



► ***From the SCANZ Executive***

Welcome to the November (and now December) 2007 issue of the SCANZ newsletter.

It's been a bit of a transition time the last few months, particularly with our stellar Secretary/Treasurer leaving for a grand tour of South America. So, we apologise for the slight delay in getting this to you, and thank you for your patience this time!

We hope you enjoy this edition – the main thing to note is the SCANZ AGM, now officially scheduled for 30th January 2008. Please read below for more details, and please plan to attend if you can.

Other than that, we hope you have a very good holiday season, and we look forward to kickstarting again in 2008!

► ***News***

SCANZ AGM details confirmed

The SCANZ AGM will be held in Wellington at 12.30pm on Wednesday 30 January 2008. MoRST is kindly providing a light lunch and will host the AGM in a room equipped with teleconferencing facilities. Venue details are: MoRST HQ, Level 10, 2 The Terrace, Wellington.

Please advise Karen Hartshorn asap (karen.hartshorn@stonebow.otago.ac.nz) if you expect to take part in the AGM in person or via teleconference. We'd love to have as many people as possible contribute and help launch SCANZ into what promises to be an exciting year ahead.

With our inaugural President Peter Burke standing down after 4 years' service, we are accepting nominations for a new President, as well as the roles of Secretary/Treasurer and membership of the SCANZ Executive.

Our goal is for an Executive group which is not overly large in number, and is a good representation of the SCANZ membership in terms of occupation and location. The Executive will meet every 6-8 weeks, making good use of Skype

or teleconferencing. Ideally the group will meet face-to-face at least twice a year. Key challenges for SCANZ in 2008 include running a well attended conference, organising a good range of functions around the country, managing the budget and developing other initiatives of real value to SCANZ members, such as NZ and international networking & educational opportunities.

It is expected that each Executive member will establish a group of SCANZ members to help them run regional events through the year, with support from the Secretary-Treasurer and President. There will also be plenty of opportunities for non-Executive members to contribute to 2008 conference planning and other projects.

Please feel free to contact Karen, Phil Johnstone (phil@imagine-that.co.nz) or Kim Griggs (kim@griggs.net) if you have any questions or comments about the AGM or what SCANZ will achieve in 2008.

And finally - nominations for any of the roles to be allocated at the AGM should be sent to Karen Hartshorn. An AGM reminder email in mid-January will include dial-in details and a list of those who have been nominated.

Alison Ballance and Bryan Walpert win Manhire Prize

The winners of the inaugural Royal Society of New Zealand Manhire Prize for Creative Science Writing were announced at the Royal Society Honours Dinner on 20 November in Dunedin. 182 entries were received, and the winners each receive \$2,500.

Alison Ballance, producer at Natural History New Zealand and author of more than 20 books on wildlife and biology, won the non-fiction section. Judge Kim Hill said "Alison's entry, *Touchstones*, is a beautifully written and very personal reflection about a particular part of the planet that she obviously knows intimately. By turning the technicalities of climate change into the possibility of no longer having "glaciers and rock wrens", she gives real and poetic impact to the prosaic litanies of scientific reports and forecasts. But the piece is also grounded in solid scientific understanding and historical context... a gem of concise eloquence."

Dr Bryan Walpert won the fiction section. He is at the School of English and Film Studies at Massey University in Palmerston north. Kim Hill said of Bryan's entry, "*16Planets* is a very bleak and disturbing story of a world in which the most innocent and familiar things have become destructive... the Kiwi deck, mum driving her son to his rugby game, returning stranded starfish to the ocean... a world in which the big picture is so dark that there's no longer any consolation in small pleasures. Of the several entries trying to express the uncomfortable mix of personal and political in a time dominated by apprehension about climate change, this one did it best. A great piece of writing, it conveys the despair and confusion of a bloke who's lost his bearings. The author has crafted his story so that it carries a large point about climate change, but at the same time manages to move the reader at an emotional level. That's clever."

The winning entries will be published in the Listener, and will also be posted on the Royal Society of New Zealand website.

