

ISMTE: Our Aims and Objectives

From the President - Jason Roberts, PhD

As a collective professional group, we who work in editorial offices are not small in number. Some estimates suggest as many as 19,000 journals are published globally. The International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE)



*Jason Roberts, President, presents ISMTE at the Editorial Manager User Group meeting in Boston, MA on June 29, 2007.
With thanks to Richard Wynne and Aires Systems.*

is an organization created and run by editorial office staff. For most of us this will represent the first time we have been able to engage in debates with peers across a spectrum of titles because typically most of us work in relative isolation. ISMTE could, therefore, become a key element contributing to the coalescence of the editorial office community. I hope this is the start of a long and fruitful relationship between you and your peers within a supportive community of like-minded professionals.

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Welcome to ISMTE: We've Been Waiting for You, and We Think You've Been Waiting for Us

Have you been at a conference recently and thought, “This is interesting, but I really don’t feel like I belong here?” Have you had an administrative question that your publisher couldn’t really answer and you didn’t know where else to go for help? Have you ever felt like you’re reinventing the wheel, and you’re sure that somewhere out there, there must be someone else who’s done this before; or, in contrast, have you wondered if you’re the only managing or technical editor in the business?

Welcome to ISMTE. This international society has been designed to provide opportunities for education and training; a place to share ideas and best practices; forums for changing policy, improving performance, developing industry-recognized standards that will lead to a certification program, and for promoting the value of Managing and Technical Editors; possibilities for networking with people who do what you do all day; a link for people looking for jobs and those needing to hire; and bridges to other existing organizations.

This Society newsletter will provide you with current information and resources that will illuminate the many aspects of what your job is and the possibilities of what it can be.

For example, in this issue, you will find “Tips and Tricks” for best practice in the editorial office, an article on the managing editor’s role in the peer-review process, biographies of the Society’s officers and other roles, information on what a good editor is from a publisher’s perspective, a portrait of one editorial office, information on upcoming Society meetings, and more. In future issues, you will see articles on best practice by Irene Hames, a recognized author and Managing Editor, and articles from other editors willing to share their expertise on topics that are important to our field.

This Society is a door through which you will find the resources for professional development. Come on in. We’re waiting for you.

Kristen Overstreet
ISMTE *Newsletter* Editor

Managing and Technical Editors of the World, Unite!

Early in 2008, ISMTE will hold its inaugural seminars, bringing managing and technical editors and other editing roles together to address editorial-office best practice.

These seminars will give participants opportunities for personal professional development through keynote speeches by leaders in the industry and small-group discussions with peers.

Please read on for information about dates and speakers. Times, locations and agendas will be posted on the website as they become available.

European ISMTE Seminar

The inaugural European ISMTE seminar will be held in London on Wednesday, 27th February 2008.

Stephen Hancocks, OBE, Editor-in-Chief of the *British Dental Journal* and Editor of the *International Dental Journal* will be the keynote speaker. Besides being an editor, Dr.



Hancocks is a qualified dentist, writer and performer. He also owns his own publishing company, Stephen Hancocks Ltd. (www.shancocksLtd.com) and the Outlaw Theatre Company (www.outlaw-theatre.com). In 1997, Dr. Hancocks was appointed OBE (Officer of the British Empire) for services to the dental profession.

U.S. ISMTE Seminar

The inaugural U.S. ISMTE conference will be held in

Baltimore, Maryland, beginning on the evening of March 18 and concluding on March 19, 2008.

Linda J. Miller, PhD, U.S. Executive Editor for *Nature*, the *Nature* research journals and the *Nature Reviews*, will be the keynote speaker.

As the Executive Editor, Dr. Miller's responsibilities include being a liaison between researchers and the editors, determining editorial policy, assuring content quality, promoting scientific discourse, and ensuring that the issues affecting science are discussed.

*Sharing, Learning and Benchmarking Best Practices
in Today's Journal Editorial Office*

Glia

by Marcia Douthwaite

My name is Marcia Douthwaite, and I am the Editorial Assistant for the U.S. Office of Journal GLIA. GLIA is somewhat unusual because we also have a European Office in Berlin. Each Office is run independently, and authors may submit to either office; generally European authors submit to the Berlin Office and U.S. authors submit to my office. Both offices receive submissions from Asia, Australia, and South America. The U.S. Office received approximately 180 manuscripts in 2006. The European Office generally receives slightly more.

