

SEP 19 2012



Press ex-editor deserves job back

Authors, co-workers are best judges of of Willcox's work.

By NED STUCKEY-FRENCH

Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Hank Waters' Sept. 7 opinion piece suggests that university administrators had legitimate reasons to lay off Clair Willcox, former editor-in-chief of the University of Missouri Press.

They did not.

Waters asserts, "UM officials had become disenchanted with management of the press, largely because they thought Willcox & Co. failed to make administrative changes that would have saved operating money by paring publishing activities in unimportant areas."

Clair Willcox was never the director at the press and had no authority to make "administrative changes." His responsibility was to oversee and develop Missouri's prize-winning list of books, and his skill at cutting costs while maintaining the excellence of the list consistently won the praise of his supervisors.

Waters also asserts that the administration laid Willcox off because he was not "paring publishing activities in unimportant areas," an assertion belied by the fact that interim Director Dwight Browne and Assistant Vice President Deborah Noble-Triplett have been calling the authors of scores of books that Willcox acquired and pleading with them to stay on board. Why would they do this if those books were "unimportant" and in need of pruning from the list? Why would other presses be actively courting so many of these authors and offering to reprint their books in new editions?

Waters goes on to speculate that "maybe in the official view Willcox should have been sent packing, anyway, and now that he has been shunted aside, the easy resolution is simply to move on without him." This is not and never was the "official view." On July 26, Clair Willcox was laid off — not fired — because the press was being closed and his talents were no longer needed. No other reason has ever been offered.

Elsewhere, Waters admits he cannot evaluate Willcox but does tell us who is best able to do so: "I have no idea what I would decide about Willcox were I in a position to properly evaluate his fitness. Outsiders who worked with him have a better perspective, but those officially overseeing the operation presumably have the best view and will have the final say."

Those of us who are seeking his reinstatement are not convinced that an administration that has decimated a 54-year-old press in just three months does have the "best view" on Willcox's "fitness" to serve or should have the "final say." In addition to those stellar evaluations by his immediate supervisors, he has received nothing but high praise from his colleagues.

Former Acquisitions Editor John Brenner wrote, "I have trained under Clair Willcox, and I have worked closely with him for nearly as long as I have been a Tribune subscriber, nearly 20 years, so I think I am in a pretty good position to opine about his 'fitness.' My opinion is that he has always been an incredible asset to the press and thus to the University of Missouri. The university's treatment of him is a continuing travesty."

Jane Lago, former UMP managing editor, writes, "When I think of Clair Willcox, the first word that comes to mind is 'integrity.' Authors respect and admire him because he is a man of his word who always provides an honest response, the type of response that inspires the best writers to do their best work."

Integrity also is the watchword for Annette Wenda, a former press employee who is now a freelance copy editor: "Within a few weeks of the May 24 decision, Clair called me because he had been working for six years with an author to publish a book of photography. He knows that I work for another press that should have a natural interest in the project, and he called to get my opinion. Here's a guy who's facing imminent dismissal, but he wasn't scrambling to get a résumé out or looking after his own interests; he was making sure that his author would be taken care of by a publisher who would value his work."

Finally, there are 57 authors (representing 136 UMP books) who are so dismayed by the administration's treatment of the press and its employees that they have asked for their books back. Forty of those 57 have offered to reconsider that request if Clair Willcox is reinstated because, they say, "he is the best, perhaps the only, person who has a chance to recruit authors, old and new, and facilitate the restoration of the press's reputation for excellence." The administration should put pride aside and accept the generous offer these distinguished scholars have made.

Ned Stuckey-French is a Florida State University faculty member and co-organizer of the Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press. Other signatories to this commentary are coalition members Lois Huneycutt, Jane Lago, Bruce Joshua Miller, Stephen Montgomery-Smith and Annette Wenda.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

Chemical BPA Linked to Obesity in Children

White children exposed to high levels of bisphenol A are five times more likely to be obese than peers with low levels of the chemical, according to new research

By Brian Bienkowski and Environmental Health News

White children exposed to high levels of bisphenol A are five times more likely to be obese than children with low levels, according to a study published today in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The study by New York University scientists is the first to link the chemical to obesity in children. Previous research reported links in adults and animals.

