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Dear MCAA members,

Following publication of the [MCAA Magazine – IRRADIUM](#), we are pleased to present the 6th issue of the Marie Curie Alumni Association newsletter. Just like in previous issues, MCAA Members have been involved in the production of content and we hope that we will continue receiving content from YOU!

- **Things to know about the second MCAA General Assembly:** find out what happened on this special day.
- **MCAA Award ceremony:** how does it work and who are the winners? Meet them and read about how they were selected.
- **Latest news from the Association:** the Climate Change Working Group, the South Asia Chapter and the German Chapter update us on their activities.
- **10 popular blogs for researchers:** get inspired by these blogs from one MCAA Member's shortlist.
- **My host country was France:** tips and advice from Fellows who have worked or are currently working in this country.
- **I benefited from a Marie Curie Action: International Outgoing Fellowship in the spotlight:** three Fellows share their experience of this Marie Curie Action.
- **Five top tips on how to write efficiently:** become an inspiring writer by applying our tips!
- **Participate in a research project on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by European adults:** Olatz Lopez-Fernandez, an MCAA member, is currently working on a project evaluating the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by European adults. Help her by completing her survey!
- **Scientific Investigation on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP):** why, how and where mainstream scientists can play an active role in understanding UFOs.
- **“Writing – A therapeutic tool in healing”:** this article has been written by Bhavna Rani, the latest winner of the MCAA editorial prize.
- **Keep in touch...what's coming up in the next newsletter?** See what's in the pipeline for the next newsletter!

Yours,

The MCAA Team



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Things you should know about the MCAA's second General Assembly

If you weren't present at the Second MCAA General Assembly (6 to 7 February, Porto, Portugal), take a look at this round-up of several things that we think you might like to know.

What was approved?

The minutes of the previous General Assembly that took place on November 2014 were unanimously approved, as well as the 2014 MCAA report of activities.

How was the 2014 budget distributed?

The treasurer of the MCAA, [Roy Someshwar](#), presented the Association's 2014 financial report as well as how the budget was distributed:

- Micro Grants (72%);
- Chapters (16%);
- Working Groups (12%).

Like the minutes and the activity report, the financial report was unanimously approved.

Useful tips for getting reimbursed

The treasurer took the opportunity to remind Alumni of reimbursement rules:

- send all your receipts both online and as hard copies;
- send within one month from the date of event;
- travel by car is an eligible expense;
- provide a declaration of attendance;
- provide a report of the event with pictures.

He added the following tips:

- make a copy of all receipts before posting;
- if possible, underline the date and amount with a highlighter;
- Respect the deadline of 1 month.

From now on, these procedures will no longer be a mystery to you!



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Working groups and Chapters, what's new?

Seven Working Groups and 17 Chapters have now been created within the MCAA. During the GA, [Francesco Grassi](#), the MCAA's Vice-Chair, appointed the Chairs of each Working Group and Chapter (who are considered as ex-officio members of the Board). Each Working Group Chair had the opportunity to present his/her activities as follows:

1. Communication WG – [Wuraola Akande](#)
2. Events & Networking WG – [Francesco Sanna](#)
3. Information & Data Access WG – [Mauricio Manfrini](#)
4. Policy on Successful Researchers WG – [Marco Masia](#)
5. Grants & Awards WG – [Anett Kiss](#)
6. Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Science WG – [Giovanna Avellis](#)
7. Internal Governance & Chapter Management Team WG – [Kiran Kumar Chereddy](#)

Opportunities to compete!

A representative from [FameLab](#) presented the concept – a communications competition designed to engage and entertain by breaking down science, technology and engineering into three-minute presentations.

Contestants from around the world take part, armed only with their wits and a few props that they can carry onto the stage – the result is unpredictable and aims to encourage curiosity and find out about the latest research. A winner of the 2014 Portuguese edition shared her experiences and told how challenging it was to compete.

Participant's portal: a helping hand for researchers

A European Commission representative reiterated that the documentation underpinning the Horizon 2020 programme represents extends to 2 000 pages, but that the [Participant Portal](#) is there to help to guide researchers through their funding applications.

To complete this presentation, [Zoran Andjelic](#), Ordinary Board Member, shared his experiences as a coordinator of research projects. He presented each of the projects, describing the process from proposal writing to project implementation. At the end of his presentation, he gave advice to members on how to be successful, especially in project negotiation, project kick-off and project realisation.

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Understanding researchers' career pathways

A representative from the European Science Foundation (ESF) presented the “Career Tracking Pilot Project”. It aims to:

- create a framework that will look for the first time at the neglected population of early career researchers;
- develop a career tracking instrument and process;
- produce data analysis and data reports;
- identify and communicate methodological and statistical steps.

What's next for the MCAA?