My duties as an Editorial Assistant for GLIA include managing the manuscript process from submittal through final outcome, managing the submission/review process, maintaining reports (e.g., manuscripts accepted and published monthly, submission tracking spreadsheets, and combined offices' yearly report to the Board), and working through production concerns with the Wiley (my publisher) production editor and technical issues with the ScholarOne staff. I also assist authors with submission concerns and follow-up with reviewers who are late submitting their reviews. The Editors-in-Chief determine decisions regarding policies and collaborate with Wiley staff on mutual concerns.

My greatest challenge is keeping the manuscript process moving forward in a timely manner.

My greatest challenge is keeping the manuscript process moving forward in a timely manner. Appropriate reviewers are sometimes difficult to assign as they are committed to so many other endeavors. Often reviews come in late or extra time is required to complete the

review. My Editor is also very busy as Chairman of the Department and many other responsibilities. This often makes for delays in the review/decision process that I am striving to improve. I advise the authors when the review is taking extra time and send "gentle" reminders to the reviewers. I continue to seek a better solution.

GLIA publishes articles on all aspects of glial structure and function,* including anatomy, biochemistry, immunology, pharmacology, physiology, and the pathology of glial cells, for a multidisciplinary audience that includes neuroscientists, neurobiologists, neurologists, cell and developmental biologists, anatomists, pathologists, and neurochemists.

The Journal was established 20 years ago under the collaboration of the Editors (Drs. Ransom and Kettenmann) and the publisher Alan Liss (later acquired by John Wiley & Sons) with offices in the U.S. and Germany. Glial cell research has advanced in the neuroscience field, and this year the Journal will publish more than 1,800 pages.

I am employed as an Administrative Assistant by the University of Washington, and GLIA's publisher, Wiley, pays for part of my salary. During my 11 years with the Neurology Department at the University, I have been involved with the Journal in some capacity. In 2001 I took on full responsibility as Editorial Assistant and helped transfer the journal from a paper system to an electronic editorial office in 2002.

The electronic editorial office, Manuscript Central, facilitates the U.S. and European offices in tracking manuscripts, identifying whether we are over-utilizing some of our

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The History

The concept for the society emerged following a user group meeting of a particular Electronic Editorial Office (EEO) provider. Speaking personally, this was the first time I had been able to talk about day-to-day issues in my job with someone else that truly understood, or maybe more accurately, who cared enough to listen. In a manner implying I need to get out of the house more (a definite problem for a work-from-home free-lancer), the experience was exhilarating for me and others. That proved to be the genesis of the society.

To get the society from a vague concept to an operating entity has involved a lot of discussion between editorial office staff, publishers, and vendors (a vendor typically providing one of the EEO systems). Repeatedly, we heard individuals from all parts of the journal publishing industry say there is a critical need to provide a professional support network for editorial office staff, and this was usually accompanied by astonishment that such a group did not already exist. That no one group had, until now, represented editorial office staff specifically, reflected the

somewhat transitory nature of our particular niche of scholarly publishing.

In the pre-internet days, editorial offices typically were physically moved during transitions to the locations of the new Editors-in-Chief, with the personnel having to find gainful employment elsewhere, or more likely, return to their regular 9-5 jobs. Only the very largest titles operated with permanent staff, with most editorial office employees balancing their journal responsibilities with a regular full-time job. Many titles still operate along this model, but most journals are now exploiting the possibilities provided by EEOs to retain staff. The result is the emergence of the editorial office specialist.

Editorial office specialists are often self-employed (and frequently working on more than one title), retained by a society, or based in-house at a publisher. All bring an increased level of professionalism and the ability, and capability, to invest more time in professional development, though I would *definitely not* wish to imply that there is some sort of lackadaisical approach from those that perform their roles part-time or on a limited-term basis.

Editorial office specialists are now able to serve their titles with an obvious career-track beyond traditional editor term-limits, maintaining a fixed editorial-office base that is unaffected by editorial transitions and provide their titles with the benefits that are derived from continuity and established relationships with the author/reviewer bases.

Aims and Objectives

Apart from fostering a sense of community, the ISMTE purports several additional aims and objectives. The most obvious will be to enhance professional development and to empower editorial office staff to assume more responsibility for the growth and successful operation of their title(s). To that end the society will offer training for both the experienced and new professional alike. Training may take the form of attending meetings, web-seminars, and accessing other resources provided online. Typically such training will concentrate on larger concerns of editorial processes rather than focusing on finer technical details, one such example could be understanding the issues associated with reporting conflicts of interest and how

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data collection should be implemented accordingly.

