality of environmental coverage. To that end, SEJ is doing what it can to keep the story fresh and prominent – at our annual conferences, with regional workshops and in an online climate reporting guide, among other things. One of the bright spots in the Iowa caucus coverage was the climate-change question posed by Carolyn Washburn, editor of the *Des Moines Register*. Washburn was one of the 18 top news executives who came to Stanford University last September for a daylong forum with leading climate experts, cosponsored by SEJ.

Meanwhile, several SEJ leaders — including Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Mark Schleifstein, executive director Beth Parke and me— joined hundreds of scientists and leaders in signing an online petition urging the presidential candidates to agree to a debate focused solely on scientific and environmental issues. As of the end of February, the contenders had yet to agree, but here's hoping if they do that the questions won't all be about whether they believe in UFOs – one of the lines of inquiry in one televised exchange earlier in the political season.

What are journalists who cover the environment to do? Well, instead of just lamenting how "our" issues are being ignored by the pundits, it's time for us to get busy. Sharpen our political reporting skills. Dig into the candidates' platforms on energy and the environment, research their voting records and speeches and track down their advisers. Cast a spotlight on how the next presi-



dent and Congress may – or may not – tackle an issue of global importance. It's the story of the century, after all. We can't leave it to the boys on the bus.

SEJ goes to Washington, then Ottawa (sort of) ...

One thing that hasn't cooled off is SEJ's devotion to freedom of information, right to know and open government. Since my last column, which focused on the efforts of our First Amendment Task Force, SEJ has gone where it never has before – to Capitol Hill in Washington, for instance.

I testified on behalf of SEJ at a congressional hearing in December about the Department of Interior's efforts to regulate

commercial filming, still photography and audio recording in national parks, wildlife refuges and other federal lands under its management.

Well, thanks to our Task Force chairman, veteran reporter Ken Ward of the *Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette*, the issue drew the attention of Rep. Nick J. Rahall, the West Virginia Democrat who is chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. He invited SEJ and a handful of other journalism groups to come to Washington to express our concerns. It was a weird experience, answering questions instead of asking them. But the hearing drew even more media attention to the issue, and Rahall sternly advised Interior officials to heed journalists' concerns in finalizing its regulation. It remains to be seen how well Interior listened, but it can't be for our lack of speaking out.

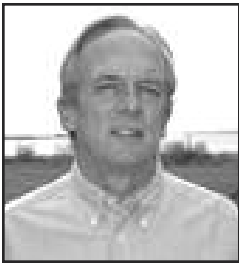
We haven't been invited to Ottawa yet, but SEJ did write to Canada's minister of the environment in February to express our concern about news reports of a new government policy barring scientists with Environment Canada – that country's EPA – from speaking directly with journalists.

The issue came to SEJ's attention via its 80-some Canadian members. After a brief consultation on the SEJ-Canada listserv, I agreed to sign a letter seeking confirmation of the new communications policy and expressing SEJ's concern about how it could affect journalists' ability to inform the public of the government's scientific work.

"Given that some 60 percent of the ministry's workforce and 80 percent of its budget are devoted to science and technology, we consider restricting scientists' freedom to communicate with us a major threat to performing our job of distributing information and analysis in a timely manner to decision makers and the rest of the public," the letter said.

We'll go anywhere, anytime— virtually, at least— to speak up for our members' ability to report what's happening with the environment.

Tim Wheeler covers growth and development for The Baltimore Sun and is SEJ's board president.



By BUD WARD

O.K., It's Time to Play the Climate Change Card in the Campaign

The hard truth of the matter is that few of the reporters most likely to read this column will be in a good position to ask the presidential election front runners or nominees penetrating questions about environmental policy.

Few of them may have the opportunity, even briefly along a rope line, to probe a candidate's familiarity with "cap and trade" versus carbon taxes, wetlands restoration versus coastal development, nuclear energy versus coal versus biofuels versus conservation.

Look hard enough, and I'm pretty sure we'll find that the late comedian Rodney "I-don't-get-no-respect" Dangerfield was down-deep an SEJ member. Before he was deep-down, that is.

Surely he shoulda been.

SEJ members know full well the Dangerfield curse. It is one they feel when each cycle of national electoral campaigns again short-shrifts their pet issues. One view here is that this certainly was the case during most of the protracted presidential primary campaigns. Environmental issues were by and large unexplored in any real depth. And it's not at all clear that these issues – including the 800-pound gorilla of climate change – will fare much better in the general election campaign. That is particularly likely if, as now appears possible, there's no widespread gap perceived in the leading candidates' positions on climate change – those candidates at this writing being just Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama and Republican John McCain.

To say that either of the leading candidates' environmental pronouncements on climate change, for instance, have been more detailed than another's is to damn with the faintest of praise. The details of these issues will simply have to wait.

And, perhaps, wait and wait again. Wait certainly until we're at last into the heart and relative "meat" (read substance, a relative term in this context) of the general election campaigning.

So that's clearly one view, and it can't be easily dismissed. But there's another view too.

This one holds that, perhaps alone among the environmental issues, climate change at least has already gotten some candidate attention, even during the primaries. That's so even though the politics of pursuing each party's committed "base" made it inconvenient, no pun, for McCain to focus on his maverick position in favor of regulating carbon dioxide emissions. With all the other Republican candidates at most "luke-cold" on ratcheting greenhouse gas emissions, and with the party's base increasingly against it, there were perhaps easier ways for McCain to commit hari-kari.... but not many.

On the Democratic side of the primary campaigning, the challenge of getting air minutes or air time on climate change was just the opposite: With a full initial slate of candidates expressing

real concern over climate change, the public (and to at least some extent even the mainstream political and general press) can be excused for not ferreting out lots of daylight between them. Once it all came down to Clinton and Obama, the problem is little different: "There's not a whole lot of distance between Obama and Clinton," analyst and writer David Roberts wrote in a posting on *Grist.org*, initially posted on the blog *Passing Through*.

It's an assessment many may find, however reluctantly, to be on-target.

If misery indeed loves company, environmental reporters can take heart from the plight of other policy wonks and beat reporters convinced their issues too have gotten the short end of a short shift.

A February 5 front-page *Wall Street Journal* headline provides a snapshot of the situation: "Issues Recede in '08 Contest as Voters Focus on Character," Gerald Seib's three-column piece cried out. "Candidates Pitch Style, Avoid Big Ideas," the subhead read.

In a prolonged Democratic primary campaign in which "day one" and "experience" vied for attention with "inspiration" and "change" it's fair to think that the leading candidates for now were virtually splitting hairs. Each, after all, had staked out clear positions of concern over the prospects of harmful climate change.

On the Republican side, nominee and Arizona Senator John McCain had already done about all he might in alienating his party's conservative "base." No need to rub global-warming salt in the wounds of the leery party faithful.

No wonder the candidates weren't out there bandying about their aggressive stances to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Don't forget: even "green" candidates such as Al Gore and John Kerry went mute on environment as they traipsed the country looking for voters.

To wit, the angst of many environmental reporters that the issue is barely making it into voters' conscience, with the campaign press among those bearing much responsibility.