“This is a great example of a health study that is consistent with studies in animals, and it also confirms what we’ve seen in adult populations,” said Frederick vom Saal, a University of Missouri-Columbia professor who studies bisphenol A (BPA) but was not part of the new study. “That gives the findings much greater weight and strengthens this link we keep seeing between BPA and obesity.”

Traces of BPA – used in some canned food and beverages, paper receipts and dental sealants – are found in virtually every U.S. adult and child.

In the study of body mass and BPA data from 2,838 youths aged 6 to 19, only white children were found to have significant increases in obesity prevalence as their BPA levels increased. Those with the highest concentrations in their urine were five times more likely to be obese than children with the lowest levels.

Black children with higher BPA levels were 1.25 times more likely to be obese than those with lower levels, which the scientists said is not statistically significant. Hispanic children had the same rates of obesity at the highest and lowest levels.

“Neither Hispanic (Mexican American and other Hispanic) or non-Hispanic black children had a significantly increased risk of obesity with elevated concentrations of urinary BPA,” the authors wrote in the journal article.

It is unclear why BPA levels were so strongly associated with obesity in white children.

“There were no dietary differences specific to whites,” said Dr. Leonardo Trasande, an associate professor in pediatrics, environmental medicine and health policy at NYU’s School of Medicine who was lead author of the paper. “It is possible that there is some genetic interaction that may be specific to the (white) population ... but we don’t know.”

It’s also possible, he said, that higher rates of obesity in the Hispanic and black children – 23 and 24 percent, respectively, compared with 15 percent of white children – made it more difficult to tease out a link between the chemicals and obesity in those groups.

Representatives of the chemical industry said the study had too many weaknesses to prove a connection.

Steven Hentges, from the American Chemistry Council's Polycarbonate/BPA Global Group, said that attempts "to link our national obesity problem to minute exposures to chemicals found in common, everyday products are a distraction from the real efforts underway to address this important national health issue."

The median BPA urinary concentration for children in the study was 2.8 nanograms per milliliter, slightly higher than the median for U.S. adults, according to a 2008 national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The highest group of children had concentrations at least double that.

Experts suspect that diet is the most frequent route of exposure for children. One study of 257 preschoolers in North Carolina and Ohio found that 99 percent of BPA exposure was through food. But national data is lacking and it is hard to pinpoint exposure since the chemical is in many plastics and other products.

The study adds to the evidence that certain industrial chemicals – called obesogens – may be in part spurring the obesity problem in the U.S.

“People are always told if you just stop eating or exercise more, you will lose weight. But there may be more to it ... and I think there is,” said Retha Newbold, a visiting scientist at National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences who specializes in BPA and other endocrine disrupting chemicals.

Human studies are limited. However, data from 3,967 adult U.S. men and women showed an association between higher BPA levels and obesity, regardless of race or gender, according to a study published in July 2012. The same association was found in Chinese adults in a study published in February 2012.

In addition, baby rats exposed to BPA had increased body weight even though they were fed a normal diet, according to an August 2011 study. In the same study, the results of obesity were exacerbated when the rats were fed a high-fat diet and exposed to BPA.

The jury is still out on how a chemical like BPA would spur obesity, Newbold said.

“There are a lot of hypotheses floating around,” Newbold said. “It’s possible that it (BPA) alters neural development, which has been shown in rodents, and it increases their craving for sugar.”

Most research on environmental chemical-induced obesity is focused on altered brain development, Newbold said.

“We’re just now really digging into this stuff,” she said.

It is difficult to investigate effects such as obesity because BPA doesn’t stay in the body long. Since exposure comes from foods, however, BPA is continuously present in most people’s bodies, Trasande said.

The new study found that compounds similar to BPA – other phenols, often in products such as sunscreens or soaps – were not linked to obesity in the children. They also controlled for activity level, calorie intake, tobacco exposure, race and education levels of whomever takes care of the child.

About 12.5 million, or 17 percent, of U.S. children are obese, which can lead to high blood pressure, diabetes and breathing problems. Obese children also are more likely to become obese adults.

“When a child becomes obese, it’s a life sentence,” vom Saal said. “It’s not something the medical establishment has found a way to treat.”