Knowledge Sharing

A key element behind the success of the society will be peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. This will range from mentorship opportunities to discussion boards. Members will be able to develop forums specific to the circumstances they work within (such as journal subject matter, geographic location, nature of their job, EEO format, etc.), and it is my hope that discussions will be numerous, varied, lively, and informative.

Certification and Minimum Standards

Two logical progressions then emerge from the simple career development concept: formal recognition of professional status and the formulation of minimum standards. Publishers are increasingly looking to hire, or advise society title-owners to hire, staff with proven skills in recognition of the key role that well-run editorial offices play in the success of a journal. Coupled with the emergence of the editorial office professional, the society will be able to best serve the mutual interests of

publishers and members alike by developing an industry-recognized certification program. Such a program will provide grounding in all essential elements of the job and provide a testimony to an individual's skill level. In time we imagine this will become an important constituent on the typical members' resume/ curriculum vitae.

We have a responsibility to educate others within journal publishing regarding the roles we perform, the difficulties we face, realistic targets we must achieve, and the resources we need to complete our jobs effectively.

The second progression represents an important step for us to provide, collectively: the setting of standards or performance indicators. ISMTE provides an opportunity to influence our own professional circumstances. We have a

responsibility to educate others within journal publishing regarding the roles we perform, the difficulties we face, realistic targets we must achieve, and the resources we need to complete our jobs effectively.

Meeting Up

Most of us have very limited travel budgets, and especially, as we are international in outlook, the chances for us to meet together as a group will be limited; so I urge you strongly to contribute to the society through our website, most obviously on the discussion forums. That said, we do have two meetings planned in London and Baltimore, Maryland, for 2008. I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend. The ISMTE website (www.ismte.org) and this inaugural newsletter, contain information on the meetings.

Behind the Scenes

Finally, it would be remiss of me to not mention the enormous effort of those that have been involved in getting the society launched. Firstly, I must recognize the efforts of Talley Management Group, the association management group that has guided us this far:

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Gregg Talley for organizing a vague collection of ideas and people into a fully-functioning society and Meridyth Senes, our new Executive Director, for her unstinting effort to date. I would also like to thank the officers of the society: Gary Bryan, Ira Salkin, and Alice Ellingham. Jennifer Deyton and Julie Nash have been very busy developing the first training programs. Elizabeth Blalock had the unenviable task of pulling together the many strands of the society in developing our Web-presence, and Flory Fearn-James is looking forward to acting as the discussion forums moderator. Taylor Bowen and Alice Ellingham have handled the important task of developing our launch meetings with the utmost attention to detail. Wendy Krank has been extra-

diligent, acting as the membership coordinator, and Katherine DyReyes has been instrumental in getting the word out to publishers. I'd also like to thank Lindsay Haddon, Jane Moody, Anne Carter, Alison Alsmeyer, and Laura Lawrie for their advice and support. Last, but not least, a big thank you to Kristie Overstreet for pulling this newsletter together – a bit of a busman's holiday. I would also like to thank Sage Publications for their generous gift of support to help get us this far and Wiley-Blackwell for demonstrating faith in us by providing our first block of members.

“Truly Finally”

Okay, truly finally, we anticipate the society will grow

quickly, and it would be especially beneficial for as many people as possible to get involved with its day-to-day functioning. Where individuals have performed tasks to get us this far we would like to form committees to oversee all aspects of the society. If you would like to get involved please do contact me. For the society to succeed and grow, we will need an active membership.

Best wishes,

Jason

Jason Roberts, PhD
President, *International Society of Managing and Technical Editors*
Plymouth, Massachusetts
journal@ahsnet.org

Thank you!

The International Society of Managing and Technical Editors would like to extend their gratitude to both ScholarOne, providers of the *Manuscript Central* system, and Aries Systems, provider of *Editorial Manager*, for allowing us to address their user groups on the launch of the society. This opportunity to promote our nascent society is much appreciated.

Do Peer-review Policies Deserve a Place on the Managing Editor's To-Do List?

by Kristen Overstreet

Editors covet high quality manuscripts that are likely to be accessed more often, add important information to particular fields of study, and be cited by other authors. These manuscripts contribute to higher rankings for publications; and higher ranked publications attract higher quality submissions. This desirable result validates the necessity of creating and maintaining a high quality peer-review process.

What are the Qualities of Good Peer Review?

If the peer-review process could be made perfect, an editorial team would never know the panic of discovering that one of the articles they published fell into the dark realm of publication misconduct. Perfect reviewers/referees would be so well read in their specialty areas that they would always identify a manuscript that resembled an already published article; they would be such honorable experts,

that they would know instinctively if authors had conducted their research unethically; and they would be so well connected in their discipline's communities that they would know when authors failed to disclose conflicts of interest; and (on top of this), they would have an unerring sense for which manuscripts were truly of the highest quality.

