

DECEMBER 2006
SOCIETY OF AMERICAN BUSINESS EDITORS AND WRITERS
WWW.SABEW.ORG

TBJ

THE BUSINESS JOURNALIST

COVER STORY



New York state of mind

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

FORBES SPEAKS: Immediate and interactive, that is what the Web is about > Page 2

BLOGGING: Bloggers tell all, or at least first impressions of nascent trend > Page 3

CPA TRAINING: Look beyond the bottom line when reporting earnings > Page 6

ENERGY CRISIS: That's where we're headed, says one economist > Page 7

SNAPSHOT: Photos from the workshop > Pages 9, 10 & 11



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Redesigned, enhanced
Web site ready for you.

Page 13

CHAIR'S CORNER

Data User's Group
really knows numbers.

Page 14

BEHIND THE BEAT

Post business editor
shares hiring insights.

Page 15

BIZ BUZZ

BusinessWeek tops
recent staff changes.

Page 17

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Immediate and interactive, that is what the Web is about, says Forbes

By Susan Tompor

NEW YORK — If newspapers want to make money on the Web, it's essential to avoid treating the Internet like a clone of the paper product, advised Steve Forbes, president and CEO of Forbes. Forbes, who is also editor-in-chief of Forbes Magazine, spoke at the workshop on Oct. 30.

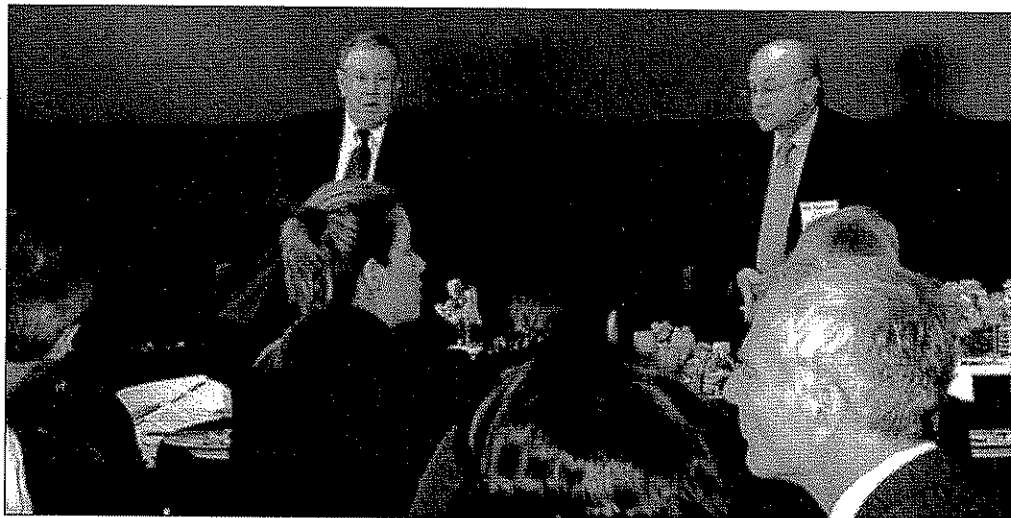
Based on his experience, Forbes said he's come to the conclusion that online news sites must be developed as a separate medium. "Print won't disappear, but a lot of papers could if they don't readjust," Forbes said. The Forbes family continued to invest heavily in the online product, he said, even during lean years for the magazine industry in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

"Thankfully, we make money off the Web now," Forbes said. Forbes.com has a separate staff than the magazine, including a different editorial staff, a different art department, a different public relations department and a different sales staff.

About 99 percent of the content on Forbes.com is separate from the magazine, excluding the annual listing of the super rich. The remaining 1 percent is the magazine content, according to a Forbes.com spokeswoman.

The Web site focuses on offering immediate and interactive information.

A people tracker, for example,



BECKY BISBEE

Steve Forbes, president and CEO of Forbes, answers questions from SABEW members about health-coverage, the Internet and U.S. trade deficit during the Q&A portion of his appearance at the workshop. Rob Reuteman, Rocky Mountain News business editor, right, introduced Forbes and moderated the discussion.

offers a way to get online alerts on news related to top executives nationwide.

The Web site also offers exclusive, original business video reports.

Forbes noted that the online products shouldn't be treated as the enemy or an ancillary. Forbes told the group of editors and writers that Internet readers, in general, do not have all the time in the world.

"The Web is designed for ADD people," he said. In other matters, Forbes also chal-

lenged business journalists to reconsider how they cover economic news. He noted that the economy continues to be strong but people can feel dour, thanks in part to the way journalists cover the economy.

One example: Forbes suggested that the trade deficit is over emphasized. Critics often point to the growing U.S. trade deficit as a troubling sign for the U.S. economy and U.S. jobs.

"Just because it crosses a border does not mean an economy is weak," Forbes said.

As for the Detroit automakers, Forbes said after his speech that he believes that both Ford and General Motors will survive. Both companies, he said, know they need to get much sexier products on the road.

And he expects more legacy cost-cutting efforts to be addressed in contract negotiations with the United Auto Workers next year.

Susan Tompor is a personal finance columnist at the Detroit Free Press and a SABEW governor.

TBJ THE BUSINESS JOURNALIST

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN BUSINESS EDITORS AND WRITERS • WWW.SABEW.ORG
VOL. 42, NO. 7 • DECEMBER 2006

The Business Journalist is published seven times per year by the Society of American Business Editors and Writers, Inc., The Missouri School of Journalism, 385 McReynolds Hall, Columbia, MO 65211-1200; 573-882-7862; fax, 573-884-1372; sabew@missouri.edu; www.sabew.org. Republication in any way is prohibited without the written permission of SABEW.

Executive Editor
Becky Bisbee
Business Editor, The Seattle Times
206-464-2494
bbisbee@seattletimes.com

Advertising Information
Lanet S. Wisner
573-882-5093
wisnerl@missouri.edu

Creative Director
Paul Morgan
425-776-1021
morganducks@verizon.net

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Bloggers tell all, or at least first impressions of nascent trend

By Hanah Cho

NEW YORK — Jon Lansner blogs about Orange County, Calif., real estate. Michelle Leder posts questionable and unusual items from company financial documents on her Web site. And Erick Schonfeld blogs on business and technology.

These three business journalists shared their experiences, everything from dealing with reader feedback to receiving extra pay for blogging during a panel discussion at the workshop.

Lansner, a business columnist at the Orange County Register, started his real estate blog seven months ago. His 400 posts on topics such as home sales and mortgages have generated 6,600 reader comments.

