



SEJournal

Winter 2011-12, Vol. 21 No. 4



EPA's Lost Photo Archive

- Getting started as a freelancer
- Who leads climate change coverage?
- Lorax lessons for today

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In an effort to draw public attention to the serious energy crisis Oregon was experiencing in November, 1973, Governor Tom McCall brought a kerosene lamp into his office. David Falconer photographed the event for the Environmental Protection Agency's expansive Project Documerica (see story, page 16).

PHOTO BY DAVID FALCONER, EPA-DOCUAMERICA / NARA

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Transparency Watch project raises serious concerns about government access

By CAROLYN WHETZEL



A recent project by *Columbia Journalism Review* and ProPublica revealed it's not just SEJ members who have a tough time gaining access to federal information or scheduling interviews with scientists or other experts at federal agencies.

Results of the *CJR*/ProPublica survey of science, health care, environmental, and other journalists found many others experience the same frustrations in dealing with federal agencies as SEJ members do when trying to speak to government sources or simply get comment or reaction to breaking news.

The survey and related story, "Transparency Watch: A Closed Door," by *CJR*'s Curtis Brainard in the magazine's September/October issue, was the first of a series of efforts this fall by journalism groups and news organizations to raise concerns over transparency and access issues at government agencies. (More details on the survey will follow.)

SEJ teamed up with *CJR* and the National Press Club to host an Oct. 3 event called "Access Denied: Science News and Government Transparency" in Washington.

Brainard and SEJ former President Tim Wheeler organized the panel of journalists moderated by Seth Borenstein of the Associated Press. The journalists shared their experiences in dealing with federal agencies during the Obama administration and prior administrations. (Environmental Protection Agency officials, however, did not respond to repeated invitations by both Brainard and Wheeler to participate).

Politico's Darren Samuelsohn, one of the panelists, reported the Obama administration had processed freedom of information requests requested under the Bush administration.

Felice Freyer, a medical reporter for *The Providence Journal* and board member of the Association of Health Care Journalists, shared how the Food and Drug Administration press office had her jump through hoops for comments on a story, only to end up days later with no comment.

Stories in the *High Country News*, *NewsPro*, and other publications followed, focusing both on the *CJR*/ProPublica survey and individual experiences of journalists.

A series of reports by other groups grading the Obama administration on transparency and access issues have also been released in recent months, many of which SEJ's watchdog Joe Davis has posted on SEJ.org. Like the *CJR*/ProPublica survey and even the anecdotal evidence SEJ has collected, the latest studies conclude that while the Obama administration has made some progress in making some information and data more accessible to the public, it is still has a long way to go in

providing the transparent and open government it promised.

The 400 journalists *CJR*/ProPublica polled — a random sample of members of SEJ, the Association of Health Care Journalists, the National Association of Science Writers, and Investigative Reporters and Editors — gave the Obama administration generally poor marks on access and transparency issues, but found marginal improvement over the Bush administration.

"The outcome of the poll was not exactly what I expected," Brainard told me.

Conversations Brainard had with journalists prior to the survey indicated many believed transparency and access had grown worse under the Obama administration, he said.

Also, Brainard said the survey indicated that journalists who spend the most time working with the government were likely to give the Bush and Obama administrations "poor" grades overall for transparency/access.

"I would have thought that people who spend more time working government have established better lines of access and therefore feel less frustrated," Brainard said. "The idea that the more you try to gain access the more disappointed you are, is really worrisome."

Brainard said younger reporters that he spoke to as part of the survey were not as concerned about transparency and access problems. "I suppose that's likely due to the fact that, unlike their older colleagues, they can't remember a time when they didn't have to jump through so many hoops to get hold of an expert or piece of information," he said.

"I've had a lot of terrific feedback on the transparency piece and the event at press club from frustrated journalists who were gratified to *CJR*, as well as journalism groups such as SEJ, AHCJ, and NASW, for tackling ongoing problems related to access," Brainard said. "I received dozens of compliments from journalists and watchdogs of all stripes, many of whom shared stories about obstruction and obfuscation that they'd encountered while reporting on science, health, and the environment."

CJR plans to continue tracking these issues as part of its ongoing transparency project (<http://www.cjr.org/transparency/>), Brainard said.

Meanwhile, SEJ will continue its work to address transparency and access issues.

Last year SEJ submitted comments on draft scientific integrity policies proposed by NOAA and EPA. In both submissions, SEJ

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Exploring the narrative form

“The Lorax speaks for the trees.” But do e-beat writers too often reach for that bad-news narrative?

By MICHELLE NIJHUIS

There’s a lot of genuine tragedy on the environmental beat, and it doesn’t take a partisan to see it. There’s not a whole lot to like about water pollution, or crop failures, or mass extinction. But I wonder if environmental journalists, steeped as we are in bad news, reach too quickly for the Lorax narrative. You know how it goes: The Lorax speaks for the trees, the rest of us keep buying the needs, and for hope all we get is the Once-ler’s last seed.

Are there other ways to tell environmental stories? With Christopher Booker’s *Seven Basic Plots* as a field guide, I’ve been searching for examples of environmental journalism with other-than-tragic narratives — archetypal frameworks that still fit the facts, but startle the reader out of his or her mournful stupor. I’ve found some good ones, and I’d love to hear about more.

The **Overcoming the Monster** narrative often shows up in invasive-species stories. For one recent and hilarious example, check out this Aug. 10 story (<http://bit.ly/uHmR4L>) from *Esquire* about Argentine ants. (“They’re not in your underwear by accident. They’re nation-building.”) For a different kind of struggle against a very different kind of monster, listen to “Just Another Fish Story,” (<http://tinyurl.com/6sp8vqc>), a gem of a radio piece about a small Maine town’s attempt to cope with a beached whale.

A wonderful example of the **Rags to Riches** narrative at work in an environmental story is “Wild Eyes,” a Radiolab piece about big-cat conservationist Alan Rabinowitz and his lifelong connection with animals. (Rabinowitz told the story himself on the Moth stage at <http://themoth.org/stories/man-and-beast>.)

The **Quest** narrative is common in science stories: Scientist sets out on a journey of discovery, faces obstacles, and ultimately overcomes them (or not). I’ve been on a John McPhee binge lately, so I’ll cite “Atchafalaya,” the colossal *New Yorker* story that’s also the first chapter of his book *The Control of Nature*. Here, the earnest but short-sighted hero is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and its quest — to keep the wandering Mississippi on its current course — is surely doomed.

The **Voyage and Return** narrative is similar to the **Quest**, except that the hero returns home with the wisdom earned from his or her adventure. For an unusual example, read Edwin Dobb’s personal story about his love of open-water swimming, and what he’s learned about wilderness from his progressively longer, colder swims. It can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/7q5dlvy>

Finding the **Comedy** narrative in environmental journalism isn’t as tough as it sounds: as psychologist John Fraser points out

environmental stories are full of comedies of errors in his story on Grist (<http://tinyurl.com/6q2r7oc>).

(The problem is that most are missing their happy endings.) Earlier this year, I wrote an appreciation of Ian Frazier’s genius story “Hogs Wild,” (<http://tinyurl.com/8a54v68>) in which humans and feral hogs play the comedic leads in an essentially tragic tale.

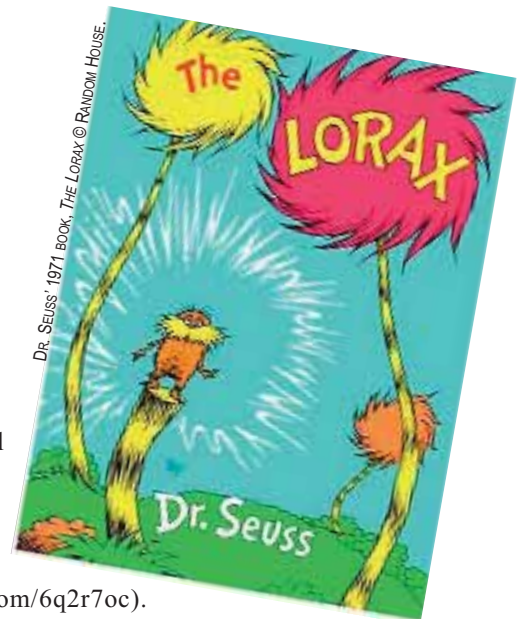
Environmental journalists occasionally get to dig out the **Rebirth** narrative, though we often find its dark side. I recently edited Brad Tyer’s poignant *High Country News* story about Opportunity, Montana, a small town destined to be the victim of a much-celebrated Superfund cleanup. The **Rebirth** story of the cleanup has been told many times; Tyer flipped the archetype and found what lay forgotten underneath.

Last but not least is our old friend **Tragedy**. I’ll spare you countless possible examples and leave you with one especially memorable story: “Tuna’s End,” an excerpt from Paul Greenberg’s book *Four Fish*. “Tuna then are both a real thing and a metaphor,” Greenberg writes. “Literally they are one of the last big public supplies of wild fish left in the world. Metaphorically they are the terminus of an idea: that the ocean is an endless resource where new fish can always be found.”

Sometimes, the Lorax is just the fastest way to the truth.

Editor’s note: This story was originally posted on the science and science writing blog, <http://www.lastwordonnothing.com>, which touts “Science: clear, crafty, and delivered to your door.” Interesting comments followed the post including a couple suggestions of other narrative forms — David v. Goliath or, to use more modern terms Erin Brockovich and, finally, Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing.

Michelle Nijhuis lives in western Colorado, between the foothills of the Rockies and the redrock canyons of southeastern Utah. A lapsed biologist, she specializes in long-form stories. In 2011, as an Alicia Patterson Foundation fellow, she reported on radical measures to conserve endangered species. She’s also a longtime editor of High Country News.





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To strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues

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The first public gathering of the Cousteau family at the conference; left to right, Alexandra, Céline, Fabien, Jean-Michel and Philippe Cousteau. PHOTO © Jenny Abreu.

SEJ's 2011 annual conference in Miami achieves many firsts, setting new standard

By JAY LETTO

The Miami extravaganza was easily SEJ's most ambitious annual conference ever. The star-studded Wednesday evening opening reception set the stage for a whirlwind of activity and news-making field trips and presentations that kept members running and writing till they collapsed Sunday morning at the peaceful Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Hosted by the University of Miami at the InterContinental Hotel, SEJ's 21st Annual Conference set records and had many firsts, including:

- First time the whole Cousteau clan appeared on stage together.
- First scuba dive and first swamp walk.
- Most speakers, most panels, most tours ever.

- A registration record with 938, just nipping the former record of 937 at Stanford in 2007.

Miami also was the most diverse, with attendees from all continents and at least 25 countries. This was a reflection of SEJ's re-energized Diversity Task Force and our partnerships with the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, *Poder Magazine* and the Americas Business Council Foundation, the Transatlantic Media Network of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

In addition to the whole Cousteau family, Wednesday's opening reception included Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, University of Miami President Donna Shalala, a live link with a

very moving scientist from Antarctica that left nary a dry eye in the house, and, of course, Carl Hiaasen, whose vivid descriptions of various politicians falling prey to invasive Burmese pythons in the Everglades, and excited captive dolphins in pools, among other sordid humor, had 500 attendees pounding the tables.