Until mere human reviewers/referees achieve this editorial utopia, editorial teams should look at improving their existing systems.

According to Jennings (2006) and Nature Publishing Group (2007), a good peer review is:

 **Dependable** – a good review provides the editor with dependable information, based upon a careful assessment of the manuscript and the relevant existing literature, that can be used to make an appropriate decision

about the future of the submission;

 **Appropriate** – a good review is written professionally and respectfully, providing enough detail that the editor and author will understand the reviewer's perspective of the manuscript's positive and negative aspects;

 **Unbiased** – a good review does not reflect biases that the reviewer may have toward the authors, their institution, or their research that can not be supported by reasonable means;

 **Timely** – a good review is quickly performed and submitted. It allows the editor to make a quicker decision; and this allows the author to save time in between revisions. Timely reviews and decisions shorten the time from original submission to a final decision that will culminate in publication or the opportunity for the author to submit to a more appropriate journal.

Do Peer-review Policies Deserve a Place on the Managing Editor's To-Do List? continued

How can the Managing Editor Influence Policies that Improve Peer Review?

How Managing Editors are involved in the peer review process varies. Some may actually identify and invite reviewers for submitted manuscripts; others may invite reviewers after the Editor-in-Chief identifies them.

Managing Editors may also be involved in recruiting reviewers at conferences or through associations with them as authors. They may manage the reviewer information databases, provide technical support for reviewers as they complete their reviews online or on paper, compile incoming reviews in a paper-based system, or help in the creation of the instructions for reviewers that their publication provides.

Regardless of how a Managing Editor is currently involved in the process, taking the time to learn more about peer review and how the process can be improved will benefit the editorial team and

possibly the publication. As Managing Editors, we often deal with the minutia of running an editorial office. Educating ourselves and making time to improve our publications' processes by starting a discussion with our editorial teams or rewriting our publications' current policies on our peer review processes is time well spent. It can also directly lead to improving the integrity of our individual publications.

Irene Hames states in her new book, *Peer Review and Manuscript Management in Scientific Journals: Guidelines for Good Practice* (2007), that "Peer review is a very powerful tool if used correctly, but as in every area of life, the whole spectrum of quality exists, from very poor to excellent. It is also rather an 'amateur' activity in that there is usually no formal training, with most people learning 'on the job'" (p. 4). Her book is an excellent guide for editors wanting to improve their peer-review processes.

Lee and Bero (2006) provide specific information on how to "improve transparency and promote fair peer review" in their article

Ethics: Increasing Accountability: What Authors, Editors and Reviewers Should Do to Improve Peer Review. Groves (2006) also encourages a transparent review system and notes the importance of carefully matching reviewers to manuscripts, providing them with the information and instruction they need to provide a good review, and thanking them for their work.

Use the resources in the appendix to start educating yourself on the peer review literature and model policy examples and make a commitment to review your publication's policies on peer review. Take time to explore the literature on the topic of open or public peer review, an alternative system that may become the accepted process for peer review in the future.

The peer-review process is an important component in many of our publication processes; as the debate grows about whether and how to transform the peer-review process, now is an excellent opportunity for Managing Editors to become educated and involved.

Do Peer-review Policies Deserve a Place on the Managing Editor's To-Do List? continued

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Appendix. Resources for Improving Peer Review

-  *Authors and Referees @ NPG: Peer Review Policy*: http://www.nature.com/authors/editorial_policies/peer_review.html
-  *Nature's Peer Review Web Debate*: <http://www.nature.com/nature/peerreview/debate/index.html>
-  Hames, I. (2007). *Peer review and manuscript management in scientific journals: Guidelines for good practice*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
-  Program from the Peer Review Congress' Fifth International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication: <http://www.ama-assn.org/public/peer/program.html>
-  *Overview of Peer Review*, available on the Nurse Author & Editor Web site at <http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/> under the "For Reviewers" bullet.

Author Retention - Ensuring Satisfaction Through Rapid Review

*by Jason Roberts, Managing Editor
Headache: the journal of head and face pain
& The Journal of Sexual Medicine*

Author satisfaction is a rather nebulous concept to grasp. What pleases some authors (quick turnaround) might displease others (quick turnaround at the expense of a thoughtful review).