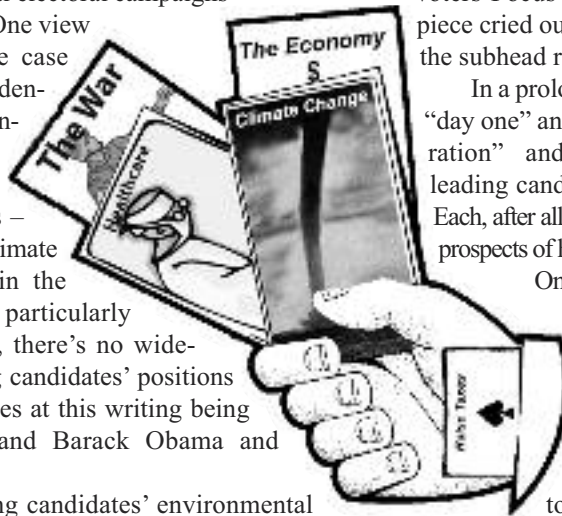
So....where from here? If environmental and science reporters are likely to remain back-benched during the campaign, must their issues also suffer in silence?

For discussion purposes, let's again focus on climate change, the single environmental issue considered by many to have a shot at "most likely to succeed" in at least making a small splash with the campaign press pool.

If knowledgeable science and environmental reporters themselves are unlikely to be posing the questions to the candidates directly, they might well mentor those in their news organizations who do and will have those responsibilities.

Are those reporters angling to ask some public health questions? To raise some energy conservation or nuclear power issues? To ask about winding down the Iraq war, winding up the U.S. economy, or simply rewinding and starting anew with the whole Iran, Middle East, Pakistan, *ad infinitum*

continued on page 28





Jim Handman and **Pat Senson**, producers with CBC Radio's weekly science progra, "Quirks & Quarks," have won the 2007 Science Writing Award from the American Institute of Physics. It is the second time the team from Q&Q has won the prestigious prize. The program has been a runner-up in the SEJ Awards three times.

John S. Adams, formerly a staff writer covering the environment and politics for the weekly *Missoula Independent* in Missoula, Mont., was hired as the *Great Falls Tribune's* new capitol bureau chief in November. Adams now covers politics, energy and the environment for the daily from the other side of the divide in Helena, Mont.

A three-day series in *The Times-Picayune* of New Orleans titled "Last Chance: The Fight to Save a Disappearing Coast" was one of the winners of this year's John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism. The series was authored by *Times-Picayune* reporters **Mark Schleifstein** (a member of SEJ's board of directors) and **Bob Marshall**, graphics artist **Dan Swenson**, former *Times-Picayune* reporter and now Associated Press Billings, Mont., correspondent **Matthew Brown** and *Times-Picayune* photographer **Ted Jackson**.

The Tampa Tribune's **Mike Salinero** recently gave up his position as the paper's environmental reporter to take over coverage of Hillsborough County government. Salinero became the *Tribune's* fulltime environmental writer in June 2004 after covering environmental matters at the state level in the Tallahassee Bureau for three years. Salinero maintains his love and interest in all things environmental but said he was ready for a bigger challenge. Hillsborough County has 1.2 million citizens and the county commission has a \$4 billion operating budget.

Amy Westervelt, a correspondent for *Sustainable Industries*, a monthly magazine covering green business innovation on the west coast, won a *Folio* Gold Eddie for her feature "Algae Arms Race," which appeared in the April 2007 issue of the magazine.

Founding SEJ Board Member and freelance journalist **Julie Halpert** has written a book, *Making Up With Mom: Why Mothers and Daughters Disagree About Kids, Careers and Casseroles (and What to do About It)*. The book, co-written with sociologist Deborah Carr, focuses on generational differences between women and their mothers and how to resolve them. It will be published April 15th by Thomas Dunne, a division of St. Martins Press. For more information, visit the Web site: www.makingupwithmom.com

Freelance writer **Susan Williams** has published a book of essays and short stories about the desert. It explores contemporary themes about water availability, cultural perspectives of the region and science education about the Sonoran Desert Upland Desert subdivision. For more information about *Paeon to the Earth*, 2008, Tuscon, Ariz., Four Feathers Press, check www.writeforchange.com.

From April 5-14, **Wendee Holtcamp** will be blogging live for Discovery Channel as she reports on and dives with sharks and researchers in Australia's Coral Sea to promote the 2008 Shark Week. Visitors to the site can comment and ask questions. <http://blogs.discovery.com> — look for Shark Week blog 2008.

Kathy Sagan has moved from the digital world (thedailygreen.com) back to books this summer as a senior editor at Simon & Schuster, acquiring both nonfiction and fiction.

Alexa Elliott, at PBS affiliate Channel 2 in Miami, won a Suncoast Regional Emmy in the health/science/environment category for Channel 2's series, "Wild Florida," about Florida's native species and habitats. Elliott shares the award with producers, videographers and editors. The series is syndicated through American Public Television and is scheduled to air on over 30 PBS stations nationwide as well as in a couple of foreign countries.

Amanda Womac recently won the Best Research Award for a Master's Student at the University of Tennessee's College of Communication and Information Sciences 30th Annual Research Symposium for her paper, titled "Frames of Mountaintop Removal in Print Journalism." This was the second year in a row she has won the award.

Christie Aschwanden has won the 2008 Arlene Award for Articles That Make a Difference from the American Society of Journalists and Authors. Her award-winning article in *The New York Times* described a Vietnamese botanist's project

Publishing Paradox continued from page 10

Twenty years of
environmental book publishing

NUMBER OF NEW ENVIRONMENTAL BOOKS

Year	Trade only	Trade & textbooks
2007	1832	2840
2006	1792	3109
2005	1853	3165
2004	2044	3287
2003	2168	3326
2002	2182	3376
2001	2284	3571
2000	2030	3287
1999	1640	2875
1998	1889	3287
1997	1790	3112
1996	1691	3016
1995	1732	2898
1994	1570	2777
1993	1480	2323
1992	1439	2141
1991	1135	1801
1990	755	1400
1989	461	855
1988	481	835

** (Search of the Global Books in Print database, BISAC for all markets, published in UK and US, in English, subject "nature environmental conservation" or subject "nature ecology," by year of publication. The second column includes both of those categories and a third category, the BISAC subject "science / environmental science")

to protect minority tribal groups from the lingering effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam's central highlands. After the piece ran in the *Times*, botanist Phung Tuu Boi received donations in excess of the \$20,000 he needed to complete the project. He will use the surplus funds for other environmental remediation programs in the area. Aschwanden's travel to Vietnam was funded by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Media on the Move needs an editor. Interested in gathering and compiling news on your fellow reporters, professors, students and others in the environmental journalism world? If so, contact Mike Mansur at mmansur@kstar.com

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The Beat—

long-form stories continued from page 13

On Feb. 21, the show had an environmental theme and was hosted by correspondent **Miles O'Brien**, who presented four stories under the unifying title “Broken Government: Scorched Earth.”

The first piece took a sharply critical look at claims made for ethanol. The second dealt with ASARCO’s controversial bid to reopen its shuttered copper smelter in El Paso, Texas. The third was about two government programs that separately kill prairie dogs and help the endangered black-footed ferret, which preys on them. The fourth focused on a NASA public affairs officer who was unhappily caught up in the clash between politically-appointed superiors and NASA climate scientist James Hansen over his statements to the media.