For more information: <http://www.rsnz.org>

Australian Science Communicators Elect New President

Tim Thwaites, a freelance science writer and broadcaster with over 25 years experience, has been elected the new president of the Australian Science Communicators. He takes over from Jenni Metcalfe and will serve a two-year term.

Otago University opens new Centre for Science Communication

The first degree course in Science Communication in New Zealand launches in February 2008, with the creation of the Centre for Science Communication at the University of Otago.

It will teach three new Masters degree options under the umbrella of a Masters in Science Communication (MSciCom).

The first option is designed to take science to the community. It is a wide-ranging MSciCom degree, giving students the chance to discover their own communication abilities and strengths. Papers will include the craft of story telling, digital design and general science communication. The end goals for students in this option are:

- Gain experience in interviewing techniques and media skills
- Achieve effective on-line and digital communication
- Gain key skills in building exhibits, writing for magazines / blogs and science festival presentations.
- Gain work experience in business or institutions specialising in communicating science.
- Achieve an understanding of the elements of design that make communication engaging.

The second option focuses on creative non-fiction writing, ranging from essay to book length writing. The end-goal of this degree option is to produce a book. Students will also have the chance to:

- Be mentored by a published author.
- Learn how to craft stories.
- Develop critiquing abilities so as to understand from the audience's perspective what works and what does not.
- Learn writing techniques.

The third option further develops our internationally popular natural history and science filmmaking postgraduate diploma. In this option, core papers focus on filmmaking, the techniques involved, and the art and craft of preparing narratives. For this option, the end goals for students are to:

- Produce a commercial length film.
- Get work experience as an intern at Natural History New Zealand or in other institutions specialising in factual filmmaking.

- Learn camera and editing techniques.

Two appointments have been made for the new Science Communication Centre. Lloyd Davis, already director of the Natural History Filmmaking Unit, will take up the role of Stuart Professor of Science Communication. In addition, Jean Fleming, an original founder of the New Zealand International Science Festival, will be returning from three years in Australia as Professor of Science Communication.

For more information:

Course information email - sciencecommunication@otago.ac.nz

Course website - <http://www.sciencecommunication.info>

Otago enrolment information - <http://www.otago.ac.nz>

Hamilton Hosts Massive Science Celebration

On 12 October 2007, Hamilton hosted possibly the largest multi-disciplinary science celebration the Waikato has ever seen.

The inaugural 'Kudos' awards - the Hamilton Science Excellence Awards - were awarded to eight of the region's top scientists at a celebration event at Le Grand Boutique Hotel.

Award categories included Science Educator/ Communicator, won by Dr Alison Campbell, of the University of Waikato.

Hamilton Science Awards Trust Chairman, Hamilton Mayor Bob Simcock, said both the number and calibre of nominees made the judging task a challenging one. Almost 50 nominations were received for the eight award categories and the nominated scientists represented every major research organisation in the central Waikato region.

The eight award categories included: Medical Science, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Information and Computer Technology Science, Science Educator/Communicator, Emerging Science, Science Entrepreneur and a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Alison Campbell received a \$4000 award sponsored by Wintec.

She is a gifted educator and science communicator with the ability to communicate effectively to a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds. Previous recognition includes the 2005 New Zealand Association of Scientists' Science Communicator Award.

Dr Campbell is well-known around the Waikato and Bay of Plenty through her involvement in promoting science to school students and community groups. Many secondary biology students know her as the 'skull lady' as a result of her presentations on human evolution, using skull casts held by the University as props.

Other presentations cover topics as diverse as living with black swans (done as part of her PhD research), fish structure and function (for primary school students), her experiences in Antarctica, and the issue of pseudoscience and 'intelligent design' (which has also been the subject of radio interviews). Her skill in communicating about biological issues saw her invited to deliver a keynote address on the nature of science to the 2007 national biology teachers' conference, Biolive 2007.