The Plan of Activities 2015 was presented by Francesco Grassi. He recalled the purpose of the Association: “*to promote and exploit, in the broadest sense, the full potential of the community of researchers who have benefitted in terms of mobility from the People programme*”. It is crucial to “brand” the Marie Curie experience as it represents a “*privileged community*”, a “*potential to exploit*”, “*services and networking opportunities*”.

Roy Someshwar presented a potential model for the sustainable development of the association, and for generating external revenues.

In 2015, the MCAA will continue do its best to provide its Members a space where they can make their voice heard!

Two Alumni were awarded a prize!

Find out who they are in our article “MCAA Award Ceremony”.

The Second MCAA General Assembly in figures



The Second MCAA General Assembly lasted two days



75 Alumni attended



21 abstracts were presented during the poster session



2 Alumni were awarded the MCAA Award



There are 7 Working Groups



There are 17 Chapters



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MCAA Award Ceremony – who are the winners?

The MCAA Award Ceremony took place on the second day of the MCAA General Assembly. Find out more about the winners and the procedure!

Why an MCAA Award ceremony?

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) wants to recognise members who have made contributions to the Marie Curie community, as well as career achievements.

MCAA Alumni of the Year Award 2014

This award aims to identify, highlight and promote outstanding contributions made by Members to the community through their professional career. Contributions can take any form, such as exceptional promotion of the programme, or remarkable results that show the value of activities supported by Marie Curie programme.

Any Member can nominate his or herself for the award.

Mostafa Moonir Shawrav was awarded the MCAA Alumni of the Year Award 2014. Originally from Bangladesh, he worked on his Marie Curie project at the Vienna University of Technology after having been awarded an Initial Training Network (ITN) grant.

MCAA Career Award 2014

This award recognises an outstanding career achievement by an MCAA Member. Career achievement can take various forms, such as scientific excellence, innovativeness of research approach, or outstanding contribution to the overall research community.

Juan Blanco was awarded the MCAA Career Award 2014. Originally from Spain, he benefited from a Career Integration Grant to work on ecological models at the University of Navarre.

We wish both a lot of success in their respective careers!

Award Committee – Who are they?

The Members of the Award Committee are as follows:

- **Mrs Veselina Angelova** – European Commission;
- **Prof. Panagiotis Bamidis** – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki;



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- **Prof. Laurent Sébastien Furnier** – Université de Nantes ;
- **Prof. Helen King** – Open University;
- **Dr Vincent Reillon** – Science Europe.

Before assessing the applications, Members of the Committee have to sign a conflict of interest declaration. They register then their appraisal through an assessment template where they have to identify the top three applicants and provide their reasoning. The Members must then reach a consensus on the final nominees.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Chair of the Award Committee:

contact@mariecuriealumni.eu

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Latest news from the MCAA Chapters

The South Asia Chapter attended the Pak-China Business Forum 2015

The South Asia Chapter had the opportunity to attend the Pak-China Business Forum 2015 and to represent the MCAA. Find out what they learnt during this exciting event!



About the event

The PAK-CHINA Business Forum took place from 27 to 30 March 2015 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

This event provided a platform for interaction between Chinese and Pakistani entrepreneurs and businessmen and women. Participants could attend workshops on:

- renewable energy technologies;
- new energy technologies;
- information & communication technologies (ICT);
- water conservation, purification & sanitation;
- biomedical materials.

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MCAA South Asia Chapter at the forum

Muhammad Khurram Bhatti (Chair) and Ishtiaq Ali launched the 2015 promotion campaign for the South Asia Chapter by representing the MCAA at this special event. Their stand helped them raise the association's visibility.

According to Bhatti, the Chapter's participation was very positive: “Visitors from academia and industry both equally appreciated our effort to educate the audience about the objectives of MCAA and, in general, also about MSCA programmes for potential beneficiaries”.

Following their participation, our Members have been invited by two universities to give presentations informing students about the MCAA benefits and actions. We are looking forward to reading their feedback on the MCAA website!





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Latest news from the MCAA Chapters

Career Choices Seminar held by the MCAA German Chapter

Mark this date in your agenda: the German Chapter is organising a Career Choice seminar on 10 June at the Technische Universität in Darmstadt, Germany.

Why should I attend this event?

If you are currently wondering what you will do after you Ph.D or Postdoc, the following speakers may provide you with tips and ideas:

- **Anjana Bückow from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)** will explain how to write a DFG proposal, focusing in particular on the Emmy Noether Programme which helps researchers achieve independence at an early stage of their scientific career;
- **Alexander Damaschun** will present the EXIST programme of the **Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy** which supports recent graduates as they develop a business idea in cooperation with universities and research institutions;
- **Zoran Andjelic, Ordinary Board Member of the MCAA**, will explain his experience of moving from academia to industry.

