

➤ ***From the President – Karen Hartshorn***



Welcome to this edition of the Science Communicators Association of New Zealand newsletter—my first as President. You'll find more information on the new committee in this issue; please feel free to contact us with your thoughts and ideas.

We've had a bit of a break since the last edition, so this one is really to let you know that the new SCANZ committee are up and running, and full of enthusiasm for 2008 and beyond.

Our first order of business is organising the 2008 SCANZ Conference, and I'm very pleased to let you know that it will be held in Dunedin this year, on the 10th-11th July. This coincides with both the International Science Festival and the Springboks v. All Blacks match on the 12th, so there are plenty of reasons to come down to Dunedin for a few days!

This year's conference is for anyone interested in science communication, but we have several events that will particularly interest those researchers who are also interested in widening and improving their general communication skills.

We'll hear from researchers actively engaging new and 'non-traditional' audiences for their work, using new tools, new technologies and new topics of interest. We'll see some of the products of their work and also how the internet, films, courses and issues will shape science communication in the future.

We'll also have a focus on communication, for and with Māori and local communities. We'll hear from a former Australian of the Year on the health research she does with aboriginal children in Western Australia, and how the results get communicated back to the community. We'll also hear from New Zealand researchers about efforts that are working with New Zealand, and particularly Māori, communities.

Finally, we'll introduce a new resource that will have a great influence on how science is communicated to the media—the brand-new Science Media Centre to be showcased as part of this year's conference.

All delegates at the SCANZ conference will be eligible for discounted tickets to Science Festival events, and this year we'll be able to provide accommodation as part of the conference registration.

We hope you'll join us in Dunedin this July, for two days of mind-widening and eye-opening presentations on science communication now and into the future.

Thanks, and enjoy this issue.



Karen Hartshorn

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► **News**

Putting pen to paper

Entries are now open for the 2008 Royal Society of New Zealand Manhire Prize for Creative Science Writing. The theme this year is evolution, in honour of Charles Darwin and the imminent 150th anniversary of "On The Origin of Species".

The topic you are asked to respond to is:

"The Universe makes rather an indifferent parent, I'm afraid," said Dickens' kindly Mr Jarndyce. Humans have evolved to understand and intervene in the unsentimental processes of nature. With some unfortunate and unintended consequences. Back to nature or on to the future?

There are fiction and non fiction categories, prizes of \$2500 for each, and the winning entries will be published in the New Zealand Listener. Entries close 15 August 2008. For full details see the current Listener, or go to <http://www.rsnz.org> and the competition is listed among recent items.

If you have any enquiries, call Glenda Lewis, Tel (04) 470 5758, or email glenda.lewis@rsnz.org

Managing the Science Media Centre

The Royal Society of New Zealand has announced the appointment of Peter Griffin as the Centre's founding manager of the MoRST-funded Science Media Centre.

The former technology editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, Peter Griffin is an award-winning journalist who has covered the technology beat for a decade in print, on TV and radio, and as the *Herald's* first daily blogger, he understands the pressures of the newsroom and the needs of busy reporters.

Upon accepting his position, Peter commented that "The science media centre will be a first stop for journalists when they are working on breaking stories that have a scientific element. But it will be more than that, a resource for general reporters and

broadcasters through to specialist writers and freelancers to gather background information and ideas for science-related stories.

Ultimately we want journalists and scientists talking to each other more so that there's greater coverage of science in the media that is balanced, accurate and relevant to the public."

The Centre will launch at the beginning of July. Peter begins his role on 9 June; in the meantime, please contact Bette Flagler for information (bette@flicka.co.nz 021 956 122).

Callaghan to step down

Professor Paul Callaghan will step down as Director of the MacDiarmid Institute for Advance Materials and Nanotechnology on 1 July and the Institute has begun the international search for a director for the government-funded Centre of Research Excellence.

Professor Callaghan will maintain his formal association with the Institute as Chair of the International Board, and with the University, and continue his public engagement work and advocacy for the benefits of scientific curiosity about basic, everyday experimentation.

New SCANZ executive committee

At the 2007 SCANZ AGM, Peter Burke and Nancy de Bueger announced their intentions to step down from their respective positions as SCANZ committee president and secretary/treasurer.

Since then several new members have been appointed to the committee, and the line-up is as follows:

Karen Hartshorn (President); Christine Ross (Secretary / Treasurer); Stephanie Gray (Newsletter editor); Katherine Trought; Kim Griggs; Justin Brownlie; Alison Campbell; Bette Flagler; Marilyn Head; Deirdre Viviers, and Emma Timewell.

A manifesto from the National Science Panel

Earlier this year the National Science Panel—comprising leading scientists and research leaders—developed a plan to mitigate the barriers that limit the contribution that research, science and technology make in New Zealand.

