

World Federation of Science Journalists

October 2009 Bulletin

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Letter from the President

It is with excitement and high expectations that I address for the first time the World Federation of Science Journalists' member associations. I am excited because I hope my two years of presidency, 2009 - 2011, will represent openness, transparency, and open lines of communication between the WFSJ board, secretariat, and WFSJ members. I have high expectations because I hope by doing this we will have a stronger Federation.



In order for this to happen, we have established a Google mailing list for association representatives to communicate easily with each other and with WFSJ board members and secretariat. If you are an association representative (president or communications officer) and have not yet joined this group, please email Augustin Denis at adenis@wfsj.org for details on how to join. We have also established a facebook group for science journalists anywhere in the world to communicate with each other. To join, please visit <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=134168625518>.

The WFSJ started as a small but ambitious project. In very little time it has been successful in turning out several world-class World Conferences of Science Journalists, the last of which was in London in June 2009. That conference attracted more than 1,000 participants from around the world! The WFSJ also successfully completed a large \$2 million training project for science journalists in Africa and the Arab world. We are hoping to continue that project with a new group of trainees in 2010. We are also doing everything it takes to start a similar project in Latin America. The WFSJ has also held several competitions, the most prominent of which sent 15 science journalists to the Arctic on the Canadian research icebreaker, the Amundsen.

And we want to spread our wings even further! But to do so we need your help. We need you to tell us how we can better serve you. And we need you to help us better serve you. Do you have ideas for international or regional projects that your association would like to manage under the WFSJ umbrella? Do you have updates about your association's projects or members that you'd like to make known to other WFSJ member associations? Do you have suggestions on how we can be more efficient and communicative? What are we doing well and what can we improve on? Your constant feedback would be most appreciated!

I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you through any of many means of communication. My email inbox will also always welcome you. And expect to hear from us regularly!

Best,

Nadia El-Awady
President, World Federation of Science Journalists
nadiaelawady@gmail.com

Associations News

France - Emilie Martin, journalist with "Ciel et Espace" magazine, and Cécile Klingler, journalist with the monthly "La Recherche" are the new contacts with the World Federation for the association of French science journalists "Association des journalistes scientifiques de la presse d'information (AJSPI)".

South Africa - Christina Scott is the new president of the South African Science Journalists' Association (SASJA). She succeeds George Classen who was the first president of the new association launched in December 2008.

Togo - Last September, our colleagues in Togo, West Africa, created their own association of science journalists and communicators: Journalistes et communicateurs scientifiques du Togo or Science Journalists and Communicators of Togo (JCS-Togo).

The following month they submitted their application to join the World Federation of Science Journalists. The WFSJ Board will meet on 7th November in Budapest in the context of the World Science Forum and make a decision regarding the membership of the Togolese association.

United Kingdom - Natasha Loder, science



journalist with The Economist, is the new Chair of the Association of British Science Writers (ABSW). She succeeds outgoing president Ted Nield. She is seconded by two Vice-Chairs: Jeremy Webb, Editor-in-chief of The New Scientist, and Kat Arney, science communicator with Cancer Research UK.

News & Blogs

Pay up, pay up, or we blow the whistle

This is a story about money, and how to help freelancers when they are ignored, cheated or stalled when it's payday.

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/news/news.php?id=180>

WFSJ Podcast

We wanted to give science journalists from around the world the opportunity to talk to one another about important topics and issues.

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/news/news.php?id=179>

Science journalism in the Entertainment Age

In his essay 'Science journalism: Too close for comfort' (*Nature*, 25 June 2009) the American science reporter Boyce Rensberger analyzes

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=106>

Science journalists on science journalism

Scientists often blame science journalists for being superficial and being sensationalists. But how do science journalists themselves look at their jobs

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=105>

Dutch fact checking project offers valuable tips for journalists

Journalism and New Media students at Leiden University and Fontys School of Journalism in Tilburg, both in the Netherlands, scrutinised media reports

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=104>

Crossing over

CAPE TOWN: Bill McKibben looked tired. Tired, but intense. The 350.org organiser-activist sat opposite me at the table of a curb-side café, punch drunk

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=103>

Russian Youth in Search for Science

"I read your article and I didn't quite understand what 'star density' means", a good friend of mine, Sasha, told me last week

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=102>

The promise of entrepreneurial journalism

Philadelphia Magazine recently named Jim MacMillan Philly's best "Nuevo Journalist". In other circles he is known as Philly's best unemployed journalist.