Other topics are also on the agenda:

- Publishing: an editorial perspective,
- Constructive Communication – by Natalia Balcazar,
- Mrs. Liselotte Wurster of Persaldo Steuerberatung will detail how to make a tax declaration and reclaim mobility-relevant tax refunds in the German tax system.
- The MCAA German Chapter's activities – by Brian Cahill (Chair).

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I am not German and I don't live in Germany, can I participate?

Of course! Be aware that some of the talks will target those residing in Germany, but you might be interested by many of the other presentations.

How do I register?

Registration is open. Just send a short e-mail to german.chapter@mariecuriealumni.eu

A small participation fee of €20 is necessary to cover catering costs.

More information:

<https://www.mariecuriealumni.eu/posts/career-choices-seminar>




MCAA German Chapter
announces its first event
Career Choices Seminar
on 10 June 2015, Darmstadt.

Proposed Topics

- Proposal writing skills
- Constructive Communication
- Patent and Intellectual Property Rights
- From Academia to a Career in Industry
- From Research to Commercial Success – Starting a Business
- Tax advice for mobile researchers

Participation fee : 20 €

To register mail us,
german.chapter@mariecuriealumni.eu

Open to all researchers



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Latest news from the MCAA Working Groups First meeting for the Climate Change working Group

The Climate Change Working Group held its first meeting on 27 March. If you want to know what happened, read Riccardo Biondi's account of the key points discussed.

Why a Climate Change Working Group?

The Climate Change Working Group is completely unofficial since the MCAA does not allow thematic Working Groups. However, the topic is multi and inter-disciplinary and many researchers are interested in it, especially as so many policies from the last two decades have stemmed from climate change and global warming.

The story so far...

I launched the idea of this WG last year with the objective of creating a group within the MCAA, strong enough to submit a proposal at EU level. For some EU calls, participants' CVs have a high impact on the evaluation of proposals. Being an all MC Alumnus could give an added value to a proposal. The WG wasn't very active for a while – it is hard to discuss when you do not yet have a critical number of active members and it is especially hard to prepare a proposal talking to people who have never met before and who have no possibility to meet face-to-face.

At the last General Assembly, I met Luigi Caranti (Chair of Sicily Chapter and member of the Climate Change WG) and over a glass of wine, we decided to re-launch the WG, organising a joint meeting with the Sicily Chapter.

What happened at the first meeting

We did not know how many people would be interested, but surprisingly there were 10 persons participating in the meeting (mostly on Skype) and many others interested, but not able to attend the meeting that day. There are currently about 20 people interested in the WG, from eight countries. All are especially interested in the coming proposal, the number is increasing day by day. Their expertise covers a wide spectrum of areas, from atmospheric physics to philosophy, from archeology to mathematics, from dendrology to volcanology. Climate Change is a very broad topic and is regularly debated, and this makes the subject intriguing.



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The Climate Change working Group needs you!

At the meeting we mainly discussed how to organise our collaboration, since it is impossible to meet, and what EU call to respond to. The proposed options were COST Action, Marie Curie ITN or EU Cooperation project. After a long discussion on the procedures and type of collaboration we want to establish, we decided that the Marie Curie ITN would be the most appropriate call for us, giving value to our CVs, giving importance to the fact that we are already MCA and providing funding simultaneously for research and networking. We are now studying the call documentation, collecting CVs and ideas and thinking about how to connect all the different fields into a meaningful proposal. The MC-ITN call should open in a few months and we would like to be ready with a good draft at that point. Everybody interested in the project is very welcome to contribute.



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10 Science Blogging Networks

There are so many science blogs out there now that it is difficult to choose only a few to recommend. As many are grouped together in networks, it is however possible to follow several of the internet's best science writers at the same time. Here we have chosen some of the top blogging networks for you to check out. Some are serious, some funny, some are technical, some political. All have their merits so have a quick look through and decide what suits you.

National Geographic

The National Geographic network, known as Phenomena, hosts some of the internet's best known science bloggers including Carl Zimmer and Ed Yong, who bring science to life with colourful and informed writing on the latest research. Laelaps by Brian Switek provides great coverage of paleontology.

The Guardian's Science Blog Network

As one of the top newspapers covering scientific topics, it is no surprise that the Guardian also has an active science blogging network. What makes this blog even stronger is that the writers are given the freedom to write about anything they choose, without editorial interference, adding depth and perspective to the newspaper's coverage, and also providing humour and less mainstream commentary.

Scientific American Blogs

Here you'll find both staff-written blogs from the professional writers at Scientific American and invited bloggers who discuss and share opinions related to science.

Science Blogs

Over 60 bloggers selected on the basis of their originality, insight, talent, and dedication provide up-to-date coverage of their different scientific fields. Here you will find the ever-entertaining PZ Myers and his blog Pharyngula, where you'll find his thoughts on cephalopods and much more besides.

Wired

The American science and technology magazine has an active group of bloggers, including Maryn McKenna, who is at the forefront of writing about infectious disease.

