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Greetings from the ISMTE Board of Directors (BOD). The month of October signals the season of fall for many ISMTE members, spring for others, and even the rainy season for some. Regardless of your location, it’s likely a time of transition for you as the end of the calendar year approaches. And what a year 2020 has been. Below we provide you with a brief update about what the ISMTE BOD has been working on during the last few months.

North America Virtual Event an Astounding Success

COVID-19 has changed our lives in unimaginable ways, including how we attend the conferences of our professional organizations. ISMTE held its first-ever virtual event this past summer, replacing its annual North America (NA) Conference, which was to be held in Chicago, Illinois, with a nearly week-long event of virtual sessions and networking. Attended by nearly 260 editorial office professionals, the event boasted representation from nine countries throughout the world. The board is extremely grateful for the hard work and creative thinking of the North American Planning Committee led by Chair Kim Retzlaff and Vice-Chair Ryan Farrell.

Related to the NA Virtual Event, the board provided support to the committee tasked with planning the Asia Pacific Virtual Event, which was held September 14 and 15, as well as with supporting the upcoming European Virtual Event, which will be held on November 19 to 20.

Annual BOD Meeting

As is the case every year, the BOD held a strategy meeting to take a big-picture look at the current state of the Society and to discuss the upcoming year. This year our meeting looked a little different than in years past. Traditionally, we tether this meeting to the North America Conference and meet in person. However, because of COVID and the conference pivoting to a week-long virtual event, we decided to hold a stand-alone virtual meeting in early September.

The meeting was a productive one—we began the session by conducting an exercise on values, identifying those that we believe hold true when we, as a board, are at our best. At the time of this writing, the values hadn’t been finalized, so we plan to have them confirmed at our monthly board meeting in October. We'll be excited to share them with you in our next board update.

Moving on to our three-year strategic plan, we took stock of the progress we’ve made in 2020, despite the unique circumstances of working and living during a global pandemic. Knowing that we need to tightly prioritize our efforts with the plan in 2021 due to ongoing capacity constraints, we decided we would use our newly established values to guide our decisions about which objectives to pursue in year two of the plan. We intend to meet in November to nail down these objectives and will communicate them to you in our next update.

We were also lucky to be joined by Kim and Ryan for a reflection of the NA Virtual Event, where they shared with us the successes of the meetings and discussed possible opportunities for improvement in 2021. Of note, the very timely session on the anti-racism toolkit was widely attended and highly valued. Also, attendees appreciated the multiple opportunities for connection and networking on the Whova app. We had over 1,500 responses to polls, 1,700 messages on the community board, and 900 private messages exchanged by attendees.

We ended the meeting by hearing from our committee chairs, who shared their major accomplishments for 2020, any projects or initiatives in progress or planned, and any challenges they may have faced during the year. This was an excellent opportunity to have bi-directional communication with the leaders of our committees where the bulk of the work for ISMTE gets done.

Development of DEI Advisory Council

We announced at the NA Virtual Event the development of a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Council. Our intention with the council is to put action to words—in early June the ISMTE BOD pledged to improve the diversity in our governance, leadership, and programming. To that end, we envision a council that will serve as an enduring advisory body.
to the board and to ISMTE committees on practical and meaningful opportunities to create a culture of DEI within all facets of the organization. We are now accepting applications for the council and encourage you to consider applying—we are looking for those who want to make a difference in the persistent inequities that exist in our field. As a member of the council, you would help guide both internal and external efforts around DEI for ISMTE. Applications are due December 15, 2020.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

One of the best ways to advance your career and to get to know your peers in the field is to volunteer for one of the many committees we have at ISMTE, where meaningful work informs the decisions of the BOD and helps direct the future of the Society. We’re looking for enthusiastic and engaged members for several of our committees, including:

**Marketing and Communications Committee**
Purpose: To identify market opportunities (corporate/individual membership, sponsorship) and curate content to comprehensively promote the various offerings of ISMTE (annual meetings, webinars, educational resources, local groups, etc.) so that members and non-members alike are fully aware of the Society’s robust portfolio of benefits, with the ultimate goal of increasing member recruitment, retention, and engagement.

**Sponsorship Committee**
Purpose: To identify and develop opportunities for external sponsorship of ISMTE membership and activities; liaise with, and understand the needs of, current and prospective sponsors; and propose policies for ethical sponsorship.

**Website Committee**
Purpose: To support the mission of ISMTE by ensuring ismte.org remains a go-to informational and developmental resource for members and a strong representation of our organization to the broader community.

If you’re interested in being a member of any of these committees, please complete this form. For additional questions about these or any other ISMTE committee, contact Alethea Gerding.
As always, if you have any feedback for the ISMTE BOD, please contact us at info@ismte.org.
Several facets of the scholarly publishing landscape are evolving with regard to collaboration, sharing, and access. Five such segments are authorship, peer review, preprints, data sharing, and open access (OA). Annette Flanagin, Executive Managing Editor and Vice President of Editorial Operations of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) and the JAMA Network, discussed specifics of each during her keynote address at the 2020 ISMTE North America Virtual Event.

Research is almost always a collaborative effort, and trends in authorship credit are starting to evolve to provide equal credit for equal contributions. More often, authors are starting to ask for shared co-first authorship or co-senior authorship. Similarly, group authorship allows a team to use its group name on the byline and then list all non-author research collaborators’ names in a special section for shared credit.
Similarly, newer trends in peer review are moving toward collaboration. JAMA, for example, has an “Editorial Review Before Revision” step in its process, during which the handling editor, senior editors, a statistical editor, the manuscript editor, and an expert in graphics and data display collaborate on the revision before it goes back to the authors to minimize revisions authors make.

Peer review is also evolving with the open science movement. While models are moving toward openness and transparency, there are varying levels, and allowing reviewer/author choice is common and needed. To illustrate, Flanagin cited an Elsevier pilot study that ran from 2014 to 2017 in which only 8% of reviewers agreed to reveal their identities.

With regard to access, journal policies on allowing preprint submissions are changing. This shift is occurring as a result of several factors, including that Crossref started registering preprints in 2016, the National Institutes of Health declared support for preprints in 2017, and publishers have started launching or buying preprint servers and integrating them with manuscript submission systems. Major medical journals started getting on this bandwagon in 2018 when The Lancet collaborated with SSRN, and then medRxiv, a preprint server for the health sciences, launched in 2019. The question about patient safety still remains, so the medical community remains cautious. That said, COVID-19 has caused an extreme increase in preprints. medRxiv has seen 1,600 to 2,000 posted per month since April 2020.

In pursuit of open science, data-sharing policies are becoming more prevalent, especially as funders and government agencies require them. Other drivers of this trend are the Center for Open Science, which launched its Transparency and Openness (TOP) Guidelines in 2017, and the ICMJE, which started requiring data-sharing statements in 2018. Adoption for actually sharing data has been slow, however, because of perceived barriers, including the resources required to maintain data in sharable formats and the costs associated with formatting and depositing data.

And what discussion of open science would be complete without mentioning OA publication? As of July 2020, the Directory of Open Access Journals lists 15,041 journals from 133 countries with 5.1 million articles published OA (up from about 4 million in 2019). In looking at the proportion of articles published by access type, there is an overall decrease in pay-access and an increase in open and public access.

While the OA movement is good “in principle,” Flanagin said, the risk is that predatory opportunists and others may “hijack the altruistic goals of open science” for their own “nefarious” pursuits, which could have the unfortunate side effect of widening inequities and access gaps that “threaten the future and integrity of scholarly publishing.”

“Whatever happens,” Flanagin added, “it’s clear that the global pandemic of 2020, with its effects on science, academia, professional societies, journals, worldwide economies, and human lives is changing the panorama of scholarly publishing in ways that we haven’t seen before.”

**Integrating Artificial Intelligence Tools into Your Editorial Office Workflows**

**Reported by Jacob Kendall-Taylor**
Director, Editorial Systems, JAMA Network

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming more ubiquitous at different stages throughout a journal’s workflow. We are seeing development work pre-submission to allow for a better user experience for authors and a faster peer-review process. During this session, a panel discussed the current state of AI in publishing.