There do appear to be some common themes that emerge in author satisfaction surveys – you might assume them to be critical issues to address:

- Rapid review from submission to decision
- Comprehensive and thoughtful reviews
- Absence of publication delays once accepted
- Reassurance: submissions are handled with care

In this first of two columns, I will discuss ways to make your peer-review process more efficient. The second column will address improving the quality of reviews received. The points I focus on could be applied universally regardless of journal size.

Diminishing turnaround times across journals simply fuels authors' appetites for increasingly rapid decisions – if your competition is making a lot of noise about rapid reviews, you are probably going to have to come up with your own approach for the same. Expectations regarding high quality reviews do not appear to have changed, and it does not necessarily follow that in order to provide a timely first decision, quality must be sacrificed, if peer review is handled properly. The demand for rapid review probably varies amongst subjects, and almost certainly 'rapid' is defined differently. I sense the demand for expediency is greatest in some areas of medicine and science, but equally it could be determined by the pace of research or growth within a given subject area.

It's pretty obvious there is a lot of waiting around while not much happens with peer review. This should be expected, as nearly every

journal has to depend upon volunteer support from reviewers and perhaps the editorial board. My own informal studies of the mechanics of the submission-to-decision cycle revealed that the time *reviewers* spent evaluating a manuscript was relatively constant. The variable (and all-to-frequently delaying) factors were the time it took to select the minimum number of reviewers required and the time elapsed while Associate Editor's made recommendations to the Editor-in-Chief. Some simple strategies, therefore, to employ include:

- Try and strike a balance between inviting more reviewers than your mandatory minimum number of reviews required and inviting enough to satisfy that minimum (assuming you indeed invite rather than assign). Perhaps the biggest hold up in completing peer review is attaining the minimum number of

Author Retention *continued*

reviewers required. I know personally some journals that invite as many as seven reviewers in one go in the hope that three accept the invitation to review. This strategy I'm sure works in very large fields, or if you are a top-ranked title, but in smaller fields, such an approach is either going to overtax your reviewer base if they all say yes or will have the counter-effect of seeing more declined invitations as your reviewers are receiving too many requests. An additional guide should be the nature of the manuscript under review. I know several medical journals, including one that I work on, use fewer reviewers for Case Reports – which for those of you not in medical publishing are often informative vignettes rather than groundbreaking studies (they are also disparaged by many editors as Impact Factor repellants).

- Remind those that perform the reviewer

selection process that a typical journal might expect upwards of 25% of all invitations or assignments to review will be rejected or not receive a response. This means their job is not quite done when they make their initial reviewer selections. To reinforce this point run a report of your own to get your journal's specific statistics.

- Your editors most likely pick the reviewers based on who they know to be a particular expert on the subject under review. Some of the guesswork can be removed from this process, however, and that in turn may lead to a decrease in turn-around times. How? Provide your editors with reviewer data, or if you are using an online peer review site, educate them on the data at their disposal.

- Ongoing reviews – the likelihood of a reviewer turning down an invitation or assignment increases if they are already

providing a review for your journal.

- Recent reviews – the same pattern holds true for reviewers that have undertaken several reviews for you in the past twelve months.
- Examine reviewer behavior – is there a pattern of serially declining invitations or never returning assigned manuscripts?

With certain online peer-review sites, ongoing and recent-review data is presented within the reviewer selection area without the need for an editor to run reports.

- To further refine the reviewer selection process, consider reviewer Search Terms (typically a predetermined set of terms/classifications) – your chances of an accepted invitation are increased if you can correctly target

Author Retention *continued*

reviewers who would be interested, and best of all, motivated, to provide a review. You can use this approach whether you use an online peer-review system or an Excel spreadsheet. Contact your reviewer base and ask them to identify the Search Terms that best apply to their areas of expertise. To aid the process still further, authors, when submitting a manuscript, could be required to enter one or more of these same Search Terms that best describe their manuscript. Using Search Terms, you can quickly partner manuscripts with appropriate reviewers. If your journal is broadly international, the Search Terms function may provide names of individuals in other regions whose expertise was unknown to some of the reviewer selectors. Search Terms work more effectively than keywords, simply because keywords can be mis-spelled or

abbreviated, resulting in an incomplete reviewer search return.

- If you have adopted an online peer-review system, consider switching to *Inviting* rather than *Assigning* reviewers to a manuscript. The latter approach, which really is the only method under paper-based workflows, is typically inefficient unless you have an excellent track record of getting reviews back. By inviting a reviewer you establish quickly if there is no intention to provide a review.
- Consider creating an Immediate Reject template letter to function as a screened review notification. Many larger journals, inundated with submissions, are screening out unsuitable articles before peer-review, providing a few words of assessment along with a polite rejection. It is inevitable that some authors may find this approach brusque, but equally many will

appreciate the quick notification and can move on, possibly with submission to another journal. Journals benefit by sparing over-worked reviewers and not spending time on an article never destined to be published in your pages.