Alison, with colleague Penny Cooke, launched the Hamilton branch of Café Scientifique in 2004, part of an international movement to involve the community in talking about scientific issues.

She has also made full use of new media communication, launching into the blogosphere with Bioblog. This is a site aimed at supporting year-13 Biology students and their teachers in preparing for New Zealand Scholarship exams. Alison was Team Leader of a group that developed the Evolution for Teaching website, and has written a considerable portion of the content for the site.

More information:

Bioblog – <http://www.sci.waikato.ac.nz/bioblog>

Evolution for teaching – <http://www.sci.waikato.ac.nz/evolution>

Hamilton Cafe Scientifique -

<http://www.sci.waikato.ac.nz/news/Lectures/CafeScientifique.shtml>

Waikato organisations sponsored the Kudos awards, providing financial support for cash and in-kind prizes totalling \$52,000. Sponsors include: The Perry Foundation, Environment Waikato, Hamilton City Council, James & Wells, Rural Link, University of Waikato, Waikato Innovation Park, WaikatoLink, Wintec and Waikato District Health Board.

CSTA Science Initiatives

The Canterbury Science Teachers Association has been an active and successful group for decades. This year it has initiated two significant programmes to further improve communication between its members and to support science education.

The first is the establishment of an email database of Canterbury science teachers so that individuals receive information directly, rather than through their organisations - where information transfer can stall. Historically CSTA members were from the secondary sector but the database, with its associated newsletters, has become highly effective at involving others. The challenge will now be keeping the database current and newsletters succinct.

The second initiative is the establishment of a CSTA website to test its usefulness at communicating information efficiently to Canterbury science educators. To date, the website has been highly successful and has attracted science related information from a wide range of organisations such as technicians, tertiary outreach programmes, regional and local councils.

International Polar Year (2007-2009) has been a recurring theme on the website.

Information Matters Ltd has very kindly hosted the website for the trial so far.

For more information: <http://www.csta.school.nz>

The Science Mirror

Victoria University Stout Research Centre resident Dr Peter Hodder recently gave a seminar called *The Science Mirror: Showing Our Science to Ourselves*.

The seminar focused the ways in which we portray science and technology at public exhibitions, and what this tells us about how we value research and scholarship. He compared the mid-nineteenth century, where international exhibitions and the nation's centenary were opportunities for New Zealand to show its achievements in technology and science to itself and the world, with the succeeding 'quiet' decades when DSIR dominated science.

Dr Hodder is currently writing a history of the public portrayal of science in New Zealand. It will trace the presentation of science from days of colonial exhibitions right through to science centres, science festivals, and recent arts-science collaborations.

His experience in this area includes establishing Hamilton's interactive science centre –EXSCITE (Explorations in Science and Technology), exhibition development and museum management knowledge, activities in science promotion, and a research career in science and education at Waikato University.

For more information: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/stout-centre>

ECOS Magazine is looking for NZ stories

ECOS, Australia's magazine on sustainability in industry, environment and community, covers emerging issues across the Asia-Pacific.

Science journalists are invited to make story submissions with New Zealand themes that will excite and interest national audiences. Ideas can include research stories, tech innovation, and personal or organisational achievement across the full spectrum of sustainability areas.

For more information, contact James Porteous (Managing Editor)

<http://www.publish.csiro.au/ecos>

Phone: +61 (0)3 9662 7604

Fax: +61 (0)3 9662 7600

SuperPlasticsMan available to download

In association with Professor Paul Callaghan and the MacDiarmid Institute, e-cast Ltd have produced a documentary, *SuperPlasticsMan*, the story of the late Alan MacDiarmid. It follows his life and work in the field of synthetic metals,

features interviews with family and colleagues, and shows footage of his 2000 tour around New Zealand following the award of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

The documentary is now available for streaming or downloading (for free) from either the e-cast HotScience site or from the MacDiarmid Institute site.