➤ <http://www.wfsj.org/blogs/wfsj/post.php?id=101>

2009 London General Assembly

A total of 30 associations from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe participated on the 1st of July 2009, in the General Assembly of the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ), which is held every second year, during the World Conference of Science Journalists.

In a room packed with more than 80 representatives of member associations, the voting members unanimously approved, after modifications, the creation of two new categories of members: associate partners and corporate partners.

The Federation's Constitution was modified for organizations that share the goals of the Federation to join and for private companies to offer their support.

Regular members, i.e. associations of science journalists and communicators, keep the exclusive right to vote at the WFSJ General Assembly, specified Pallab Ghosh, Past-President for 2007 - 2009.

Both categories of associate and corporate partners pay a membership fee, as determined by the Board. In return, they have their logos displayed on the WFSJ web site and can participate in the General Assembly, but cannot vote.

The adopted amendments produced a new version of article 3, the essential changes being the insertion of the new paragraphs b) and c). The discussion on this amendment also led to a modification of sub-article 3.6, in the advent that the General Assembly would not be held within two years of the previous one. See Minutes of the General Assembly (London) and the full text of the new modified Constitution.

As of October 2009, there is one Associate Partner: the Unites States' Council for the Advancement of Science Writing. There are no corporate partners... yet.

(This article is adapted from a more detailed article on the website:

<http://www.wfsj.org/news/news.php?id=174>)

Highlights of the Minutes of the General Assembly held 1st July 2009 at Central Hall Westminster, London (United Kingdom)

(Full minutes are posted at: <http://bit.ly/4oZMQg>)

Pallab Ghosh, President for 2007 - 2009, opened the General Assembly saying how the SjCOOP project had been a phenomenal success. He highlighted the development of the online course in science journalism, now available in six languages, the latest being Chinese, thanks to the work of Jia Hepeng.

Details of Pallab's report as WFSJ President from April 2007 to June 2009 can be read on the website: WFSJ 2007-2009 Report Empowerment through Knowledge.

Pallab stressed the need for the Federation to keep the expertise and experience of previous board members and past presidents, proposed the following resolution which was unanimously adopted by the general assembly:

RESOLUTION

The Executive Board will select and appoint, utilise and reorganize as it deems fit a Board of Advisers made up of former presidents of the World Federation and such other notable individuals whom it determines may assist in advancing the aims and aspirations of the Federation.

Deborah Blum, Chair of the Program Committee, focussed her report explaining that the Program team has decided to develop a project on the reporting of climate change. Deborah explained that the Climate Change Project plans to deliver a multiplatform product that would include a book, a web site and a CD. The project will focus on 'what science journalists do that is unique in reporting climate change'.

Other information on WFSJ Program activities can be found in the WFSJ 2007-2009 Report Empowerment through Knowledge.

Nadia El-Awady, Chair of the Finance Committee, asked the Assembly to observe that, over the two-year period, the financial situation of the Federation has improved with its account increasing from \$27,604 to \$47,047, see article Financial Overview. That period also included the completion of the \$2 million SjCOOP project which, as required by donors, has been financially neutral for the WFSJ account, though the SjCOOP financing covered most of the costs of maintaining the WFSJ secretariat. This was possible because the establishment of the Federation was one of the objectives of SjCOOP. She ended by highlighting the fact that the Federation is now successfully collecting the membership fees from its members, a major achievement of the previous two years.

The following discussion focused mainly on the proposed amendments to the Constitution, see article Constitution and General Assembly.

The newly elected WFSJ President, Nadia El-Awady Nadia expressed her gratitude for the trust put by member associations and the previous board members in her, to preside over the Federation, and direct the next World Conference of Science Journalists to be held in Cairo, in 2011.



She said she will work hard to establish communications and making sure associations 'tell us what to do'. She renewed the commitment of the Board to reach out to member associations and listen to their suggestions. Nadia announced that a new listserv for opening and maintaining a dialogue would be put in place.

She ended welcoming everyone to Cairo for another spectacular World Conference of Science Journalists.

CONSTITUTION

Each General Assembly of the World Federation is the opportunity to review and update the Constitution.