Steve Scott, Director of Portfolio Development at Digital Science, kicked off the panel and discussed Writefull. This product allows for automated language assessment for academic writing. Writefull uses deep learning models trained on millions of published journal articles to provide authors and publishers assessment scores (spelling, grammar, style, etc.) that can serve as the basis for edits. This program has been adopted by some submission systems with a simple goal: Better written papers can undergo faster review and in turn reviewers and editors spend less time correcting language.

Josh Dahl, Product Director from Clarivate, spoke next and discussed his organization’s approach to integrating AI into workflows. Much of Clarivate’s development is pre-submission, which could improve the user experience for authors submitting to a journal. This work has taken the form of helping authors meet journal-specific formatting requirements, parsing information from a manuscript directly into submission fields, and performing certain automated checks before an editorial office gets to work. An area that many editors find cumbersome is finding and securing reviewers. Clarivate, using their Web of Science database, is
working to address this. Their tool automatically suggests reviewers for a manuscript and can greatly decrease the time editors and staff spend searching for reviewers.

The final speaker was Neil Blair Christensen, Sales Director, Americas, from UNSILO/CACTUS. UNSILO is working on issues recognized by staff as the more burdensome portions of quality control. Christensen highlighted some select industry developments and screening solutions from Research Square, SciScore, DataSeer, and scite, and provided a more detailed demo of “UNSILO Technical Checks,” a program that has been fully integrated with the ScholarOne system. Some checks include the following: confirming the lengths of specific sections meet journal requirements, funding information, and potential conflicts of interest.

During the past four to six months many journals have seen a sharp uptick in submissions. The tools described could help increase efficiencies and improve quality control. UNSILO has been working to address this. Their tool automatically suggests reviewers for a manuscript and can greatly decrease the time editors and staff spend searching for reviewers.

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**Flipping to Open Access? Case Studies and Potential Pitfalls**

*Reported by Jitesh Soares, PhD*

Sr. Associate Publisher, American Chemical Society

To comply with developing policies worldwide, publishers are pivoting to either establishing new fully OA journals, hybrid journals, or flipping business models on current subscription-based journals. This session was designed to inform attendees on potential roadblocks and to provide some approaches to overcome them to ensure successful and sustainable publishing programs.

The session began with an up-to-date overview from Avriel Licciardi, PhD, an Associate Editor from LetPub, on multiple topics around OA. These topics included informing the audience on the current landscape of OA mandates from around the world. Licciardi delved into the potential executive order on OA policies within the United States emanating from the US Office of Science and Technology Policy. In the final part of the talk, Licciardi explicated the importance of catering to researchers from China when deciding whether or not to flip the business model of a journal toward OA. Recent surveys indicate that there is an increase in uptake of gold OA publishing by authors in that country. The Chinese Academy of Sciences encourages green OA publishing and is willing to fund author publishing charges. Current trends show that the early-career researchers have demonstrated a strong desire to publish in well-reputed OA journals. Licciardi also shared changes in policy in China, which have the potential to impact the publishing industry, including no less than one-third of articles published by authors in China need to be published in China-based academic journals; the threshold for publishing costs per paper is 20,000 RMB (~2,800 USD); and only journals on the “good list” as determined by funding agencies are credited.

Matthew Giampoala, PhD, Vice President for Publications at the American Geophysical Union (AGU), presented on OA journals within his remit including seven fully gold OA journals and the publication of AGU’s first OA book. When moving to an OA model, Giampoala advised that publishers announce the transition to OA before sharing subscription rates. Additionally, he recommended the need to survey the authors, assess the landscape, identify revenue per article needed for sustainability, negotiate with publishing partners, notify authors of the date when the new payment will be required, and assess the need for creation of additional mechanisms to receive author payment. Journals with the following characteristics were described as good candidates to flip to OA—journal could improve its accessibility, visibility, and usage; keep its current author base with the opportunity to expand as OA funding increases; and through its established reputation, reduce submission and output loss in the early years. Once a journal is flipped, expect an initial decrease of 20% to 30% in submissions and published output for the first couple of years, which is followed by a rebound.

Overall, the session provided several factors that need to be considered when pursuing business models related to OA to safeguard the sustainability and growth in influence of your journals.
Adventures in Copyright

Reported by Craig Lincoln
Senior Managing Editor, J&J Editorial, LLC

Copyright law can be daunting. Additionally, the law is ever-changing and open to re-interpretation as technology evolves and new mediums emerge by which we publish and share intellectual property. Luckily, Eric Slater, Senior Manager/Attorney, Copyright, Permissions, & Licensing at the American Chemical Society, navigated us safely through the history of copyright law and showed some examples of fair use.

Slater began with an overview of how copyright law started in the United States and how it evolved. He showed how surprising things can cause the law to change. One example of this was when a modification to the law came about because of self-playing pianos. An overview of protected works helped explicitly show what the law interprets as intellectual property.

Slater reviewed fair use and how some court cases have helped guide what constitutes a violation of copyright law. While fair use isn’t guaranteed to protect you in reusing a work, Slater provided guidelines on what factors the courts weigh when determining if an adapted work falls under fair use. Generally, if you are not affecting the heart of the work, and are not impacting the value, if you’re adapting the work in a factual way, or using for educational purposes, then the law typically favors that kind of use. Slater showed examples ranging from a Gerald Ford biography to 2 Live Crew defending a parody of “Oh Pretty Woman” to demonstrate how the courts have historically ruled with regard to copyright.

While copyright law is dense and can be hard to parse, Slater shined a bit of light on how the courts interpret this law and how this law can change. One thing Slater stressed is the law is slow to respond to technology and usually doesn’t make any modifications unless it is clear a certain platform that can affect copyright is here to stay. One thing is clear, this law will continue to be complex and evolving, so being aware of those changes and how it might affect the editorial office is paramount.

If You Build It (Right), They Will Come

Reported by Grace Hansen-Dewar
Editorial Coordinator, New England Journal of Medicine

This session was presented by Todd McGee, Vice President of Research, Development and Operations at HighWire Press, Inc.; Clark Holdsworth, Research Communications Manager at LetPub; and Geoffrey Shideler, Editorial Manager at the American Water Works Association. Like many of our sessions, it was on-demand; it took the form of three brief presentations and then a quick “fireside chat” around topics that each speaker brought up.

McGee began with an overview of what gets readers engaged with a publication’s website—and how to get that second click!—and a brief discussion of traffic drivers, such as access, discovery, and speed, as well as underutilized tools like short videos. He touched briefly on the effect of COVID-19 on website traffic, which was explored more in depth during the chat portion.

Holdsworth narrowed our focus down a bit more, with some concrete suggestions about what to add to a journal website to draw readers, such as plain language summaries, graphical and video abstracts, and podcasts. He also addressed the perennial question of “But who’s going to come up with and implement all these things?” by suggesting that journal staff are often an untapped resource for new and exciting ideas. We got a look at how journals were already using innovative methods—check out Nature Video!

Shideler treated us to a case study on the #BirdBump; the American Water Works Association posted authors’ research to their Twitter along with author handles and then analyzed the results. With more standard methods like emailing a table of contents, page views rose but plateaued. Social media posts caused a brand-new rise in views, which may mean a brand-new audience engaging with research, a great result for any journal!

During the fireside chat, we took a deeper dive into many of the points raised during the presentations. Of course, the current pandemic was on everyone’s mind; part of the conversation focused on how to ethically engage with the increased traffic that a major crisis or event might drive, including that positively capitalizing on rising interest allows for further, quicker dissemination of important information!
After a spirited conversation about getting over tech hesitation and the concern about making things perfect as opposed to accessible (as well as a brief acknowledgement of the power of YouTube to reach a broad audience!), we wrapped up by talking about the appeal of podcasts to readers, as well as how to find the time to make all these cool new tools.

After the on-demand video was made available, the discussion forum linked to it also lit up, with terrific conversations focusing around tips for rebranding a journal (requested by Bonnie Ponce) and sharing resources for creating new content, especially graphical abstracts. ISMTE members always have great ideas, and they love to share. If you’re looking to increase readership, ask around!

When Jobs Cross: Effective Initiatives That Paid Off in the Workplace

Reported by Kristen E. Anderson
Senior Managing Editor, Allen Press, Inc.