Check out these Web sites

Footnoted.org

Michelle Leder's blog, where she reports on red flags from financial documents

blogs.oregister.com/lansner/

Orange County Register business columnist Jon Lansner's writes about real estate

business2.blogs.com/business2blog/

The Next Net: Business 2.0 magazine's Erick Schonfeld tackles technology and business

"Ninety percent of the content hasn't been created by me — that's the exciting thing," Lansner said.

While feedback is important, Lansner said he edits comments for inappropriateness and potentially libelous statements.

The editor at large at Business 2.0 magazine, Schonfeld created his blog called The Next Net 18 months ago. He said blogging helps his reporting and writing.

"If journalism is the first draft of history, blogs are the notes," he said. So when Schonfeld writes stories for the magazine, he said he has completed much of the work because of his blog.

What's more, Schonfeld said blogging creates visibility of his work and "gives us a leg up when you're doing reporting."

"(Sources) know who you are," he said.

Blogging, for the most part, is like a second job for these journalists. Lansner and Schonfeld have regular deadlines to meet and stories to write. But only Schonfeld is getting paid for blogging; he will start receiving a modest bonus tied to his blog's Web traffic.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Inaugural Business Journalism Professors Seminar

Presented Jan. 8-11, 2007 by the Donald W. Reynolds
National Center for Business Journalism
at Arizona State University

Congratulations to these university educators selected
as fellows to participate in this training program:

U.S. Fellows

Len Barcoucky
Steve Crane
Dr. Anita Fleming-Rife
Dennis Herrick
Harold Higgins
John Irby
Dr. Ed Lenert
Bill McWhirter
Joe Moore
Mark Morrison
Dr. Thomas Ruggiero
Timothy Smith
Chris Warden

Univ. of Pittsburgh
Univ. of Maryland
Grambling St. Univ.
Univ. of New Mexico
Univ. of Minnesota
Washington St. Univ.
Univ. of Nevada-Reno
Michigan St. Univ.
Univ. of Central Missouri
Univ. of Texas at Austin
Univ. of Texas at El Paso
Kent State Univ.
Troy University

International Fellows

Thalyta Swanepoel
Dr. Xu Xiaoge

North-West Univ.
(South Africa)
Nanyang Technological
Univ. (Singapore)

Free One-Day Business Journalism Workshops in 2007:

Cities will include Anaheim, Calif.; Boston; Cleveland;
Denver; Houston; and Orlando. More to be announced later.



Donald W. Reynolds

National Center for Business Journalism

Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism
Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication
PO Box 874702
Arizona State University
Tempe, Ariz. 85287-4702
480-727-9186

The Center is funded by a grant from the Las Vegas, Nevada-based
Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

www.BusinessJournalism.org

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Words of wit, wisdom and caution from three of the best

By John F. Wasik

NEW YORK — When you get luminaries like Diana Henriques, Floyd Norris and Allan Sloan on the same dais, the wisdom and advice flow like the Hudson River.

Such was the case when the three award-winning reporters anchored a workshop session on Oct. 30.

Often vague and self-serving traders' argot was the first bone of contention for the panelists.

Sloan, Newsweek's Wall Street editor and columnist, urged business reporters to be dispassionate about their reporting and eschew the language of Wall Street.

Sloan cautioned reporters against becoming "cheerleaders for the stock market," and advised against the common use of "profit-taking" or "correction" when "market decline" would be more precise. "When stocks go up, we don't call it a mistake. So when they go down, why is it a 'correction?'"

"We use the term 'profit taking' when owners are selling stocks," Sloan stated. "How do we know they're taking profits? The one thing we do know is that they're selling, and that's what we should say: selling. Call them 'sellers' not 'profit takers.'"

Focusing his comments on emerging stories, The New York Times columnist Norris counseled reporters to dig into the relationship between derivatives and hedge funds. As financial instruments that represent everything

from stock indexes to credit risk, derivatives have been implicated in trading scandals involving hedge fund partnerships such as Long-Term Capital management and Amaranth.

The next big story is hedge funds and derivatives, Norris predicted. "There's going to be a blow-up one of these days. Derivatives transfer risk. To whom do they transfer risk?"

Since there's very little transparency in how private hedge funds trade and operate, reporters have to work even harder to uncover key details.

include consulting contracts, leases or other deals between private entities and public companies. And there may be employee stock ownership filings by private companies. Other good sources are litigation records and bid documents for public contracts.

"Use the public documents at hand," Henriques said. "For example, the typical entrepreneur has gone bankrupt twice. So that's a lot of bankruptcy court records. You can also do [online] searches using company names and the word 'resume' to locate potential sources who were once there or are there now."

Henriques implored reporters to learn as much as they can about risks to the financial system.

"Business journalists are too often climbing the last learning curve, instead of looking ahead and learning about what insiders are worrying about now," she said, a shortcoming that will come home to haunt the financial media if it's blind-sided by the next financial debacle. How are business journalists seen if they miss the next Enron or Worldcom? "After the next blow-up, the business media will once again get blamed for not having warned the public in time."

John F. Wasik is the personal finance columnist for Bloomberg News and author of The Merchant of Power (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2006).



Floyd
Norris



Allan
Sloan



Diana
Henriques

Henriques, The New York Times's investigative business reporter, urged journalists to examine the role of private companies through careful document searches. She recommended reporters check public SEC reports for clues to private entities. For example, 13(d) filings can reveal more about private companies that own 5 percent or more of a company's stock. Exhibits filed with SEC documents could

"Business journalists are too often climbing the last learning curve, instead of looking ahead and learning about what insiders are worrying about now."

Diana Henriques, The New York Times's investigative business reporter

Blogging: Not much money in blogs so far

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Making money from blogging is a struggle, said Leder, a freelance business journalist and founder of footnoted.org. Leder operates her blog mostly through donations. She unsuccessfully experimented with Google ads

and considered paid subscriptions.

Leder started her blog three years ago to promote her book, "Financial Fine Print: Uncovering a Company's True Value." Today, Leder continues to write on interesting and unusual items buried in Securities and Exchange Commission filings. Leder said her

posts are 99.9 percent original reporting.

Hanah Cho is a business reporter at The Baltimore Sun. She received a scholarship from the Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism to attend the conference.

It's not just
about the words _____ ■

It's about the
quotes

Expand your pool of expert sources with
ProfNet ExpertsSM from PR Newswire.

ProfNet ExpertsSM from PR Newswire is the smart but simple way to find fresh new sources for interviews and quotes. Our network of 13,000 news and information officers — representing more than 4,000 organizations on five continents — is standing by to help you develop stories on any topic.

Just submit a query describing the nature of the expertise you need or search our database of 20,000 expert profiles. You'll quickly connect with expert sources that can provide just the insights and quotes you need for your story.