In London, on 1st July 2009, two constitutional amendments were approved by the General Assembly. One minor change allows a board member to serve a third consecutive mandate only as past president. A more major change creates two new classes of members: Associate and Corporate These two new types of members will not have voting rights, but will allow the Federation to build long term partnerships with groups that have shown a genuine interest in its wellbeing and success.

Here is the new article 3:

Article 3: Membership and Partnership (new title)

3.1 The WFSJ is an "umbrella" organization; thus, its members are other organizations and associations, including mainly national associations of science writers, journalists, editors, and communicators. (no modification)

3.2 Individuals can be represented via a national or a regional association of science writers or journalists in their region or through the International Science Writers Association (ISWA). (no modification)

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ an association must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership and Partnership applications will be examined and accepted or refused by the Board of WFSJ. (new paragraph)

3.3 To become a member of the WFSJ, an applicant must apply and be accepted in accordance with this Constitution. Membership of the Federation shall consist of the following three categories: Ordinary, Associate, and Corporate. (new paragraph)

a) Ordinary Membership shall be open to any association, network or group of professional journalists who support the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled appropriate by the WFSJ Board. Ordinary Members shall pay an Annual Membership Fee set by the Executive Board, and are entitled to one vote per member at the General Assembly. (new)

b) Associate Partnership shall be open to any association, council, organization, board, foundation, institute, network, or group which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by the WFSJ Executive Board. Associate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board. Representatives of Associate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote. (new)

b) Corporate Partnership shall be open to any statutory organizations, boards, corporations, and public and private companies which supports the objectives of the Federation and whose candidacy in this category is ruled to be appropriate by Executive Board of WFSJ. Corporate Partners shall pay an annual fee which shall be set by the WFSJ Board. Representatives of Corporate Partners may participate in debates on matters of business at any General Assembly, but shall not be entitled to vote. (new)

3.4 Members who violate the spirit of the WFSJ constitution, or who do not fulfill duties and responsibilities of membership, particularly in regard to the timely payment of membership fees, will be warned by the Executive Board, and cease to be members if three such

warnings go unheeded. (no modification)

3.5 Members who have not paid their contributions lose the right to vote. (no modification)

3.6 Board members are normally elected at the World Conference of Science Journalists. In the advent of a World Conference not being held within two years of the previous one, elections of the Board members will be done electronically. (new)

Pallab concluded his term as President thanking board members, particularly Past-President Wilson da Silva and Vice-President Diran Onifade, who were leaving the WFSJ, having reached the limit of two terms on the Executive Board.

At Pallab's request, Véronique Morin, former WFSJ President from 2002 to 2004, took over the chairing of the General Assembly. She explained that there was a contradiction within the WFSJ Constitution which, in article 5.1 says that the Executive Board will include the Past President while in article 5.2 says: "A Board member can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms". She proposed the following resolution to waive the 2 terms limit for a President who becomes Past President and has already served two terms on the Board.

The proposed changes, approved by the General Assembly, make article 5 modified in the following way:

Article 5: Executive Board

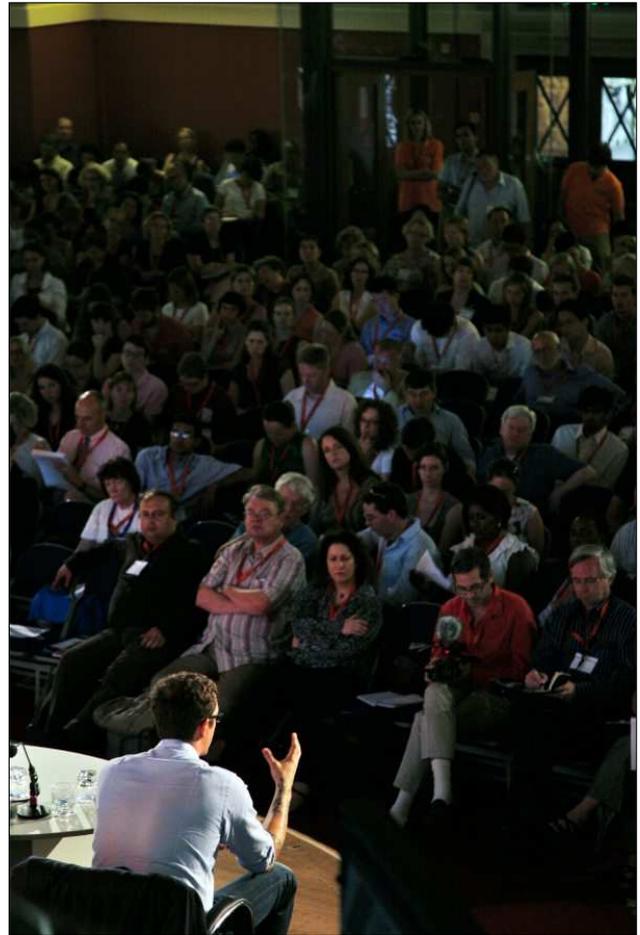
5.1 The Executive Board is the administrative and operational body of the WFSJ and consists of seven members: a President, a Past-President, one Vice-president, one Secretary, one Treasurer, and two at-large members. (no modification)