- When a manuscript is returned under a **revised** workflow, simply *assign* reviewers at this point rather than *invite* them. The likelihood of *not* hearing from a reviewer is much lower at this point, especially if your original template invitation email has been edited to state an expectation that reviewers must also commit to receiving any revised versions.

Finally, attempts to reduce turn-around time should not omit the performance of the Editor-in-Chief (and for those ISMTE members that are EiCs I suspect these next few lines are not typical of your behavior, so you can stop reading now). As most Editors-in-Chief have full-time, and typically, extremely demanding positions, their editorial

Author Retention *continued*

responsibilities often have to be squeezed into an already packed schedule. Many of us, therefore, are confronted by the problem of the Editor-in-Chief that batches their decision-making. Batching, in itself, is not a problem if it is done on a regular basis, and by regular, I mean no more than once per week. It strikes me that the solutions are as individual in character as the Editors, themselves, and not helped by editorial staff working in different locations. Some issues to consider:

- Does the Editor provide his/her own in-depth review and, consequently, delays posting a decision until a point where sufficient time can be found to perform the review? There may be no way around this if this is the personal preference of the Editor, but you should find a way to differentiate revised manuscripts from original submissions if the Editor is notified by email. Revised manuscripts, in all but the most exceptional cases, should not need such a detailed review the second time

around, and there is nothing more frustrating to an author with minor corrections than to wait several weeks for a cursory decision.

- If the Editor does share a concern about turnaround time, it might be worthwhile running regular task-to-task timespan reports. Such reports, which are readily available on most online peer review systems, reveal the time expended at each part of the peer-review process. If the time from Associate Editor recommendation (or all reviews returned) to final decision represents one of the longest parts of the process, then the Editor needs to be alerted
- If your journal offers some form of online publication ahead of print (fully typeset or otherwise), you may be submitting material to your publisher on a workflow removed from the old issue-based submission. Such workflows can mean a

manuscript is sent to the publisher in timeframes ranging from immediately after acceptance to weekly or fortnightly batches. A quick decision followed up by rapid publication online represents a great service to authors and can certainly placate those most anxious to see their material published. With regular submissions to your production staff the Editor-in-Chief may be convinced to perform their decision-making more frequently.

Sometimes the Editor-in-Chief may have to be confronted beyond repeated reminders. Relationships between editorial office staff and editors range from collaborative in a collegial environment to perfunctory. This obviously makes a difference in determining how you approach an editor to resolve the situation.

Typically, the most obvious way to back up your concerns is to present a timespan report similar to the example above. In presenting the report your approach need not be hostile

Author Retention *continued*

or negative. A positive spin might be to try and set a target as part of an overall campaign to reduce turn-around time and look to publicize your time-to-decision as a marketing device to attract authors. Explain that authors are increasingly looking for quick decisions, and tardy peer review is likely to damage credibility.

If, however, a problem persists and the Editor is unwilling to address their delaying behavior, you may have to report his or her actions; indeed, depending on the contract status of

both yourself and the Editor, you may be obligated to do so anyway. Be aware that the vast majority of editors are under contract either with the publisher or the society-owner of a journal, and there will very likely be a clause relating to the timeliness of operations in their contract. It's likely not your job to point out legal obligations to the Editor, but if the problem is severe, the journal's reputation may be at stake, and that concerns the owner of the title. Not acting and hoping the situation goes away may ultimately see your personal reputation getting

dragged into the whole sorry mess.

This may sound the recipe for a complete breakdown in working relations and, therefore, some skillful politicking is required. Rather than 'informing' on an Editor, a more delicate approach might be to pull together the Editor, a representative of the owner, the publisher, and other relevant personnel to discuss a broad topic of better service delivery to authors. Use this forum to look at the whole process and emphasize editorial delivery of decisions within the wider debate.