It's fast, easy and it's free.

Find out today how ProfNet Experts can assist in making your job easier and your story more credible. Go to www.prnewswire.com/media or contact PR Newswire's Media Help Desk at 800-387-8448.

News Release Distribution and Archives • Multimedia and Photos • Media-only Web Site • Expert Database

© PR Newswire Association LLC 2006



PR Newswire
United Business Media

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Look beyond the bottom line when reporting earnings

By Pamela Yip

NEW YORK — When earnings season swings around and business reporters are inundated with press releases from companies, the tendency is to concentrate on net earnings.

But that can be misleading, said Jay Taparia, a chartered financial analyst, who speaks to journalists on financial statement analysis at seminars offered by SABEW, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and the American Society of Business Publication Editors.

"When you only report net income, you're only telling half the story," he said at a CPA training session at the workshop. Taparia conducted the program with Tom Contiliano, a certified public accountant, accounting consultant at Bloomberg News and a member of the organization's global training team.

They joined with the CFA Institute to talk about "Seven Habits for Financial Statement Analysis and Business News Reporting."

"Net income or earnings can easily be manipulated within the income statement, given the flexibility of accounting rules," Taparia said. "Think about why companies are always beating earnings per share estimates by a penny? Why not two or three or four pennies?"

Also, under conditions of generally rising prices, even when inflation is just 1 percent or 2 percent, records for earnings and revenues are not unusual, he said.

Here is an abbreviated version of the seven habits of successful financial statement analysis.

1. Read the company's latest 10-K and 10-Q reports before earnings season begins.

"Doing so helps you to better understand the company's structure, the nature of the industry and how the company actually makes money," Taparia said.

He said the section about key risk factors is severely underreported.

"Imagine if, during the years of the Internet bubble, a technology company

On the Web

To download Jay Taparia's full presentation to go to <http://www.cfainstitute.org/aboutus/press/pdf/TipSheetSevenHabitsUS.pdf>



included any one of its key risk factors in its earnings release," Taparia said. "Would investors have learned and paid more attention to the fact that these companies would not make a profit for several years?"

2. Maintain spreadsheets of historical company financial statements.

"Journalists should keep a database of a company's financial statements for the last five years and, separately, the last 12 quarters," Taparia said. "Include the cash flow statement, balance sheet and income statement."

3. Never assume that increased revenue and net income mean a company is making more money.

"Prior to the biggest bankruptcies in recent history, revenue and net income were always overstated and never showed a company's true financial health," he said.

For example, reported revenue can actually be estimated, he said.

"Publicly traded hospitals recognize revenue based on optimistic estimates of what they think they will collect from Medicare and other insurers. This may not reflect the true amount actually collected and could be significantly less than what the hospital billed the government, the typical hospital's largest customer.

"If revenues can be estimated or overstated, so can net income," he said.

"Journalists should review the company's income statement and revenue footnotes to see how the company is actually recognizing revenue," Taparia said. "Journalists and investors need to know not

only why reported revenue increased or decreased, but also how the company came to that conclusion."

4. Always review the cash flow statement first.

"A company's true value is based on the amount of cash flow, not net income, it produces," Taparia said. "The company pays its bills with cash flow. It's money in the bank account, it's real."

The cash flow statement allows investors to compare how much cash came into the company during the period, where it came from, how much was used, and what it was used for.

"When you see cash flow and net income go in opposite directions, that's your story," Taparia said.

Pay attention to how much cash a company holds because high levels may mean "something's about to happen," Contiliano said. "It doesn't make sense for a company to hold on to a lot of cash."

5. Review the balance sheet in terms of dollars and percentage of total assets.

"The balance sheet gives the reader a greater sense of what the company owns and what it owes," Taparia said. "It gives an indication of the resources a company has to help it grow during economic booms and to survive during bad times."

5. Review the income statement items both in terms of dollars and as a percentage of total revenues.

"After analyzing the cash flow statement and balance sheet, journalists can reaffirm their conclusions about the company's financial health by reviewing the income statement," Taparia said.

For example, if you analyzed an airline's financial statements, you would have noticed if its business model was not working and whether profitability was declining or negative, he said.

7. Read the company's earnings

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

U.S. headed toward energy crisis redo, says economist

By Don Mecoy

NEW YORK — The 1973 OPEC oil embargo convulsed the U.S. economy as American motorists queued up to pay record gasoline prices.

But the energy crisis produced a couple of benefits, said economist Joe Kalt, professor of International Political Economy at John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, during a speech about covering energy at the workshop.

Scores of U.S. newspapers enhanced business coverage, producing more jobs for journalists and more interest in the stories they wrote.

And, the sudden spike in energy prices persuaded Americans to conserve, he said. Without conservation, the country would use 75 percent more energy than it currently does.

But the nation's economic growth has outstripped the reduction in per capita consumption, contributing to the latest energy crunch, he said.

For energy consumers, the numbers are bleak, Kalt said.

"Things are downright scary. And I'm a genetic optimist."

Kalt ticked off some pertinent, pessimistic figures:

- The U.S. remains shackled to fossil fuels, with 86 percent of the country's energy needs being met by petroleum, coal and natural gas.

- In 1979, the United States imported about one-third of its oil. Today, the nation imports about half its supply. Imports supply about 30 percent of total U.S. energy needs.

- Except for oil, domestic energy production has increased dramatically since 1970. U.S. coal production is up more than 80 percent; natural gas production has expanded more than 45 percent and nuclear power production has grown more than 300 percent as existing plants generate more power.

- Economic growth (the U.S. gross domestic product has increased more than 140 percent since 1970) has boosted energy use by more than 30 percent. Meanwhile, growth in China and India has created more demand for liquid fuels, which sell on a global market.

- In 30 years, there will be an additional 2 billion energy consumers. Meanwhile, higher incomes in developing countries will create a greater global appetite for liquid fuels.

- Increasingly, oil reserves are concentrated in the Middle East, which supplies about one third of the world market. By 2030, experts estimate about 40 percent of the world's oil will flow from the Middle East.

Some argue alternative fuel technology could ease the crisis, he said. But the volatility of the energy market makes funding developments an extremely risky proposition.

"Just when you have put your investment in new technology and a great alternative, the oil producers can zap you by flooding the market with low-cost fuel, and take away your profit."

The United States has limited its purchase of oil from Saudi Arabia, which has the largest reserves and thus the biggest leverage on oil prices. But, Kalt said, that doesn't protect the country from Saudi manipulations of the global market.

Failing to place energy stories in perspective is a disservice to readers, he cautioned.

