

Melissa Pollak

National Science Foundation

Good News & Bad News

What the public knows and believes about science

For the past quarter century, the National Science Foundation has sponsored a survey to measure public knowledge and attitudes about science and science related public policy issues. This survey has become the gold standard for research on science literacy and attitudes.

NSF publishes the results every two years. The report (Science & Engineering Indicators) receives widespread press coverage, mostly focused on how little the public knows. The data show that only half the public knows that the earth goes around the sun in one year. Most don't know what a molecule is and only about half of American adults believe in evolution. While the survey collects little data on public belief in pseudoscience, other organizations conduct ongoing surveys, and their data are included in Indicators.

The talk will be an overview of the NSF findings, and will provide an opportunity for the audience to provide feedback to improve coverage of the subject in future editions of Indicators.

Melissa Pollak has worked for NSF since 1980. She joined the Indicators staff in 1990 and took over public attitudes work in 1998. In addition to overseeing the 1999 and 2001 surveys, she has written the 2000, 2002, and 2004 public attitudes chapters in Indicators. Before joining NSF, she worked on Capitol Hill. She holds a bachelors degree in political science and economics from American University and a masters degree in economics from George Washington University.

Saturday April 17, 2-4pm
B-CC Services Center
4805 Edgemoor Lane
Bethesda, Maryland

The **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center** is located at 4805 Edgemoor Lane in downtown Bethesda, across the street from the Bethesda Metro station. The Center is located in the two-story County office building on the plaza level of the Metropolitan complex, above a County parking garage. Free parking is available in the garage on weekends.



National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series

FREE admission - Everyone welcome - members and non-members

For more information call the 24-hour NCAS Skeptic Line recording at

(301) 587-3827

e-mail: ncas@ncas.org

www.ncas.org



SHADOW OF A DOUBT

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

APRIL 2004

We Want You!

It's time for the annual NCAS board elections, and we invite interested members to run. Board members are elected for a 2-year term.

We are an active organization and, in addition to our monthly presentations, we have our annual workshop and fun special events such as our Friday the 13th social. Get involved, there are plenty of avenues for your talents.

If interested, send email to ncas@ncas.org as soon as possible. 

Local Events of Interest to Skeptics

Logic Made Easy: How to Know When Language Deceives You: Sharpen your critical thinking skills with the Smithsonian Resident Associate lecture, **Logic Made Easy**, by Deborah Bennett, on Thursday, April 15, 7:00 p.m.. Martin Gardner said of her book, "The best introduction to logic you will find."

Logic. We desperately need it; we frequently shun it. If we understood its principles a little better, we might save ourselves from others' verbal tricks and our own self-deceptions.

Deborah Bennett turns from mathematics to the verbal world to detail the often muddy but comic relationship between language and logic. In a jolly evening, she uses her wit to identify the illogic of everything from street signs to tax forms as we learn how to remedy the logical slips we encounter daily.

Dr. Bennett is the author of *Randomness* and teaches mathematics at New Jersey City University. Her new book, *Logic Made Easy: How to Know When Language Deceives You* (Norton) is available for signing after the program.

Cost: \$20, general admission; \$15, members

Location: S. Dillon Ripley Center, 1100 Jefferson Drive, S.W., Washington, D.C.

For more information: <http://residentassociates.org/rap/otoapr/logic.asp> 

Want to Hear About a Different Kind of Creationism? Attend, "13.7 Billion Years: A History of the Cosmos"

A lecture by Dr. Yervant Terzian (David C. Duncan Professor in the Physical Sciences, Department of Astronomy and Space Sciences at Cornell University)

When: Thursday, April 15, 11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Where: West Dining Room, The James Madison Memorial Building, Library of Congress

Cost: FREE and open to the public

For more information: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/events/terzian.html>

Dr. Terzian is co-editor of *Carl Sagan's Universe*, a book that includes an article by James Randi on "Science and PseudoScience" in the section on science education 

A Scientific Look at Possible Extraterrestrials

Exploring Space Lecture Series

Astronomer's new "Microscope on the Sky"

Dr. William C. Danichi

Wednesday, April 14, 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Albert Einstein Planetarium

National Air and Space Museum, National Mall

Admission: FREE, but tickets required

For more information: call 202-633-2398 or go to <http://www.nasm.si.edu/events/lectures/esls/esls.cfm>



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