Scientopia

Scientopia is a community of bloggers who love to write about science. They explore the interplay between scientific issues and other parts of our lives with the shared goal of making science more accessible.



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Occams Typewriter

This is another independent blogging community where you can find posts by the respected physicist Athene Donald, who blogs about her views and opinions on the scientific life, and Jenny Rohn, the scientist, novelist, and activist. It is also worth checking out Lablit, a site launched by Jenny Rohn, and the spiritual home of all fiction and creative writing about scientists.

PLoS Blogs

The network of this open-access journal has six staff-written blogs from PLOS journal editors or departmental teams, and a variety of independent bloggers writing on scientific topics.

Discover

Another magazine based blog, including the popular Neuroskeptic.

SciLogs

Last, but not least – Sciloggs, supported by Nature, is a great place to find a variety of science bloggers writing on many topics, and new bloggers are welcome to join them.

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During my Marie Curie Project, my host country was... France

Fidel Costa (from Spain), Keisuke Hatada (from Japan), Sarah Magalhães (from Portugal) and Arianna Picciali (from Italy) worked on their Marie Curie Project in France... some very much enjoyed their stay, whereas others faced unexpected difficulties while there. If you're thinking of working in Voltaire's country, get some tips here!



Fidel Costa



Keisuke Hatada



Sarah Magalhães



Arianna Picciali

An attractive country for researchers

Working on the development of a theory and a programme on Ballistic Electron Emission Microscopy (BEEM) spectroscopy, Hatada was happy to settle in Rennes because there was a team working on his topic.

Costa studies volcanic rocks, quantifying the processes related to the release of sulphur emissions into the atmosphere, and what the release involves. He says the laboratory where he worked in Orléans is among the leaders in the study of volcanoes.

“During my Marie Curie fellowship I studied the upper atmospheres of Venus and Mars using data acquired by two successful European missions: Mars Express and Venus Express,” says Picciali. The laboratory where she worked in Guyancourt, close to Paris, has many competences in planetary atmospheres and gave her plenty of opportunities to improve her skills at work and to enlarge her professional network.

Magalhães studies the mechanisms underlying the evolution of specialisation in plant-feeding arthropods and was happy to work under her post-doc supervisor's direction in Montpellier.

French way of life and way of work

According to Picciali, France has excellent centres of research; he points out the investments made to foster innovation. Magalhães emphasises the country's high levels of scientific culture, saying, *“French people are very analytical. They like to discuss science in depth. I think this comes from a high investment in education.”*



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Hatada noticed however a lack of collaboration between different fields in France, whereas Costa admits that his position of postdoctoral Fellow was unclear to most researchers and administrative staff, which generated some misunderstandings and therefore inconvenience, for example in relation to attendance at meetings.

Last but not least, Costa used his time in France as an opportunity to learn about its food delicacies, cheeses and wines!

Things to know about French administration

For the attention of the Fellows who would like to come to France, Costa advises: "*Don't try to start your fellowship in August or September!*" because most administrations are not responsive, due to long summer holidays.

As you may probably know, a certificate showing your place of birth is required. Hatada struggled to obtain this document as it is not commonly used in Japan.

Regarding health insurance, both Picciali and Costa encountered difficulties in getting the "*Carte vitale*" for which they had to wait between six months and one year. One piece of advice would be to take care of this issue as soon as possible after arriving in the country.

Hatada highlights that he is still waiting for a document that will ensure him a stay permit and Picciali points out with amusement that she had to provide unexpected documents like a declaration of non-polygamy!

Parlez-vous français ?

All of our Fellows agree that speaking the language of the country is indispensable. According to Magalhães "*They speak French most of time, compared to the Netherlands where I did my Ph.D and where everything was in English*". Picciali echoes this: "*Even if not obligatory, I think however that it is very important to learn French, this will help to strengthen contacts with colleagues and with the world outside the laboratory.*" Now that her fellowship has ended, Picciali is still working in France and to her, "*the best is yet to come!*"

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I benefited from a Marie Curie Action – IOF in the spotlight

Loraine Bacchus (from the United Kingdom), Marcin Smietana (from Poland) and Elvan Ceyhan (from Turkey) benefited from International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF). What did they learn from this experience?



Loraine Bacchus



Marcin Smietana



Elvan Ceyhan

About our Fellows

Loraine Bacchus’s project explored the social and ethical aspects of using mobile health – mHealth – technology to deliver DOVE domestic violence intervention during perinatal home visits in urban and rural areas of the USA.

Marcin Smietana currently works on global reproductive tourism and focuses in particular on surrogacy and egg donation among European gay father families in the United Kingdom (regulated by the State) and in the USA (free market).

Elvan Ceyhan works on a project called “Pattern Recognition in High Dimensional Data (PRinHDD)” (in mathematics).