"I think the frustration in part comes that it needs to be in context. They don't understand that there's been a great deal of conservation. They hope that there's a magic pill, a breakthrough in solar or hydrogen or ethanol, whatever it might be. That then colors our politics."

Americans suffer from the conceit that they can solve any problem, and elect politicians who claim to have the answers, Kalt said. But the problems are too complex and too global to be solved domestically, he said.

Politicians have developed few new ideas, Kalt said, noting that President Bush's energy policy announcements were "uncannily similar" to the ideas proposed more than a generation ago by President Carter.

Reporters must challenge the legitimacy of energy policies put forth by politicians and others, particularly those advocating U.S. energy independence, a concept that is nowhere in sight, Kalt said.

"We've been saying it for 30 years. We are so far from getting off oil it's not worth talking about."

Don Mecoy is a business reporter at The Oklahoman. He received a SABEW Chair scholarship to attend the workshop.



Joe Kalt is the professor of International Political Economy at John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University

CPA training: Dig deeper to find a company's true health

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

release.

"Flag anything that seems like or acts like pro-forma earnings," Taparia said. "This is the company's way of saying it has a one-time explanation for why it lost money or did not make as much as it did the prior year or quarter."

Examples of this are words like "write-offs," "charge-offs" and "one-time charge."

Regularly reference cash flow from operations and free cash flow and generally explain what the terms include and exclude, Taparia said.

"These numbers are powerful tools that tell an audience about the financial health of a company," he said. "These two calculations are also less prone to manipulation, as they represent large movements in cash and quickly reflect management's strategy."

Always read the footnotes to financial statements.

"A majority of the truth of the company's health is buried here," Taparia said. "The numbers alone rarely tell the full story. Take time to review and ask questions regarding any vague statements."

Pamela Yip is personal finance writer and columnist for The Dallas Morning News. She helps develop training programs and seminars for the business news staff, and was a team leader this year in the newspaper's newsroom-wide reporting and writing training program for reporters and editors.

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Tips for better Web surfing

By Chris Knappe

NEW YORK — Is Internet Explorer limiting your ability to explore the Internet? Is plain old Googling not getting the job done?

Extend your online antenna with these tips from Columbia Journalism School Dean of Students and WABC-TV tech guru Sreenivasan, host of "Smarter Surfing: Web Tips for Business Reporters" at the workshop:

1. Explore beyond Explorer.

Sure, Microsoft Internet Explorer is the most popular way to get around the Web, but even in its recently released IE 7.0 incarnation it's not the best, or the most useful browser. Sree recommends Firefox, a free alternative browser with broad support for Web standards, innovative features like easy text enlargement and quick (customizable) access to multiple search engines.

www.firefox.org

2. No more animated paperclips.

Need compatibility with standard Microsoft Office apps, but don't want to shell out \$100-\$400 for Redmond's latest and greatest? Download OpenOffice.org's free office suite, which is able to read, edit and create MS-Office compatible files. Open Office isn't perfect — it only does "about 80 percent" of what Office can do — but the price is right.

www.openoffice.org

3. Share your docs, change your world

Google Docs & Spreadsheets "has changed

my online life," Sreenivasan says. Formerly known as Writely, a Web-based document creation and sharing tool, he uses Google D&S to eliminate e-mail attachments, share information with students, collaborate with an editor and write from virtually any computer in the world. Don Mecoy, reporter for the Daily Oklahoman, says the paper's editors are using Google docs as a budgeting tool since many people can edit a document at the same time. The spreadsheets function can work similarly, with functions that range from tracking expenses to crunching data. Files can be saved in Office-compatible or PDF formats.

docs.google.com

4. Google your desktop

"It is easier to find a file on the SEC Web site than on your own desktop," Sreenivasan says. Google Desktops remedies that, indexing your hard drive to make locating documents on your PC as easy as finding them on the Web.

Mac users running Mac OS 10.4 already have a similar function, Spotlight, built into their computers.

Be careful, though. Google Desktop on a public terminal can keep track of everything you do, posing potential security risks.

desktop.google.com

5. Smarter alerts

He calls Google Alerts "one of the most important developments out there for journalists." Create alerts via Google's news page by

typing in some keywords, like a company or executive name, and harness Google's ability to constantly scan news sources and e-mail you the latest relevant headlines. Recently added features enable alerts from blogs, Google Groups and Usenet postings.

news.google.com

6. Get specific

Need a government document or a scholarly report? Use two unheralded Google functions to find academic reports and obscure government publications without the clutter of a plain old Google search.

scholar.google.com

Usgov.google.com

7. Mash it up

So-called MASH-up sites combine the functionality of a resource like Google Maps with other public databases, such as housing locators. Check out housingmaps.com, chicagocrime.org and cellreception.com for examples.

These and many more links can be found at Sreenivasan's Web site www.sree.net. He also welcomes questions and suggestions from SABEW members (just be sure to put SABEW in your e-mail subject line). Write to him at sree@sree.net

Chris Knappe is a business reporter at The Grand Rapids Press. He received a SABEW chair scholarship to attend the workshop.

Dare to have fun with economic stories, say panelists

By Stephen Keating

NEW YORK —

Understanding the economy requires a comprehension of numbers and data, yet to communicate the larger meaning to an audience takes analytical and storytelling abilities.

"It's got to be fun. There has to be a certain panache to it," said Thomas Keene, editor-at-large at Bloomberg, who moderated a panel titled "Covering the Economy" at the workshop.

"Be very comfortable with all the numbers," said Kathleen Stephansen, head of global eco-

Recommended reading

• International Monetary Fund: www.imf.org

• "The Secrets of Economic Indicators," by Bernard Baumohl

nomics for Credit Suisse Securities (U.S.A.). She cited one indicator in particular when tracking the global economy: the composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the U.S., U.K., Euro zone and Japan.

"All the data matters down to

the decimal point, there's an audience for it," said Jack Doran, editor-in-charge of treasury news for Reuters. He added that market news has been so commoditized that there's a move in financial reporting away from "widget production" and toward deeper analysis.

"What does the trade imbalance mean for the U.S.?" Doran asked as an example, saying that readers want "more context and more perspective."

He suggested reading a book called "The Secrets of Economic Indicators" by Bernard Baumohl.