“Reporter Miles O’Brien and I want to give full credit to **Mark Bowen**, who first told (public affairs officer) Gretchen (Cook-Anderson)’s story in his book *Censoring Science*, and to **Andrew Revkin**, *The New York Times* correspondent who first reported the political machinations going on at the NASA Headquarters Public Affairs Office,” wrote **Kate Tobin**, senior producer in the CNN Science & Technology Team, on its *SciTech Blog*.

Keith Schneider was a national environmental reporter for *The New York Times* who went on to found the non-profit Michigan Land Use Institute, a “smart growth” organization that includes journalism as a key element in its mix of activities. Now, besides writing as a regular correspondent for the *Times*, he serves as senior editor and producer for Circle of Blue, self-described as “an international network of journalists, scholars and citizens that connects humanity to the global freshwater crisis.”

On Jan. 21, the non-profit Circle of Blue’s Web site published “Reign of Sand” – a multimedia report with articles and gallery of stunning photos and video reports – about interrelated problems facing Inner Mongolia that include water shortages, desertification and pollution.

In the lead article, **W. Chad Futrell** wrote: “Many of the same conditions that produced the American Dust Bowl in the 1930s, an environmental calamity and

human tragedy that journalist **Timothy Egan** called the ‘worst hard time’ in United States history, are being replicated in China with even graver consequences for the land, and for people in and outside China who are directly affected by the sand storms.”

Schneider, who served as senior editor and performed other roles for the project, announced it on his blog with this observation: “As environmental reporting and most other important journalism is gradually pushed out of the newspapers and television reports of America’s mainstream news business, it is flourishing in independent news organizations, among them Circle of Blue.”

An older, independent journalism organization, the non-profit Center for Public Integrity, in February posted an article and podcast atop the home page of its website concerning government research on environmental hazards in the Great Lakes region—“Great Lakes Danger Zones?” by investigative journalist **Sheila Kaplan**. (Personal disclosure: I worked as a senior writer for the Center from 2001-03.)

Kaplan’s lead: “For more than seven months, the nation’s top public health agency has blocked the publication of an exhaustive federal study of environmental hazards in the eight Great Lakes states, reportedly because it contains such potentially ‘alarming information’ as evidence of elevated infant mortality and cancer rates.”

Published along with the article were downloadable excerpts from the report produced by a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Public Health Implications of Hazardous Substances in the twenty-six U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern.” Public radio veteran **Bill Buzenberg**, now executive director of the Center for Public Integrity, handled correspondent duties on the accompanying podcast.

Following disclosure of the study, other news organizations reported that congressional investigators were examining the CDC’s withholding of the report and its reassignment of the lead author.

*Bill Dawson is assistant
editor of the SEJournal.*

Web Tools to Help Negotiate the Information EXPLOSION



By DAVID POULSON

New story-telling forms are the big buzz in journalism. Seconds after you suggest an idea, chances are an editor demands that you grab a quick video interview for the Web.

Maybe your art department inserts information that pops up on a graphic at the touch of a mouse. Perhaps you're narrating slideshows.

Maybe you've produced a podcast or – heavens – are telling stories on a blog.

All that is very cool and exciting and something we should be doing as we figure out journalism nowadays. But lost in all the story-telling glitz are the new tools for the mundane aspects of our job.

You know, finding, gathering and organizing all that information so that you have the building blocks of a story, the stuff you need regardless of how you choose to tell it.

In a very fundamental way our job remains unchanged. Journalists still sift through overwhelming, suspect, confusing and seemingly unrelated bits of information to interpret the world for others. It's just that nowadays powerful tools are needed to sort through an information explosion.

You don't have to use them. But chances of finding a good story are better if you do. Here are four Web tools that may keep you from drowning in data:

Tags – If you're bookmarking Web sites, you're already tagging. But if you think bookmarking with your browser is helpful, try a social bookmarking site. Visit <http://del.icio.us/> and sign up for a free account. With Del.icio.us you can sort into a virtual bin (or tag) anything you come across on the Web. It might be of long term interest or fodder for a breaking story. Maybe it's about a lake integral to your beat. Every government report, news story or academic study relevant to that lake can be tagged with its name. Then your source documents are at your fingertips when you sit down to write. Here's how tags are superior to simple bookmarks:

- You can quickly tag the same document several ways. A report on habitat loss could be tagged by geography, cause or consequence. That same report can show up under separate tags for Lake Ojibway, climate change, water pollution or others.

- You can see what other people tag. Follow what a trusted source is tagging and you may find a story. Got a favorite reporter who is always ahead of the curve? Check out what he or she tags and maybe you can borrow a story idea or source.

- Unlike bookmarks, you can access your tags from any computer.

RSS feeds – SEJ member and self-described media consultant/info-provocateur Amy Gahrn introduced me to feeds at the 2003 SEJ national conference in New Orleans. I grabbed hold of the concept as a useful way of publishing one of my projects. Content producers find feeds handy for bypassing congested e-mail boxes to reach subscribers directly.

But nowadays people use feeds to surf efficiently. Instead of checking Web sites for new content, have Web sites tell you when they have something new.

Check out Google's free feed reader. Just click on the reader link after you create

new information. New information finds you. One caveat: Work your feeds a couple of weeks. It's a bit of an adjustment. But give it a fair trial and you're unlikely to return to blind surfing.

I'm tempted to say that feeds drastically reduce my online time. Instead, I think that I surf just as long, perhaps longer. But I see much, much more of the Web that interests me.

Social Media – I don't practice what I'm about to preach. Maybe I'm anti-social. Maybe I'm too busy reading all those feeds. But if I were reporting again, I'd reconsider. Here's why:

One of my students wrote about a warm winter forecasted for our region. Typically you might approach such a story by interviewing weather experts and then conducting a dozen person-on-the-street interviews in hopes of capturing three serviceable quotes.

But this student went to Facebook and quickly limited potential sources to those attending our university. Then she checked for students listing winter sports as a favorite pastime. That gave her local sources most likely to gripe about a mild winter. All that was left was to track them down, assess their credibility and arrange

quick interviews.

Find more professional sources at linkedin.com. Here you can search for experts, post questions, sort through an archive of answers for story ideas. Post a profile that describes your reporting needs. Now sources can find you with stories and ideas.

Can you trust sources found this way?

Instead of checking Web sites for new content, have Web sites tell you when they have something new.

or sign onto your account at google.com. The directions are straight forward, and Amy has an excellent video tutorial at www.capturetheconversation.com/internet-marketing-training/google-reader/.

Once you have a reader set up, you can quickly organize content and track it for updates. You're no longer searching for

Hey, you're the reporter. You don't get off the hook that easily. You need to investigate and assess credibility. But at least you have something to evaluate. That's why you're paid the big bucks.

Twitter – It took me a while to warm to the utility of a service that limits posts to 140 characters and tells a network of contacts what you're up to at any given moment. The first thing I posted in response to "What are you doing now?" was "Trying to figure out why Twitter is remotely useful."