About IOF

What is an International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF)?
The Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF) are open to experienced researchers from the European Union or Associated Countries (e.g. Iceland, Norway, Balkan countries, Turkey, Israel, Moldova and the Faroe Islands). The action enables European researchers to receive training and to acquire new knowledge in a research organisation in a non-EU Country.

The host organisation can be a university, a research centre or a business established and located in a non-EU country. The return phase has to be spent in an EU or Associated country.

When applying for an IOF, the researcher has to work closely with his/her return host organisation. If successful, he/she will receive up to three years of support (covering the outgoing and return phases).



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Projects are classified into: chemistry, economic sciences, information science and engineering, environment and geosciences, life sciences, mathematics, physics, social sciences and humanities.

What did our Fellows learn?

How did they get information about IOFs? All three Fellows were familiar with the Marie Curie Actions, as they already heard about them from colleagues or at university. Bacchus went further by attending a presentation about the Seventh Framework Programme FP7 which she found *"very informative in terms of how to write a successful application for the IOF"*.

At which point in their career did they apply? Ceyhan was in the *"consolidation"* phase of his career when he decided to apply for an IOF, whereas Bacchus was an experienced researcher of more than 10 years. Smietana decided to apply for an IOF before he completed his Ph.D. He says, *"After my PhD experience of working in a few different research projects of my research group, I liked the idea of creating a more independent though collaborative research project, rather than being hired for an already designed specific study; I also wanted to check out some new life prospects in a different country"*.

How did they choose their host organisation and host country? A combination of different factors were at play. Ceyhan identified the Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute (SAMSI) in the USA as it provides quality programmes in line with his research activities. For Bacchus, it was important to share her interests with an inspirational researcher, so she decided to contact Professor Linda Bullock at the school of Nursing at the University of Virginia and asked her if she would be her mentor. *"I chose the UK, one of the only two EU countries that permitted altruistic surrogacy, and the US, where many Europeans were travelling for commercial surrogacy, particularly to California,"* says Smietana.

How did they prepare their application? It took between one and three months for our Fellows to prepare their IOF applications. Three months was about right for Bacchus *"I conducted a number of Skype calls and exchanged e-mails with Professor Linda Bullock to discuss ideas. However, once we developed a clear outline of the research and training component, it took just over three months to write the application."* For Smietana, one month was a little tight: *"This was a little too late and a little stressful, particularly because of administrative and electronic platform issues"*. However, there is more to preparing for a project than writing a proposal. For Ceyhan, *"the mental preparation took more than a year"*.

How did they organise their work? During his outgoing phase, Ceyhan took the opportunity to attend workshops, lectures and seminars, and participated in working groups and discussions at his host organisation. These helped enrich his research. Bacchus developed a work plan which contained clear outcomes and time frames. She managed to have regular meetings with her mentors and was integrated as a member of the DOVE research team. As Smietana was conducting research alone most of time, he considered it important to take part in working groups and in a few academic events to find inspiration.



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Which obstacles did they encounter? During the application process, it took some time for Smietana to understand the functioning of the electronic platform that researchers have to use to submit their proposal. With the help of his host organisation and friends, he was able to overcome the difficulty. For Bacchus, the main problems were related to organising her work “*The interviews with women were conducted in their homes in remote rural areas and in high crime urban areas. Therefore, I was accompanied by a DOVE researcher or hired a student researcher on all field trips as a safety procedure.*” She also spent more time than expected on data collection activities and on attending trials. She recommends to future applicants that “*any additional work that is not related to the Marie Curie fellowship should be kept to a minimum*”. Ceyhan unexpectedly had to revise his research objectives and work plan after starting his project.

Did the funding cover all their needs? All three of our Fellows agree that the funding covered or is covering their needs. For Ceyhan, funding dedicated to mobility and training could however be increased. Smietana encountered difficulties when he moved to the USA as the accommodation is far more expensive than it is in Spain (his previous country of residency). What's more, he got married after his application but the coordinating host considered him as single and this situation generated other financial challenges. The IOF covers the return period as well.

Is it worth it? For Ceyhan “*The IOF is a great opportunity and I received it at the right moment of my career.*” Bacchus echoes this: “*Working in a new context was inspirational and helped me to develop new ideas for future research studies.*” Smietana also strongly recommends applying for an IOF and adds “*Even if it may seem somewhat complex, it is really worth it.*”

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Five Top Tips on how to write efficiently

Language is the primary conductor between our thoughts and our audience; effective language strengthens our message. Writing well and efficiently requires skills and may be learnt. Here are five tips to help you write efficiently.

1. Try to understand the “line of thought” for the language you are using

Differences between languages go further than words and symbols. Languages arrange words differently in a sentence; word groups that fit in one language do not work together in another. Even more important is that languages arrange ideas differently in a sentence or in a paragraph; this is known as *thought pattern*. Whether or not you are a native speaker, you must try to follow a thought pattern corresponding to the language you are using in order to write more efficiently and effectively.