Trasande pointed out that 1,000 to 3,000 new chemicals have been produced every year since the 1970s, and at the same time we’ve seen a rise in childhood obesity. But he was quick to point out that there are “definitely limits to how much you can say to that.”

Chemical industry representatives remain skeptical.

"Due to inherent, fundamental limitations in this study, it is incapable of establishing any meaningful connection between BPA and obesity," said Hentges of the chemical industry group. "In particular, the study measures BPA exposure only after obesity has developed, which provides no information on what caused obesity to develop," he said.

Jennifer Wolstenhome, a University of Virginia postdoctoral fellow who studies endocrine disruption, said the study was strong, but noted that one limitation is the age range, which "spanned critical windows of development," including puberty.

Since children’s bodies undergo many changes during those years, it could skew the results. For example, the chemical may affect children in different ways during or after puberty, when hormones change.

Trasande said he’d like to further this research by doing a longer term, population-based study on BPA looking at exposures even earlier in life and the potential for obesity, since susceptibility for infants is high.

“Poor diet and activity level certainly matter, but we need to be looking at environmental chemicals’ role in obesity too,” Trasande said. “Our study suggests we should reconsider the uses of BPA in the context of these new findings.”

BPA is a main ingredient of polycarbonate, the hard, rigid plastic used in some food and water containers, as well as resins in the liners of some canned food and beverages.

Currently 11 U.S. states have banned BPA in some products, and in July the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned the chemical from baby bottles and sippy cups.

The FDA rejected a petition from the Natural Resources Defense Council to ban BPA in food containers but says it is awaiting results of government studies into its potential health risks.

This article originally ran at Environmental Health News, a news source published by Environmental Health Sciences, a nonprofit media company.

MU researchers expand study of health alert system to Iowa

By [Xinrui Zhu](#), [Hannah Spaar](#)

September 19, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Sensors monitor George Hage constantly.

They know how long he sleeps. They know when he wakes up. They know how many times he opens the refrigerator. They record his heart rate.

“I know they are there, but I don’t really feel them. They don’t affect me,” Hage said, sitting at his desk and working on a book about his experiences in World War II. A sensor attached to his chair monitors his health, and several sensors watch his activities from the wall.

The people behind the sensors aren’t spying on Hage — they’re monitoring his health. Far from being bothered by the surveillance, he says it makes him feel safer.

Hage, 89, is participating in a study of sensor technology to monitor aging adults at Tiger Place, an intermediate care facility in Columbia designed to allow both independent living and those who need nursing home-level care. The sensors monitor various aspects of Hage's health from afar so that he has more independence.

Marilyn Rantz, executive director of the Aging In Place program at Tiger Place, and Marjorie Skubic, Director of Center for Eldercare and Rehabilitation Technology, have used motion-sensing technology to monitor the health of older adults at Tiger Place since 2005 as part of the state Aging In Place program.

The demand for technology that allows older adults to live independently for longer is growing. The older population will continue to grow for at least the next 18 years. The Administration on Aging in the Department of Health and Human Services projects that the population over the age of 65 will continue to increase to 19 percent of the total population in 2030 from 12.9 percent of the population in 2009.

Of that population, a sizable number are considered independent. In 2010, 37 percent of older women and 19 percent of older men lived alone, according to the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging Related Statistics.

In its first use outside Tiger Place, the system is being installed in a similar facility, Western Home Communities, in Cedar Falls, Iowa, to test its long-distance capabilities. Eventually, Rantz hopes it will be available for use in homes throughout the country.

Sensor technology

There are 10 motion sensors called "early illness alert sensors" located in Hage's apartment. They're in the refrigerator, cabinets, bathroom, bookshelf and even under his chairs. They monitor his daily behavior and routine changes, which can indicate early symptoms of illnesses.

Factoring into the same detection algorithm as the early alert sensors is a sensor in Hage's bed that monitors his heart rate, respiration and bed restlessness. **This sensor in particular has been entirely developed at MU, and like the early illness alerts, is being installed at Western Home Communities.**

In Hage's apartment, there is also a radar sensor system installed in his rooms that can detect falls by analyzing changes in his walking that may indicate a risk of falling. Radar sensors will not be used at Western Home Communities, but are being tested in some rooms in Tiger Place.