I've read suggestions that journalists should create a Twitter "posse" of expert sources. The idea is to gain instant feedback on story angles or questions to ask while you're working a story. That may be particularly handy because you can access Twitter with a cell phone from a crime scene or breaking news event.

Still, I was cynical about anyone taking the time to do that while chasing a story. But a former student in my computer-assisted reporting class who found a job in online news convinced me that there may be something here for journalists. Shawn Smith is a senior content producer for MLive.com, the online arm of Booth

Newspapers, a chain of eight daily newspapers in Michigan. He also blogs about new media applications for journalism at www.newmediabytes.com.

Shawn has about 120 followers on Twitter, all self-identified as interested in the same stuff that he is. During the primaries he read that Barack Obama

followed 12,000 people on Twitter and that Hillary Clinton followed zero. He figured comparing the campaigns' social media strategy might make a good story. So he posted the idea on his Twitter account. Several of his Twitter connections responded with pointers to helpful research and news stories.

"What's really helped me is creating a bigger network," Shawn said. "When I post things, people respond because they are interested in what I'm interested in. It goes into their Twitter feed, and they say, 'I may have an answer to that.'"

"People can respond in ways that lead you to thinking differently about an issue," he said.

Those are just four tools for helping you navigate the drink-from-a-firehose-information-madhouse that reporters face today. There are certainly more. Send your favorites to Poulson@msu.edu. I'll collect them for a subsequent column.

David Poulson is the associate director of the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. He teaches environmental, investigative and computer-assisted reporting.



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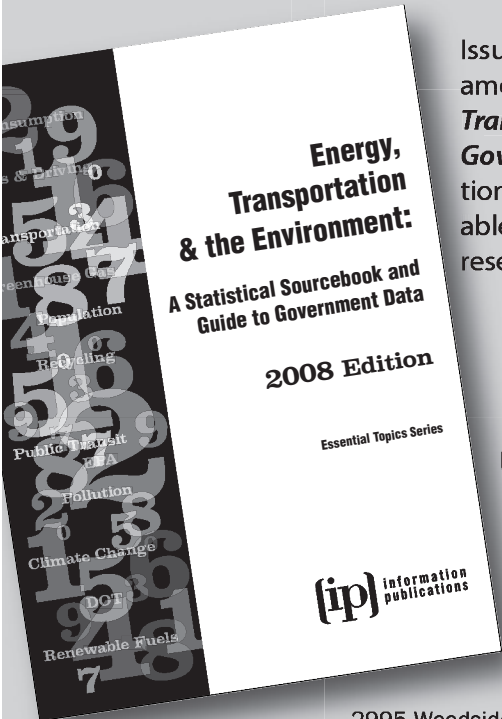
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Studies Look at News Bias and Internet's Impact on Coverage

By JAN KNIGHT

The Internet has transformed news about oil spills by providing accounts that rivet global attention and go beyond official versions of the disasters, a recent study suggests.

Specifically, environmental groups' increasingly sophisticated Internet use has expanded the ways in which oil spills are framed. Via their websites, email and blogs, the groups have interrupted official efforts to control information about the spills and mobilized local and international action, according to the study.

Focusing on one event – the November 2002 *Prestige* oil tanker spill off Spain's northern coast – the researchers examined reports from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace and smaller, more local groups. They also studied coverage of the spill appearing in newspapers in Spain, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, France.

Overall, they found that the spill received more international attention than spills of the past. In 1989, for example, the *Exxon Valdez* spill received intense news coverage within the United States, but relatively little on an international scale. In contrast, the *Prestige* spill spawned the creation of a bevy of globally available NGO websites, which challenged official accounts, mobilized local and international protests and pressured the oil industry and governments to protect the environment, according to the study. Academics also posted their views on the Internet, including a manifesto endorsed by 422 Spanish scientists representing 322 universities and six research institutes that denounced authorities' failure to use readily available knowledge to predict the fuel's behavior in the sea.

For their part, local and regional newspapers framed the spill in terms of its impacts on the local economy, rather than on the environment, and provided sustained long-term coverage. On the other hand, news media outside of Spain largely focused on the environmental impacts of the spill, even when it posed no immediate local or regional threat to their home country.

But this attention was short-lived, with the bulk of it occurring the day after the sinking of the *Prestige* and the release of its

Internet transforms oil spill coverage, sparking increased international attention, research shows



cargo, 77,000 tons of heavy crude oil, into the ocean.

Although the researchers assessed international coverage as problematic for its “selective and intermittent” attention, they concluded that, together, the international press and especially the Internet “provide the public with a greater range of competing interpretations of a major oil spill, and it is more difficult for official sources to put their spin on the story.”

“Even where local people tend to rely mostly upon the local/regional news media as their primary source of information,” they added, “activists across the globe can coordinate protests and challenge official accounts with increasing sophistication and speed.”

For more information, see Alison Anderson and Agnes Marhadour, “Slick PR? The Media Politics of the *Prestige* Oil Spill” in *Science Communication*, Volume 29, Number 1 (September 2007), pages 96 – 115.

Perceptions of news bias and audience size impact reader assessments of public opinion, study shows.

Recent research suggests that people use news reports to assess public opinion of social issues: They may perceive unfavorable news coverage as an indication that public opinion is

unfavorable or just the reverse.

This includes policy-makers, who also use news media accounts as informal public opinion polls. But the strength of influence depends on many factors, including people's perception that a media slant is hostile to their views. In such cases, people likely will not equate news coverage with public opinion.

In part because of the policy implications involved, researchers recently conducted experiments focusing on two factors believed to be involved in this indirect media influence – the perceived slant of news and the perceived “reach” of news, or people's perception of audience size.

The researchers asked participants to read print and Internet news articles about the Bush Administration's position on drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and on ratifying the Kyoto Treaty. The participants believed that the articles came from *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine or local news sources, but the researchers had altered the articles to provide slants that were clearly favorable to the Bush positions (pro-drilling and anti-ratification) or clearly unfavorable to them (anti-drilling and pro-ratification). Before reading the articles, participants provided their political party affiliation. When they finished reading, they answered questions about the slant of the articles, estimated the reach of the articles and gave their assessments of public opinion on the issues.

While participants from both political camps viewed the pro-drilling article as biased in favor of drilling, Democrats found it much more favorable toward drilling than Republicans, the researchers found. Likewise, both groups agreed that the anti-ratification article was clearly biased against the Kyoto Treaty, but Democrats found it to be much more negative toward ratification than Republicans. And participants' assessments of public opinion matched past research findings – those perceiving a hostile media bias did not view the articles as representative of public opinion.

For more information, see Cindy T.



YALE UNIVERSITY has launched an ambitious program to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent.

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For interviews, contact Tom Conroy at tom.conroy@yale.edu.

Environmental Reporting BOOT CAMP

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Michigan State University's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism will train journalists at a three-day workshop in Roanoke,



Va., just before the SEJ national conference. Boot Camp includes sessions on computer-assisted reporting, investigative techniques, writing, ethics and topical issues. Watch <http://www.ej.msu.edu> for details, application, deadlines and information.

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Christen and Kelli E. Huberty, "Media Reach, Media Influence? The Effects of Local, National, and Internet News on Public Opinion Inferences" in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Volume 84, Number 2 (Summer 2007), pages 315 – 334.