For instance, the normal English paragraph follows a straight line. The paragraph usually begins with a statement of the main idea followed by some clarifications and some preparation for the next idea. Romance languages tend to deviate from time to time from the main straight line of thought to introduce digression; Oriental languages try to circle around the main idea. English language uses nouns and verbs as opposed to adjectives and adverbs — romance languages tend to use more adjectives and verb complements.

2. Chose a simple design for your text and hold it

A simple design creates a firm structure for your text. A simple design must follow a line of thought that guides the reader through your message — and many times the line of thought differs considerably from the order in which you thought about it. Make sure to focus each paragraph on a single idea.

Try to use definite and concrete language, avoid loose sentences and avoid the use of qualifiers. I suggest avoiding at least the following words: *very, extremely, totally, completely, entirely, slightly, really* and *somewhat*.





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3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out

This is one of the main rules of writing well from George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English language". Less is more — cut out sentences, groups of sentences, or paragraphs if possible. Elimination is an important part of writing and we often skip it. Do not try to write a concise text at the beginning but take the time to improve it by removing unnecessary words in sentences, and sentences in paragraphs.

It does not mean we have to curtail our text at all costs but we have to make every word count — whether it is long or short.

4. Create your own style

Creating a good style in a text is a less orthodox suggestion than being clear or brief — no one knows why a particular arrangement of common words creates a vigorous sentence. Write naturally, do not use clichés (and if you do, try to tweak them with a personal touch) and do not explain too much. Choose an angle, a point of view and maintain it.

5. Revise and rewrite your text

Samuel Johnson said that *what is written without effort is in general read without pleasure*, and this means that writing — like painting or playing an instrument — requires attention. Revising and rewriting serves not only to remove unnecessary words and sentences, but also to detect flaws or poor arrangements of your ideas, or even odd style changes.



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Participate in a research project on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by European adults – take the online survey!

Olatz Lopez-Fernandez, an MCAA member, is currently working on a project evaluating the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by European adults. She is based at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.

Help her complete her project by completing the online survey that assesses your ICT usage patterns! It won't take more than 25 -35 minutes.

More information

https://uclpsychology.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0J5UK85ockOte1n



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Scientific Investigation on Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAP)

About 5% of the reported unidentified anomalous phenomena — or so-called UFOs — can't be explained and should be thoroughly investigated by mainstream scientists according to Etienne Caron (Canada). Together with Massimo Teodorani, astrophysicist at the Italian National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF), he tells us why, how and where mainstream scientists can play an active role in understanding the anomaly. In essence, they are not saying that UFOs are carrying intelligent beings from outer space, but do recognise the importance of monitoring the events in a more rigorous and deterministic way.

The so-called 'UFOs' have been widely reported around the world and even throughout human history¹⁻⁴. The anomaly appears to be transient and unpredictable, iridescent and hypnotic, liquid and floating, harmonic and ethereal, symmetric and asymmetric⁵. When such reports are not fakes, hoaxes or misinterpretations of natural and/or man-made phenomena, they come from witnesses whose emotional state often alters what really happened⁶.

Measurement sensors are able to record the phenomenon with a high level of accuracy and reproducibility. Interestingly, the phenomenon has been frequently observed in specific locations in the world (**Figure 1**) and high-speed photometry could have been used to monitor the phenomenon.

Among these sites, Hessdalen in Norway is particularly interesting as the phenomenon has been reported very frequently, with about 20 observations per month in the 1980s. Hessdalen is now equipped with various instruments, continuously recording data within an automated station⁷. The recorded data can be plotted on a graph to illustrate the variation of physical parameters as a function of time (**Figure 2**). Subsequently, an equation can be derived to describe the trend of the acquired data and finally deduce a physical law. This is a simplified example of the scientific method currently used in Hessdalen to describe the unidentified anomalous phenomenon (UAP) in a rigorous scientific manner.

Hessdalen is a good example of how it is feasible to set up proper instrumentations for the scientific investigation of UAP.

UAP could turn out to be anything: fakes and hoaxes, unknown natural phenomena, secret human technology or even visitation from exo-intelligence⁸. Physical science can provide all the necessary means to identify the nature of the observed phenomena and to understand quantitatively the physical mechanism characterising it. Again, identifying strategic sites and adopting the appropriate measurement instruments is crucial to enabling mainstream scientists to acquire such data. For instance, it is possible to use high-quality, high-sensitivity and all-sky video cameras, high-speed recordings, low and high-resolution optical spectrographs, thermal imaging cameras, magnetometers, VLF/ELF and microwave spectrometers, radars, LIDARs, electrostatic particle detectors and gravimeters. Some of these instruments have been already used to monitor UAP, but funding is needed to equip additional scientific stations on various pre-defined strategic sites⁹.