Though Western Home Communities isn't installing radar sensors, it is installing another type of fall-detecting sensor that is being tested at Tiger Place. Microsoft Kinect systems set up to detect falls are collecting data on 10 residents at Tiger Place.

Sensors capable of determining a risk of falling are particularly applicable to monitoring and preserving the independence of older adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of three adults who are 65 or older fall every year, and falls are the leading cause of death from injury for this age group.

The program continues to make improvements even as it expands. For example, the program is testing technology to tell immediately if someone has fallen. Hage's apartment has recently been installed with a radar sensor in his attic that can tell if someone is on the floor.

“At this point, we are not doing an automatic falling detection yet. We are working on that,” Rantz said. “When we’re ready for that, we will alert people by beeper if somebody falls.”

Rantz said that there is testing that needs to be done before staff are alerted directly of falls in order to prevent false alarms.

Preserving autonomy; detecting illness

Information from these different types of sensors will be sent back to Columbia and will be analyzed by computers, which is the same process for residents at Tiger Place. Instant alerts are sent to health care providers if the automatic database detects any rapid changes in a resident’s health.

“You don’t have to watch; it is all done with automatic database processing,” Rantz said.

Because the systems allow study from a distance, aging residents are able to maintain some independence when their health problems require them to live in assisted care facilities. The sensors do not intrude on their privacy, either, as even the Microsoft Kinect sensors only create what Rantz refers to as “shadowy figures.”

“It creates silhouette images, not pictures and not films, so they don’t have to worry about privacy,” Rantz said.

Hage said he feels “pretty independent” at Tiger Place. He has been a part of the program since it began in 2005, and said that the sensors have been there for so long that he doesn’t worry about them. So far, Hage has not had any illnesses detected by the system. But he said he believes it will help him sometime in the future.

Health problems have been found on other Tiger Place residents participating in the study.

“We’ve detected lots of health problems and gotten things solved early,” Rantz said, noting that early detection is highly beneficial to healing and recovery. Among the diseases that have been detected are congestive heart failure, early indicators of stroke, respiratory complications, pneumonia and urinary tract infections.

Expansion to Iowa and beyond

The expansion to Iowa is being funded by a \$300,000 grant awarded in July by the National Science Foundation to allow the researchers to test their system over a greater distance.

Western Home Communities already uses a high-bandwidth fiber cable internet system to run some of its services, and that cable is what made the project's expansion possible.

"Not only do they have the fiber, but they're interested in using it," Rantz said of Western Home Communities. She also called the organization "quite technology savvy," because of the staff's familiarity with the fiber connection.

Rantz hopes the expansion to Iowa is just the start of the growth of the sensor technology. Tiger Place is currently working with a company to license the sensors so they can be sold commercially, and Rantz believes they will be accessibly priced.

She thinks people will seek the technology for themselves and family members. "I think it's going to end up in people's private homes and other housing projects all over the country," she said.

Supervising editor is Katherine Reed.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Thank you from the University of Georgia

By Michael F. Adams

September 18, 2012 | 11:09 a.m. CDT

On behalf of the Bulldog Nation, I am **writing to thank the University of Missouri and the entire community for the wonderful hospitality shown to us last week.** To a person, you were friendly, helpful, warm and inviting. The excitement about Mizzou joining the Southeastern Conference was palpable, and the game day experience was exhilarating.

You showed us how to be great hosts. We will try to live up to that standard when you come to Athens.

Michael F. Adams is the president of the University of Georgia.

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Ticket fraud reports down from Georgia game

By: Tracy Cook

A week after event staff recorded more than 400 "missed scans" at Memorial Stadium, the ticket fraud problem virtually disappeared for Saturday's game against Arizona State University.

Reports of fraudulent tickets were made public last week following Missouri's football game against the University of Georgia, the team's first conference matchup in the Southeastern Conference. More than 71,000 fans turned out for the game, but some were turned away at the gates due to fake tickets.

The MU Police Department reported ticket scanners counted more than 400 "missed scans" on tickets at the Georgia game, some of which might have indicated fake tickets, according to a Sept. 13 news release from the MU News Bureau.

Of these missed scans, MUPD received two reports of ticket fraud following Missouri's inaugural SEC game.

"Two official complaints came in to us," MUPD spokesman Brian Weimer said.

The case is still open, he said.