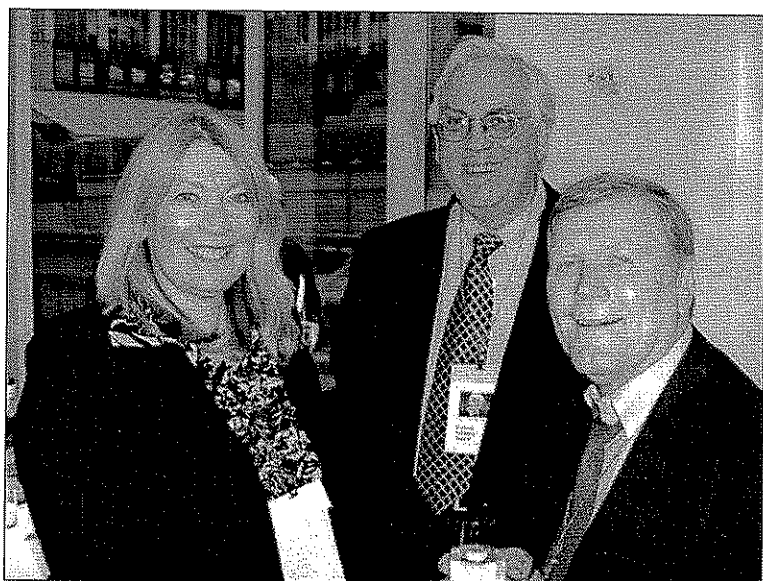
Keene also emphasized reading, saying that the "single best way to get educated is to have five market economists you like to read." He also recommended reading the World Economic Outlook reports from the International Monetary Fund, as well as the history of economics.

So what makes an economics story?

"If there's a dollar sign anywhere in it, it is an economic story," said David Wessel, deputy bureau chief of The Wall Street

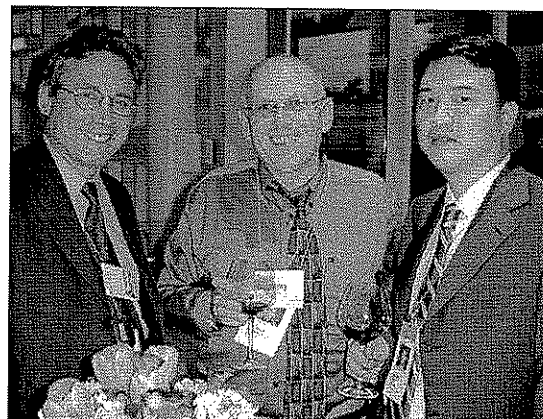
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT



BECKY BISBEE

SABEW Chair Marty Steffens, of the Missouri School of Journalism, left, Floyd Norris, chief financial correspondent of The New York Times, center, and freelance writer Dick Paplemik, a former SABEW governor, right, at the Bloomberg reception.



BECKY BISBEE

Allan Dodds Frank, of Bloomberg News, left, workshop chairman George Gombossy, of The Hartford Courant, center, and Walden Slew, of Bloomberg, visit during the reception hosted by Bloomberg at their headquarters in Manhattan.

2006 AWARDS — for Excellence in — HEALTH CARE JOURNALISM

The Awards for Excellence in Health Care Journalism recognize the best health reporting in print, broadcast and online media. In its third year, the AHCJ contest boasts nine categories. Entries can include a wide range of coverage, including public health, consumer health, medical research, the business of health care and health ethics.

First-place winners earn \$500, complimentary lodging and registration for Health Journalism 2007 – AHCJ's national conference – scheduled for March 15-18 in Los Angeles.

For more information on entry guidelines, please go to AHCJ's Web site, www.healthjournalism.org. You also may contact contest co-chairs Charles Ornstein at charles.ornstein@latimes.com or 213-237-7969, or Julie Appleby at jappleby@usatoday.com or 703-854-5647.



Association of Health Care Journalists
and the Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism
www.healthjournalism.org

CALL FOR ENTRIES!

Entry Forms available at www.healthjournalism.org

Take advantage of the early-bird deadline and save money!

Early-bird rate

(postmarked by Dec. 8, 2006)

- \$30 members
- \$50 nonmembers

Regular rate

(postmarked by Jan. 10, 2007)

- \$40 members
- \$60 nonmembers

Entry Categories

- Large Newspapers (over 250,000 circulation) and wire services
- Medium Newspapers (90,000 to 250,000 circulation)
- Small Newspapers (under 90,000 circulation)
- General Interest Magazines above 1 million circulation
- General Interest Magazines below 1 million circulation
- Trade Publications / Online Journals / Newsletters
- TV (Top 20 markets, network, syndicated)
- TV (Below Top 20 markets)
- Radio

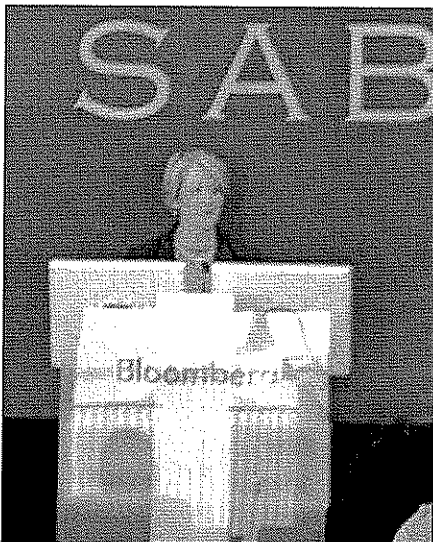
The Awards for Excellence in Health Care Journalism were created by journalists for journalists and are not influenced or funded by commercial or special-interest groups.

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT



Certified financial planner Jay Taparla, who led a session on deciphering financial statements, left, answers questions posed by reporter Jeanne Bonner of The Morning Call.

BECKY BISBEE



LANET WISNER

Xerox CEO Anne Mulcahy told SABEW members one of her first acts after taking over the troubled company was to seek advice from Berkshire Hathaway's Warren Buffett, a Xerox shareholder. His advice: Forget about Wall Street and focus on customers and employees.



BECKY BISBEE

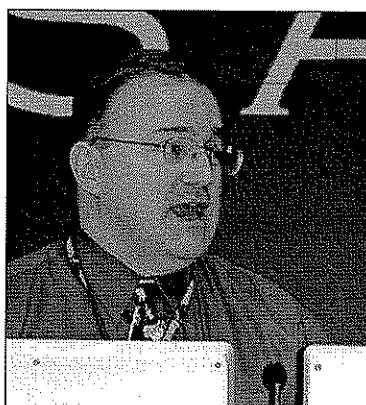
Dimitra DeFotis, senior writer at Barron's online, left, and Amanda Hoyte at the Bloomberg reception.

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT



BECKY BISBEE

Reporter Daniel Connolly, of The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal, left, reporter Kelko Morris, of Newsday, center, and Liz Moore of Newsday, right, at the Bloomberg reception.