Research Note

Press releases for research published in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* can be found at www.aejmc.org, the website of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).

On the home page, point to "Scholarship." In the drop-down menu, point to "Publications" and then point to "Journals." Click on "JMC Quarterly," scroll down to "Research You Can Use" and click on it to find the press releases.

The AEJMC web site is worth exploring if you want to know more about journalism research or are thinking of an academic career. It also contains information about other journals publishing research on news coverage and journalism education and many useful links.

Jan Knight, a former magazine editor and daily newspaper reporter, is a former assistant professor of communication at Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu, where she continues to teach online courses in writing and environmental communication. She can be reached at jknight213@aol.com.

Playing Climate Card *continued from page 22*

imbroglios? Or perhaps probing the ins and outs of the federal deficits, the enormous challenges facing New Orleans and coastal Louisiana, drought and wildfires in the West, the everywhere/everyday commuting and sprawl quandary?

Are they aware of how those issues affect, and are affected by, the climate challenge? Can you spare them a few minutes so they don't look entirely bug-eyed and clueless the next time a candidate tells them "the science is enormously uncertain and controversial" or humans can't possibly be affecting something so vast and immense as the atmosphere or the oceans?

Environmental journalists can keep beating their collective heads against the impenetrable walls as they continue complaining among themselves that their issues don't get no campaign respect. Or they can go to Plan B and take their case directly to their editors and newsroom and journalism colleagues, give them some ammunition to make the connections between what those editors see as the issues of the day and what environmental journalists and many scientists see as the issue of the century.

At least in that way, they'll have played their own cards as best they can. And not let the campaign press simply say "How were we to know?"

Bud Ward is an independent journalism educator and founder/former editor of Environment Writer. He now is editor of the Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media

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Slideshows can highlight big projects, offer readers more

By CASEY McNERTHNEY

Every story has moments that get left out in the retelling. Sometimes those moments are what reporters remember most, but have a hard time describing in a print news story.

Because of the Internet, those moments—both in images and audio—now can be shared with the readers.

The inflections in a source's voice, the photos that help explain, the odds and ends you collect that would normally be buried on your desk – those now have a place in an online slideshow.

Slideshows can polish a major project and help it stick in readers' memories. The most popular program journalists use to create them, Soundslides (www.soundslides.com), is so basic even computer Neanderthals can figure it out quickly.

The only major drawback – other than the time it takes to create a project – is that slideshows haven't proven to be the most popular spots on websites. That explains why online slideshows aren't created for many stories, and why some newspapers have ignored the technology.

Here are some basic tips for creating an online slideshow:

- **If you have an interesting story, you can make an interesting slideshow.** But people who give good newspaper quotes aren't always good on tape. The best sources are natural storytellers, or people who are at least compelling in conversations.

- **Think of your slideshow as a movie preview.** Make it move. Even your best friends won't want to hear every detail. But they will give you two minutes. Your slideshow should hook people in that time and make them want to know more. Those details can come in your print story, which doesn't have to match the slideshow. The best slideshows can stand alone without an accompanying story.

- **Think "outside the box" when recording audio.** Use 911 tapes. Find old radio interviews. Interview folks where there are natural sound effects. It's not hard to interview someone in a quiet room with a microphone. But doing that exclusively is boring.

- **You can never have enough pictures.** I've hit a point in every Soundslides project where I'd give my left arm for another dozen pictures. If you have 40, that's good. If you have 100, that's better. It's also important to work with a photographer who understands the slideshow concept. Photographers I've worked with say shooting for a slideshow is much different than a regular assignment, which aims for two or three good photos instead of a few dozen. Also, because slideshow photos are typically small and displayed on a computer screen, you can sometimes get by with photos that might not be up to newspaper production standards.

Tips on creating an online slideshow:

1. **Get a MiniDisc recorder or recorder with equivalent quality.** If your audio is awful, your project will be, too. As with pictures, the best projects have a wealth of material to draw from. Record everything when you're interviewing subjects and walking around places in your story. You'll capture elements that put readers inside a story.

2. **Team with a photographer and editor who understand your project.** Having people who understand your mission makes all the difference. An understanding photographer knows that shooting for a slideshow is different than shooting a regular daily news assignment. An understanding editor won't mind if you spend a day or two working on a slideshow. The editor should tell you if the slideshow is too long to keep the average viewer's attention.

3. **Interview subjects and get other audio.** If your story is about a barber, record sounds of his scissors. If you're reporting on a football player, record



sounds from the game. Record all interviews and make sure to get a wind screen to cover the microphone (about \$5 at most music stores).

When recording, be aware of your surroundings. The hum from fluorescent lights, air flow from a heater and other noises that aren't obvious during the interview will stand out later.

4. **Edit the audio into chunks with simple titles.** If you don't already have access to some kind of editing software, download one such as Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>). After transferring the recordings to a computer, pull out quotes or sounds into roughly 15-second chunks. This part is a pain, and very time consuming, but don't be deterred. Create folders for each person or place. Use Windows Media Player or a similar program to arrange the clips in an order that keeps listeners wanting more. Produce something that would make a good radio segment, and that will serve as the first draft of the audio.

5. **When you have a rough draft of the audio, play it for colleagues.** Are they interested? If they are, keep going. If not, make it more interesting. But don't let one negative comment throw you.

6. **Cut down the audio.** The tighter the audio, the better – just like quotes in newspaper and magazine stories.

7. **Match the audio to the pictures.** Think outside the box for how you can get pictures. Are there archived photos? Video stills? Programs or handouts you can scan? Pictures of old pictures? Think creatively.

8. **Make a title screen that's compelling like a movie poster.** Photoshop or a similar program works.

These pages include slideshows on environmental topics:

New Orleans Times-Picayune on the disappearing coast: www.nola.com/speced/lastchance/

Alternet on mountaintop removal coal mining: www.alternet.org/water/70475/

Voiceofsandiego.com on air pollution: <http://tinyurl.com/2q93r4/>

Seattle Post-Intelligencer on a polluted river: seattlepi.nwsourc.com/specials/duwamish/slideshow/

Newfarm.org on coffee growers in Guatemala: www.newfarm.org/international/guatemala/coffee.shtml

Lynchburg News & Advance on a struggling lake: <http://tinyurl.com/yor2ju>

9. Show your slideshow to at least a half dozen friends or colleagues. What do they react to? Work in the finishing touches based on their reaction.

10. Work with your company's media team to make sure your project gets good attention online. Slideshows might not get a lot of hits, but they can draw attention to a bigger package. A prominent place on the Web site is a major boost.

A quality slideshow is the same as a quality newspaper story. The story is shown, not told; each audio clip is concise and powerful; the story is arranged to keep the reader/viewer hanging on.

It's crucial to understand your target audience and tailor your slideshow to their attention span. Just because you think your project is worthy of eight minutes doesn't mean it is. Try to create a compelling story in two to three minutes. If you can do that and follow these steps, your work should be well received.

Casey McNerthney is a reporter with the Seattle Post-Intelligencer who recently trained journalists on slide show production for the Society of Professional Journalists' Seattle Chapter.