The most valuable aspect of the SEJ conference, according to the evaluation forms, was the same as every year — the networking opportunities. But, this year had a twist: A huge part of the networking value involved actually getting story assignments and other work, as opposed to just ideas, sources, and camaraderie.

Other highlights from the evaluations: Networking and work opportunities were cited over and over as the main value of the conference. Here are a couple examples of typical responses: “I met three editors who are likely to give me a freelance writing assignment. I got a half dozen good ideas for stories to pitch to editors.” “I made numerous contacts for future interviews plus received several unexpected story leads.”

Several also cited opportunities to interview top sources, like National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Jane Lubchenco, U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis and others.

A new member attending his first conference wrote: “I was invigorated by new story ideas, great article contacts, and all kinds of info I learned in sessions. I absolutely loved this conference.

I knew I'd like it, but it far exceeded my expectations. LOVED IT!!!!”

Other similar responses: “On at least two occasions editors approached me with opportunities for ongoing freelancing, rather than the other way around. These instances happened spontaneously after conversation or after I had asked questions during panel discussions and tours, and they would only happen with my presence and participation in the conference.”

“I got a contract for a story (although that was in the works prior to the conference). I had a promising initial talk with a book editor. I was asked by an editor to pitch a story. I had a good talk with someone from a high profile outlet who expressed interest in a partnership with my entrepreneurial journalism project.”

“I gave my editor a list of five stories (including an exclusive) I got from SEJ. It was wonderful.”

Eighty-six percent of survey respondents cited “new contacts and networking opportunities” as the highest value of the conference; 64 percent cited “deeper understanding of the issues.”

Both Wednesday workshops garnered great praise. Something similar is planned already for next year in Lubbock. The opening reception garnered more praise than any past opening nights. Of the 90 who answered the question, 81 percent rated it “excellent” or “very good,” and no one rated it below “okay.”

While Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and the Cousteaus had mixed reviews, everyone loved Carl Hiaasen and the live link to Antarctica. Typical responses were: “It went on a bit long, but it

Speaker 'Live from Antarctica' via a satellite link to the Palmer Research Station during the conference's opening evening. PHOTO BY KATIE SIKORA, *THE MIAMI PLANET*.





Participants in Everglades outing learned a whole new meaning for getting one's feet wet in the pursuit of their craft. PHOTO BY CHRISTINE WOODSIDE.

was terrific.” “A top-notch group of people that will be hard to top at future conferences.” “Fabulous line-up! Almost too much.. Carl Hiaasen was stellar, a high point of the entire conference. Skypecast from Palmer Station was also good; Salazar interesting but nothing unexpected there; Cousteaus interesting. Hiaasen definitely the best, and that's saying a lot given the all-star line-up.”

SEJ's signature tours were extremely popular. Eighty percent of respondents rated six Thursday tours “Excellent” with the rest rating it at “Very good.” Perhaps most tellingly, only one of 97 respondents rated the tours below “Okay.” Here's a typical response: “This tour offered everything you could ask for — newsmakers, a great outdoors experience, knowledgeable tour guides, wonderful food, beautiful weather and, as a bonus, a huge argument on the bus ride back to the hotel (which I quoted in my story on the trip).”

The mini-tours all received generally good ratings and the post-conference tour to The Keys received all “Excellent” scores.

Reviews of the plenaries were mixed, although the Saturday lunch plenary on climate change and extreme weather had a whopping 91 percent “Excellent” or “Very good” rating.

A close read of members' specific comments reveals their diverse opinions about session formats and specific speakers and topics. Commonly, one evaluation expresses over-the-top praise for a speaker, while the next totally pans that same speaker. This has been the norm throughout the years, and SEJ conference

planners generally try to provide something for everybody, and recognize that you can't please everybody all the time. For example, one respondent wrote: “Sylvia Earle was a major disappointment because she gave a canned presentation suitable for any general audience and didn't leave time for questions.” But another stated: “She's brilliant and so articulate!”

The most well-attended concurrent sessions included: Freelance Pitch Slam; BP Spill and Future of Offshore Drilling; Pollution Politics and Environmental Budgets; Criminal Enforcement of Environmental Laws; and Data Tools You Need Now.

Concurrent sessions that gained the most consistent praise include: Climate Change as a Cultural Issue; Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples; Diseases and Chemicals; Florida's Iconic Critters; Coral Reefs and Ocean Acidification; and Media Critics Dissect Science and Environmental Journalism.

The beat dinners and network lunches remain popular and allow organizers to include many more member ideas and specific topics and speakers, i.e., a smorgasbord of options, as opposed to a keynoter that all must listen to whether they are interested or not.

Attendees also loved the Sunday morning program at Fairchild Garden, which proved to be a great place to wind down following the Saturday evening chaos.

As with past conferences, though, there were some complaints. The venue was expensive, and SEJ tried mightily to make it as affordable as possible for our members. But some



Interior Secretary Ken Salazar (left) accompanied journalists on a field trip to the Everglades.
PHOTO BY NATALIE EDGAR, *THE MIAMI PLANET*.

things proved out of our hands, and the InterContinental Hotel changed many things on us, leading to considerably more expense than expected for both SEJ and our members.

And, of course, the Saturday night dinner, awards program and eco-fashion show, well, had some problems.

We bused attendees to South Beach for a one-of-a-kind sustainable seafood dinner, organized by the Monterey Bay Aquarium, at Eden restaurant, and then headed over to the hip Setai hotel for our awards program and an eco-fashion show. While SEJ organizers pride ourselves on fixing problems as they occur, the problems at Eden, and particularly Setai, proved to be not fixable.

We didn't have the Sustainable Seafood dinner in the evaluation form, but many respondents cited it as a problem. "Most definitely never, ever would have ... ate so little for a \$35 dinner before," one wrote. Many others complained about the small size of the servings and the lack of adequate vegetarian fare, as well as the restaurant being too crowded.

As for the awards program and eco-fashion show, these were common responses: "Awful. Embarrassing. We owe a big apology to our winners." "What were y'all thinking?"

Okay, deserved. SEJ has apologized publicly and privately to the award winners, and I want to underscore here how deflated the entire conference team felt by letting down our winners and the entire membership. Please accept our sincere apologies and know we tried our best to make this work.

There was one great thing about the awards program this year (other than the impromptu runway strutting by several members) — that is, it garnered way more response in the evaluation forms than ever before!

Really, it was painful reading those responses, but

not as painful as actually trying to make things work in the moment when we learned of numerous promises renege, and tried, perhaps all-too desperately, to make the best of things.

What all went wrong at Setai would take too long to explain here. Suffice to say from your finally dried out conference director, it was a true "when in Rome" opportunity, and we gave it our best shot, and, well, nobody died.

Finally, my personal favorite response: "It could have been great, but restaurant was too exclusive for us, wouldn't let us sit and sound system wasn't working correctly. Still, an interesting experience to see how folks live — high on the hog — on the land-based Titanic. All will be underwater soon, not just Jay's left foot."

For the record, it was my right foot, and I did still manage to stay mostly above water.

You know that everything's bigger in Texas, so we're gonna offer our in-house fashion models a bigger challenge next October: We're going to build the runway over a feedlot and see who's still brave enough to strut their stuff.

Herd 'em up, head 'em out... see y'all in Lubbock.

Jay Letto is SEJ's conference director and one of only two who has attended every SEJ conference (the other being founding president Jim Detjen).

Robert McClure of InvestigateWest gets his point across during a Q & A session.
PHOTO: © JENNY ABREU.



Miami according to Helvarg

SEJ declared an invasive species by South Beach club owners

By DAVID HELVARG



MIAMI -- Environmental journalists are only the latest invasives to spread across south Florida, threatening native species including slash grass, poisonwood, mosquitoes and real-estate agents. This raises one of those complex questions we as reporters are forced to grapple with: is sea-level rise that may soon overwhelm Florida a problem or a solution? Things are so exotic here I encountered my first endangered species at the airport — Beth Daley, a newspaper reporter. At one point Occupy Miami protesters appeared across from the Intercontinental Hotel, where I figured some rich people must be staying. As it turned out it was just a bunch of U.S. and Latin journalists trying to imitate the fabulous Miami lifestyle of a Gloria Estefan or a Jeff Burnside.

The welcome dinner speakers' roster Wednesday included Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, who illustrated the Obama administration's commitment to conserving energy with his low-impact talk that was also an example of recycling. Taking on the role of Jerry Springer, Jeff got five Cousteaus to appear on stage together for the first time. Jean-Michel handed batons to the younger generation and to Jeff's obvious discomfort they failed to hit each other with them. I can understand the anti-GMO banner at the protest rally as the Cousteaus are obviously a genetic experiment gone right. Not to say they're unusually attractive, but Florida's last flamingo was reported to have fled the state shortly after their appearance. There was also a live feed from Antarctica that was cool, though the easiest way to experience climate variability was to walk into the hotel, where the air conditioning was calibrated to stun manatees.

Carl Hiaasen was a hoot (and wrote *Hoot*, too!), though I'd have to disagree with his claim that an Everglades python could take down presidential candidate Michele Bachmann. Between those two invasives, I'd fear for the snake.

Thursday's investigative field trips included scuba diving, sport fishing, shark tagging and riding around in airboats. I opted to study the impact of humidity on a highly chlorinated body of water from my poolside recliner. Luckily my roommate Bill returned from his tour jazzed at Miami's garbage-to-energy plant. Thank goodness there are a few enviro-journalists who remember that sometimes you just have to stop working and have some fun by visiting a landfill or toxic waste dump or analyzing an EPA spreadsheet.

Thursday evening I got to see predatory mammalian behavior, watching reporters cruise the exhibition hall for pens and notebooks before hitting the hospitality suites for booze and food. With some 1,000 attendees this year, the Exhibition Hall had everyone from the Sierra Club to the American Petroleum Institute,

Texas Tech (host of next year's conference/dust storm) and, no bull, the Fertilizer Institute.

Next morning at 7 a.m. (ouch) our conference co-chair launched the panels, what he called the "basic meat and potatoes," of an SEJ conference — though these were more fish and chips. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Dr. Jane Lubchenco reported oceans are 30 percent more acidic than a century ago. Keeping it acidic, an AP reporter asked why she was such a lousy communicator, to which she responded with a snappy 12-minute rejoinder. In honor of the "Fish Fight" follow-up session, the hotel kept the temperature set to assure the fish wouldn't defrost. There was also some talk of depletion of forage fish like the sardine and the anchovy, though I can't see them becoming a big story. In keeping with our ocean theme, lunch bags provided by the hotel also maintained the same ratio of plastic to food as there is plastic to phytoplankton in the Pacific gyre.

Friday's SEJ annual meeting included 15 board members seated behind a long red table and an election in which three candidates successfully ran for three positions. Apparently the reason the Cubans cancelled the post-conference trip to the island is they thought we were mocking their Politburo.