5.2 Members of the board are to be elected every two years when the General Assembly meets. The President of the WFSJ must be a science journalist who is an active member of a WFSJ member association, and a citizen of the nation that becomes the next host nation. All Board members have to be present at the General Assembly to be elected. The Board should reflect as much as possible its membership and cover most regions of the world. A Board member can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms, except for a member of the Board who becomes Past President. Nominations for the board will be accepted one month prior to the General Assembly. (modified paragraph)

5.3 The Board acts within the regulations of the Constitution and those decisions imposed

See full updated Constitution online:
<http://www.wfsj.org/about/page.php?id=27>



Financial Overview

This overview presents the portrait of the financial situation of the World Federation of Science Journalists' account from April 2007 to October 2009.

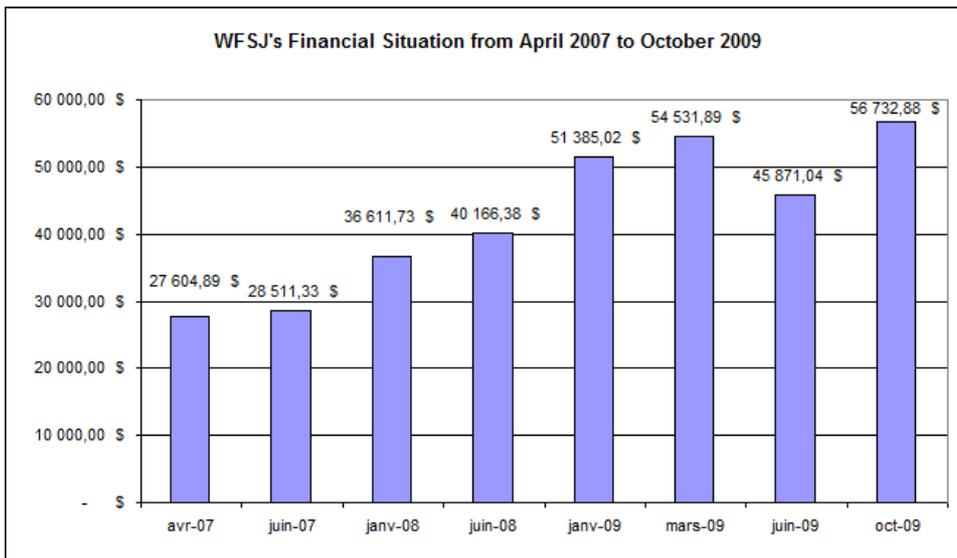
From April 2007 to date, we have been able to increase the bank account from \$27K to \$56K. Thanks to the growing acceptance of the Federation by its members most of our members are now paying their membership fees. In 2009, 29 associations out of 40 paid their membership fees and some promised to send their payment before the end of the year.

Over the two years, we also have been able to cover the salaries and the WFSJ's secretariat costs from the overhead of the SjCOOP project. In addition, we conducted two successful international competitions that generated small revenue.

Last but not least, ABSW shared a third of their profit of the very successful London Conference held last June-July.

As the SjCOOP project ended last July, we started covering the secretariat costs from the WFSJ's own funds.

During this critical period, the WFSJ secretariat is working to find new sources of support to assure the sustainable development of the Federation. During the last Finance Committee meeting, 20 October 2009, the members agreed to submit to the Board two recommendations: one asking to hire a professional fundraiser who will explore funding from private companies and the second one to explore in depth how to recruit Corporate Partners who would also commit to support the upcoming 2011 World Conference of Science Journalists, in Cairo.