SEJ Gains Ground *continued from page 12*

the government denies people information about whether their food may be contaminated (much less the location of a smelly feedlot), the effect may be the opposite.

SEJ and other groups opposed the measure and got it changed in the Senate, thanks to effective lobbying by groups like the Sunshine in Government Initiative and the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government. But the outcome of Senate-House negotiations are uncertain, and the matter may end up for the Agriculture Department to decide.

Environmental Health Perspectives Privatization

Another long effort by SEJ's WatchDog Project to save a major conduit for communicating environmental health research to the public also seemed to succeed finally late in 2007.

Environmental Health Perspectives, a peer-reviewed journal published by the National Institute of Environmental Health

Sciences (NIEHS), had been renowned for its example in publishing the latest trends and findings by scientists — and translating them not only for a general public audience, but also for audiences overseas in places like China.

The journal's existence seemed threatened when Bush administration appointees in September 2005 proposed "privatizing" it and cutting its budget by 80 percent — as well as eliminating general-audience content and the Chinese edition. SEJ opposed this.

After two years of investigation and scandal—at first covered almost exclusively by SEJ's *WatchDog* newsletter — NIEHS Director David Schwartz resigned, privatization efforts were abandoned, and NIEHS' acting director promised to restore funding and abandon efforts to quell the journal.

Joe Davis directs the SEJ WatchDog Project and edits the WatchDog Tipsheet.

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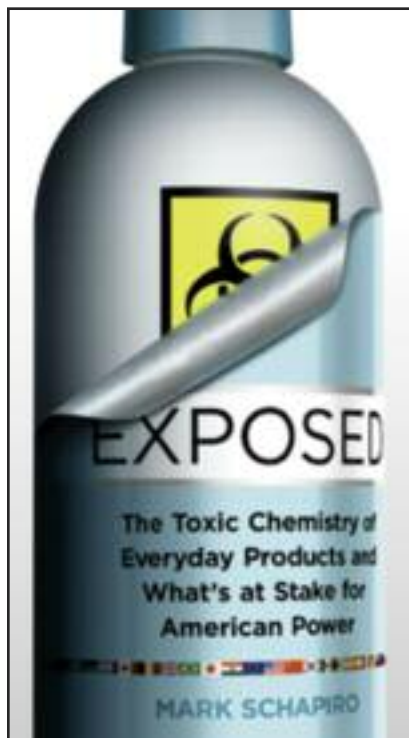
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Lenient U.S. chemical regulation poses a health risk

EXPOSED:

The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products Who's at risk and What's at Stake for American Power

By Mark Schapiro
Chelsea Green Publishing, \$22.95

Reviewed by Susan Moran

In the quagmire of the Iraq war, the United States has lost credibility as a world leader. In *Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products*, investigative journalist Mark Schapiro offers another version of the erosion of American leadership. In this case, it's how the U.S. government has gone from one whose environmental laws and regulations were once a model for other nations to one whose standards have fallen so far below those of even some developing nations.

As the long-time editorial director at the Center for Investigative Reporting in Berkeley, Calif., Schapiro has tracked and dissected the downward trajectory of U.S.

environmental and public health standards. In 1981 he co-authored a book with fellow CIR journalist David Weir, *The Circle of Poison: Pesticides and People in a Hungry World*, which described how the U.S. government continued to export to developing countries many pesticides it had banned from domestic use. The process of “dumping” toxic products like DDT overseas not only poisoned many local residents, it also harmed workers in U.S. factories. Ultimately, the pesticides found their way into U.S. kitchens, in salads, coffee and other foods.

In *Exposed*, Schapiro reveals that the United States is now a dumping ground for chemicals and consumer products that don't meet more stringent health standards elsewhere. Ironically, products made overseas — lead-laced toys from China notwithstanding — are now often safer than those made in the United States.

U.S. politicians and chemical industry executives have fought tooth and nail product-safety mandates enacted by the European Union. Schapiro recounts, for example, how Secretary of State Colin Powell sent a personal letter asking an Italian legislator to abandon a 2003 proposal by the European Commission to register, evaluate and authorize more than 60,000 untested chemicals before they would be deemed safe enough to remain on the market.

The proposal, which became law, was Europe's challenge to a big loophole in the U.S. Toxic Substances Control Act, or TSCA, passed in 1976, when environmental policy in Europe was still handled by individual countries. TSCA exempted 62,000 chemicals already on the market. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to this day 95 percent of all chemicals have never been subjected to any tests for toxicity or environmental impact.

Even when U.S. companies have adapted their manufacturing processes to adhere to stricter regulations imposed in Europe so they can sell their products there, many of them continue making a separate line of products for the U.S. market and other lax markets in some developing countries, Schapiro says.

A glaring example of this is the cosmetics industry's bifurcated marketing. Procter & Gamble, the behemoth maker of Head and Shoulders shampoo, Gillette

razor blades, Clairol hair dye, Cover Girl and Max Factor cosmetics and many more ubiquitous personal-care products, quickly changed its manufacturing processes to adhere to a 2005 European Union mandate called the Cosmetics Directive, which banned all ingredients in cosmetics that may contribute to cancer, have mutagenic effects or damage the reproductive system. Across the Atlantic, however, P&G has continued to sell the products containing the suspect ingredients.

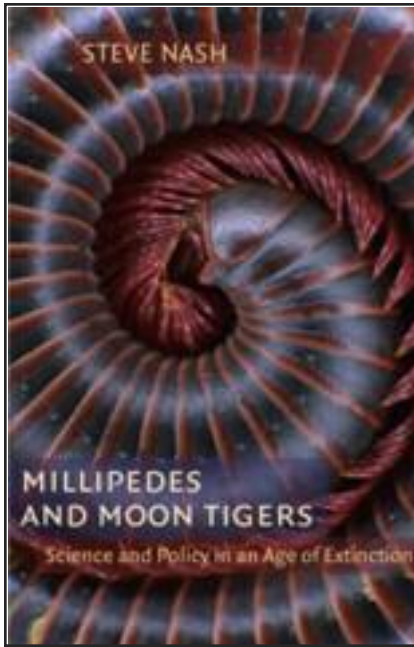
Schapiro places most of the blame on U.S. manufacturers, but the U.S. government is for its part hugely responsible for not enacting laws that would force U.S. companies to clean up their act. Without policy or regulatory pressure, few companies here or even in Europe have cleaned up their act. Schapiro does note that the Food and Drug Administration has little authority to regulate the ingredients in cosmetics, though it monitors over-the-counter prescription drugs and food additives.

What's more, the EPA's mandate to regulate chemicals has been reduced to a rubber stamp for industry, especially during the current Bush administration.

Those keen on learning more about how coal tar appears in dandruff shampoo, how lead lies in lipstick, and how many other products that we rub into our skin before bed contain toxic compounds, might also enjoy reading another recently-published book, *Not Just A Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*, by Stacy Malkan, a founding member of Campaign for Safe Cosmetics.

If there's any silver lining to Schapiro's grim exposé, it's that more countries, including China, are emulating the EU's consumer-safety standards, rather than more lenient U.S. standards. That could increasingly put U.S. manufacturers at a competitive disadvantage overseas but benefit American consumers if it means that they can choose to buy safer imported products. Americans are becoming accidental beneficiaries of protective standards created by another government, over which they have no influence, and they needn't fall prey to a “dumping ground” economic landscape, Schapiro says.