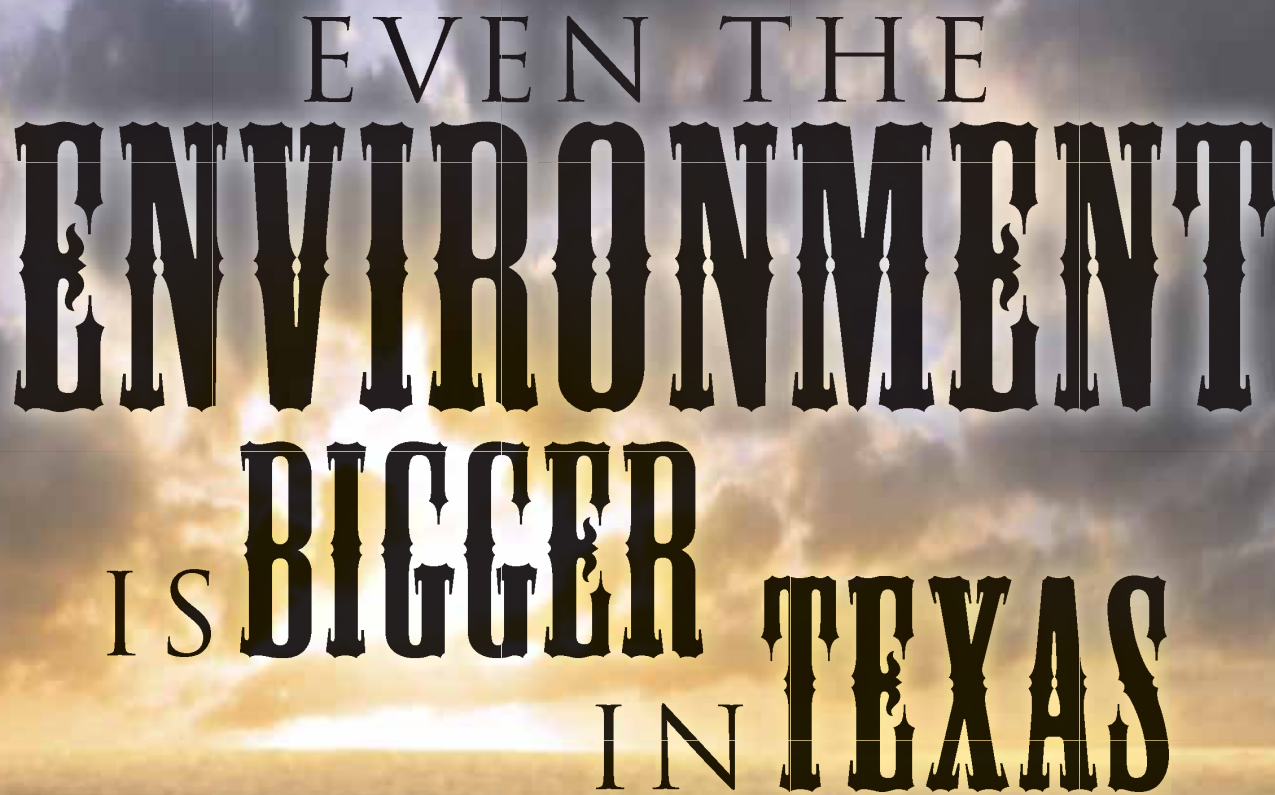
Friday night's network dinners were great except for "Science, Denial & Global Warming," as half those who signed up didn't think it was really happening.

Saturday's sessions were all good. I learned, for example, that the U.S. Congress is very concerned that if Cuba starts drilling for oil off Florida, why can't we? The afternoon mini-tours included kayaking near the proposed port dredge site, though I thought a wider range of perspectives might have included a Jet-Ski rental option. Others got to tour the *Golden Shadow*, a 219-foot yacht/research vessel run by a Saudi Prince with its own nine-passenger float plane and ... I'm sorry, why exactly did Occupy Miami target the low-paid journalists?

Saturday night started at Eden, a South Beach restaurant where we got to eat tasty sustainable seafood while squeezed together like sardines, I mean forage fish. I think the panel of ocean experts standing up front might have been talking about marine noise pollution but I couldn't really hear.

From there, we headed over to the eco-fashion show at Setai Hotel club. The bartender told me they only use sugar from Mauritius (off East Africa) in their mojitos. I assume this is to protest the environmental impacts of Florida sugar. I have to admit it was the best \$21 mojito I ever drank. After the SEJ Awards, a string of models sashayed down the catwalk through the palms,

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EVEN THE
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So now you're a freelancer. Here are some very important things to consider.

By BUD WARD

O.K. You're a freelancer now.

You may be fresh out of school or a wizened veteran, perhaps unceremoniously “down-sized.”

Or, there again, you may yet become one, as so many of your former newsroom colleagues already have.

Now what?

Look around you. So many of your SEJ colleagues nowadays are in that same camp. As such, many might well be your mentors and, let's acknowledge, many may also be among your competitors. Either way, you can learn from them.

But to return to the question: You're a freelancer...now what?

Being More than 'Just' a Journalist

It all starts with your attitude, and with the skill set you bring to the freelance challenge and develop along the way.

First, you will need to think like an entrepreneur. Yes, an entrepreneur, something not traditionally taught in J-schools. Think like a business person. Ditto the above point. Be entrepreneurial ... and learn how to artfully self-promote — social media, etc. This is not necessarily easy, given that so many of us went into this field specifically to avoid such demands.

The Health Insurance Question

In U.S. society, this is, unfortunately, a big one. Covered or not covered? How, how much, and by whom? Writers newly unemployed, after the relative security of a salaried position over the past few years, certainly will find their options greatly expanded if an employer-paid or subsidized health care program isn't one of their greatest and most immediate needs.

Forget about “COBRA” and other helpful but short-term assists, we're talking health coverage here. Have it, perhaps through a spouse or significant other, and that's one consideration that need not drive — need not even be among the key drivers of — your next steps. Whew! Without it, all else may become more difficult, and almost certainly will become more costly. But it's by no means impossible depending, more than any other one thing, on your own health, both physical and mental, and temperament.

The Cash Flow Issue

You may be used to the seeming assuredness of a paycheck hitting that bank account like clockwork, every other week or at least once a month, providing invaluable peace of mind. But you're a freelancer now, so *Fuggedaboutit*.

If you can afford, both financially and psychologically, to

evaluate your self-worth — and, not unimportantly, also pay your bills — based on what you earn over a longer time frame, that can be like gold in the bank. (Well, not exactly.)

So, let's say you've been comfortable bringing home X-hundred bucks every two weeks. What would happen if instead, and for purposes of discussion only initially, you were to bring home 12X-hundred bucks every three months or so, sliced up as no bucks at all in some weeks but twice-X in some other weeks. Get the picture?

If cash flow isn't the immediate financial or psychological need (you have some savings socked away and maybe even a severance to get you going) ...

If you can make do with making only a percentage of your previous standard take-home for the first several weeks, or even months ...so long as you close out the year pretty close to what you “need” ...

All that too can shape those early freelance months. Or years.

Incorporate: Should I? Or Shouldn't I?

The late physician and popular author Richard Carlson made a fortune with his “Don't Sweat the Small Stuff” advice books and variations on that theme.

Take it to heart: the issue of whether to incorporate or not incorporate need not be a burdensome question for most freelancers. You might decide to, and you might decide not to — either way, your decision is reversible down the road.

There are costs, mind you. Costs of incorporating and costs of not incorporating. There are also benefits of both approaches. Saw that one coming, didn't you?

Protecting your own and your immediate family's resources from liability — for instance, some polluter's crying foul that you reported that their emissions stink up the place — is one important consideration. “Ain't-a-gonna-happen,” you might well be thinking, and there's no doubt that many, make that most, freelancers can make it through their entire careers without ever having been sued for libel or slander.

Last I checked — and I caution you here that it's been some years now — costs of incorporation were pretty reasonable. Once incorporated, of course, there are other important obligations: like completing corporate tax returns and meeting monthly or quarterly corporate income reporting requirements, unemployment compensation expenses, and the like.

Planning to pay yourself a salary out of the corporate earnings? No doubt yes, in all but the fewest cases. Best advice I ever got when I initially incorporated in 1982 — retain an outside

firm to handle your payroll and reporting obligations. Yes, even if you are the sole employee. Take this one seriously, for missing even a seemingly “minor” reporting requirement can cost you lots and lots, both in time and in money. Firms like ADP and Paychex are among the reputable nationwide providers of these kinds of services for small businesses, though Intuit/Quicken and others also can meet these needs.

Oh yes. A corporate accountant. Not cheap, but having an accountant may be another worthwhile expense *if* you incorporate.

And if you don’t? It’s not necessarily a big deal. (And don’t swallow all the Kool-Aid of those telling you customers will be more likely to flock to you as a corporate entity than as an individual. It’s just not clear that that’s the case.) Many, probably most, of those same expenses that would be deductible as legitimate corporate expenses are deductible too to individuals claiming them as allowable.

Moral here: Don’t sweat it, and by no means make it a big drawn-out time-crunching decision, on whether to incorporate or not. Get some advice, follow your instincts ... and revisit it down the road in a few months or so.

Your Business Expenses

So you’d gotten comfortable during all those salaried years, or while living off your parents’ largesse, to having been provided niceties such as ...

- Writing pads, pens, and pencils, maybe even a mouse pad or stapler;
- An office desk (a desk period) and chair, a radio to stay abreast of breaking news, maybe even a newspaper subscription

(Remember those? Okay, then a digital subscription!);

- A laptop, a computer case, maybe even a suitcase for those business trips to the annual SEJ meeting and elsewhere;
- A desk lamp, a cell phone, magazine subscriptions, a book case.

If these are things you need as a self-employed individual, keep the receipts! Pay from a separate credit card and not the one you use for your personal stuff. Keep records of your personal and corporate mileage, of business-related purchases big and small, and of repairs and service calls. Of anything that would be legitimately deductible. Become the invoice and receipt hoarder you never wanted to be!

The Big Picture

Life after employment for a writer or journalist isn’t just a challenge. It’s a thrill. Expect ups and downs. Be prepared for longer hours, longer days, longer weeks than you would ever have committed for “da man.”

But there’s one big difference, and it’s your difference ... because they’re your hours, your choice.

Being a freelancer, particularly in exceptionally challenging times for both journalism and for the general economy, can be extraordinarily challenging ...but even more rewarding.

Nobody said it’s supposed to be easy.

Bud Ward, one of the co-founders of SEJ, is editor of The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media, published by Yale University’s School of Forestry & Environmental Studies and its Yale Project on Climate Change Communication.

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DOCUMERICA,

Long dormant EPA photojournal

By ROGER ARCHIBALD

Jeremy Herliczek, a Michigan State University graduate student and photographer, was searching the internet in 2006 for a new project idea, using the terms “environmental” and “photo.” One result led him to a photo. He clicked on it. And soon one photo followed another. He had entered a world of vital images he didn’t even know existed. The feeling, he recalled, “was like finding the Ark of the Covenant in that wooden crate in the huge Government warehouse where it’s being stored at the end of Raiders of the Lost Ark.”

Herliczek had discovered the lost treasure of Documerica, a photo archive that has lain dormant and largely invisible for nearly four decades. Born in the first year of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s existence, Documerica contains thousands of color photographs depicting a nation and its environmental problems in the early 1970s, the advent of the modern environmental movement in America. Documerica depicted strip mining, America’s car culture and the vast air pollution problems of a nation just coming to grips with some of its most important regulatory efforts.