A prerecorded on-demand Q&A session (that is also free to watch!) took a close look at cross-training initiatives in the workplace. Jenny Scott, Manager of Editorial Services and Scholarly Account Management at Allen Press, Inc., and Veronica Showers, Director of Sales at Atypn, dove in with their fundamental concepts of why such initiatives are important and how to achieve them. Scott spoke to her experiences on personnel training as well as backup situations, noting that open conversations with one’s employees to develop strong and honest relationships is important. Regular one-on-one check-ins concerning career interests and goals can be helpful in ensuring skill sets are synced up. And also, this will help account for busy workplaces; overburdening an already busy staff is obviously not ideal.

Showers focused on launching a brand-new product, and how one needs to get feedback from all stakeholders from the very beginning. By doing so, one will be able to gauge the level of knowledge of the team members, begin the educational process with key staff, determine which team members truly need cross-training, and explore team members’ concerns and priorities for training. She, too, emphasized that communication is key throughout the process.

The dialogue continued with real-world examples. In Scott’s office, for instance, some of her proofreader staff works toward becoming managing editors, so she looks at ways to facilitate this process. And in Showers’ office, she bears in mind who needs the in-depth knowledge of a new product getting launched; for instance, how much would the account managers in a company need to know and what would that training look like? That said, no plan is perfect and the two panelists were not shy in sharing endeavors that did not go according to plan. Scott emphasized that employees need to be patient with themselves, particularly when a cross-training effort has failed.

A key point in such efforts is embracing different learning styles and knowing who needs the written documentation versus knowing who learns best by doing. Showers spoke to some of her family’s educational background and how that helped shape her training documentation and tools: “People learn in different ways and at different rates. I can’t assume that everyone will learn best the way the content is taught nor can I assume that all knowledge will be learned at the same time by everyone.” Scott, in her manager position, mentioned that she looks for potential cross-training concepts even before a person is hired in the interview process: “I look for someone that is eager to learn, that is honest with themselves and others, open and easy to provide feedback to.”

Growing the employee as well as learning curves with a new product are challenges on their own. And the initiatives shared (the good with the bad) in cross-training efforts provided a diverse angle to the workplace. In summary, the session closed out with the following “CROSS” key points:

- Continued, transparent communication is vital for cross-training initiatives to succeed.
- Remember no process is perfect, “on-paper plans” may change; adjustments may need attention organically or as soon as possible.
- One’s employees and new products need understanding in advance as much as possible before implementing a new program; for instance, consider what career path an
employee may want to pursue as well as note what training methods are best on an individual basis.

- **Success** should be celebrated when a cross-training initiative pays off, but re-assess the program on a systematic schedule.

### See and Be Seen: Insights into Citations & Indexing

**Reported by Michelle Gaffney**
Managing Editor, ASAIO Journal

Journal stakeholders continually look for ways to increase discoverability of their content, as well as see the impact of their published research. This session provided an overview and updates on the application process for journals seeking to be indexed in MEDLINE, as well as an introduction to scite, a smart citations platform designed to show how papers are cited and the ways in which this information can guide journal, publisher, and author decision-making.

Lauren Topper, Head, Unit 1, Collection Development and Acquisitions Section at the National Library of Medicine (NLM), detailed the journal review and selection process for inclusion in MEDLINE, the NLM’s biomedical literature citation database that constitutes the majority of PubMed. Journal applications are evaluated by the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee (LSTRC) on five key criteria: scope and coverage in the biomedical field, editorial policies and processes, scientific rigor, production and administration, and impact as determined by the LSTRC.

Topper also highlighted recent updates to the application process:

- Enhanced review report form to provide greater feedback to journals on their application
- Pass/fail recommendation (i.e., applications no longer receive a numbered score)
- Ability to check application status in the online application system

Further information on the indexing selection process can be found [here](#).

Josh Nicholson, Co-Founder and CEO of scite, demonstrated how smart citations can help users discover and evaluate research better and faster. Moving beyond the standard metric of measuring quantity of citations, scite allows users to see how a scientific paper has been cited by providing the context of the citation—whether a citation supports, mentions, or disputes the study. scite provides this information in various formats:

- **See** what changes are needed within a company or editorial office, and start assessing workflows, proposals, and what new products are needed for continued success.
The Evolving World of Data Sharing

 Reported by Kimberly J. Retzlaff

Support for sharing research data is increasing in the journal publishing sphere, but there’s plenty of room to grow in furthering best practices, as noted during this session.

Aside from promoting research ideals, the push for data sharing comes primarily from funders who see data as a tangible outcome of the research they paid for, according to Tim Vines, Project Lead at DataSeer and Managing Editor at Origin Editorial. The questions for journal publishers are how to encourage data sharing, achieve compliance, and keep costs manageable.

“Data policies have been well adopted across scholarly communications since 2009,” said Daniella Lowenberg, Dryad Product Manager & Make Data Count Principal Investigator, California Digital Library. “Going forward, we need to focus on data being published in FAIR and re-usable formats at trusted data repositories.”

She recommended that journal publishers stop allowing researchers to publish their datasets as supplementary files for three primary reasons: data need their own citable DOI, data need to have registered metadata (separate from the journal article metadata), and data need different preservation mechanisms. Appropriate repositories may be discipline specific or broader, and journal publishers can help their authors by recommending tools like re3data or DataCite’s Repository Finder tool.

Once a journal publisher adopts a data-sharing policy and steers its authors to repositories, the next step is to implement proper data citation practices by getting the citations back from researchers. This will facilitate a way to quantify data citations (i.e., references in Crossref) and data reuse.

PLOS started requiring data availability statements from authors in 2014 and includes those statements as unique pieces of metadata. Compliance is strong because the policy is enforced after acceptance but before publication, said Isabel Mulhern, Sr Editorial Operations Manager, PLOS ONE. She noted that most PLOS authors choose to share their data in supplementary files (66% in 2019), and repository use is growing slowly (from 20% in 2016 to 26% in 2019). In 2019, only 8% of authors didn’t share data, which was verified by PLOS as being due to legal or ethical restrictions. Still, these data are available by request.

Open data policy and enforcement is a “worthwhile” investment, Mulhern said. In terms of staff investment at PLOS, data statement reviews take the equivalent of one full-time employee—about six to seven minutes per published article. PLOS is looking at ways to improve sharing practices, such as partnering with repositories, implementing process enhancements that make it easier to use repositories, taking advantage of submission system integrations, and providing author education.

To move data-sharing best practices forward, Vines suggests that journal publishers start by adopting a data-sharing policy and then increase the policy requirements over time. Establishing a workflow that accounts for reviewing data-sharing statements is important; the best data-sharing statements are comprehensive and include an itemized list with DOI links. And, in talking to the editorial board or other stakeholders, the editorial office should advocate consistently—data sharing is a broad movement and it’s time to join in.
Plenary: Antiracism Toolkits for Allies in Scholarly Publishing

Reported by Randy Townsend
Director, Publications Operations, AGU

Over recent years, the scholarly publishing industry has started addressing the harsh reality of exclusion and underrepresentation. Professional organizations have launched diversity initiatives and are exploring opportunities to create safe, inclusive environments. Sincere change relies on difficult conversations that challenge long-standing traditions of systemic and institutionalized racism, and the deeply rooted tactics historically used to marginalize and suppress Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), including hiring practices, overt discrimination, microaggressions, and unconscious bias. The Toolkits for Equity project recently released the first of three resources to provide a starting point for some of these difficult conversations. Jocelyn Dawson, Journals Marketing Manager at Duke University Press; Niccole L. Coggins, Editorial, Design & Production Coordinator and Assistant Project Editor at University of Virginia Press; and Gisela Fosado, Editorial Director at Duke University Press, delivered a personal tour through many of the main points of the Antiracism Toolkit for Allies and shared insight into its development and how it can be used.