Susan Moran is a freelance reporter based in Boulder, Colo.



A reporter's interesting take on a variety of conservation questions

Millipedes and Moon Tigers:

Science and Policy in an Age of Extinction

By Steve Nash

University of Virginia Press, \$22.95

Reviewed by Christine Heinrichs

Environmental change manifests in ways so different, its fragments can seem unrelated. Steve Nash's 15 feature articles, brought together in book form, stitches the fragments together, telling a dramatic story of the changes rippling through our world.

His subject material ranges from Civil War history to genetic engineering, and covers a spectrum of conservation issues reflecting contemporary pressures such as development, commerce and scientific advances. Nash, a journalism professor at the University of Richmond in Virginia, discusses practicalities, such as how historic battlefields and old-growth forests can be preserved and the philosophical

questions of why they should be. The millipedes of the title appear in a feature about the difficulties inherent in conservation of invertebrates, with their humble lack of charisma.

He explores all the angles, such as whether preserving Civil War battle-grounds is locking up too much land, cramping the economy or stifling creation of new jobs, considering that the amount of land in question is 280,000 acres, a quarter the size of a single national forest, of which there are 155. He weighs financial and political realities: the \$100 million cost to purchase the land—prospectively half from Congress and half from state, local and private sources—is about equal to the production cost of *Cold Mountain*, Hollywood's Civil War epic.

His reportorial affection for numbers provides good context. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's annual national Breeding Bird Survey figures, for example, are a chilling documentation of population losses that are not otherwise obvious. Migratory songbirds by definition are present during only some seasons of the year, and their populations vary widely even under normal conditions. But reliable numbers, now available, show these populations are in free fall. Several of the best-documented songbird species are projected nearly to disappear in the next century. A *Silent Spring*, indeed.

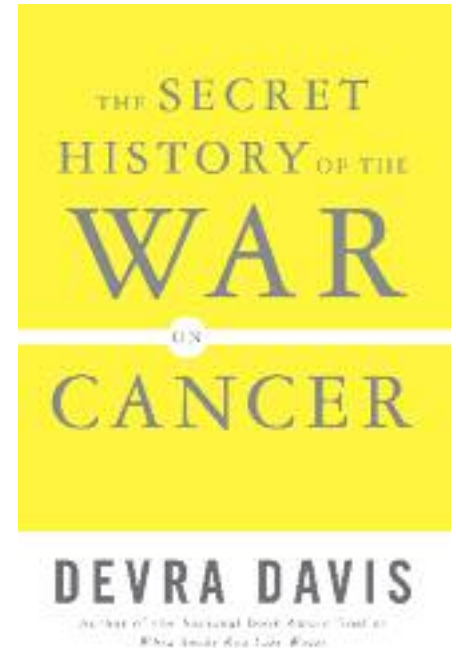
Figures for damage from invasive species, \$137 billion annually, including \$80 billion in agricultural losses, show the true significance of small critters like the emerald ash borer. And what about more subtle damages to natural systems that are more difficult to tally in dollars? Nash says the reactive, fragmented one-species-at-a-time approach is failing to protect the U.S. from exotic critters and other countries from ours.

I can't end this review without a mention of the Glofish, a genetically engineered pet fish, which certainly swam under my radar until I read about it here. Prohibited in California because of lack of a formal ecological review, these fluorescent fish are on sale everywhere else. The Glofish fell through the cracks of federal oversight because of a lack of regulations to address transgenic animals, Nash writes.

In the age of specialized reporting, Nash has specialized in reporting. He starts with a problem, researches the background and finds the sources to tell the story. His work demonstrates that solid reporting can

illuminate any subject. In an era when reporting can be as fragmented as deep forest habitat, his 20 years of writing illustrates how a conservation ethic can pervade our life and work, saving what is precious to enrich our collective future.

Christine Heinrichs is a freelance reporter in California's Central Coast, where she is writing her second book, How to Raise Poultry. Outdoors, she is a docent at the local Elephant Seal rookery.



America's 'war on cancer' misguided and misdirected

The Secret History of the War on Cancer

By Devra Davis

Basic Books (2007), \$27.95
Reviewed by Jennifer Weeks

In 1971 President Richard Nixon signed the National Cancer Act, formally launching a war on the second-leading cause of death in the United States. The legislation promised more funding and targeted government support for cancer research. "The time has come in America when the same kind of concentrated effort that split the atom and took man to the moon should be turned toward conquering this dread disease," Nixon urged in his

State of the Union Address earlier that year.

You might expect Devra Davis, director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, to see this as a watershed moment in cancer research, especially since both of her parents died of the disease. Instead Davis calls America's war on cancer shortsighted and misguided. In this provocative and often personal book, she argues that we've been fighting the wrong enemy by trying to cure the disease instead of paying enough attention to its causes.

Davis recounts debates over major carcinogens including cigarettes (her most detailed case), asbestos and vinyl chloride to show how industries that produce or rely on these goods have obscured evidence that they were dangerous. Their methods will be familiar to journalists who cover global climate change: obscuring what scientific findings really showed, funding research that pointed the finger elsewhere, and creating extreme standards for proof of harm — for example, by questioning whether results from animal studies were applicable to humans. In many instances companies knew that their products were harmful based on illness rates in their own workforces, but used legal shields to protect this data as proprietary information.

As Davis stresses, some U.S. and European researchers had shown clear statistical links between cancer and exposure to harmful substances as early as the 1930s. Citing these connections, leaders in Hitler's Germany exhorted against cigarette smoking, food preservatives, industrial toxins and artificial colorings as threats to national health. But after World War II, Davis contends, "enthusiasm for modern industrial advances" overwhelmed knowledge about cancer hazards.

Studies on smoking and health in the 1950s and 1960s, which laid the ground for the Surgeon General's 1964 statement that smoking was "a major cause of lung cancer," also spotlighted epidemiology as a key public health tool. Davis's book is a good introduction to the exacting process of comparing sick and healthy groups of people and sorting through information to "make sense of [the] messy, large-scale data of real lives." For example, she notes, big differences between groups are less likely to be random than small ones, and studying a large number of cases increases the odds of finding differences. Davis

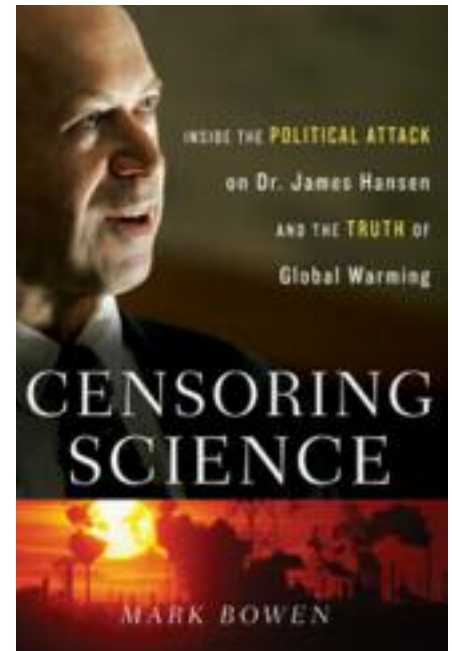
relates these methodological discussions back to issues like smoking and shows how industries have stalled some regulatory actions for decades by insisting on elusive forms of proof.