Bloomberg Managing Editor Dave Wilson speaks from the heart about the importance of helping to train the next generation of business journalists through a contribution to SABEW. Wilson and his wife, Sandy Gonzalez, an editor at Bloomberg and former SABEW governor, made a generous donation in 2005 to support the student category for the Best in Business contest. Wilson encouraged all SABEW members to support the current Fund for the Future campaign.

BECKY BISBEE



BECKY BISBEE

Becky Quick, co-anchor of CNBC's "Squawk Box," right, describes for SABEW members what it is like being on the air as various producers feed her newsy tidbits. Dawn Wotapka Hardesty, a Long Island Business News reporter, left, introduced Quick.



Reporting assistant Lyneka Little, of The Wall Street Journal, left, Media Relations Director Allison Adams, of the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School, center, and copy editor Joanna Ossinger, of The Wall Street Journal, at the Bloomberg reception.

BECKY BISBEE

2006 SABEW WRITER'S WORKSHOP REPORT

Unusual topics, quality sources underpin great narrative storytelling

By Adam Schreck

NEW YORK — On Halloween, the last day of the workshop, The Wall Street Journal treated readers to the tale of a preacher in Salem, Mass., in hot water with church authorities. His sin? Ministering to the town's latter-day witches and Wiccans.

An excerpt from Suzanne Sataline's story:

(The Rev. Phil Wyman) provides Christian-tinged theater. Near the stage, people lined up this year for dream interpretations and "psalm readings," in which volunteers proffered their advice through scriptural passages. In another tent, redolent of incense, James Wilcox, a friend of Mr. Wyman's, was dressed in a monk's cowl as he confessed the "sins of the church," dating all the way back to the Crusades. Mr. Day said some of his witch friends were moved when they heard a Christian admit the church has wronged people. "Sure, he wants to convert people," he says about Mr. Wyman. "But he does it in a way that respects you."

Quirky, middle-column stories like that — known at the paper as A-Heds — as well as longer human-interest and explainer pieces elsewhere on the page have made the Journal a leader in narrative writing.

At the "Writing Great Narratives" session, Journal page one editor Shelly Branch and three Journal reporters talked about craft-



BECKY BISBEE

Any subject is fair game for a great narrative story, say staffers from The Wall Street Journal, who spoke during a session at the writer's workshop. From left, Shelly Branch, moderator and page one editor; Geeta Anand, investigative reporter; Brooks Barnes, media reporter; and Lee Hawkins, automotive reporter.

ing the longer-form stories that have become a staple on both sides of the paper's cream-colored "What's News" box.

Branch said stories that appear on the paper's front have to be "special, unusual and creatively told." The kind of stories — eye-opening, heart-breaking or just plain weird — you can't find anywhere else.

"We ask questions that go deep and try to tell a broader story," she said.

Just about any subject is fair game. Media reporter Brooks Barnes wrote a quintessential A-Hed on Katie Couric's ascension to the CBS Evening News anchor's chair earlier this year. His 1,300-word story, full of risible quotes and fly-on-the-wall detail, explored how far CBS went to create a new

theme song to introduce its \$15 million-a-year star. He highlighted the importance of persistence and how cultivating sources pays off over time.

Pulitzer Prize winner Geeta Anand also talked about the value of good sources. Her story about costly lifesaving drugs used to treat rare diseases was told through the eyes of a middle-aged woman who's spent half her life worrying about dying early. Anand developed a close relationship with her subject through interviews at the woman's California home and in numerous phone calls throughout the editing process.

"The most important thing is picking the right subject," Anand said.

Whatever the topic, Journal stories have to be readable. That

means asking not just whether mom, dad or grandma can understand the story, Branch said, but also writing in a way that convinces them to keep reading past the jump.

She offered the following tips to engage readers:

- Cut out clutter by thinking carefully about themes and characters. Don't include quotes or people you don't need, and be willing to let go of elements that don't add to the overall narrative.

"By removing things from a story," Branch said, "you can strengthen it."

- Time matters. Some stories work better by starting in the middle, others are best suited to a chronological retelling. Whichever you choose, make sure your timeline benefits the reader and stays consistent throughout.

- Never assume your reader knows what you're talking about. Get rid of jargon and put everything in layman's terms.

- Think about movement, and push your reader to keep going. Don't get bogged down in statistics and facts, and watch out for forced transitions that spoil the flow.

Adam Schreck, a former intern at The Wall Street Journal, is completing his master's degree at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He graduates in May 2007.

Economy: Some economics reporting overhyped

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Journal's Washington bureau. Examples he gave: How are people shopping differently? Has economic inequality become a political issue? The use of Youtube.

Stephansen said she can learn as much from journalists as they do from her.

"Talking to the press is important because they do have their fingers on the pulse of what people are worried about," she said, adding that some economics reporting is overhyped. "USA Today showing gas prices above \$3 every day can create some hysteria."

In serving Wall Street Journal readers,

Wessel said the challenge is, "How do I tell them what they need to know without jargon?"

Sifting through new economic reports and data, Wessel said he asks, "What does this tell us about the economy today that it didn't yesterday? If it doesn't, it ought to be a damn short story."

Stephen Keating is the business editor at the Denver Post and a SABEW governor.



**Dave
Kansas**
Wall Street
Journal
dave.kansas
@wsj.com

>> PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Redesign first step to more useful Web site

EVERYONE IN THE newspaper business is grappling with the disruption of technology. Indeed, increasingly the term "newspaper" seems a bit quaint. The distinction between print and digital media is swiftly eroding as more of us perform across the various platforms our news organizations engage in.

This is also an issue for the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. Most of you will read this in printed form. Many of you will read it online and others may read it via email on a handheld device. As we zoom deeper into the electronic media age, SABEW has to evolve along with it.

To that end, we've recently upgraded our own Web site. The sharper design is the first step we are taking to enhance our electronic interface with our membership. SABEW's leadership fully understands that our Web site has to become a much more useful tool for our members, and we are making the investments to make that happen.

Before our recent redesign, SABEW had already made moves to take advantage of the Internet. Our biggest initiative involved taking the Best in Business contest entry process online, something that has made the contest process efficient for companies nominating award candidates and for judges dealing with entries.

Along with our new design, which was spearheaded by our Internet Committee, we have added Chris Roush, a journalism professor at the University of North Carolina, as the site's managing editor. Many of you are already familiar with Roush's Talking Biz News blog. He's bringing that blog with him and he's got other plans for making the site a better resource for members.

A companion initiative comes from our Training Committee. This group is developing online training modules. We have already made available several modules, including: "Covering a New Company in Town," by Jill Jorden Spitz of the Arizona Daily Star and Jonathan Blum of Jonathan Blum Editorial, and "10 Tips for Better Economic Stories," by Greg McCune of Reuters.