Today, Documerica’s rediscovery is giving birth to another new and important photojournalism effort. The EPA has initiated a new project, a State of the Environment Photo Project, that could be dubbed Docuworld, inviting participants from all over, not just the United States, to submit their work. The new EPA effort includes Location Challenge, which seeks to have photographers replicate the same scenes depicted in the original Documerica photographs forty years ago.

Herliczek was so inspired by his accidental discovery of Documerica that he set about building a web site to promote Documerica, with helpful hints for journalists to ease access to the Archives. The Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University even financed a research trip he took to the National Archives to learn more about the collection.

It now hosts the site he developed at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/2bdo33u>.

Herliczek was not alone in his surprise. In 2009, Jerry Simmons worked at the National Archives, as leader of the ‘Authority’ team that performs special cataloging functions, when he was assigned to clean up errors in the collection’s records. In Documerica, he expected to find old black and white photos; instead, “they were all in color, thousands of them.” In an effort to “piece together where they’d all come from,” Simmons worked his way “back through the contrail” they’d left in the Archives, as he puts it, to discover their source. When he found it, he was amazed that he’d never heard of the collection before, even while working under the same roof.



BEFORE & AFTER: Documerica photographer Bill Gillette shot this aerial view of Telluride, CO in May, 1972, before it became a ski resort. By 2004, skiing was well established and the mini town had grown. BEFORE PHOTO BY BILL GILLETTE, EPA-DOCUMERICA / NARA AFTER PHOTO: © ROGER ARCHIBALD

Simmons also embraced his discovery, writing a major feature for the Archives’ *Prologue* magazine about Documerica, contacting a number of its past photographers in the process. At the same time, he was instrumental in creating a Documerica presence on Flickr to which image files have been uploaded with much higher resolution than those available on the National Archives site: <http://tinyurl.com/88vkkmr> (it’s much easier to navigate, too). And that’s not all — on his own time, Simmons

Lost and Found

ism project being rediscovered and revived



(left) complete with lead, zinc, gold and silver processing mill settling pond (background) ng company was gone, but clear evidence of the former settling pond remained.

has created a blog titled Daily Documerica where he publishes a different picture from the project every day or so, and a short story about it: <http://dailydocumerica.tumblr.com>.

Of course, Documerica wasn't the first time the federal government dispatched dozens of photographers into the country to make one vast multi-faceted portrait of American life. In the 1930s, the Farm Security Administration's photographers created such famed iconic Depression-era imagery as Dorothea Lange's

Migrant Mother. Likewise, the goal of Project Documerica was to focus the talent and skill of a corps of the country's top photo-journalists on the state of the American environment in its broadest sense at a time that coincided with the modern environmental movement's birth.

During the six years following the project's launch in 1971, over a hundred different photographers participated at one time or another, hired as freelancers for assignments lasting up to thirty days. Although most worked within the regions where they lived, the collective set of images they produced spanned the entire country and in some cases reached abroad.

Within the project's first year, an exhibition of some of the early work was mounted at Washington's Corcoran Gallery, followed by a traveling set of exhibits sponsored by the Smithsonian that implied a promise of more to come. All told, while covering 164 separate assignments, project photographers shot over 80,000 photos; 22,000 were chosen to become part of the permanent Documerica collection. Like the earlier taxpayer-supported FSA photography, all selected pictures immediately entered the public domain, and were thus freely available for anyone to use.

But just as the project was getting up to speed, it almost immediately lost momentum and came to a halt. Like the brilliant dash of a comet receding into darkness, Documerica departed the American stage almost as abruptly as it had arrived. By 1975, photo assignments had essentially dried up. In 1977, the project was officially concluded. And finally in 1981, after a circuitous u-turn through Arizona, the picture collection and existing documents were received by the National Archives back in Washington, where they now rest.

Inspired vision

For any effort like Documerica to take root and survive within the federal bureaucracy, a special set of preconditions has to exist. Government agencies, even new ones like the EPA (only a year old when the project launched), are rarely perceived as hotbeds of innovation. For such a bold initiative to gain critical mass, both a committed promoter and a connected protector are necessary. The earlier FSA documentary project had largely succeeded not only through the inspiration and leadership of a single individual, Roy Stryker, but also through the sustained support of FSA Administrator Rexford Tugwell, and his successors.

Documerica was the beneficiary of a similarly paired dyad. The EPA's first administrator, William Ruckelshaus, was immediately drawn to the idea, and with White House approval,



Documerica photographer Michael Philip Manheim shot a 727 airliner flying low over homes on East Boston's Neptune Road in May 1973 as it approached Logan International Airport. PHOTO BY MICHAEL PHILIP MANHEIM, EPA-DOCUMERICA / NARA

provided institutional cover and support for it as long as he led that agency. But in making it happen day to day, the project owed its existence almost entirely to the inspired vision and persistent determination of one man, Gifford Hampshire.

Born in the Dust Bowl of western Kansas and raised during the Depression, Hampshire personally experienced living conditions that became the subject of many FSA photographs. Following decorated service on a bomber air crew in the western Pacific during World War II, he studied journalism at the University of Missouri at a time when its photojournalism program, destined to become the preeminent such course of study in America, was just getting started. Among his instructors was Arthur Rothstein, who in the 1930s had been one of the principal FSA photographers.

Hampshire's professional career ultimately led to Washington D.C., where he served as a picture editor at *National Geographic* for five years — experience that would later serve him well at Documerica — before taking a public affairs position with the Food and Drug Administration. In 1970, he transferred to the EPA at its creation, and as one of the public affairs leaders on the charter staff, immediately realized the potential to replicate for the environment what the FSA had earlier done with photography for agriculture and rural poverty. With Ruckelshaus' approval and his commitment to provide the project all necessary support, Documerica was born. "That's the reason it happened at all," Hampshire later told UC Berkeley journalism Professor Ken Light, author of *Witness in Our Time*, a study of documentary photographers. Years later in an unpublished memoir, he added, "As long as I had Bill Ruckelshaus' support, I was secure."

Rather than go through the laborious and time-consuming Civil Service procedures for hiring federal employees, Hampshire was able to assign all the project photography to freelancers. His former teacher Arthur Rothstein signed on as an adviser, and Hampshire turned to national professional photography organizations as well as his own connections to recruit his first batch of shooters, who were paid the basic \$150 photography day rate of that era, plus expenses.



Michael Philip Manheim, accompanied by a reporter from NPR's Living on Earth, returned to Neptune Road in 2010 to shoot the same view from the same spot and same direction as his 1973 picture. PHOTO: © MICHAEL PHILIP MANHEIM.



Former Documerica photographer Michael Philip Manheim back on Neptune Road in April, 2010.

PHOTO: COURTESY MICHAEL PHILIP MANHEIM.

Michael Philip Manheim, who was embarking on a career in art photography, remembers responding to an invitation circulated to members of the American Society of Magazine (now Media) Photographers to meet Hampshire for lunch at Boston's Durgin Park restaurant. Boyd Norton, a former nuclear power industry physicist turned nature photographer, answered a similar call in Denver. In San Francisco, Charles O'Rear, a former newspaper photographer who had already completed one assignment for *National Geographic*, was tapped for Documerica.

In a significant departure from the more hands-on approach Roy Stryker had taken in managing the FSA photographers, Hampshire's instructions to his first cadre of photographers to go into the field were far more general. He emphasized just two guidelines:

- "First, establish a 1972 baseline of the environmental problems and accomplishments in the geographical area assigned to you."
- "Second, look for pictures wherever you are, for whatever purpose. Where you see people, there's an environmental element to which they are connected. The great Documerica pictures will show the connection and what it means."

Rather than give them specific assignments, each was free to cover a subject of their own choosing, just so long as it adhered to EPA program interests. "My philosophy was we're dealing with intelligent people here, people who are concerned about things," he later recalled in Ken Light's *Witness in Our Time*. "They have the resources, the intellectual resources, to develop it."

Develop it they did. Manheim was so drawn to use his photographic skills "to contribute to the cause" of environmental protection, that he gladly waived his copyright to the work he produced, a project requirement. "I never did that before, and I would never do it again," he now says. As a result, the pictures he produced for the challenging task he'd assigned himself — photographing noise pollution and the impact it had on residents in the immediate vicinity of Boston's Logan



Documerica founder and director Gifford Hampshire (left) at an early exhibition, with the EPA's first administrator, William Ruckelshaus. PHOTO: COURTESY GIFFORD HAMPSHIRE FAMILY



Documerica founder and director Gifford Hampshire (right) in 1974, with former FSA Photo Project director Roy Stryker (center) and Arthur Rothstein, a former FSA photographer. PHOTO: COURTESY GIFFORD HAMPSHIRE FAMILY

International Airport — immediately became public records.

For Norton, whose career switch to nature photography was still a bit financially shaky, Documerica “came along at a very opportune time.” Like Manheim, he was equally committed to benefiting the environment through his work, which later led to his induction as a charter Fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers in 2005. Norton chose to document ranchers in Montana who were “fighting to keep their land from being strip mined, and to maintain their traditional lifestyle.” Closer to his Denver home, he also covered the first publicly traded solar energy company in America, and admitted to a bit of “insider trading” afterwards, “I bought stock in it, but it went under.”

O’Rear, recommended by an editor at *National Geographic*, believes he may have done more work than any other photographer in the program, covering a whole range of subjects on the West Coast, and that he was the only project photographer dispatched to Hawaii. He also documented the “healthiest men in America” in Seward County, Nebraska, while work he did on the Lower Colorado River later led to an expanded story in the *Geographic*, where he worked for the next twenty-five years as a contract photographer.

O’Rear voiced one lament that seemed to be universally shared by all the photographers, “I worked alone.” Other than the initial meetings where they all first gathered to be considered for the project, “We never saw each other again.”

In that way, Documerica was significantly different than its FSA predecessor, whose photographic staffers enjoyed a good deal more collegiality. In contrast, the whole Documerica operation resembled something akin to a bicycle wheel, with a hundred or so spokes, representing the photographers, all linked to the hub, the project headquarters in Washington. In the beginning, “It didn’t require much of a staff,” Hampshire explained to Ken Light in *Witness in Our Time*, and consisted of “just me and my secretary.” He added, “All I needed was a set-up to handle the film when it came in, and get it processed, and get it into a file.”

The latter proved to be a challenge for a headquarters staff of two, plus an intern or two, the equivalent of a skeleton crew for an

operation assigning so many photographers into the field all at once. Norton, who used to call Hampshire from time to time, observed, “Initially, he seemed to suffer from a lack of organization.” Eventually the staff was expanded to include a picture editor.

Tom Powell, who served in that capacity during the mid-1970s, remembers learning that the position had been open for several months before he first reported for work. “I was given a corner office, 16 by 20 feet, with no windows,” he recalls. “I walked into it, and all I could see, floor to ceiling, were yellow boxes,” the characteristic packaging Kodak labs used when processing color transparency film. Powell’s job was to “look at the film, and make a selection that fairly represented what the photographer had shot.”

