

Dr Sunny Bains – Letter of Motivation

Dear Mr Bourillon,

In my career I've striven to make sure science journalism is just that: journalism. It's not enough to simply quote cheerleaders and nay-sayers and leave it to the audience to decide. In contrast with a reporter, a journalist must gain enough expertise to ask the right questions and understand enough of the answers to make judgements. This is what I teach my students at University College London (UCL), and the approach that I've explained in my book, *Explaining the Future: How to Research, Analyze, and Report on Emerging Technologies*.

WFSJ should be – and is – an organisation that helps give journalists the confidence and tools to apply knowledge and judgment to stories as they unfold. I'm particularly keen to help with that process. Right now, I'm doing this through the Association of British Science Writers (ABSW), where I am organising a summer school (a WCSJ satellite event) that includes workshops on investigating companies, investigating technologies, and the law around investigative stories (like whistleblowing, NDAs, protecting sources), as well as more conventional sessions on business models, writing features, and incorporating visuals.

I'm particularly keen to broaden the range of journalists who get involved with organisations like ours. A lot of potential members have dedicated their careers to covering technology and engineering (as I have), but they have not always seen what they do as covering science. Bringing these journalists into the fold is something that I think will benefit everyone. We will learn from them, they from us, and we will all be stronger together. To do this only requires small shifts: sometimes in emphasis, balance, terminology. I hope to help the WFSJ with this.

As a tech journalist myself, I have written for *The Economist*, *Science*, *New Scientist*, *Wired*, *EE Times*, and many other publications: I've had more than 500 articles published. In the last 10 years my focus has shifted more to teaching journalism, directing an online publication called *Engineering Inspiration* <engins.org> and writing books. My first was published earlier this year, and I am in the process of starting my next project on neuromorphic engineering.

In terms of internationalism and participation, I've lived in three WFSJ member countries (USA, Canada, and the UK), am currently on the Executive Board of the ABSW, and also serve on the Governance Committee of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW). I was also an active member of the ABSW Executive Board when the WCSJ was held in London in 2009.

I welcome the chance to attend WFSJ meetings. Although there are usually 20 weeks of the year when it is difficult to travel (the UCL teaching weeks), I otherwise have a great deal of flexibility in my schedule. I have a particular fondness of Montreal (I have two sisters and many friends in the area) and would look forward to the opportunity to travel there.

I very much hope I have the opportunity to work with you.

Very best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Sunny Bains". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.