"The suspects have not been identified," Weimer said. "It's still under investigation."

Such claims were not the case at this week's game, though, as there have yet to be any reports of fraudulent tickets.

"Our post-game report from our police didn't list any fraudulent tickets from (Saturday) night," athletic department spokesman Chad Moller said in an email.

Weimer confirmed that as of Monday morning, the police department has not received any reports of ticket fraud from last weekend's football game versus Arizona State University.

Regarding whether MU's recent entrance into the SEC had any impact on the fraudulent ticket incidents, Weimer said there was no relation between the two.

"(The ticket fraud reports) have nothing to do with the switch in conferences," Weimer said.

There is a higher risk of ticket fraud at sold-out games because tickets are in higher demand, Weimer said.

The fake tickets look nearly identical to the real ones, Weimer said.

"They even have the same feel," he said.

The fraudulent tickets even had the correct disclaimers on the back side, according to the news bureau's news release. When in circulation with legitimate tickets, it is almost impossible to tell the difference between the two.

There is no chance the fake tickets will scan at the gate, Weimer said. Anyone who unknowingly buys a fraudulent ticket will not find out until one reaches the entry gate, and those with fake tickets will be denied entry to the game.

One of the problems with ticket fraud is that people selling tickets might be unaware they have fraudulent tickets if they didn't purchase them directly from MU, Weimer said.

"It's also possible that the individual selling the ticket does not know it is fake," Weimer said in the news release. "He or she might have bought the fake ticket and is trying to turn it around for a quick profit along with legitimate tickets. Unfortunately, the victim might not realize it's a fake ticket until it's scanned for entry into the game."

MUPD has seen incidents of ticket fraud in past years, Weimer said. Fans should not look to get tickets through online auction sites or from strangers, according to the news release. The best advice is for people to make sure they are purchasing tickets directly from the MU Athletic Office, Weimer said.

Definition of intellectual property remains in question after UM syllabus requests

By [Lizzie Johnson](#)

September 18, 2012 | 12:52 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The degree to which a college syllabus is seen as intellectual property appears to vary with the circumstance.

The University of Missouri System is maintaining they are and is refusing to give syllabuses from education programs at the four system campuses to the National Council on Teacher Quality.

The nonprofit advisory council in Washington, D.C., is challenging the system's call. The council says it wants the syllabuses and other teacher education documents as part of a national survey of teacher preparation programs.

Robert Bain, a St. Louis attorney specializing in intellectual property, defines it as any creative work considered to be owned by the maker. It includes four categories: patents, trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets.

Bain said a syllabus is protected under copyright law because it can include original and creative material. He likened it to a map.

"The relative location of the boundaries between the states, the shape of the states and the geographic features are not protectable," Bain said. "But the map itself can contain creative aspects, like the coloring, the font, the typeface and the other ornamental features. Collectively, it is protectable, even if the underlying facts are not."

The collected rules for the UM System say any course belongs to the faculty member who created it. This means the syllabus, lectures notes, class handouts, lab manuals and digital presentations created by the faculty member are considered intellectual property.

"As soon as you create a work, you automatically own a copyright, no other requirements," Bain said. "As soon as you write a poem, as soon as you write a song, as soon as you write a syllabus, as the author of that work, you are protected."

The National Council on Teacher Quality's Arthur McKee said in an earlier *Missourian* article that about 80 percent of the public institutions to whom the syllabus request was made have cooperated.

Among them was the University of Kentucky, which turned over its syllabuses in 2011. Phillip Rogers, former executive director of the Kentucky Education Professional Standards board, said the decision was made under duress.

"We have a very solid, clear, open-records law in Kentucky," he said. "If you are a public institution or agency, people can ask you for records and only personal information can be redacted."

Kim Walters-Parker, director of educator preparation for the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, said public institutions have fewer syllabus rights than private institutions.

"Private institutions are by definition private, so they are not covered by open-records laws in the way public institutions are," she said. "Public institutions are government agencies, so their records are covered by open-records laws."

The teacher quality council made an open-records request for UM's syllabuses and other documents in November 2011. The system denied the request in July. The two continue to talk about whether they can reach an agreement, Robert Schwartz, system chief of staff, told the *Missourian* in an earlier article.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.