Two ‘selects’ were kept to go into the Documerica collection from each subject or scene the photographer shot; the rest was returned to the photographer as ‘outtakes.’ Photographers also received a duplicate slide for each original slide of theirs to be retained by the collection. Unfortunately, the quality of these ‘dupes’ proved to be far inferior to the quality of the original transparency film they were duplicating, a disparity that continues to have negative ramifications for the Documerica collection to this day.

‘No fire in the belly’

The bulk of the current Documerica collection was photographed between 1972 and 1974. That scale of production was expected to continue, but when an economic recession intervened in 1974, all Federal agency budgets had to be cut back, and Documerica took a big hit.

During the same period, political events in Washington deriving from the Watergate incident were building toward the resignation of President Nixon in August, 1974. (Interestingly, the Documerica collection contains virtually no imagery relating to Watergate.) In response to resignations by high-ranking officials, Nixon appointed EPA head William Ruckelshaus to be deputy attorney general at the Justice Department. Six months later, in what became known as the Saturday Night Massacre, Ruckelshaus

and Attorney General Elliot Richardson chose resignation rather than carry out Nixon's order to fire Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox.

With Documerica's champion at EPA gone and its budget in tatters, Hampshire was forced to retrench. "Gradually, the guys that resented my doing it in the first place came out of the woodwork, as always happens in government," he told Ken Light. "One of them wound up being my boss." Photography assignments slowed to a trickle. "As far as photographers were concerned, it ended in 1976." Budget constraints even prevented the final 6,000 images selected for the collection from ever being properly catalogued.

In his unpublished personal memoir written about the same time (1997-98), Hampshire was more blunt, "As soon as Bill left EPA, my enemies attacked me and Documerica ... And then my health began to fail." Following stroke-like symptoms leading up to a heart attack in 1977, he had bypass surgery in 1978.

After his convalescence, Hampshire "went back to work determined not to let events there hurt me any more," he wrote in his memoir. Instead, he "found an EPA wallowing in a morass of ineffectiveness due to political/industry pressures on a leadership without a clear sense of mission. My superiors cared only for their own security. There was no sense of purpose. No fire-in-the-belly." Nevertheless, he hung on at the EPA, servicing picture requests as they came in, but fielding no photographers, until he took early retirement in February 1980, having lost hope that a change in presidential administrations would help rejuvenate the project. "Documerica was just a file now," he lamented in his memoir.

To the warehouse

For the photographers, the demise of Documerica was like receiving a recorded message that a friend's phone number has been disconnected. "During the shooting, I felt connected to Giff and EPA, but as soon as the project ended and staff was terminated, there became a void," O'Rear remembered. "There was nobody to talk with and nobody knew where the photos had gone."

Norton even tried to do something about it. He arranged for Hampshire to meet with Gary Hart of Colorado and Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus, an old friend from his nuclear power industry days in Idaho, in an effort to find solutions to the project's budgetary problems. "I coordinated all this with Giff and he met personally with Gary and Cece," Norton says, "but to no avail."

Documerica's departure from the EPA is an event somewhat shrouded in mystery. When Hampshire described it to Light in the late 1990s, he stated, "As soon as I was out the door, the National Archives people who had wanted to add Documerica to their still picture collection came to the EPA and asked for it ... EPA agreed ... and it went to the Archives."

But the collection's last act at the EPA actually occurred the month before Hampshire retired. Records show it was shipped off — not from Washington, but from a commercial photo lab in New York City — and not to the National Archives as would be expected, but to the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Claiming to be "the largest institution in the world devoted to documenting the history of North American photography," the CCP houses a number of

premiere picture collections, including the work of Ansel Adams. Contributing the Documerica set to this institution would seem a perfect fit, were it not for federal regulations requiring all inactive U.S. Government records and documents to go to the National Archives. Within 16 months, the feds came calling, and the collection was soon on its way back to Washington.

For the next 16 years, the collection was housed in cold storage at an off-site Archives facility in Alexandria, VA, virtually unavailable to the public. Then around 1997, the approximately 16,000 images that had been catalogued were included in a larger group of materials intended to be scanned into digital files for eventual placement at low resolution in a massive online database called the Archives Research Catalog. Only at this point did the Documerica image collection once again become reasonably accessible, now by computer. Its long disappearing act was about to come to an end.

Awakening

Nearly four decades after Documerica's launch, Norton harbored dreams of renewing the project he joined at the dawn of his photographic career. At a meeting of the International League of Conservation Photographers in 2009, he broached the idea of a Project Documerica 2.0, sending a proposal to current EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson. It generated no response.

But an official assigned to its Office of External Affairs and Environmental Education in Boston experienced her own epiphany upon encountering the collection for the first time in 2010. Jeanethe Falvey, who managed the EPA's Flickr photo-stream, had long had a passion for photography and visual arts. "As soon as I saw it," she said, "it literally choked me up ... I couldn't wait to find out more about it." Aware that the EPA would soon turn 40, she quickly concluded that revisiting these photographs in some manner was "the perfect way to celebrate our 40th anniversary." She shortly came up with the same idea that Boyd Norton had — go back and re-photograph the same spots now that Documerica did 40 years ago.

The EPA has created a State of the Environment Photo Project that could be dubbed Docuworld, since it invites participants from all over the world, not just the United States, to submit their work, not just the United States. "Environmental issues these days don't know national boundaries," she likes to point out. Part of that project is the Location Challenge, which seeks to have photographers actually re-shoot the same scenes depicted in the original Documerica photographs forty years ago: <http://blog.epa.gov/epplocations/about>.

The project commenced on Earth Day, 2011 (April 22nd) and will close on or about Earth Day, 2012. "Photos that best illustrate the new 'after' view of the same original Documerica 'before' photo," according to an agency statement, "will have a chance to become part of the Earth Day 2012 State of the Environment Exhibit at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C. and travel around the country."

There are two huge differences, however. EPA will not pay or reimburse for the photos and it asks photographers not to submit any pictures of recognizable people. Falvey is sensitive to the concern that the new rules may severely limit the number of Documerica originals that can be replicated. But she hopes a good number of original Documerica photographers will be willing to participate again, and return to photograph the same scenes that

they did 40 years ago.

Falvey can already point to one key success. Manheim has not only agreed to return to Neptune Road in East Boston to again photograph low flying aircraft approaching Logan Airport over a now homeless landscape, but he's also signed on to judge a student photo contest that the EPA is concurrently sponsoring as a part of its State of the Environment Project.

"My father would be thrilled that there is a renewal effort," said Gifford R. Hampshire, the son of the project's founder. Hampshire, who practices law in Manassas, Va., and his twin sister, Victoria, have sought to keep the project's memory alive since their father's death in 2004.

Hampshire considered Documerica the "peak achievement" of his career. But its premature demise was a great disappointment to him. The ironic twist may be that it's just possible that Project Documerica's untimely termination was its great saving grace. Had it endured all these years, it might silently have slipped into the background noise of endlessly produced government data that tracks changes in our lives, like the census or the consumer price index. But ending as it did, like the earlier FSA photography, it left a clear picture of our life at a particular time that has not been obstructed by millions of more pictures piling up on top of it.

For Documerica to be rediscovered, it first had to be lost. And if it hadn't ever been lost, it probably never would have been found.

Almost 20 years after leaving Documerica, Hampshire seemed to draw a similar conclusion, according to Light's *Witness in Our Time*. "Documentary has no commercial value and no real

journalistic value at the time, but if it's preserved and kept in a public file in the public domain, then maybe it does," Hampshire said. "Today, if someone wants to understand the environment in the early 1970s, they can find the answer partially in that file — to the extent that we did our job properly. That makes it a baseline of what was happening in America environmentally when the EPA started — those images have meaning only because of their relationship to the time, the place, and the circumstances at a later date."

Roger Archibald is photo editor of SEJournal.

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF
CYNTHIA BARNETT

This fall the news media around San Bernardino, Calif., picked up a press release from the local water district and ran it with little alteration or context: A leading national panel of groundwater experts, the release and the news stories said, had concluded that a water-supply project known as the Cadiz Valley Groundwater Conservation, Recovery and Storage Project “can offer a significant water supply to Southern California communities and avoid environmental harm.”

That’s a matter of considerable scientific and policy debate and has been since the late ‘90s, when agribusiness company Cadiz first proposed to store Colorado River water in the Mojave Desert during wet years and pump it up in dry ones to pipe to Southern California. The Metropolitan Water District, an original partner, backed out in 2002 amid financial and environmental concerns. Now, Cadiz has partnered with five other Southern California water companies. The utilities see steady supplies and sales of freshwater for growing populations. The Cadiz principals and their investors see a gold mine. Environmental reporters should, too.

The Cadiz story overflows with reasons why our community, state and national water supply “crises” — and proposed solutions — deserve the same scrutiny we’re paying presidential candidates’ environmental records. It’s not that these crises aren’t real: The United States has depleted aquifers and over-tapped rivers from coast to coast. Freshwater habitats have become the single most degraded of America’s major ecosystems. Climate change seems to be having the greatest impact on freshwater resources. And many communities are grappling with vanishing water supplies, steep energy costs to move water around, financially unstable utilities and other problems.

But in some cases the water managers themselves and particularly their preference for the largest infrastructure projects, are to blame. The classic example in the West: vast diversions of the Colorado River, so over-allocated that there isn’t enough for all human legal users, much less fish and wildlife, during times of drought. In the East: harnessing a relatively small river — the Chattahoochee — to quench a major metropolitan area, Atlanta, brought that metro within 90 days of running out of water. It spawned a legal battle among three states that has dragged on two decades. And it doomed aquatic life downstream that relies on freshwater flows to Fla.’s Apalachicola Bay.

Unintended consequences continue in the 21st Century. In Tampa, water managers already were regretting their 25-million-gallon-a-day desalination plant’s cost overruns and technical mishaps when they were surprised by its enormous energy demands and carbon emissions. The utility’s annual electricity costs have soared 138%, an additional \$10 million.

So what’s a reporter to do, when such projects promise to solve a problem as desperate as water scarcity — and when they are championed by water engineers, the hydraulic heroes we rely on to bring us fresh, clean water and protect us from floods?

The first thing to know is that water use in the United States is declining rapidly. Check the U.S. Geological Survey’s “Estimated Use of Water in the United States” at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1344/>. The Pacific Institute is another good source (<http://www.pacinst.org/>.) Everything we do as a society — growing food, industrial processes, flushing toilets, to name a few things — takes a *lot* less water than even 10 years ago. Other countries, too, are showing how we can live quite well with a lot less. These are problems for which there often are solutions.

In 2010, I took a leave of absence from my day job to report on these new ways of living with water from different parts of the world and the United States for my new book, *Blue Revolution*, which calls for a water ethic for America. I learned that much of the conventional wisdom I’d heard during my years on the water beat — such as the refrain from some utilities that they can’t make money if their customers use less water — is simply not true, or doesn’t have to be.

If the political body or environmental agency you’re covering insists your city, region or state needs a lot more water 20 or 50 years from now, that’s a red flag: Cities such as San Antonio, Texas, have proven it’s possible to grow population and economy while using far less. Reductions in the agricultural irrigation that accounts for roughly half of freshwater use in the U.S., are especially promising for easing groundwater pumping or freeing up supply. The USGS scientists can help you analyze agricultural water use in your state or region, and whether farmers have transitioned to micro-irrigation or still rely on unsustainable practices such as flood irrigation. (Flood irrigation still accounts for about half of all agricultural use east of the Mississippi.)