This toolkit was designed specifically for white people who are or want to be allies. It goes right to the heart of white supremacy, privilege, and advantage. According to the toolkit, “the work of recognizing these advantages and actively resisting racism is the most crucial work that white people can embrace in order to create meaningful change.” Dawson, Coggins, and Fosado discussed the following steps to become an ally:

- Become conscious of white privilege
- Listen to people of color without judgement or defensiveness
- Move out of social segregation and develop truth-telling relationships of accountability
- Take action to interrupt racism and white privilege at all levels
- Create work communities where everyone thrives

For more information about the Antiracism Toolkit for Allies or the Toolkits for Equity Project, please email equitytoolkits@gmail.com or visit https://c4disc.org/toolkits-for-equity/.

Running a Successful Preprint Server

Reported by Ryan Alexander Farrell
Publications Manager, American Gastroenterological Association

The recent proliferation and expansion of preprint servers has given rise to a new kind of managing editor: part moderator, part gatekeeper, part editor. In this breakout session, editorial representatives from four leading preprint servers from the sciences to the social sciences discussed their approaches.

To begin, the speakers introduced their respective servers during a “lightning round.” Celina Szymanski, Managing Editor at the American Political Science Association (APSA), outlined APSA Preprints: a new, centralized outlet for content including articles, conference papers, presentations, and posters. She further discussed their conception of the server as a member benefit, which allows for greater collaboration and community. Nick Violette, Program Manager of Publications at the AGU, then introduced the Earth and Space Science Open Archive (ESSOAr). ESSOAr was formed in collaboration with several earth science societies alongside Wiley; together, they disseminate articles, posters, conference papers, white papers, and position papers. The AGU is looking to expand this remit with increased data transparency and integration with additional online submission systems. Marshall Brennan, Senior Product Manager of ChemRxiv at the American Chemical Society (ACS), discussed ChemRxiv, a server founded in partnership between the ACS, Royal Society of Chemistry, and German Chemical Society. ChemRxiv has enjoyed substantial growth since 2016, having released more than 5,500 preprints from over 80 countries, which have been accessed over 12 million times. Finally, Shirley Decker-Lucke, Content Director at SSRN,
discussed the evolution of SSRN from its focus on the social sciences to its current broad range of working papers and preprint content. In 2016, SSRN was acquired by Elsevier and they’ve since launched the First Look program, which facilitates transfers from preprint to journal.

The bulk of the session involved an open discussion, which integrated attendee Q&A. When asked what methods were used to moderate submissions, Lucker-Decke outlined SSRN’s two-stage process (staff screening for metadata, scholarly evaluation for topicality) while Jon Gurstelle, Publishing Director at APSA, discussed APSA Preprints manual metadata check, use of iThenticate, and review for scholarly merit and scope. Queried on the community-building potential of preprint servers, Violette highlighted ESSOAr’s efforts to disseminate posters and conference papers from smaller societies whose meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19. Brennan added that ChemRxiv has cultivated a vibrant community on Facebook and Twitter, which has fostered collaboration between researchers. Both Szymanski and Brennan cited Crossref as the primary method by which they ensure preprints and journal articles are appropriately linked. According to Lucker-Decke, Brennan, and Gurstelle, the investment of money, tech, and staff time are the biggest hurdles to establishing a successful preprint server; partners (i.e., societies and publishers) are essential. All speakers agreed that submissions have spiked due to the pandemic (e.g., 5,600 COVID-related submissions are currently available on SSRN). Szymanski and Brennan offered differing approaches to user comments, with APSA Preprints allowing them (though requiring membership) while ChemRxiv disabled them due to an inability to filter spam.

To close, the speakers discussed evolving demands: the necessity of a more rigorous review process (particularly given the public health implications of medical preprints), the possible dilution of research due to early availability (alleviated by embargo periods), the potential subversion of blinding if author lists are accessible, and the overall scalability of their efforts given continued public and professional interest in preprints.

Navigating Career Transitions

Reported by Jacob Kendall-Taylor

This has been a difficult year for many people, and folks may feel uneasy about what the future holds in regard to their own careers. This session asked three panelists to share their perspectives on the best ways to navigate and work toward career goals. This session could not have come at a better time.

The first panelist, Kelly Newton, Director of Scientific Publications for the Society for Neuroscience, shared advice and lessons learned achieving career accomplishments. Newton spoke about how disappointments can serve as a catalyst for career advancement. A few comments that stood out were to have people “get uncomfortable” and “be aware of the things you are shying away from” when working toward your goals. Newton also spoke about consciously thinking “what do I want to be doing?” Her advice here was to identify the skills you have but also what needs development. Come up with a concrete plan and work toward it. This is especially important during a time when many people’s work environments have changed, in some cases overnight.

Another great addition to the panel was Mark Kohlhase, Interim Chief Executive Officer at Allen Press. Kohlhase had an interesting path to publishing. Much of Kohlhase’s early career was in the bookstore business. During this time Kohlhase was cognizant of an important idea: Develop skills that can be applied to multiple industries and work to develop those skills in your current position, including volunteering for projects that could lead you on your way. One of the more interesting points Kohlhase mentioned was to identify people who have a job that sounds interesting to you and ask them, “how did they get there?” This could help provide a roadmap for your own career, but as Kohlhase is proof, we all get to our destination following different roadmaps.

The last speaker was Anna Jester, Director of Sales & Marketing at eJournalPress. Jester, who is very active in the scientific publishing community, discussed the importance of volunteering. This is how you can form your own network within the larger publishing community. Jester pointed out that now more than ever (with much of the workforce being remote), webinars, virtual social gatherings, and serving on professional organization boards (Jester has served on the ISMTE Poster Committee) is more important than ever. One final takeaway from Jester’s presentation was the reminder to keep in touch with the network you have. Great advice especially during this time.
This session took the format of a “fireside chat,” which allowed additional time for Q&A. One of the major themes of the questions revolved around remote work and how one could highlight skills that employers would be looking for during the current situation. The panel agreed that emphasizing organization and time management skills were most important. Also, being familiar and comfortable with current meeting technology would be key for the foreseeable future. This session was timely, lively, and informative!

Plenary: The Evolution of Plan S: How Are Publishers Complying?

Reported by Jitesh Soares

Plan S compliance is on the horizon. However, the plan itself has gone through multiple iterations, which has led to much confusion on the options available to publishers on how to sustainably address these new policies. The goal of this session was to bring attendees up to speed on the evolution of this plan and to share key takeaways when developing a strategy to ensure publishers can successfully fulfil these new mandates, or risk losing significant market share in Europe.

The session’s first presenter was Mark Purvis, an Independent Publishing Consultant from Blue Zulu Marketing, who provided an overview of the evolution of Plan S and the changes in mandates since its first iteration in 2018. While sharing that the “S” stood for “shock,” the plan currently requires scientists receiving research funds from specific funders, which are largely based in Europe, to publish in OA journals or platforms without an embargo. For a journal to qualify as Plan S compliant, it needs to be vetted by the Plan S Journal Checker Tool and listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals. Purvis noted that there were broadly three routes to compliance—OA journals, repository (green) route, or through transformative arrangements. Purvis advised three main priorities to work on immediately: publicly declare the intention to be compliant; know which route you want authors to choose and provide them with an easy workflow; and make sure the journal is listed in the mandated data sources.

The second and final speaker was Angela Cochran, Vice President for Publishing at the American Society of Clinical Oncology, who presented on important details that publishers would need to follow to fall in line with the Plan S revolution. Cochran advised that publishers ascertain the specific proportion of content currently funded by Plan S–relevant funders to decide whether or not the mandates are worth pursuing. Additionally, potential solutions on several key questions were presented while noting loopholes in each case—are hybrid journals in or out? How do transformative agreements fit in? What licenses need to be offered? Are there caps on author publishing charges? Is the journal transparent about its cost framework?

With Plan S–compliance requirements beginning to take effect in a few months, publishers will need to satisfy these policies as well as the ambiguities that still exist or risk losing a significant proportion of authors in Europe.

How to Launch and Sustain a Must-Listen Podcast 101

Reported by Ryan Alexander Farrell

As publishers seek out new methods to disseminate content, podcasting has emerged as a highly engaging—and fun—format. Representatives from AGU’s Third Pod from the Sun, Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP)’s The Scholarly Kitchen Early Career Development Podcast, and the JAMA Network discussed how to create and manage a successful podcast.