Contracted by the Royal Society, and under the chairmanship of Dr Jim Watson, the Panel consulted widely to evaluate the challenges facing New Zealand and the role of science in addressing those. After a year of research and analysis, including interviews with many senior officials who directly influence the state of the country's science, and discussions with business leaders, the panel came to the conclusion that the nation has failed to develop a system that appropriately uses its scientific capability.

The panel is convinced that, while New Zealand science has a record to be proud of, it is beset by chronic, severe and systemic problems. These require more than just additional investment if the science system is to be an effective agent of change.

Their resulting plans have been published in summary form as *A Science Manifesto or plan for the recovery of New Zealand Science*.

In the manifesto the panel recommends urgent action on 10 key initiatives:

1. Develop a National Science Strategy
2. Establish an Office of the Chief Scientist
3. Enhance innovation policy
4. Ensure that government policy processes are evidence-based
5. Reduce transaction and compliance costs
6. Continue to increase both public and private investment in research, science and technology
7. Improve the path to commercialisation
8. Promote science across the entire education system
9. Build national recognition of the public value of science
10. Build trust in science, scientists and scientific institutions

The full report can be downloaded as a PDF from the RSNZ website.

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➤ ***Forthcoming events***

What: Panel discussion: How to reduce global carbon emissions

Who: Institute of Policy Studies and Climate Change Research Institute, Victoria University.

When: Thursday 5 June, 12:15 - 1:45pm.

Where: Rutherford House, 23 Lambton Quay (northern end), Wgtn

Theme: The challenge of reducing global carbon emissions, as well as the specific issues facing New Zealand. A free event to be chaired by Radio New Zealand presenter Chris Laidlaw. Speakers include Dr Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme; President Anote Tong of the Republic of Kiribati and Climate Change Minister David Parker.

Website: <http://ips.ac.nz/events/Upcoming%20events/index.html>

Contact: jonathan.boston@victoria.ac.nz

What: Public lecture: Cellular Approaches to Cancer and Drug Abuse

Who: Professor John Miller, Faculty of Science, Victoria University

When: 17 June 6pm

Where: Council Chamber, Level 2, Hunter Building, Kelburn Parade, Wellington.

Theme: Anticancer drugs and the impacts of drug abuse on the brain. Peloruside—a natural product developed from sea sponges found in the Pelorus Sound—is under development at Victoria University as an anticancer drug. Professor Miller will discuss its potential impact on cancer treatment, and will also present the results from his neurobiological study of changes in the brain during and after chronic drug use.

Contact: Email rsvp@vuw.ac.nz with 'Miller' in the subject line (acceptances only) or phone 04-463 5283 to register your interest in attending.

What: 5th Annual SCANZ Conference
When: 10-11 July
Where: John McGlashan School, Dunedin
Themes: New and innovative methods of science communications, science journalism in NZ, engagement with Māori, the NZ Science Media Centre and more!
Website: <http://www.scanz.co.nz/>
Contact: Karen.hartshorn@otago.ac.nz

What: New Zealand International Science Festival
When: July 5-13
Where: Citywide, Dunedin
Website: <http://www.scifest.org.nz>
Contact: director@scifest.org.nz

What: National schools science competition (yrs 1-13)
When: Years 9-13 competition closes 31st July 2008
Years 1-4, 5-8 competitions close 31st October 2008
Themes: Rutherford, social science, invention, ethics, physics
Website: www.outreach.canterbury.ac.nz
Contact: rutherford2008@canterbury.ac.nz

What: 2008 Science Honours Dinner
When: Tuesday 11 November 2008
Where: Wellington Foyer, Te Papa Museum, Wellington
Themes: Gala Dinner to celebrate and present the top science awards and medals
Website: <http://www.rsnz.org/events/sciencehonours/index.php>
Contact: faith.atkins@rsnz.org

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➤ *Eyes and ears*

University of Otago Distinguished Communicator Lecture Series
http://www.sciencecommunication.biz/Centre_for_Science_Communication/Lecture_Series/Lecture_Series.html

Grow your own meat—one of many podcasts available from Radio NZ.
<http://www.radionz.co.nz/podcasts/thiswayup.rss>

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 in August, please send it to either Karen Hartshorn karen.hartshorn@otago.ac.nz or Stephanie Gray stephanie.gray@vuw.ac.nz and we will add it to the SCANZ website.

Want to get in touch?

Karen Hartshorn, President

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Stephanie Gray, Newsletter Editor

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Next Newsletter

The next SCANZ newsletter is due in August 2008. If you have anything you'd like to contribute, please email Stephanie Gray with your contributions—events, news and general science communication stories all welcome.

Here's wishing you the best until we meet again in Dunedin for the 5th Annual SCANZ Conference—bring your woollies!