Next, check your city or state’s per-capita water use and compare it with the national average, which is a still-high 150 gallons. If your community is around there or higher, it probably hasn’t done enough to eliminate waste to justify a mega-project. Monterey, California, is down to around 70 gallons per person per day. Sarasota, Florida, has reduced per-capita by nearly half, to less than 80 gallons a day. If residents can still water their lawns with all the cheap, potable water they want, your community is behind the curve.

Another thing to remember is this similarity between the water and health-care industries: While doctors are often trustworthy and knowledgeable sources, the system in which they work is at best driven by profit, at worst failing in some life-threatening ways.

Some of the country's most progressive engineers and local governments are showing that it's absolutely possible to live with far less water. We've begun to see new subdivisions and even part of a school (Seattle's Berschi School) built with little or no imported water — a concept known as “net-zero water.” Cisterns for toilet flushing and irrigation, recycling air-conditioning condensate and other practices are standard in cities such as Tucson and San Antonio, where local governments figured out that conserved water is their best source of “new” water. They've forestalled costly new capital projects for decades.

This doesn't mean a large infrastructure project isn't the best option for your community. Regional solutions, especially those that help struggling smaller utilities work together on water supply, are often smart. It means the scrutiny of journalists is crucial — to put the story into context for readers, viewers and listeners, and to question the hydraulic heroes.

Check the membership of panels and committees recommending water projects in your community: Is the desalination plant builder recommending the desal plant, as has been the case in several Florida proposals?

Check the campaign contributions of any company working to build a water project, including the engineering firms. I devote a chapter in *Blue Revolution* to the politics of a “Water-Industrial Complex.” The term is not random; a wave of mergers and acquisitions has transformed the industry from locally owned firms to global conglomerates, some of which are also among the top private defense contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Reporters checking the campaign contributions for Cadiz, for example, will find hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on California candidates.

Every few years, the American Society of Civil Engineers puts out its dismal report card on U.S. infrastructure to expose the nation's crumbling, woefully underfunded waterworks, roads and bridges. (www.asce.org; press contact is Jim Jennings, jjennings@asce.org.) Water-infrastructure needs are usually given the lowest grade — a D-minus in the latest report. Water and wastewater also carry the highest price tag to fix: total investment needs of \$255 billion. This is an important story — as are the busting-water-pipe stories that often happen during droughts. But next time it comes along, don't forget there's another side. Often missing from the conversation is the idea that rather than prop up failing systems, we could invest in new ways of living with water, in the same way we're investing in

alternative energy.

The new, more-ethical approaches are often cheaper than the 20th Century model — finding a pristine new source of water, conveying it with pumps, using it once, cleaning it up, then flushing it away. But the water industry has been slow to change, in part because its business model is based on that old, linear approach. Firms' revenues are directly proportional to the size of the water projects they build or land for local communities: The higher the number of gallons captured for our growing thirst, the bigger the profit.

Until recently, few companies saw the profitability in saving water. But that's beginning to change, in the same way we've seen corporations like GE and BP increase revenues by creating more energy-efficient products, from small light bulbs to giant wind turbines.

Utilities and taxpayers also save big bucks on the more ethical water path. One well-known example is Philadelphia's “all-green” storm-water plan. To halt sewage spills and comply with the Clean Water Act, the city was looking at a \$10 billion price tag for a massive sewage tunnel under the Delaware River. Instead, Philly is spending \$1.6 billion to restore streams; remake everything from parking lots to basketball courts with porous pavement; and plant miles of vegetation atop rooftops and along city blocks.

It's a compelling angle for 40th anniversary stories on the Clean Water Act (October 1972). Howard Neukrug, deputy commissioner at Philadelphia Water, is the architect of the plan and a fun interview. (howard.neukrug@phila.gov) Another source on shifts to more decentralized systems, recycling and reuse — and a counterpoint to ASCE — is economist Valerie Nelson of the Massachusetts-based Water Alliance, also a panelist at SEJ's Miami

conference. (valerie.i.nelson@gmail.com)

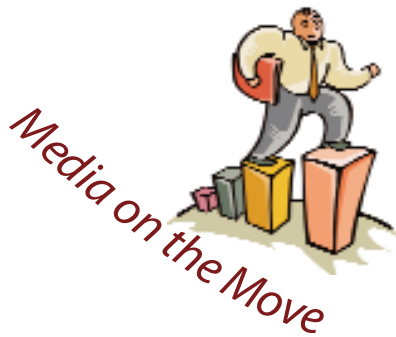
A major driver of the U.S. freshwater crisis has been our illusion of water abundance. Many Americans don't understand where their water comes from, where it goes after they use it, who's in charge of it or what it really costs — financially and ecologically. Environmental journalists have an important role to show them what's really going on under the surface.

Note: Water-supply references for reporters can be found at <http://www.sej.org/node/10769/>

SEJ member Cynthia Barnett is the author of Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis, Beacon Press, 2011, and Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S., University of Michigan Press, 2007. Feel free to email her follow-up questions, cynthiabarnett@gmail.com.)



Desalination plant in Tampa, Fla., and the electrical generating plant that powers it.



SEJ members toast new books and projects on wide range of science, environment topics

By JUDY FAHYS

SEJ members reported a number of new and interesting projects.

Angela Posada-Swofford, co-chair of Miami's 2011 conference, published the eighth book in her collection "Los Aventureros de la Ciencia" (The Adventurers of Science.) Part of a collection that will eventually include 15 novels for the young-adult market in Spanish and edited by Grupo Planeta in Colombia and Spain, the series is being used by the Costa Rican's Ministry of Education in a groundbreaking pilot project called CienciaAventura. In it, the books are a tool for teaching both science and literature to children of selected public schools in that Central American nation.

Her next step: finding a way to develop English-language versions of the 200-plus action-and-adventure novels based on real scientists.

Alexa Elliott works at the WPBT PBS station in Miami, where the ocean science series "Changing Seas" is produced. One episode, "Sentinels of the Seas," won in the Film/Radio/TV category of the 2011 Communication Awards of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. The episode also won a Suncoast Regional Emmy award last year, as well as a Miami Today Gold Award. You can see it here: <http://changingseas.tv/episode202.html>

Meanwhile, **Harvey Stone** received an initial contract to option his environmental thriller novel, *Melting Down*. Among its films, the production company offering the contract boasts a film that received two Oscars.

And **Dick Russell's** ninth book, the first of a two-volume biography on American psychologist James Hillman, will be published Spring 2012 by Helios Press.

Texas-based freelancer **Soll Sussman's** look at ecobusiness options for restaurants — "Green Beyond the Menu" was featured in *Edible Austin* magazine: <http://tinyurl.com/7xev3yg>

Christy George produced a TV documentary for Oregon Public Broadcasting called "Columbia Gorge: the Fight for Paradise," which aired in November. It uses the 25th anniversary of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act as a way to talk

about protection efforts. It's a special one-hour edition of Oregon Field Guide, OPB's award-winning weekly show.

Susan Moran's request: Don't count her carbon footprint over the last year. After indulging in an MBL fellowship to Antarctica last November-December, Moran flew to Norway in June to join a group of U.S. and European journalists (Transnational Media, through the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.). They spent most of their time above the Arctic Circle, in Tromso, learning from Arctic researchers at the Norwegian Polar Institute as well as from fisheries industry representatives and government officials — and gave up trying to sleep under the never-setting sun's glow.

When land-locked in Boulder, Colo., she juggles print freelancing and co-hosting a weekly science show called "How On Earth" on KGNU community radio, and contract editing on the side.

Justin Gerdes wrote the "Transportation" chapter in *Guide to Sustainia: Exploring the Sustainable Society of Tomorrow*, published by Monday Morning, based in Copenhagen, Denmark. He also served as lead editor for the book, which envisions the sustainable economy in 2020.

Tom Henry, an editorial writer and op-ed columnist at *The (Toledo) Blade*, joined an IJNR Great Lakes advisory board following Peter Annin's departure for a job at Notre Dame. He also serves on an advisory board for Michigan State University's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, which is using a National Science Foundation grant to better educate Great Lakes journalists about climate change.

Got a new job or sold a new project? Contact Judy Fahys about your latest achievements and shifts in direction. You can reach Judy Fahys, environment reporter at The Salt Lake Tribune, at fahys@sltrib.com.

SEJ President's Report continued from Page 4

objected to policies that would require advance approval by public affairs officials before reporters could speak to scientists or other staff experts and require public affairs staff to be present during interviews.

SEJ also will try to continue its dialogue with the EPA, to address the difficulties members have reported in working with the agency's press office to obtain comments, information, or arrange interviews.

Carolyn Whetzel covers environment issues in California for BNA Inc.



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Contact the SEJ office if you have problems with your username and password; email sej@sej.org

Climate change coverage not only dips in quantity, but also shifts in its presentation



By BILL DAWSON

Early in 2011, editor **Douglas Fischer** of *The Daily Climate* analyzed his news-aggregating website's archives for 2010. Fischer, an SEJ board member, concluded that news media coverage of climate change had "slipped to levels not seen since 2005" and that "Reuters again led the pack" by publishing the most stories on the topic.

Reuters continued to be a leader in the volume of climate coverage as 2011 wound down. By the time the limited accord at the Durban, South Africa, climate talks was announced in December, the news service had again published the most climate-related stories in *The Daily Climate* archives — 1,195, followed in second place by *The New York Times*, with 915.

(In 2010, there were 1,683 Reuters stories in the archives and 1,116 published by the *Times*.)

The ever-alert **Joe Davis**, editor of SEJ's *TipSheet* and *Watch-Dog TipSheet*, told The Beat that he had noticed that Reuters reporters were especially productive in their pre-Durban coverage, compared to other news organizations.

A little checking turned up evidence of what he had observed. The conference ran from Nov. 28 to Dec. 11. In the month before it started — defined for these purposes as the period from Oct. 28 through Nov. 27 — a search of the Reuters archives produced 47 stories (including a few updates) with the keywords "climate" and "Durban."

By contrast, searching *The New York Times*' archives with those two keywords produced seven stories published in the same period. Searching the *Washington Post*'s archives turned up just four stories with "climate" and "Durban".

Differently designed searches admittedly might have revealed more coverage by any or all of the three news organizations. For example, they may have published stories about, or at least mentioning, the conference that gave the location just as South Africa, but didn't mention the specific city.

Nonetheless, it seems fair to say Reuters did stand out for its devotion of a large amount of advance attention to the then-upcoming talks.

A month before the conference started, that coverage included stories reflecting the news service's broad international focus —

one on China's encouragement of developed nations to introduce climate-related initiatives to avoid "deadlock" at Durban, another on how the conference figured in a Commonwealth summit, and a third on the connections between the upcoming Durban talks and traditional farming methods.

On Nov. 28, the day that the climate conference got under way, Reuters published eight stories about the meeting, including one by **Jeff Oelho** and **Nina Chestney** with the arresting headline, "Can carbon for the price of a pizza save the planet?"