Lauren Lipuma, Program Manager of Media Relations at the AGU, began the session with a discussion on logistical aspects. In order to translate your research into audio content, you should avoid simply reading articles aloud. It’s important to make it personal and interesting, to evoke a feeling or mood, to create a connection between the guest and listeners; this can be accomplished through music and b-roll (i.e., ambient noise and sounds) as well as sharing anecdotes, metaphors, and other examples to drive points.
home. For those just beginning, Lipuma advises to learn by doing: Practice using a microphone, listen to the sound of your voice, and be aware of filler words (e.g., um, uh, like). You should release episodes consistently to maximize interest. And be easy on yourself—learn to accept mediocrity with your first few episodes. In terms of interviewing guests, conduct pre-interviews but save the best questions for the actual recording. Other tips include asking guests open-ended questions and remaining open to improvisation.

Meredith Adinolfi, Vice President of Publishing Operations at Cell Press/Elsevier and co-host of SSP’s Early Career Development Podcast, discussed the lessons she’s learned from the launch of the podcast. When brainstorming and generating ideas, Adinolfi stressed that asking key questions—including who the audience is, what is relevant to them, what perspectives are important, and what preparation is needed—is essential to developing the theme of your podcast. You should create a basic script/narrative structure that includes core elements but remains loose enough to accommodate spontaneity. She also suggested listening to other podcasts as well as advertisements to figure out what works and what maximizes engagement. Remember you can always pause, reset, and record to tailor your script/discussion as needed.

Jesse McQuarters, Manager of Digital Media Production at the JAMA Network, commented that determining your mission—for both your podcast and organization more broadly—is essential to driving key performance indicators (KPIs) and defining what success ultimately means. Tangible KPIs include downloads, streams, subscribers, number of episodes produced, social media and email engagement, media recognition, and awards. Equally important are those intangible KPIs, such as thought leadership, creating “driveway moments” (i.e., content that causes the listener to stop what they’re doing and listen), relationship building with important figures in your community, audience discovery/growth, and internal and external professional collaborations. Numbers are an indicator, not a key goal, and success is different for those starting out than for a more established podcast. For podcasts, content is key—we should all seek to serve our audiences with purpose.

The panelists also addressed audience queries. For those with limited capabilities, McQuarters agreed that some content—even simple audio summaries of recently published articles—is better than no content at all. Adinolfi acknowledged that while the frequency of episodes is important, new podcasts should focus on building momentum and establish consistency after launch. Finally, Lipuma discussed podcasting for those who juggle other responsibilities in the office: Do what you can, plan out as far as possible, schedule consistent working/structured meetings, and don’t be afraid to seek outside (i.e., freelance) assistance for some of the more technical aspects.

**Innovation Session**

**Reported by Kimberly J. Retzlaff**

Back by popular demand for the second year, this session featured four speakers who presented on innovative tools for scholarly publishing.

Jason Roberts, Senior Partner at Origin Editorial, presented an overview of Origin Reports, a browser-based tool that allows editors to quickly generate journal reports. After uploading a CSV file from ScholarOne or Editorial Manager (eJournalPress will be added later), editors can generate a number of standard reports, such as submissions, time to decision, and days in peer review. Features of the tool include standardization, the ability to save report parameters, and downloadable charts and graphs. Data are not saved in the system. A beta version of Origin Reports is scheduled to launch in late 2020. Journal publishers can view demos and sign up to test at www.origineditorial.com.

Tim Vines, Project Lead at DataSeer and Managing Editor at Origin Editorial, presented an overview and demo of DataSeer. This tool is intended to help advance data-sharing requirements and best practices. The tool gives document-specific advice, such as identifying which data to share and how to format those datasets. After an article is uploaded, sentences that contain datasets are highlighted. Features of the system are that it recommends suitable repositories, includes a field for DOIs or other stable links, and allows authors to explain why a dataset cannot be shared. The program can produce a number of reports and provides a suggested data availability statement. Find out more at https://dataseer.ai.

Nixon Xavier, Vice President of Innovation at Nova Techset/Katalyst Technologies, gave a demo of PubHub, an intelligent tool that bridges publishing processes from submission to publication. Features include a customizable,
web-based copyediting system, AI and machine learning techniques that help with efficiency, language analysis tools, XML conversion, style and usage corrections, and scientific language suggestions. The system accepts both Word and LaTeX inputs, provides an auto-galley proof and facilitates author review, and supports LaTeX equation editing with third-party editors like WIRIS or MathML. The collaboration tools can be used with authors, publishers, and freelancers and include systems to help manage freelancers’ schedules and payments. Find more information at www.novatechset.com.

Steven MacLauchlan, Managing Director of Data Consulting Services at UDig, discussed a proof of concept that his company completed to use machine learning to increase diversity in peer review. The selection process for peer reviewers is inherently biased because editors regularly go to their same circles. UDig sought to develop an automated way to match submitted articles with potential reviewers without the need to use and maintain a taxonomy or a complex set of reviewer attributes. Instead, abstract document similarity is used to match researchers and generate a potential pool of reviewers. After the list is generated, it can be filtered with additional business rules to help ensure diversity in the peer-review process. Find more information at www.udig.com.

After a vote through the event app, the winner of the “most innovative” award was Jason Roberts.

Updated Manuals Make Style and Organization Your Forte

Reported by Kristen Overstreet
Managing Editor/Senior Partner, Origin Editorial, LLC

This flip session occurred Friday, August 7, and featured a recorded presentation by the speakers, Stacy Christiansen, Managing Editor for JAMA and Chair of the AMA Manual of Style Committee, presenting on the AMA Manual of Style, eleventh edition, and Letitia Glozer, Managing Editor at Technica Editorial, presenting on the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, seventh edition, and then a live Q&A with the speakers and the session participants.

Christiansen explained that the first edition, in 1962, was only for JAMA staff and was 68 pages long. The new eleventh edition was published in print and online in January 2020 after a four-year revision process. The highlights she touched on can be found in Figure 3.

Highlights included how to reference social media material, preprints, and digital references; updated and new examples of data display; using the word “they” as a singular pronoun; and capitalizing the words Black and White when used to describe racial/ethnic categories. The eleventh edition also outlines the new “retraction and replacement” process to allow authors to “correct inadvertent, pervasive errors” without the stigma associated with retractions, and updates to ethical issues, such as a patient’s right to privacy.

Christiansen explained during her presentation and spoke further in the Q&A about the online version of the manual, which is being constantly updated. Some of these updates are freely available on the manual’s update page. The manual also has a Twitter @AMAManual and the AMA Style Insider blog.

Glozer presented from her point of view as an editor and was not representing the APA. She focused on the most important changes that editors will need to be aware of in the seventh edition of the APA manual. There is a new chapter included in this edition that focuses on bias-free language. In her presentation, Glozer quoted the rationale for this new chapter (page 131). Both Christiansen and Glozer talked about the revisions to the language used to describe people in scholarly writing and the importance of respectful, bias-free wording.

Glozer described some of the changes from the last edition, including using only one space after a period; condensing an author citation to first author et al. for any...

Figure 3. Slide from Stacy Christiansen’s presentation on the AMA Manual of Style, eleventh edition.
reference with three or more authors; and providing the names of all authors, up to the twentieth author, in the reference list before abbreviating with an ellipsis and then the last author’s name. Like the AMA, APA style no longer includes the publisher’s location for book citations. Glozer provided links to APA’s online resources, which include updates to the manual: main APA Style website, instructional aids page, and the APA Style Blog.

When Was Your Latest Mental Health Check-Up?

Reported by Kristen E. Anderson

To close out the ISMTE North America Virtual Event experience, attendees could opt in for a wellness and mental health check-up (without the co-pay!) from the comfort of their homes. This session came at a particularly timely hour when many have been pulled in more directions than usual given the COVID-19 pandemic challenges. Julie Edwards, Director of Health Promotion from the University of Chicago, provided ways to support one’s mental well-being that included practical strategies to consider. Her job looks at supporting an entire campus community, and she said the most important aspect of supporting mental well-being is self-care. It involves intentionality, the practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness, particularly in times of stress.