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This research is still in a very early stage and no university has taken yet a serious interest in researching UAP. In our opinion, funding agencies and universities should encourage such research because the phenomenon presents the type of anomaly that could lead to scientific breakthroughs and ultimately, the development of innovative technologies.

Acknowledgment

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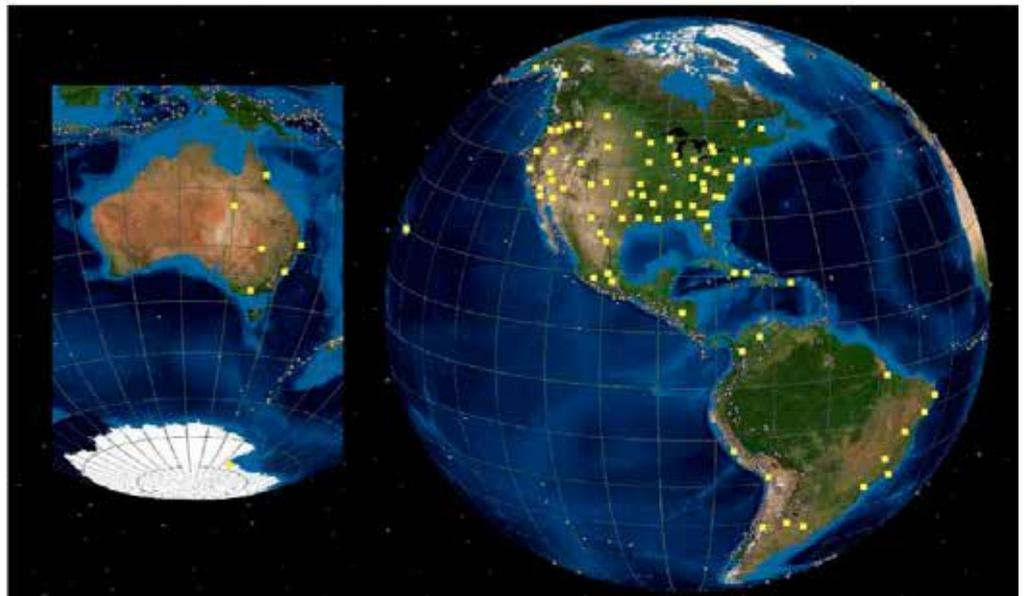


Figure 1. World distribution of locations (yellow squares) where unidentified anomalous phenomena occur more often, according to witnesses. Main sites include: Hessdalen (Norway), Marfa (Texas, USA), Brown Mountain (North Carolina, USA), Min-min (Boulia, Australia), Calingasta (Argentina), WuTaiShan mountain (China), Pietra di Bismantova (Italy), Mafasca (Canary Islands, Spain), Cluj Napoca (Romania), Ontario Lake (Canada), Yakima (USA), Joplin (USA), Piedmont, Missouri (USA), Pine Bush (NY, USA).

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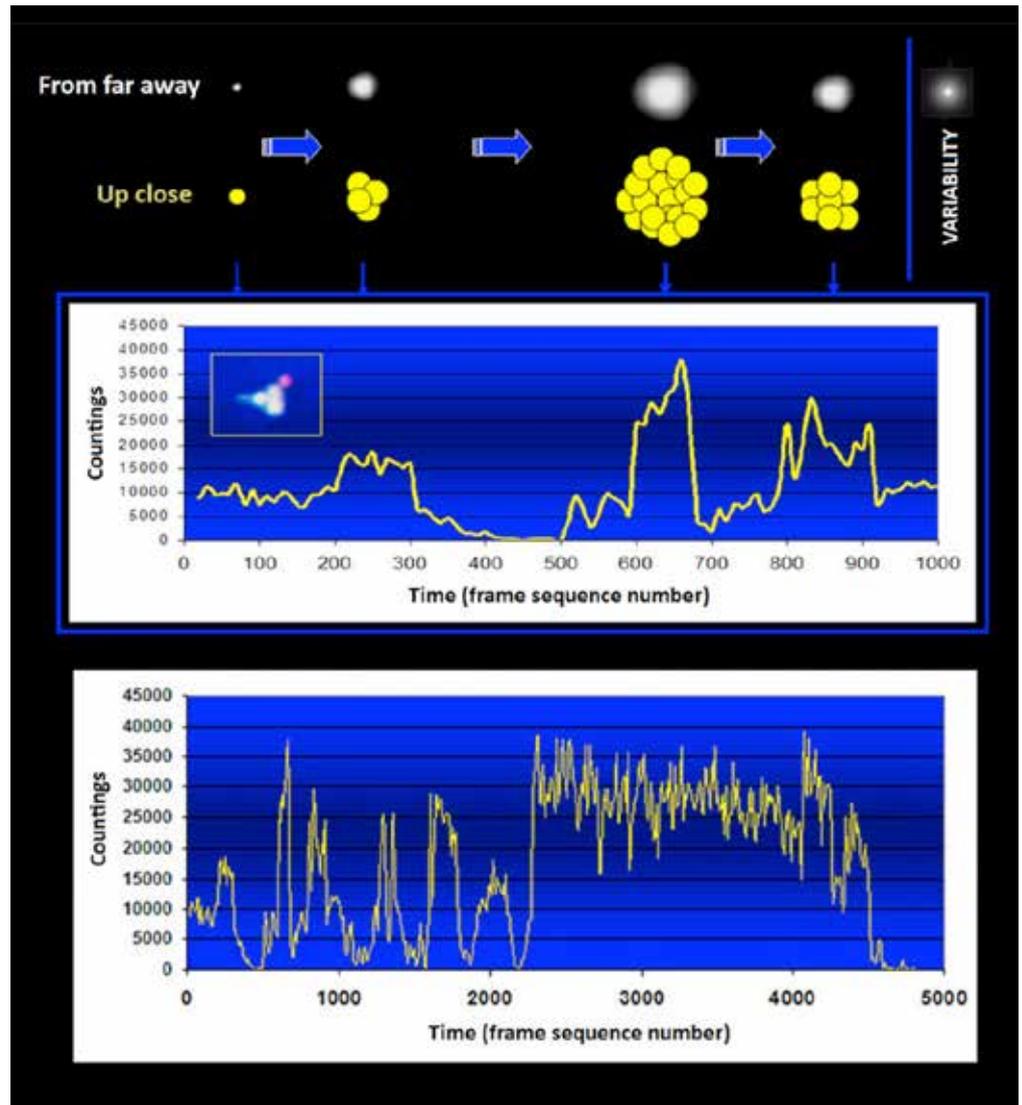