Reuters' continuation of its close attention to climate change did not signal, however, that it would necessarily continue presenting some related coverage online in the same, unified manner that it had been using.

In November, the news service announced that "Reuters.com is changing the way it publishes news about companies that make money supporting the environment or damaging it. We are saying goodbye to the Green Business section."

It was not the first time that a prominent Web location devoted to the confluence of environment and economy had vanished or changed.

In January 2010, *The Wall Street Journal* pulled the plug on its highly regarded "Environmental Capital" blog. Four months later, *The New York Times* renamed its "Green Inc." blog (about "Energy, the Environment and the Bottom Line") as "Green: A Blog about Energy and Environment" and gave it "a broader mission."

In bidding farewell to its Green Business section, Reuters said in a blog post that it would no longer publish stories "about companies that make money supporting the environment or damaging it" on "their own real estate," but instead place them on a couple of separate websites — one devoted to energy and another to environmental policy and climate change.

The news service also announced that it would no longer "be showcasing news by our esteemed editorial partners including Matter Network, InsideClimate News and GreenBiz.com," adding: "One of the goals of the sustainability movement is to integrate its objectives into all facets of business. In this light,

Reuters.com is ahead of the game as we enter a time when solar panel companies are mainstream enough to be on the regular business page and not siphoned off to a private green niche.

“Of course, green companies, technology and economies are not going away. At Reuters.com we embrace this opportunity to bring the business of the environment into the fold of the rest of the site, and welcome you to continue your dialogue with us as we branch out to yet another new chapter.”

The first commenter to accept that invitation was not happy with the change, however, contrasting it unfavorably to Reuters competitor Bloomberg News’ recent launching of a stand-alone business-environment site:

“Just as Bloomberg unveils a Sustainability site that blankets the topic, Reuters retreats. Portraying this as being ‘ahead of the game’ and deriding your previous effort as a ‘private green niche’ is a bit of fanciful spin.”

Bloomberg, announcing its new site, noted that “sustainability” means different things to different people, with business executives regarding it as “a long-term strategy to gain a competitive advantage in innovation, efficiency, reputation, and ultimately performance.”

The Sustainability section on Bloomberg.com will focus on actions by such business officials, the news service said. It explained:

“The goal is to uncover what businesses are doing, or what they need to be doing, to thrive as global competition intensifies for strategic resources. We feel this is a unique yet critical way to report on sustainability issues — from inside the companies who are defining it. If executives don’t commit to making sustainability a vital part of their company, more than just their businesses will suffer. The communities they operate in, customers, and other non-financial players are also impacted by business decisions.”

An early story on the new Bloomberg site by **Kim Chapman** and **Alex Morales** reported on the in-progress Durban talks under the headline, “Global Warming Fight Threatened by Debt Crisis.”

Featured stories on the site in the immediate aftermath of the conference included “Water Wranglers Help Fend Off EPA in Oilfields,” “China Step Toward Legal [Climate] Accord Seen As Obama Win,” “Kraft Pushes for 49-ton ‘Bridge Wrecker’ Trucks,” “China Marks Decade in WTO Amid EU and U.S. Criticism,” and “Wyoming’s Tainted Water Pressures EPA.”

Yet another change in the presentation of environmental news occurred recently on the website of the *New York Times*, when it eliminated a page featuring articles from *Greenwire* and *ClimateWire*, two subscription news services that are published daily by Washington-based E&E Publishing.

The Times had begun publishing some of the company’s coverage about three years earlier. Typically, several new articles would be posted daily.

Journalists lacking the wherewithal to subscribe to E&E but still wanting to include some of its reporters’ stories in their news diet are not out of luck, however. E&E is providing free access to a selection of its print and video stories on its own site at eews.net/public. That public page is also accessible through a link at the bottom of E&E’s home page.

In a Durban-dated story on the public page, E&E reporters

Lisa Friedman and **Jean Chemnick** explained the agreement at the climate conference to begin negotiating a treaty that would require all major greenhouse-gas emitters, not just developed nations as in the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce emissions.

Their lead:

“The longest U.N. climate conference in history ended at dawn yesterday with diplomats swinging a pick-axe at the wall that has long protected developing countries from taking legal responsibility for fighting global warming.”

Greenwire was founded in 1991 by former *New York Times* reporter **Phil Shabecoff** as one of the Web’s first subscription news services, concentrating initially on aggregation and synthesis of coverage by others. E&E acquired it from *National Journal* in 2000, shifting the focus to original reporting by its own staff members. The company launched *ClimateWire* in 2008 and also produces other publications on energy and environmental topics.

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal.

Miami According to Helvarg continued from Page 12

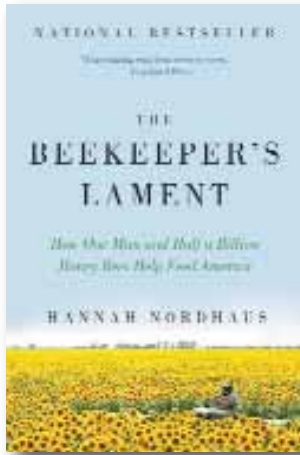
pillars and pools wearing heels adapted for sea-level rise and eco-fashions that minimized the use of cloth. Still I had to wonder if the silver metal halter and platter-sized collar on the bald 6’2”, bat-winged model had come from a mine using voluntary or mandatory mechanisms for environmental protection. After Mark Schleifstein and Dan Fagin did their own stroll down the catwalk, we did a quick retreat to the beach before the Tony Montana look-alikes in the VIP couch zones got the wrong idea.



Of course there’s nothing to end a night in South Beach like an 8:30 AM writers session at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens, where last winter’s freeze killed all the invasive iguanas, which fell out of their trees like over-ripe green-skinned mangoes. Now I understand that Carl Hiaasen’s books are actually narrative non-fiction.

But the bottom line is the SEJ conference wasn’t just about the glitter, glamor and ocean sports of south Florida. It’s about dedicated journalists educating citizens on some of the most serious and challenging issues facing the planet today. Proof is that next year’s conference is in Lubbock, Texas. Lubbock of course is the home of Buddy Holly, prairie dogs, Texas Tech and Flat. This year Moon over Miami. Next year Moo over Lubbock.

David Helvarg is an author and long-time SEJ gadfly who’s just released Blue Frontier — Dispatches from America’s Ocean Wilderness, as an updated 10th anniversary edition e-book (which sounds better than online, out-of-print paperback.)



Fascinating detail makes this tale of beekeeping a keeper

The Beekeeper's Lament

How one man and half a billion honeybees help feed America

By Hannah Nordhaus
Harper Perennial, \$14.99
Paperback

Reviewed by: KATHLEEN REGAN

It says something when you find yourself returning to a book again and again.

Hannah Nordhaus' *The Beekeeper's Lament* contains a wealth of incredibly accessible information about honeybees in fascinating detail.

It describes the scale and economics of one agricultural practice that is supported by and, in turn, supports beekeeping on a large commercial scale. It is also the story of one beekeeper, whose love of his honeybees and generosity with his time and knowledge make this fact-packed book such a good read.

Honeybees are admirable the way humans fancy themselves or desire to be — industrious, brave, loyal, cooperative, orderly. They are the good citizens of the insect world and provide us with a product we love — honey, the sweetest natural substance on Earth. Those qualities make honeybees easy to exploit for profit and both vulnerable and resistant to outside threats.

But right now it appears that the bees may be losing.

The hurdles facing honeybees in the world of modern industrial agriculture are many and complex.

As more U.S. cropland has been used to plant corn, less has been planted with crops that bees pollinate.

Corn is not one of those. Hay (alfalfa, clover, and mixed crops) used to be harvested after flowering, by machines that didn't work very fast. Bees had plenty of time to collect pollen from the flowers before they were cut. But hay is more nutritious as animal feed if it is harvested before flowering.

Now, thousands of acres are cut in just a few days, never having flowered, so are no longer available to honeybees. Another food source gone.

Although nearly one hundred commercial crops in the United States depend on honeybee pollination, almonds are by far the biggest economically. Over half of all commercially managed U.S. honeybees are moved to central California every February to pollinate the almond orchards.

However, almonds bloom in February, when honeybees normally would still be in winter dormancy, and they bloom for a very short period of time — just a few weeks.

After blooming, almond orchards are “deserts” for honeybees, due to pesticides used on the trees and herbicides used on the

ground under the trees to eliminate understory vegetation.

Hives must be highly managed in order to have honeybees ready to work at full capacity months before bees are out and about. Their winter rest period is therefore short, and their food supply must be supplemented by their beekeepers, usually in the form of corn or sugar syrup.

This book provides an excellent description of management practices used to keep hives strong so that bees will come out of winter dormancy early and ready to work the almond flowers, which represent beekeepers' primary source of income.

Honeybees have suffered massive die-offs for as long as humans have been observing them.

Before colony collapse disorder (CCD) there were foulbrood (bacterial), chalkbrood (fungal), wax moths (whose larvae feed on wax comb), nosema (diarrheal), tracheal mites, fire ants, hive beetles, and more recently, Crazy raspberry ants, Kashmir bee virus, Israeli acute paralysis virus, black queen cell virus, and varroa mites.

“Bad things have been invading beehives for a long, long time. But in the last 30 years, they have come faster, and faster, in wave after breathless wave. For that we have the almond to thank,” according to the book.

But it's not only almonds. The chapter on CCD explores every theory that has been proposed to explain it, with no clear conclusions.

Recent work (including some that has appeared since this book came out) indicates that a combination of factors is involved.

Maybe, like us, honeybees can't live on just one or two foods.

In one section of the book, readers learned how “research has suggested that bees may be suffering from the same kind of malnutrition afflicting humans who eat processed junk food.”

Sprawl, monocrops, weedless gardens and a general decline in pastureland have “made it hard for bees to find a suitable diversity of nectar and pollen sources,” the book stated.

The combination of stress from being hauled cross country, early hive activity stimulated by corn syrup, relentless exposure to pesticides, and exchange of disease vectors with other bees when they are all together in the almond orchards — could be death by a thousand cuts.

John Miller, who shares star billing with the honeybees, conducts his business on a staggeringly large scale.

But whatever one thinks of industrial agriculture, Miller is likeable. He loves his bees, he takes excellent care of them, and it is becoming clear to him that even best management practices may not be enough to keep honeybees going at the frantic rate at which they are currently required to perform.

He and others about whom this book is written are working to find safer, more sustainable practices for beekeeping. But he worries that they will run out of time, that they won't be able to do enough fast enough.

That is the beekeeper's lament.

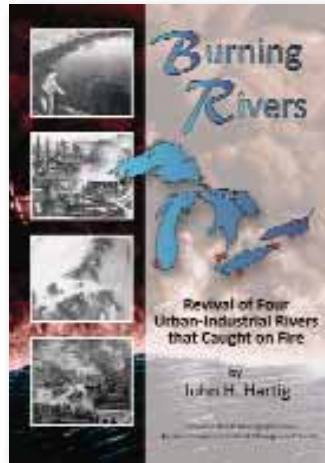
Kathy Regan is a mid-life Ph.D student in soil biology at the University of Hohenheim, Germany, working on the biogeography of nitrogen cycling soil microorganisms and land use change.