However, very often she admitted, and as many know, it is difficult to find the time to put self-care into practice. She recommended assessing one’s life as it is now: “When are you most alert and productive? When do you start to feel stressed? Take an inventory of your daily schedule and how you feel at certain times throughout the day. Next, begin to identify changes you may want to make. Are there certain times of day you want to consider incorporating self-care strategies? Make a conscious decision to put small changes into practice to see how they impact the way you feel throughout the day.” And achieving those small changes can be worthwhile in the long run.

They may be particularly helpful when stress hits and when mental well-being is a struggle. She touched on the following ways to cope:

- Give yourself grace and be kind to yourself
- Strike a work/life balance (or what she likes to refer to as a work/life integration)
- Take breaks
- Don’t sweat the small stuff
- Take time to unwind
- Be active as much as you can
- Be mindful of the present

With Edwards’ guidance, attendees then heard two real-world examples from Megan McCarty, Editorial Client Manager and Systems Support Expert at J&J Editorial, and James Galipeau, Editorial Assistant with the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and Contractor for Origin Editorial.

McCarty spoke about a Wellness Committee she helped put together at J&J Editorial. She said that, “A key aim of our efforts is to destigmatize talking about mental health. By normalizing conversation about mental health topics, we hope to foster an environment where people feel more comfortable asking for help.” To that end, committee members facilitated online and in-person discussions (such as Table Talks on Thursday that allowed them to discuss topics ranging from grief and depression and chronic illness to bias and disability), as well as company-sponsored events like lunchtime yoga and a stress management workshop. She did emphasize that the group was sensitive to one another and that they did not want anyone to feel dismissed or unrecognized. They included as many people as possible, while giving employees the latitude to pursue a wide range of ideas. The events and initiatives are not isolated, and “they engage our community while making lasting, positive impacts to our company culture.”

Galipeau spoke to a project he created called Blended Working Adventures. The concept involves having flexibility in when, how long, and where the job gets done, so the workday is not restricted to only work-related activities. Tasks like childcare, laundry, and other non-work commitments can be blended in. He said he was most interested in “the idea of taking an extended period of time during the work day to blend in physical and mental health activities,” but, of course, what the break is and when it is done can vary from person to person. He said, “It can be anything that actively engages you and provides some physical or mental benefits. But the idea is that you are doing something you like and that it’s beneficial to your mental or physical health in
some way. While the amount of time can vary, the idea is that you do it long enough that it provides a true break from your job. The first key is figuring out what works best for the employee and then looking at the requirements of the job to see where there is some flexibility. Then work together with the supervisor and colleagues to design a plan that accommodates all of these things in the best way possible. But he said this requires a shift in the way both employees and employers perceive the relationship between the job and the physical and mental health of its employees. So instead of seeing them as activities that compete for our time every day, people can see them as complementary activities that, when effectively blended together, can actually enhance each other instead of being an obstruction to one another. (And with that, hopefully we all are at least walking away from our desks for a moment…)

Always Iterating: Agile Project Management in the Editorial Office

Reported by Craig Lincoln

Editorial workflow problems are often daunting, and finding solutions to those problems can seem impossible. In this session, Brian Cody, CEO and Co-Founder of Scholastica, and Lindsay Struckmeyer, Editorial Client Manager and Systems Support Project Manager at J&J Editorial, explored ways to tackle these big, messy problems by adopting Agile Project Management workflows, a methodology adopted from the tech industry.

Cody kicked things off by explaining how Agile works. The Agile philosophy is all about tackling tremendous problems by chipping them into smaller components that you can more easily and more quickly find solutions for. The idea is to find something you can “ship,” that is implement a solution for, and enjoy the benefit much sooner. This approach also lets you adjust your approach if a solution has an unforeseen side effect much more easily. Cody rounded things out by showing the things Agile can’t solve, how data can and should inform decisions, and some examples of how Agile has helped real-world editorial offices.

Struckmeyer came in next to dig into how to use data to pinpoint problem areas. She illustrated how reports can diagnose problems and common pain points in the editorial workflow, and take an overall temperature check on specific aspects of the editorial workflow, such as the review process or editor response times. She used the current pandemic as an example of how global events can impact workflows and what areas to watch for trends on how reviewers and editors are working. Struckmeyer ended with broad considerations, such as editorial board diversity and auditing.

Improving how a journal processes manuscripts can be difficult, but Agile provides a path for finding slight improvements to carry out now, rather than drawn-out plans that could take years to implement. And the right data can help you find where you should start so your solutions have the best impact possible.

Implementing Better Methods for Reviewer Development and Engagement

Reported by Kristen Overstreet

This recorded on-demand session featured Stephanie Kinnan, Managing Editor of Clinical Publications for the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), and Michael Cannon, Director of Serial Publications and Editorial Services at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Kinnan discussed ASGE’s reviewer development and engagement programs, and Cannon discussed what it takes to cultivate positive change around performing peer review.

Kinnan explained how ASGE launched their Peer Review Mentorship Program to encourage early-career researchers to review manuscripts for their journal, Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (GIE), which had been struggling with increased submissions, reviewers declining to review, and long process times. The program allowed them to tap into early-career reviewers who were energetic and eager to learn and be loyal to the journal.

Interested young professionals apply for inclusion in the program, which is overseen by an Editorial Review Board Chair. Mentees are matched to seasoned Review Board members and
must complete a reviewer course designed by the Chair. The mentees and mentors consult together before a review is submitted. The editorial office staff, aided by flags in the Editorial Manager system, ensure the mentees are invited to review often. The program lasts for one year, and the mentees become members of the regular reviewer pool at the end of the program. Mentees are eligible for reviewer awards, and last year six of 16 mentees won awards. This, in addition to the positive feedback they receive from mentees, speaks to the success of the program.

Kinnan also presented ASGE’s awards program, which was established to recognize reviewers’ voluntary efforts on behalf of the journal, highlight those submitting superior reviews, and incentivize reviewers to be loyal to GIE. It also encourages reviewers to learn how to provide better reviews. Award winners are invited to an in-person reception at an annual conference and receive framed certificates at the awards ceremony. Award winners have the opportunity to serve as peer-review mentors. Both programs have been beneficial for ASGE’s peer-review process.

In his presentation, Cannon explained that ASHA is a large society of more than 200,000 members that has been publishing journals since 1936. Over time ASHA had been hearing that peer review was taking too long and some reviews were of low quality. They felt these issues were affecting the overall perception of their journals program, so they surveyed stakeholders in 2014. Based on the survey results, ASHA spent 18 months developing a strategic plan that included three key areas for change:

- migration to more expansive editorial boards
- structured peer-review templates
- launch of a peer-review excellence program

Cannon described how they changed the leadership structure of their journals, which included creating a vetted editorial board to perform peer reviews. They also developed structured review forms and strongly encouraged reporting guidelines (www.equator-network.org), and, most impressive, a stand-alone website for the ASHA Journals Academy, which includes the Peer Review Excellence Program (PREP). The program includes structured training through interactive development modules. The modules outline the nuts and bolts of doing peer review through an interactive learning experience that includes embedded media and assessments and a certificate of completion. The results of the changes included a reduction in overall review time, retaining editorial board members, and increased submissions as authors recognized the value of the journals.

Figure 4. Minor challenges involved with the Peer Review Mentorship Program.
Managing Mental Health for Editors

By Caitlyn E.M. Trautwein, BA
Journal Editor, Neurosurgery
NEUROSURGERY® Publications
Congress of Neurological Surgeons

I want to start by disclosing that I have no degrees or training in the areas of psychology, therapy, or any other field that pertains to diagnosing or treating mental-health issues.

That being said, I am sure everyone can agree that this year—which seems to have encompassed about a week and about a decade all at once—has been a challenge in just about every aspect of life on some level. The anxieties about the future, present health or financial challenges, division and unrest, injustice and hope, have left me feeling wrung out at the end of every week (if not every day). Despite being someone who loves working from home and is a self-described homebody, as the summer proceeds into fall, I have found myself pacing the confines of my house, wondering when it will feel safe or normal to step beyond my doors.