Other members have already started offering suggestions for additional online training modules. If you have an

idea, please contact Josh Mills, the chair of the Training Committee, at josh-mills@optonline.net.

The training modules flow, in part, from the other reality many of us face concurrently with the technology disruptions: tighter budgets. One of SABEW's chief missions is providing training to make business journalists better. While many members come to our annual conferences and fall workshops, we know that we can reach more members by offering electronic training via our Web site.

Another example of SABEW innovation occurred at our fall workshop, generously hosted by Bloomberg News at its new headquarters in New York City. The workshop was well attended and, by being in New York, we were able to attract some real luminaries of business journalism, including Matt Winkler, editor of Bloomberg News, and Barney Calame, public editor of The New York Times, as well as important local business figures, such as John

Thain, chief executive of NYSE Group, and Anne M. Mulcahy, chairman and CEO of Xerox.

We are likely to experiment with non-hotel conferences at other venues in the future as SABEW seeks the most cost-effective way to reach members all across the country.

On a final note, I want to remind everyone about SABEW's fund-raising drive. As part of our expanded development work, we have a challenge grant to raise \$25,000 by May 31, 2007. If we raise \$25,000 from our members and supporters, we will get a matching amount from the grantor, Challenge Fund for Journalism. So, don't delay in getting your pledge in to support this effort.

Our development work is vital to expanding our sources of revenue so that SABEW can provide training and leadership even in straitened times. If you have any questions or suggestions about SABEW matters, don't hesitate to email me at dave.kansas@wsj.com.

NYSSCPA.ORG

The New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants (NYSSCPA) is pleased to announce its Excellence in Financial Journalism Award, a national competition that recognizes journalists who contribute to a better understanding of business and financial issues.

The award is offered in six categories: print under 1,500 words, print over 1,500 words, radio, television, wire services, and electronic media.

Winners are selected annually and the deadline for this year's entries is February 1, 2007.

Entries published or broadcast between January 1 and December 31, 2006 are eligible. If you have any questions or would like an application, contact Lois Whitehead, NYSSCPA Public Relations Manager at 212-719-8405 or email to lwhitehead@nysscpa.org.



Marty Steffens

SABEW Chair
in Business
and Financial
Journalism

steffensm@
missouri.edu
573-884-4839

>> CHAIR'S CORNER

We've got your number...

WE'VE JUST CONCLUDED a successful SABEW workshop in New York, where we talked about a lot of weighty issues — from ethical dilemmas emerging from new advertising strategies to the burden/blessing of staff blogs.

All great stuff. But the bread and butter of our profession is analyzing numbers — lots of them. And they're often contradictory.

I went to the annual conference of the Association of Public Data Users in October. This association is comprised of government workers, public policy experts, university staff and grant writers. These people live and breathe statistics. They produce numbers that form the basis of business stories. And like the people who live in Hollywood, they know that appearances can deceive.

Take income figures.

We use figures from the Census Bureau or the Bureau of Labor Statistics. But should we be considering figures from the Bureau of Economic Analysis instead?

At the conference, BEA experts argued that their definition of income is broader than that of Census, which derives income from their Current Population Survey's annual Social and Economic Supplement. And, they said, it is more complete than that of the BLS, which gets information from employer surveys.

The BEA uses administrative data — information that taxpayers report to the IRS, as well as employer data from the BLS. The BEA figures also include

income data from people in institutions, such as colleges or prisons. The Census data usually excludes these populations.

Census data is annual cash income, and often excludes income reported to the IRS, such as rental income, lump-sum payments or capital gains.

To show you what this means on a national scope, the BEA estimates U.S. personal income was \$8.678 trillion in 2001, compared to a Census income estimate of \$6.446 trillion. The BEA says that most of the \$2.232 trillion gap — \$1.429 trillion — can be explained by the differences in how the two agencies compile data.

For example, the BEA counts \$982 billion in property income as personal income. Census does not.

BEA also adjusts incomes for the "fudge factor" — adding income to families based on under-reporting to the IRS, as well as factoring in things like bartering.

Find out all sorts of data at www.bea.gov. Go to their pressroom to find new data releases.

The Census Bureau also has developed alternative ways to measure economic well-being from the CPS survey. These measures remove taxes, add capital gains or losses, and compute the return on equity of homeowners. The Census Bureau has found this broader definition results in a more equalized distribution of income and subsequently reduces the gaps between low- and high-income groups.

So, before you do income reporting, take a look at how income figures

are compiled.

That said, I want to tip you to a couple of new things coming down the pike from our federal friends.

- The Census Bureau is adding data to its Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics database. It's map-enabled, which means journalists can generate customized reports using interactive mapping tools. You can click on a map, create a specific geographical area and have the database prepare a PDF report on incomes, demographics, etc. It's so sophisticated you could even map a tornado's path or flood zone and see who is in harm's way. More state data is being added daily

lehd.dsd.census.gov/led/

- Next year, the BEA will roll out its Gross Metropolitan Product stats — that's right — you'll get a micro view of your local economy. It'll give drill-down data on some 300 markets. What a treasure trove for journalists.

Already out from the BEA are new figures on research and development investments and on "off-shoring" — jobs and income that are sent out of the U.S.

- The University of Michigan tracks all sorts of new data. Consult their Web site for new additions — especially in the social science arena.

www.icpsr.umich.edu/org/announce.html#new2006-11-13

Marty Steffens is SABEW Chair of Business and Financial Reporting. Email her at steffensm@missouri.edu.

Fall Writer's Workshop made possible with the support of the following sponsors

Bloomberg News // CFA Institute // Reuters

Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism // The Wall Street Journal



Mary Jane Pardue

Assistant professor of journalism, Missouri State University

mjpardue@missouristate.edu

>> BEHIND THE BEAT

Looking for a new job or a new hire, take Post editor's advice

THOUGHTS ABOUT FINDING a new job are never too far in the back of most journalists' minds. In a time of reduced staffing and company obsessions with FTEs, many of us are either looking for new positions or searching for the right candidates for those valuable slots we have the go-ahead to fill.

We asked SABEW member Jill Dutt, assistant managing editor, financial news at The Washington Post, to offer insights on hiring.

Here's a brief Q&A with Dutt about The Post's interview process. It's smart advice that will work anywhere.

Q: What is the first thing you look for in a job candidate? What would make you call an applicant for an interview?

A: The most impressive clip packages are well-edited presentations of a reporter's best work. There should be no more than 12 clips. Each story should have a short annotation that explains why this piece is unique, why the story had big impact, etc. Packages should include both significant scoops on competitive stories and a couple of examples of fine writing. The personal qualities I look for are enthusiasm, curiosity, competitiveness and endless energy.