Cuyahoga River fire was just part of a larger story of neglect

Burning Rivers Revival of four urban-industrial rivers that caught on fire

By John H. Hartig

Multi-Science Publishing Co., \$35



Reviewed by TOM HENRY

Those familiar with how Lake Erie became one of the key inspirations for action after the first Earth Day in 1970 are all too familiar with the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire near downtown Cleveland. It became one of the region's greatest symbols of neglect for future generations.

But what a lot of people don't realize is that the Cuyahoga was only one of at least four Great Lakes tributaries to catch fire, all because of their enormous pollution from industrialization. The other three were the Chicago, Buffalo and Rouge rivers, the latter near Detroit.

In *Burning Rivers: Revival of Four Urban-Industrial Rivers that Caught on Fire*, limnologist John Hartig gives the reader a historical overview of the four rivers and explains the warning signs of distress the oily pollution from each caused, mainly to fish and wildlife. The history of anything from DDT to the old canal system is included.

The book won a 2011 Green Book Festival Award and was a finalist in the "science/nature/environment" category of the 2011 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. Hartig now manages the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, the only wildlife refuge shared by the United States and Canada. Formerly an adjunct professor at Wayne State University, he has more than 30 years of experience in environmental science and natural resource management.

The lay audience may find some of the scientific findings a little difficult to wade through, but they're not so cumbersome to detract from the book's eye-opening value. It sheds light where light needed to be shed, even if the prose becomes a bit academic at times.

To many people, the legacy of Great Lakes pollution is centered around the guffaws on late-night talk shows years ago, when Cleveland earned the dubious "Mistake on the Lake" nickname in the aftermath of the Cuyahoga River's fire.

Countless environmental regulators, governors and other dignitaries have for decades now used the Cuyahoga as their anecdote for the region's story of its ruin and recovery.

But as Hartig's book shows, the Cuyahoga was only part of

the story. Mankind should never have degraded the world's largest collection of fresh surface water the way it did.

Along the way, characters emerge such as Buffalo River advocate Stanley Spisiak, whose activism and fierce determination drew then-President Lyndon B. Johnson on Aug. 25, 1966 to Buffalo, where the president's wife, Lady Bird Johnson, cut through the thought of any high-brow analysis of a river sample by calling it a "bucket of slop."

Thanks to Hartig, there is a lengthy discussion about how the worst abuse — water fouled so thickly with pollution that it was capable of burning — went well beyond the Cleveland waterfront. Much of it was the result of poorly treated or untreated sewage, as well as heavy petrochemicals.

Hopefully, the odds of more burning rivers are unlikely since America's landmark Clean Water Act of 1972 and the equally important Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement signed by former President Richard Nixon and former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau ushered in the modern era of sewage treatment and industrial pollution controls.

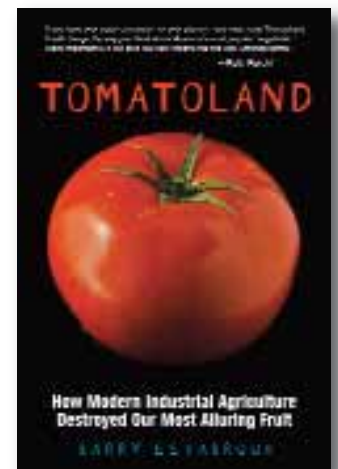
Tom Henry is an editorial writer and columnist for The (Toledo) Blade. He is a member of SEJ's board of directors, on SEJournal's editorial board and is SEJournal's book editor.

Want to know why you can't get a decent-tasting tomato? Read this.

Tomatoland How modern industrial agriculture destroyed our most alluring fruit

By Barry Estabrook

Andrews McMeel, \$19.99



Reviewed by JENNIFER WEEKS

Journalist Barry Estabrook opens *Tomatoland* with a startling vignette: He's driving on I-75 toward Naples, Fla., when spheres that look like green baseballs start flying off of a truck in front of him. At a stoplight, he sees the green orbs littering the roadside are tomatoes — mostly identical, and not one smashed, even after flying off a truck at 60 mph.

That's an arresting image, especially for a food writer (Estabrook was a contributing editor at *Gourmet* and founding editor of *Eating Well*).

In *Tomatoland*, Estabrook explains why the tomato industry in concentrated in Florida, where the weather is too wet and sandy soil doesn't contain enough nutrients for the plants to flourish.

The answer has “everything to do with marketing and nothing to do with biology,” he wrote. Florida is warm when the East and Midwest are cold, and winter tomatoes can be trucked north to market in a day or two. Growers in Florida have a three-part strategy: raising tomatoes green (so they will survive shipping), cheaply, and off-season. Flavor doesn’t enter the equation.

This book is mainly an exposé of the negative impacts of producing tomatoes this way.

Florida producers use huge quantities of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers to ward off pests and help tomatoes grow in Florida’s unpromising conditions. Those tomatoes are harvested by slave labor — mostly Hispanic men who come to South Florida for farm jobs, but then are charged so much for rent (in filthy shacks and box trucks), food, and liquor that they can never afford to leave. A U.S. attorney based in Fort Myers told Estabrook the agricultural city of Immokalee is “ground zero for modern-day slavery.”

Estabrook spent several chapters on the harrowing lives of tomato pickers, many whom are underpaid, denied benefits or exposed to toxic agricultural chemicals daily. He also talked to leaders of industry organizations such as the Florida Tomato Committee, which sees itself as a beleaguered industry trying to make a profit in a low-margin business and compete with growers in Mexico and greenhouses in Canada.

It took more than a decade for labor organizers to convince the industry to raise wages and adopt a Fair Food Code of Conduct late in 2010. Both sides called the agreement one to make the Florida tomato industry “a model of social accountability for the 21st century.”

From that success Estabrook pivots back to his original question: Why won’t modern agribusiness deliver a decent-tasting tomato? Researchers are breeding and cross-breeding types that have good flavor and are hardy enough to transport, but that’s just the first step. Then they need seed companies that will mass-produce and distribute the plants, and retailers who will carry the new products. Other players are important too, such as public-interest lawyers who represent field workers, and a developer who builds clean, affordable housing for migrants.

Another hopeful character, Tim Stark, grows vine-ripened tomatoes on a farm in eastern Pennsylvania and sells them to upscale Manhattan restaurants and at New York City’s Greenmarket. Stark farms almost completely without pesticides and fertilizers (although he is not certified organic), pays workers a living wage, and knows his regular customers by name.

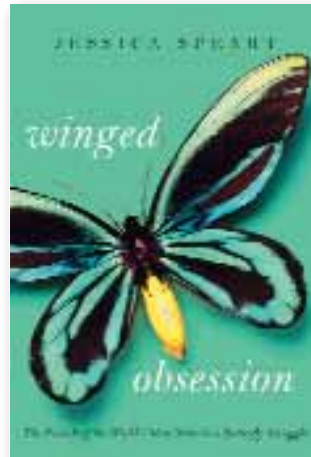
“He embraces the fruit’s intrinsic ‘tomato-ness’ and, in so doing, has built a business that allows his employees to buy cars, purchase homes, and send children to private high schools back in Mexico,” Estabrook wrote.

It’s hard work and takes a heroic amount of energy and stubbornness. “But for me, for now, it seems like the right thing to do,” Stark says.

It’s heartening to see that growing tomatoes the right way can succeed, at least in some places.

Tomatoland is full of startling facts about large-scale agribusiness and how it has commercialized and manipulated tomatoes. It also shows why everyone — not just foodies — should want them to be better.

Jennifer Weeks is a Boston-based freelancer and a member of SEJ’s board of directors.



A delicious narrative that reveals interesting world of insects

Winged Obsession The pursuit of the world’s most notorious butterfly smuggler

By Jessica Speart

William Morrow, \$25.99

Reviewed by TOM HENRY

As incredibly well researched as this book is, the thing that brings *Winged Obsession* to life is Jessica Speart’s delicious narrative.

The book reads more like a cat-and-mouse detective thriller from an expert storyteller, only it’s one of those plots in which, as Speart noted, truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

Speart, an investigative reporter-author who has split her career between writing fictional mystery books and covering wildlife law enforcement, endangered species issues and the environment for major magazines, tackles this project with a combination of writer’s grace and bulldog tenacity.

The story centers on the pursuit of Yoshi Kojima, a superstar in the surprisingly seedy world of butterfly smuggling. Kojima brazenly refers to himself as the “Indiana Jones of insects.”

Chasing him is rookie undercover agent Ed Newcomer, who homes in on his target through a combination of street smarts and high-tech savvy.

The tension Speart sets up makes for a near-obsessive read. She puts the reader in Newcomer’s shoes as the agent attempts to sell himself to Kojima as a young apprentice eager to offer his services while learning how to engage in the illegal trade of butterfly smuggling.

Newcomer finds the cunning Kojima is no easy prey. And Kojima, for his part, seems to get some odd gratification out of being the target of a hunt. Along the way, the reader is treated to the fascinating niche of butterfly smuggling. It’s fascinating in the sense it is a rarely seen underworld.

Amazingly enough, there are some butterflies that sell on the black market for as much as \$39,000. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates the illegal butterfly trade to be worth \$200 million a year, according to the book’s publicists.

Kojima had been one of the smuggling world’s most elusive characters until his arrest a few years ago, yet he couldn’t resist the temptation of coming to Los Angeles and toying with Newcomer in 2006.

As Speart traversed the globe in pursuit of this story, she found herself a bit obsessed with the characters behind it, too. “The more I learned about Kojima, the more I wanted to know,” she said.

The book ends with a fascinating encounter Speart had with Kojima in his native country, Japan.

Tom Henry is an editorial writer and columnist for The (Toledo) Blade. He is a member of SEJ’s board of directors, on SEJournal’s editorial board and is SEJournal’s book editor.

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by *Charles Saylor*

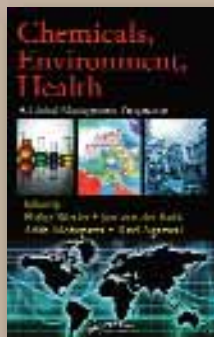
Education has failed to reach its potential in fighting climate change and environmental degradation. This passionate indictment of environmental education offers a controversial new vision. *University of California Press*



Blue Frontier

by *David Helvarg*

David Helvarg's acclaimed *Blue Frontier* — Dispatches from America's Ocean Wilderness sails anew in this updated 10th anniversary edition E-Book, available on all platforms. *Booklr*

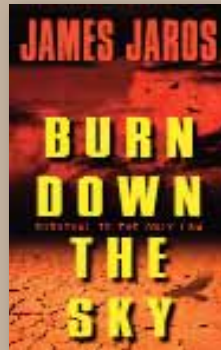


Chemicals, Environment, Health:

A Global Management Perspective

by *Philip Wexler*

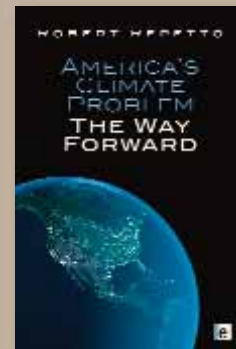
This book summarizes the global and multi-lateral efforts to manage the risks for environment or health of chemicals on the world stage. *CRC Press*



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