This book is frustrating to read, both because of what it says and because it could have used a more disciplined editor. It's long, the chronology jumps around within chapters, and some sections (such as a 25-page overview of Nazi science, leading up to what German researchers knew about tobacco hazards) don't advance the central story. Davis can get melodramatic: for example, she confides, "I have learned from others, whom I can't name at this point, that the files of many large multinational businesses could easily tell us about many more health risks associated with workplace exposures of the past."

In conclusion, however, Davis asks a critical question: if, as she believes, our system for identifying and addressing preventable causes of environmental cancer doesn't work, what should we do? Today the Toxic Substances Control Act requires anyone who knows that an activity threatens public health or safety to report it, but Davis says that this just discourages companies from keeping the kind of workplace health data that might give researchers more information about dangerous exposures. She has some hope for the European Union's REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) program, which requires companies that produce chemicals to document that these products are safe, but says it's too soon to tell if the program will work as intended.

Davis suggests some kind of process modeled after South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission to create a neutral forum where industries, scientists and regulators could exchange information on environmental health risks, funded by industries that produce risky materials. But without a whole new approach to testing and regulating potentially toxic substances, it's hard to see what incentive chemical or pharmaceutical manufacturers would have for making internal data public. It would be fascinating to see Davis collaborate with a publicpolicy expert on a book about legal and regulatory options to help modern societies protect citizens from the fruits of progress.

Freelancer Jennifer Weeks (jw@jenniferweeks.com) is based in Watertown, Mass..



Promotion of global warming scientist oversteps a bit

Censoring Science: Inside the Political Attack on Dr. James Hansen and the Truth of Global Warming

by Mark Bowen, Dutton, 336 pages, \$25.95

Reviewed by Craig Pittman

On June 23, 1988, a scientist named Jim Hansen spent five minutes talking to a Senate committee. Hansen said he was 99 percent sure the Earth was getting warmer because of the greenhouse effect, and he predicted that 1988 would turn out to be one of the warmest years on record.

Although he spoke in an Iowa-bred monotone, Hansen's testimony electrified the committee hearing. When he tried to leave, Hansen was surrounded by reporters.

"It's time to stop waffling so much and say that the greenhouse effect is here and is affecting our climate now," he told them.

Hansen's testimony — and his prediction — proved to be dead on. But its impact resulted from some artful stagecraft, according to *Censoring Science*, Mark Bowen's new book on Hansen and global warming.

Hansen had testified to Congress before, but always during colder months. At his suggestion, this time the committee called him on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year. Then, the night before Hansen's testimony, the committee staff left the windows of the hearing room open. The next day, while he talked about rising temperatures, the air-conditioning system struggled to cool the sweating senators.

Bowen's book, written with Hansen's cooperation, comes across as a similar bit of pump-priming. There's a legitimate message in it about the urgency of global warming. But Bowen (*Thin Ice*) nearly buries the message with overheated stories about the Bush Administration trying to squelch Hansen.

Have government officials attempted to censor Hansen, who has run the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, an arm of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration since 1981? Sure. In 1986 and 1988, officials from Ronald Reagan's Office of Management and Budget edited testimony Hansen was about to give Congress about the greenhouse effect. When it happened a third time in 1989, Hansen testified that his words had been

altered, producing what Bowen calls "the most spectacular headlines of his career."

However, this story takes up less than a full chapter of *Censoring Science*. Instead, Bowen focuses most of his book on a brief period in 2005, when Hansen gave a speech that ran counter to the official White House policy of questioning whether global warming existed.

Afterward NASA's public relations bosses said they wanted to know Hansen's every move, they wanted to have a say in what reporters he talked to, and they wanted to review any scientific articles he wrote before they were published.

When Goddard scientists posted some new global temperature readings on the NASA Web site, the information was taken down — but then put back up. National Public Radio asked to interview Hansen, but the NASA public relations staff turned the request down.

When Hansen got wind of what was going on, he gave interviews to *The New York Times* and *60 Minutes* exposing the scheme — and that was that. NPR finally got to talk to him. Meanwhile, his most rabid would-be censor was exposed for padding his resume and quit.

Other government scientists who offended political sensibilities during the Bush Administration have faced suspension and even firing. But Hansen was not fired. His boss didn't even yell at him. And his scientific papers continued to be published.

In fact, he became a bigger celebrity than ever, appearing at the Live Earth concert right after the Smashing Pumpkins. So Bowen's attempts to stoke

outrage about Hansen's treatment by the PR staff at NASA staff feel overblown.

Compounding the problem is the fact that Bowen has a Ph.D. in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He reels off scientific terms with aplomb, but he sometimes neglects to explain those terms for readers not familiar with, say, Rossby waves.

Bowen is less well-versed in the worlds of politics and the press, often displaying a surprising naiveté about how they work (or don't). He produces a lot of innuendo but no proof that Hansen was targeted by anyone in the White House. Instead he is able to show only that Hansen ran afoul of some bumbling image-builders who were less effective than Reagan's budget office.

Bowen also fumbles by repeatedly attempting to tie the effects of global warming to the disaster that Hurricane Katrina inflicted on New Orleans. That catastrophe resulted from faulty levees, rampant wetland destruction and poor evacuation planning — not the emissions of coal-fired power plants.

There's a good story hiding in this book, a story about a Midwestern paper boy who became the Paul Revere of global warming and the powerful people who didn't heed his warnings. It's too bad that, instead, Bowen felt the need to overcook the facts on this minor episode in Hansen's career.

Craig Pittman has covered environmental issues for Florida's largest newspaper, the St. Petersburg Times, since 1998.

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If you're reading this . . .

. . . you're holding the new, improved *SEJournal* — or viewing it online. Either way, I hope you're as wowed as I am by the stunning photography gracing the cover, and by the eye-pleasing, even slick, look and feel of the new publication.

It's been a long time coming. *SEJournal's* staff and editorial board have worked hard to bring you a more attractive publication that anyone would be proud to display on a desk, magazine rack or coffee table, without sacrificing any of the meaty, useful content that's been the hallmark of our quarterly.

You can read the staff and editorial board names on the masthead page. But the following folks deserve special mention for making a reality of our vision for a catchier-looking journal: *SEJournal's* editors, Mike Mansur, Bill Dawson, Orna Izakson and Roger Archibald and designer Kristin Johnson; SEJ

associate director Chris Rigel, and the volunteer editorial board, Robert McClure, Elizabeth Bluemink, A. Adam Glenn, Bill Kovarik, Michael Mansur, David Sachsman, JoAnn M. Valenti and Denny Wilkins.

As with any makeover, there are still tweaks being made. But I hope you'll let our *SEJournal* crew know if you appreciate their efforts as much as I do. Feel free to email in any suggestions you have, and any help you can offer. *SEJournal*, like SEJ itself, relies on the generosity and expertise of volunteer correspondents. You won't find a snazzier platform for your reporting tips, book reviews or commentary on the state of environmental journalism

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