For more information:

<http://www.macdiarmid.ac.nz>

<http://www.hotscience.co.nz>

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➤ ***Forthcoming events***

What: **Looking for Darwin**

When: Tuesday 4 December, 5.30pm

Where: Hutton Theatre, Otago Museum, Dunedin

Themes: Lloyd Davis takes us on a journey from the Antarctic to the Galapagos in order to reach his personal South Pole: the answer to "What the hell am I doing here?"

Contact: adelie@stonebow.otago.ac.nz

What: **New Zealand Bioethics Conference**

When: February 1-3, 2008

Where: University of Otago, Dunedin

Themes: Wellbeing and Technology, including politics of technology, cultural and indigenous implications of technology, holistic health care, and reproductive technology

Website: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/nzbioethicsconference/>

Contact: Sally Boulton, Phone: (03) 487 6622, sally@events4you.co.nz

What: **Victoria University South Island Tour: Landmarks in the Evolution of Life**

When: Wednesday, 26 March until Tuesday, 8 April 2008

Where: Various Locations Throughout the South Island

Themes: This two-week tour will provide a unique opportunity to delve into the evolution of life in New Zealand. Although virtually all New Zealanders respect and admire our outstanding scenery, few see these landscapes in the light of their prehistoric background and recognise what they tell us about the history of this archipelago and its flora and fauna.

Contact: Lynne Davey, Phone: (04) 463 6550, lynne.davey@vuw.ac.nz

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➤ **Reading corner**

The Future of Public Engagement?

Should research grant money be tied to media impact as well as publication and citation impact? How do scientists start evolving their methods of communication so that they are picked up successfully? What are future directions of science communication? Is "framing" science just another way of spinning it? Two articles to look at here, the first by Matthew Nisbet and Dietram Scheufele. The second, "Scientists on Science", discusses the problem of framing science.

<http://www.the-scientist.com/article/home/53611/>

<http://www.the-scientist.com/article/home/53618/>

Science Has a "Serious Marketing Problem"

The presentation that kicked off the debate above. At the annual American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference in 2007, Google founder Larry Page discussed how scientists and engineers were wonderful citizens who could change the world, but noone would listen to them until they got over their marketing problem. Read the conference blog here:

http://news.aaas.org/index.php/news/am_page_plenary/id=127

Time for a change

Linda Cooper's blog looking at other, hopefully better, ways to write scientific articles. She argues that published science is unnecessarily difficult to read and understand, and that researchers need to be "trained" to write so that others can make use of it.

<http://network.nature.com/blogs/user/UA8E0D68F>

➤ **Bits and Bobs**

We've changed our postal address!

Please send correspondence to:

Science Communicators Association of New Zealand
PO Box 6052
Dunedin North
Dunedin 9059

Want to join SCANZ?

If you have an interest in communicating science and subscribe to the objectives of the organisation, you are welcome to join. Current members include working journalists, public relations professionals, academics, science festival staff, museum directors, policy advisers, students, scientists and researchers, and science leaders.

The membership fee for 12 months is \$80 (\$32 for full-time students).

Membership forms and instructions are available through the SCANZ website, at <http://www.scanz.co.nz/joinus.asp>

Updates for the Web

If you have something that you'd like publicised before the next newsletter (February 2008), please send it to either Karen Hartshorn (karen.hartshorn@otago.ac.nz) or Marilyn Head (marilyn@actrix.co.nz) and we will add it to the SCANZ website.

Want to get in touch?

Phil Johnstone, SCANZ Executive
Karen Hartshorn, Newsletter Editor

phil@imagine-that.co.nz
karen.hartshorn@otago.ac.nz

Next Newsletter

The next SCANZ newsletter is due in February 2008. If you have anything you'd like to contribute, please email Karen Hartshorn on karen.hartshorn@otago.ac.nz with your contributions - events, news and general science communication stories all welcome.

This will be the last you'll hear from us in 2007, so here's wishing you and yours a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year, from all of us at SCANZ.

We'll see you again in 2008, when we look forward to the next SCANZ Conference, regional events, and (fingers crossed) offerings at the 2008 International Science Festival!