Members associations

African Federation of Science Journalist (AFSJ)
Arab Science Journalists Association(ASJA)
Australia: Australian Science Communicators(ASC)
Bangladesh: Bangladesh Science Writers & Journalists Forum (BSWJF)
Brazil: Brazilian Association of Science Journalism (ABJC)
Cameroon: SciLife (Cameroon's Association of Science Journalists and Communicators)
Canada: Canadian Science Writers' Association (CSWA)
Catalonia: Catalan Association for Scientific Communication(ACCC)
Chile: Chilean Association of Science Journalists (ACHIPEC)
China: Chinese Society for Science and Technology Journalism (CSSTJ)
Colombia: Colombian Association of Science Journalism (ACPC)
Denmark: Danish Science Journalists' Association
Europe: European Union of Science Journalists' Associations (EUSJA)
Finland: Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists(FASEJ)
France: French association of science journalists (AJSPI)
Germany: German Science Journalists' Association (WPK)
Germany: German Association of Science Writers(TELI)
Ghana: The Ghana Association of Science Journalists and Communicators
International Science Writers Association (ISWA)
Ireland: Irish Science & Technology Journalists' Association (ISTJA)
Italy: Italian Association of Science Journalists (UGIS)
Japan: Japanese Association of Science and Technology Journalists (JASTJ)
Japan: Medical Journalists Association of Japan(MEJA)
Kenya: Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA)
Korea: Korea Science Reporters Association (KOSRA)
Netherlands (The): Dutch Association of Science Journalists(VWN)
Tanzania: Network of African Journalists Journalists on earth science (NAJES)
Nigeria: Nigeria Association of Science Journalists(NAJS)
Pakistan: Pakistan Medical Writers' Association (PMWA)
Philippine: Philippine Science Journalists Association (PSciJourn)
Québec: Association of Science Communicators (ACS)
Russia: Association of Science Writers and Journalists 'INTELLECT'
Rwanda: Rwanda Association of Science Journalists (RASJ)
South Africa: South African Science Journalists' Association (SASJA)
Spain: Spanish Association of Science Communication (AECC)
Sudan: Sudan Association of Science Journalists
Uganda: Uganda Science Journalists' Association(USJA)
United States: National Association of Science Writers (NASW)
United Kingdom: Association of British Science Writers (ABSW)
Associate Partner
Council for the Advancement of Science Writing

Members of the Executive Board and Committees for 2009 - 2011

Executive Board

Following the General Assembly, members of the newly elected Board decided to distribute more widely the responsibilities. Jia Hepeng is now Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee while Christophe Mvondo has accepted to Chair the Program Committee.

President: Nadia El-Awady, Middle East (Egypt) Journalist

Past President: Pallab Ghosh, Europe (UK) Science Correspondent, British Broadcasting Corporation

Vice-President: Valeria Roman, Latin America (Argentina) Journalist, Clarín newspaper

General Counsel and Secretary: Natasha Mitchell, Asia (Australia) Journalist, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Treasurer & Chair of Finance Committee: Hepeng Jia, Asia-Pacific (China) Editor-in-chief, Science News Bi-weekly

Member-at-Large: Deborah Blum North America (USA) Journalist & author

Member-at-Large & Chair of Programme Committee: Christophe Mvondo, Africa (Cameroon) Journalist, La Nouvelle Expression newspaper

Programme Committee

Chair: Christophe Mvondo, Africa (Cameroon) Journalist

Members

Valeria Roman, Latin America (Argentina) Journalist
Horacio Salazar, Central America (Mexico) Journalist
Subhra Priyadarshini, Asia (India) Journalist
Lisbeth Fog, Latin America (Colombia) Journalist
Julie Clayton, Europe (United Kingdom) Journalist
Juliette Mutheu, Africa (Kenya) Journalist
Mercè Piqueras, Europe (Spain) ACCC

Finance Committee

Chair: Hepeng Jia, Asia (China) Journalist

Members

Martin Ince, Europe (United Kingdom) ABSW
Jim Cornell, North America(USA) ISWA
Vesa Niinikangas, Europe (Finland) FASEJ