In the September issue of EON Deborah Bowman wrote about this state of anxiety, this shift in the world and our mindset toward it. She mused “What I’m wondering is how all of this is going to mark us mentally and emotionally… Will we ever feel comfortable shaking hands again? Hugging? Or will we always hesitate and pull back out of fear?” Her article hit a distinct chord with me: I’ve felt this shift myself, questioning activities and physical interactions I used to take for granted. And there’s no way of knowing when—or if—we’ll ever be able to go back. Many of us thought this would be “over” by now. And yet, here we are.

The blur between life and work has gotten fuzzier, too. Publishing is a high-stress, high-volume job at the best of times. In the last few months some of us have experienced tripling workloads as COVID-19-related research flooded our submissions systems. We’ve had to figure out how to manage this increased workload, sometimes in expedited timelines, all-the-while trying to juggle new office spaces that may be constantly interrupted by pets, the needs of family, or just slow internet as our bandwidth tries to keep up with everyone on the block downloading, streaming, or browsing. Some of us experienced a sudden drop-off of work as the country and indeed the world ground to an initial halt. And some too have experienced furloughs, unemployment, and uncertainty about the future. And that’s just the work-related stressors.

At this point I’m summarizing what you all know already. We’ve lived through it and are still living through it. But I think it is all too easy to forget—when we’re feeling overwhelmed and anxious, angry and frustrated, and wondering why on earth we might feel this way “for no reason”—that there is every reason to be struggling right now. A recent perspective published in The New England Journal of Medicine reminded that disaster events tend to go hand-in-hand with emotional distress, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no different. A preliminary study by Case Western surveying some 600 respondents described that “90% of the sample reported [are] experiencing one or more post-traumatic stress symptom(s)” in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by the NIH, “it can be difficult to cope with fear and anxiety, changing daily routines, and a general sense of uncertainty.” It’s not just the fear of possibly getting ill or the fear that our loved ones could get sick, although for many of us that is a real and terrifying factor. It’s also the constantly shifting global status and response, a struggling economy, and a lack of clear direction forward in so many areas of our lives. All the usual stressors are still there, but now they have to compete. And that constant uncertainty is a powerful corrosive on mental health, whether in obvious or more-subtle ways.

I’ve been calling this general malaise of negativity in myself White Noise. Things that normally wouldn’t have made me blink an eye six months ago have gotten harder to deal with. I’ve felt as if I were on a roller coaster, experiencing emotional highs one day and then extreme emotional lows the next, seemingly without provocation. I don’t feel rested, and my mind is constantly worrying about nebulous possibilities and things I can’t control. I try to focus on what I can manage day to day, but even when I’m not thinking about it, it’s there. To
be an utter geek and quote The Matrix (1999): “Like a splinter in your mind.”6

Ok, that was dramatic, but you get my point. This wasn’t the 2020 any of us expected. It’s more important than ever to be focused, driven, and organized—and yet it’s more important than ever to not beat ourselves up when we have off days or when we feel anxious, fearful, and doubtful. It’s time to recognize that we may not have the energy or desire to do the things that we usually love to do, and that’s understandable. Nevertheless, there are resources, tips, and tricks that we should be aware of and feel confident including in our wheelhouse of mental-health maintenance.

The ISMTE North America Virtual Event (#ISMTEGlobal) held August 4 to 7, 2020, included a webinar titled “When Was Your Latest Mental Health Check-Up?”.6 In this webinar, speakers Dr. James Galipeau, Megan McCarty, and Julie Edwards discussed methods that they had taken, individually and in their workplaces, to encourage mental-health maintenance, wellness, and practical methods of employing wellness philosophies across the work-life barrier. Speaker Julie Edwards reminded that self-care (the practice of taking one’s own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress) is a responsibility, not an indulgence. Speaker Megan McCarty shared her experience at J&J Editorial, LLC, of establishing a Health and Wellness Committee in the workplace, which helped employees feel engaged and supported. Speaker Dr. James Galipeau described the concept of Blended Working as a means of breaking down the work-life balance into a flexible flow between job and life.7 This webinar was a good reminder that it’s not a failing or an extravagance to take care of our mental health—it’s a necessity. Mental health is becoming a larger topic of open discussion in the workplace, and often our employers can (if they don’t already) provide additional support and engagement. It was a good reminder also that, as the industry evolves and changes, throwing up new challenges, it can also provide new opportunities, such as flexible work hours and locations.

I want to cap this all off by saying that if you are experiencing extreme anxiety and depression, please reach out—to your doctor, your church, your family and friends, a colleague. The CDC has an entire page8 dedicated to coping with stress, including crisis helplines and informational resources. Many employers have assets for their employees to help manage mental health in themselves or their children (sometimes quarterly assistance newsletters are part of an insurance program; reach out to your HR coordinator to see if one is available or might be requested). There are also many online resources dedicated to helping individuals with mental-health conditions cope during this difficult time. The University of Michigan Health has put together a list of practical tips and online support, as well as a free online toolkit, and there are many others available.9,10

In the meantime, here are some general tips and tricks you could incorporate into your day. Give some a try, and remember to try new things! You never know what exactly will cut through the White Noise.

Managing Work Stress:

• Try reorganizing the way you manage your to-do list. Have you ever tried sticky notes? Digital calendar reminders? Perhaps now is the time to try journaling or keeping a physical planner. Play to your strengths, but also switch it up if there’s an organization technique you haven’t tried (even if you think you might not like it). For example, I’m a hand-written list maker. But I’ve also come to love calendar reminders in my work email—if you don’t have to think about a task for two or three weeks, put it on the calendar and take it off your mental plate. This reduces the clutter of your day-to-day priorities. You can’t think about everything you need to do each month in a single day.

• Talk to your manager about work priorities. What needs to get done today, or this week, or this month? Make sure that you are exerting your time on primary tasks. If something can wait a week or a month, it’s good to know so that you don’t spend time finishing that first, and then get pinched by a deadline that was more essential. Perhaps your workload can be rebalanced if one of your colleagues has less to do during this time than normal. Or maybe something you’ve been doing all this time isn’t relevant anymore and can be retired. Now is the time to reassess.

• Think about what changes might make your day easier. Sometimes these changes can be helpful not only to you, but to your colleagues as well—and sometimes these changes can even positively impact your authors or reviewers. What are the pressure points in your workflow system? How can you ease them?

• TAKE TIME OFF! It might not be the vacation you hoped for, but time away from the computer screen, off the phone, and unplugged from work is essential for recharging your ability to cope and stay focused. A half day, a long weekend, or a longer break can all have their benefits. Try going on a walk, a hike, or a picnic. And don’t check your email while you do. Never underestimate the power of the Staycation.
Managing Overall Stress:
- Get fresh air and exercise. Whether running, walking, gardening, taking the dog out, hiking with a friend or family member, biking, or whatever your physical/geographical/financial ability allows, getting outside in the sun and getting your heart rate up are proven methods to release endorphins and improve mental health.
- Talk it out: Discuss the situation with friends and family members, even your colleagues. Let them know if you need advice or just a listening ear.
- Do the things that make you happy. Make time for hobbies and activities that help you relax or make you feel good. But also be honest with yourself. Perhaps sewing or knitting has seemed too difficult recently; maybe picking up your guitar or sitting down at the piano has felt like a burden. Whatever your hobby is, try getting back to it—but don’t force yourself if you’re struggling. Anxiety can make even the happiest activity feel like an effort. It might be time to try something new, to trick your brain back into a healthy form of stress management.
- Stay hydrated. There are phone apps that you can download to give you reminders to drink water. For that matter, set a timer to get up and stretch, or to remind you to sit up straight. Healthy habits are hard to manage, and it’s no failing to use technology to our advantage.

Disclosure Statement
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References:

Call for Submissions
Are you a fan of EON? Do you have an idea for an article, column, or special section? Contact our editorial office today to share your suggestion or for more information on submitting a manuscript.
Call for Volunteers

Volunteers Needed for Strategic Plan Implementation

The following ISMTE committees are in need of volunteers in 2021:
- Sponsorship Committee
- Website Committee
- Webinar Committee
- Marketing and Social Media Committee
- Asia Pacific Conference Committee

If you are interested in sharing your time and talent with ISMTE please sign up via the ISMTE Volunteer Form.