Q: What moves a candidate to the top of the list of potential hires?

A: A proven ability to break big stories is most important. I also look for people who really know the beat they are covering. I need reporters who know more than who's who and what companies are important on their beats. Attractive candidates can see over the horizon of their industry or beat, can muse about the immense challenges looming and articulate a strategy for how they will cover the great stories down the line. Being able to connect the dots is imperative.

Q: Describe your interview process once a candidate gets an invi-



Jill Dutt, AME for financial news at The Washington Post.

tation to visit The Post.

A: Well, it's a long one! The regular drill is a full day of interviews with Post editors. Applicants should expect to meet with me, my deputy and a few other Business section assignment editors. They will also meet with a few senior Post editors running other sections because The Post encourages reporters to work for several different desks over the course of their career. Finally, each job candidate meets with Executive Editor Len Downie, Managing Editor Phil Bennett, Deputy Managing Editor Milton Coleman and others in News Personnel. For some candidates, the interview process takes two days. Copy editor candidates must complete a one-week tryout. After the interviews, Post editors gather to discuss the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. If things look good, we'll conduct reference checks and then make an offer.

Q: What is the biggest mistake candidates make while on a job interview?

A: Not reading the newspaper. Job candidates should make it a point to read the Business section for at least several weeks before agreeing to a job interview. They should know what's been on A-1 for at least the past week. Candidates should do a long-term clip search to see how we've covered the beat for which they are applying.

And candidates should have a well-thought-out pitch for how they would cover that beat going forward, explaining how they would do it in relation to how their predecessors have tackled it. They should also be able to discuss their long-term goals, i.e., they want to cover Wall Street or be a Style feature writer or a correspondent in Mexico City. We like people with big aspirations.

Q: How can seasoned professionals market themselves to compete against young talent?

A: Veteran reporters actually have an advantage in applying to The Post. Although we have training programs, we are not a starter newspaper. Rather, we want to hire reporters who can have an immediate impact on their beats. Experienced reporters should highlight their unique skills.

One thing to watch for: Don't expect us to be impressed just because you were one of the pack who covered the White House for two years or were posted to Paris covering economics or even that you did some A-1 stories on GM. You have to show that you led all the competition — including The Post — on significant aspects of these beats.

Q: Conversely, how can young talent market themselves to compete against seasoned professionals?

A: This is where creativity and enthusiasm come in. Emerging talent should focus on explaining the ambitions they hold for their journalism career, providing clips that show how they tried and where they fell short. Self-awareness is really important here; reporters with three years of experience should be able to recognize that they still have a lot to learn. Since young people do consume journalism differently than I do, being able to explain their own personal relationship to the news and how their work can reach people of their generation is also a plus.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

The contest is coming, the contest is coming

By Jill Jorden Spitz
Contest committee co-chair

As we continue to expand and improve SABEW's Best in Business contest — 2007 is our 13th annual competition — some changes are afoot you need to know about:

1. We are going completely digital for news categories. Last year's conversion to an electronic entry process was a success. We are expanding the electronic process for all of the news categories — enterprise, breaking news, projects and columns. You'll register the entry online, attach a PDF (or include several of them in a zip file, which we'll tell you how to create), and that's it — you're finished. Nothing to copy or mail.

If you're entering the section contest, you'll enter as you did last year: register your entry

online, and then mail in four copies of each of the sections you're entering. More details, and explicit directions, will be included in the BIB instructions to be posted on our Web site — www.sabew.org — soon.

2. One entry date. Last year, we created some confusion by having two entry dates: one to register and one to postmark your entries. This year, we're going back to basics with one entry deadline: Thursday, Feb. 1.

3. Two of the three mandatory submission dates. Start collecting those papers. Here are the first two mandatory dates for the section contest: Thursday, Feb. 16; and Sunday, Aug. 20. We'll announce the third mandatory date, and give you more information on the three dates you can choose, by the end of the year.

BEST IN BUSINESS 2007

MANDATORY DATES

Section contest

- Thursday, Feb. 16
- Sunday, Aug. 20
- One more TBA

Column contest

Wednesday, Feb. 8 - or If no column was published that day, the first column published AFTER Feb. 8

Beat: Best way to get your next job is to excell in your current one

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Q: How do you make the decision to offer a job?

A: We do extensive reference checks, both official ones through News Personnel, and also through my own informal network of friends and co-workers at newspapers and magazines around the country. Once we are sold on someone's clips and wooed by their winning personality, we try to find out what their colleagues think of them. This is both to uncover any yellow flags, but also to see if we think they would thrive in The Post's unique culture.

Q: Do you have any other advice for SABEW members thinking about changing jobs?

A: The best way to get your next job is to excel in your current one. Even if you don't like your beat, your boss or your newspaper, give it

your all. Then, when you have built an impressive file, reach out to the places you think you'd really love to work. I would put more emphasis on the "where" you want to work next rather than the "what" of your next job. Oftentimes moving to a bigger paper means taking a job with less responsibility or visibility than what you currently have. Don't sweat that. If you decide the big papers aren't for you, start examining smaller ones where you can have a huge impact. Finally, try to find a way to do what you love rather than aiming for a big title. We don't get paid enough in this business for a career to be plotted to a goal of money and power; journalism is a passion.

Behind the Beat profiles people in business news departments across the nation. If you have ideas or people you would like to read about, please e-mail Mary Jane Pardue at mjpardue@missouri-state.edu. Pardue is an assistant professor of journalism at Missouri State University.



Disney CEO headlines annual conference

By TBJ staff

Walt Disney Co. CEO Robert Iger will address SABEW's 44th annual conference in Orange County, Calif., on May 21, 2007.

Iger succeeded long-time Disney CEO Michael Eisner as the entertainment and news company's leader in October 2005. He oversees a diverse set of operations from a major Hollywood studio to the ABC network and its news production as well as a massive tourism business.

Previously, Iger was Disney's president and chief operating officer. He came to Disney through the company's purchase of Capital Cities/ABC, where Iger was president.

Iger's talk will be part of a SABEW event that will also feature:

- A town hall meeting on business journalism ethics.
 - Presentations of SABEW's Best in Business awards.
 - Session on how to better cover hot-button topics.
 - How to best manage your workflow in budget-crushing times for newsroom.
- Check our Web site, www.sabew.org for programming updates and registration and hotel information. The conference dates are May 20-22.

SABEW Trivia: Eisner was a keynote speaker when SABEW last visited Southern California for an annual conference in 1998.