Figure 2. The 'clustering effect' manifested by the light spheres observed in Hessdalen. (Above) Sketch showing the mechanism of light increase of luminous plasma phenomena in Hessdalen due to a 'clustering effect' of many light spheres around a common barycenter. (Center) The corresponding measured light curved obtained using a professional video camera. (Below) The complete light curve obtained during a time period of 3 minutes.



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Latest winner of the MCAA editorial prize

Writing: A therapeutic tool in healing

Bhavna Rani

In the current day, when we are bamboozled by a plethora of drugs and the taboo of several ailments, cancer stands on top of all without a fail. Despite this, advances in medical interventions are more or less in vain in solving the ever emerging new cases. In the medical field, all attention is diverted towards finding a potential cure or a wonder drug for the particular illness. However, during lots of surveys and dealing with multiple patients, I have realized that having a disease is itself a mental and emotional burden as well as a physical one. Despite writing prescriptions or spending all our precious time in the lab to find a cure, we could also do a better job of healing the patients at an emotional level.

I have gone through a survey of cancer patients and found that giving them a piece of paper to pour out their emotions on, shows that several patients are baffled in dealing with their thoughts. Providing counseling reveals that a person's soul can die while we are still busy finding out the cure of their actual ailment. In this case, writing helps in many cases; especially it does wonder when it becomes a therapeutic tool in healing. Several pathographies and autopathographies narrating the illness of the patients are emerging in the market. It is very true that when one writes down their emotionally challenging experience or feelings in the form of words, it leaves one with a stronger sense of value in the world and the ability to accept that life can be good even when it is sometimes bad and it can change one's perspective on life. Moreover, on the scientific level, it has been proved that writing helps in the mental well-being of an individual. In fact, considering this, many doctors are becoming more interested in reading their patients narration so that they can provide a better comfort to them, both at an emotional and physical level.

Pathographies /Autopathographies are not only sources of inspiration for the individual patient, but also prove to be beneficial to others as a source of healing. Some people do know what is troubling them but find it very difficult to express it to anyone in a helpful way. Friends and relatives can only listen to an extent and psychotherapeutic time is limited and expensive. In this case, writing can be very cost effective as it only needs a paper and pen, providing an enormously effective, relatively cheap and straightforward imaginative form of expression and exploration. On the other hand, it could be more effective to distribute pathographies among the people who are dealing with more or less the same trauma. Therefore, they could apply the same tactics in their lives to better understand their ailment and help themselves in opening up their minds on a piece of paper to get to know what is going deep inside them. Time to time counseling and encouragement is most needed for improving a patient's mental well being.

Although writing alone is not an offbeat cure of any illness, it could act as a guide to direct the individual to live at ease with a pathological condition and to find their inner self and discover a healing journey through words.



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Dear MCAA Members,

We thank all the Alumni who contributed to the creation of this issue.

In the next edition, we will bring you news of the MCAA's activities over the summer and much more. We are looking forward to receiving your news and article contributions, so please keep in touch!

The MCAA team

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