Example of a task timespan report

| Author | Associate Editor | ME check-in to AE assignment | AE assignment to minimum required reviewers assigned | Reviewer Assignment to reviewer scores returned | Reviewer Score to AE recommendation | AE Recommendation to EiC Decision | Total Time in Review | Decision |
|--------|------------------|------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Dr A | Editor 1 | 0.04 | 21.67 | 16.63 | 1.04 | 0 | 39.38 | Minor Revision |
| Dr B | Editor 2 | 2.21 | 11.58 | 13.21 | 2.42 | 1.71 | 31.13 | Reject |
| Dr C | Editor 2 | 17.75 | 4.96 | 4.96 | 0.04 | 3 | 30.71 | Major Revision |
| Dr D | Editor 3 | 2.29 | 16.25 | 15.88 | 0.88 | 2.25 | 37.54 | Major Revision |

time elapsed in days

Join ISMTE Today! www.ismte.org

Benefits of Membership:

- Continuing education and training through regional meetings, Webcasts, mentoring and online discussion forums based on journal subject matter, location of editorial offices and electronic editorial office systems used
- Sharing of ideas, concerns and best practices
- Consultancy services for publishers/journals/ members upon request from a pool of recognized thought leaders
- Newsletter with original articles on trends, best practice procedures and performance data
- Participation in a pro-active community that enables members to influence professional development for themselves and others
- Ability to post your resume and positions wanted for free

ISMTE Officer Biographies

Jason Roberts, PhD, is the President of the ISMTE.

You may reach him at journal@ahsnet.org.

After graduating from the University of Wales/Prifysgol Cymru, Aberystwyth and Loughborough University with a BA and PhD respectively in Geography I undertook a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the University of Oxford before deciding teaching was not for me, entering the scholarly publishing industry instead at Blackwell Science, as it was back then.

Ever restless, I moved to the United States but stayed with Blackwell, becoming a



Publishing Manager for several mid-sized journals. Eventually an opportunity arose for me to work for the American Headache Society on its title *Headache: the journal of head and face pain*.

Since then I have been able to add other journals to my portfolio as a freelance professional Managing Editor. I have functioned in the past in an advisory capacity for several editorial offices and regularly speak at various meetings/conferences on editorial-office best practice.

Gary Bryan is the Vice President of the ISMTE.

You may reach him at gbryan@bmj.com.

Gary started with the BMJ in 1990 and started to cover all of the BMJ Journals in 2006. Gary is now the manager of the electronic peer review system for the BMJ Journals. Gary

manages a large editorial support team and provides a rare perspective of operations from within one of the world's largest, and most prestigious, journals.

ISMTE Officer Biographies *continued*

Alice Ellingham, BSc, is the **Secretary** of the ISMTE and coordinator of the U.K. meetings.

You may reach her at alice@editorialoffice.co.uk



I graduated from Nottingham University with a BSc (Hons), 1st Class, in Molecular Plant Biology and joined Macmillan Press' Journals

Department (now part of Nature Publishing Group) as an Assistant Editor. During my time at Macmillan, I managed an extensive list of medical journals and instigated Macmillan's new partnership with the British Dental Association's journal, The British Dental Journal, which was successfully re-launched under contract in January 1997.

Following a career break, I co-founded *Editorial Office Limited*, launched specifically to remotely manage peer-review systems for Science, Technical and Medical journals. *Editorial Office Ltd* now works with a growing number of international societies and four of the world's leading publishers.

We have gained a huge amount of experience with three of the major peer-review systems, plus a large number of journals of different sizes and structures.

It is this experience across a range of journals and systems that I hope will be helpful to the ISMTE. I am looking forward to the challenges that the new society will bring and to meeting other managing editors at our launch meeting in 2008.

Ira F. Salkin, PhD, F(AAM), is the **Treasurer** of the ISMTE.

You may reach him at irasalkin@aol.com.

I am the Chief Editor of *Medical Mycology* and joined the ISMTE planning group after discussions with Jason because I believe that the organization will provide opportunities for those involved in day-to-day editorial functions to exchange information and obtain training to assist and improve their management and editing skills.

I am also an adjunct associate professor at the New York State School of Public Health, Department of Biomedical Sciences. I have

worked internationally as a consultant on clinical and environmental laboratory procedures, processing of biohazardous waste, and scientific writing and editing. During my tenure with the New York State Department of Health I served as the director of four different programs related to safety and laboratory operations.



ISMTE Biographies continued

Elizabeth Blalock is the Web site editor for the ISMTE.

You may contact her at Blalock@sidnet.org.

I am the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*; prior to 5 years with JID, I served 4 years as the Managing Editor of *Endocrinology*.

I am living proof that an English major can find gainful employment, but I give a nod to the humanities by hosting an annual bad poetry party.

I came to ISMTE through my desire to find a place to exchange ideas with other managing editors; becoming Web Editor is a welcome challenge, in which I can bring information to members and help them find allies in addressing tough work issues.