The ISMTE Board of Directors are executing a three-year strategic planning process that involves an examination of all current programs, committees, goals, and objectives. As we wrap up Year One of the strategic plan implementation process and head into Year Two, we invite you to consider becoming more active as a volunteer of ISMTE. A broad range of opportunities with varying requirements of time and expertise are available. This enhanced level of engagement provides more opportunities to create resources that benefit the profession, enhances opportunities for interaction with other editorial office professionals, and provides an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Medical Editors Short Course

Where: Oxford  
When: November 11-13, 2020  
https://www.pspconsulting.org/medical-editors/

Training journal editors for over 20 years, this workshop is designed to help editors ensure their journals achieve the maximum impact with the best research. The programme looks at the world of publishing, attracting (and keeping) authors, ensuring quality, and increasing visibility and readership. Run with only 25 participants, the course is highly interactive and allows editors to discover solutions for their own journals.

*The course is endorsed by the BMJ, Wiley, and the European Association of Science Editors.*
Editors’ Note: In this column, the avid readers of ISMTE share their literary thoughts on pieces from their own libraries. Expanding beyond reviews of traditional style guides, these reviews by editors for editors will highlight how our careers in scientific editing shape the way we read and view the world.

When I think of Alan Alda, I remember the TV show MASH, or maybe the movies The Four Seasons or This Time Next Year. But not science communication. He acts out scripts that other people write; why would an actor need to be concerned with the art and science of communication?

In this book, Alda explains that his interest started one day when his dentist was about to perform a procedure, and he casually remarked, “There may be some tethering.” When Alan asked the dentist what he meant, the man got impatient, so the actor backed off. Later, he realized the “tethering” had altered his smile, making it look more like a sneer. Bad move for an actor, but it did set him on a path of realizing the importance of clear communication.

As editors, we know that getting our message across unambiguously is critical, so I found this book to be extremely interesting. Alda talks about responsive listening. Many times, when someone else is talking, we may be thinking about what we are going to say next instead of really listening to what the other person is saying. Then, when it is our turn to talk, we aren’t actually responding to what was said. We have to be willing to be changed and not be afraid to show our ignorance—that is a true, purposeful conversation.
Ignorance can be an ally, as long as it is backed up by curiosity. Communication, Alda explains, is like making a sculpture out of space. The person speaking is the artist and is responsible for how well the other person understands him. Alda notes that soldiers still train by marching in step and shouting cadences because it has been shown to promote cooperation within a group. Interestingly, studies have proven that this extends beyond the armed forces; students walking in step while conversing scored higher afterward on cooperation. Similarly, people in a group who tap on a table in sync at the beginning of a project or meeting have been shown to pay more attention to the good of the group. Observation games where the language used is gibberish have had interesting results when the people involved listen carefully to inflection and notice body language and facial expressions; the listener can comprehend a lot without understanding a word.

In communicating, Alda says, you not only have to know where to start (what does your audience already know?), but it is also important to know when to stop, so they don’t feel swamped with information. If someone has a medical problem, they don’t always need or want to hear the scientific terminology; they need simple language that leads them to ask questions. The communicator should mirror the listener, pick up on what is confusing, and respond to that. This kind of active listening, Alda notes, can be important in the workplace, as well as in personal relationships.

This advice can be used in the opposite way as well. If you are listening or paying close attention, you are more likely to know how to harm the other person. Alda calls this “dark empathy,” and it helps boxers deliver more damaging punches to their opponents. Another misuse of empathy was seen in an experiment wherein students were told they would be delivering electric shocks to scholars from another school. One group was allowed to overhear an assistant calling the group they were about to shock “nice people.” An identical group overheard them being called “animals.” The second group delivered higher levels of electrical shock.

One sentence that struck me as a person who sometimes gives presentations is, “The trouble with a lecture is that it answers questions that haven’t been asked.” In a perfect world, a lecturer would start by understanding what audience members hope to learn from him or her. We should take this into consideration by knowing our audience and anticipating their questions. Aristotle said a good story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The trick is that the middle has to go into a different gear. When you get to the middle, the story (or lecture) should deepen and engage the audience even further, so they care about what will happen next.

This book is full of exercises and improvisations designed to help with communication skills, the bread and butter of our world as editors. Alan Alda participated in public conversations about science communication at the University of Southern California, followed by numerous conversations at multiple other institutions. In 2014, he was named a fellow of the American Physical Society for his work in helping scientists improve their communication skills. He is a member of the Board of the World Science Festival and is a Visiting Professor at Stony Brook University’s Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science. Who knew?

George Bernard Shaw has been attributed with saying, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look On My Face? will help to ensure that your communications are heard and understood.

**ISMTE Elevator Pitch**

Quick: Why join ISMTE? I’ve been a part of this organization since its inception, and if given the opportunity, I could happily rattle on about it at some length. But could I give you the 20- to 30-second elevator pitch? The Board of Directors’ strategic plan has prioritized developing an ISMTE “elevator pitch” to point out the unique selling proposition of the organization. What makes ISMTE different from other similar groups? Why should you join ISMTE?

I will be soliciting elevator pitches over the course of the year. Send yours to me at alethea@ascpt.org. You’re in the elevator with a fellow editorial office professional. You have six floors to go. Be quick!
Oh no! Not another Zoom meeting! I guess I’d better shave. And comb my hair. And put on a shirt.

Good thing they haven’t developed a smellcam yet.
Committee Update:
2020 European Conference

This has been an odd and chaotic year, and one that none of us will ever forget. It has been hard to carry on with our lives as usual, and to keep abreast, proactive, and positive while the world around us is collapsing. Nonetheless the European Conference is going ahead. Unfortunately, we will not be able to meet you all in lovely Amsterdam, but we are really excited about the ideas and themes we want to discuss with you this year. The theme of this year’s ISMTE conferences is “Evolving trends in scholarly publishing,” and in the European Conference we will approach it through three main angles:

- ‘Evolving trends in peer review,’ mostly exploring the advent of journal-agnostic peer review
- ‘Evolving trends in response to the pandemic,’ with a focus on how publishing is changing and might change due to the pandemic, exploring how preprints, overlay journals, and cross-publishing portable peer review express three different kinds of evolution in the way we review and publish
- ‘Evolving trends towards greater equity, diversity, and inclusion,’ with colleagues in the publishing industry talking about how they have implemented EDI programmes

To foster the community feeling that we all value so much at ISMTE meetings, we’re also planning some time for breakouts to talk about case studies and change experiences. We hope to have more updates in the next few weeks, when a full and refined programme is ready, and we will look forward to seeing you all at the meeting—virtually this year!

Committee members:
Mary Miskin (Emerald Publishing, United Kingdom) – Co-Chair
Maria Guerreiro (eLife, United Kingdom) – Co-Chair
Erica Wilfong Boxheimer (EMBO Press, Germany)
Franca Bianchini (International Journal of Cancer, Germany)
Mate Palfy (Company of Biologists, United Kingdom)
Simone Larche (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom)
Thina Hedbom (Journal of Internal Medicine, Sweden) – ISMTE Board Liaison
Changes in authorship

(d) Request for removal of author after publication

- Clearly reason for change in authorship
- Author(s) gives acceptable reason for change
  - Check that all authors agree to change (including excluded author)
  - Author(s) alleges fraud/misconduct
  - Author(s) has difference in interpretation of data
- Author(s) does not agree to write letter or writes something unpublishable
- Author(s) writes a letter
  - Contact other authors explaining what is happening
  - Other authors submit response
  - Other authors do not wish to respond
  - If author insists on removal of name and other authors agree, then consider publishing correction
- Publish both letters
- Publish minority view letter
Calendar of Events

ISMTE European Conference
November 19-20, 2020
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https://www.ismte.org/page/2020EUROPE

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**Editors-in-Chief:**
Stephanie Kinnan
skinnan@asge.org
Lindsey M. Brounstein
lbrounstein@gastro.org

**Senior Editors:**
Liz Bury
managingeditor@acousticalsociety.org
Nijsje Dorman
nijsje@gmail.com

**Editorial Advisor:**
Meghan McDevitt
meghanmcdevitt@outlook.com

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A note on English: ISMTE aims to be a truly international society. English will represent our lingua franca, but we would like to stress that, in materials published in EON or online, variations in idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.
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