Kristen Overstreet is the Newsletter editor for the ISMTE.

You may contact her at Kristen.overstreet@mac.com

I graduated from Metropolitan State College of Denver with a BA in English literature and journalism. I had planned to go back to school to get a teaching certificate so that I could someday work in these fields. Fate and nepotism, however, offered me another option.

My mother accepted the position as editor of the *Journal for the Society of Pediatric Nurses* (now the *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*). About a



year later, she hired me to be her editorial assistant.

Nearly 10 years later, that experience has led me to a position as Managing Editor of four nursing titles (*Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, *Journal for the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, and *Research in Nursing and Health*) and one food services title (*Journal of Foodservice*).

I became affiliated with ISMTE when I responded to a query Jason Roberts placed in *Nurse Author & Editor*. I am very excited to be part of a Society that is specific to the needs of Managing and Technical Editors.

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 this newsletter or online that variations in idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.

ISMTE Biographies continued

Taylor Bowen is the U.S. meetings coordinator for the ISMTE.

You may contact him at www.aegis-prm.com.



I have been involved in STM publishing for 17 years, first with Carden Jennings Publishing Company, then its technology spinoff, ScholarOne, and finally on my own as proprietor of

Aegis Peer Review Management in Charlottesville, VA.

I was fortunate to have been a part of the team at ScholarOne that developed Manuscript Central™, one of the first (and now one of the most-used) online peer review systems. While at ScholarOne I was also despatched to Oxford, England, for a year-long stint to open the company's first European sales office. Quite an experience for me and my young family!

Being involved in the peer-review business as it so dramatically changed with the advent

of online technologies, I saw an opportunity to offer self-publishing societies a "virtual editorial office" service that would provide a high level of daily administration services while also saving them money. Thus was born Aegis Peer Review Management.

Today I manage the peer-review process for 5 US- and UK-based STM journals on a daily basis, and I also help commercial publishers, such as Wiley-Blackwell, implement new online peer-review sites for their family of journals.

I first heard about ISMTE at a Manuscript Central user conference and was eager to lend my support. The dynamics of our industry are changing quickly, and I feel ISMTE will serve our community well. I am honored to chair the inaugural ISMTE U.S. conference in March 2008 and hope to see many of my colleagues there!

COLUMN: *Portrait Of An Editorial Office Continued* continued from page 1

reviewers, assuring that the submissions are in the correct format for the publisher, and assisting authors with submission issues. While our invitation and decision emails to authors and reviewers are standardized in Manuscript Central, I appreciate that I am able to customize the text to maintain a personal touch.

I enjoy working with the authors and reviewers, trying to provide a positive, friendly interaction with the Journal. Manuscript Central has certainly streamlined the process

and has been interesting to learn and use. Simply stated, I love this work! I enjoy it so much that I am seeking a position with an additional journal.

* Glial cells, or neuroglia or just glia, are the most common cells in the brain. There are several types. Glia are indispensable partners to neurons and have diverse functions that include support of synapse formation, neuron migration during development and regulation of the fluid surrounding brain cells. They also have roles in disease states and neural repair after injury.

A “good” editor is . . . (from the publisher’s perspective)

by Kristen Overstreet

At the International Academy for Nursing Editors (INANE) meeting July 30-Aug 1 in Las Vegas, a panel of publishers that included representatives from Elsevier, Informa, Jannetti, Slack, Wiley-Blackwell, Wolters Kluwer/ Lippincott Williams & Wilkins discussed a number of issues that included the interface of print and online journals and the future of these, the business model of journals, and relationships between editorial offices and publishers.

A question from the audience during this discussion led to interesting insight into what qualities publishers think a good editor possesses.

According to this panel of publishers, a “good” editor is:

- ★ highly regarded in the field,
- ★ well-published,
- ★ affiliated with an academic entity,
- ★ ethical,
- ★ a person of integrity,
- ★ computer savvy,
- ★ timely,
- ★ able to appreciate business aspects,
- ★ able to understand their readership,
- ★ committed to attending conferences,

- ★ a good speaker/presenter,
- ★ clear about the mission of their journal,
- ★ able to promote a dynamic environment with their editorial board, readers, and publisher,
- ★ a good listener,
- ★ able to generate content,
- ★ responsive to publishing staff,
- ★ a team player with the authors, editorial board, and publisher,
- ★ passionate and committed to the journal, wanting it to be a journal of choice,
- ★ someone with a good reputation in the field,
- ★ altruistic,
- ★ an advocate for the journal within the society,
- ★ grounded in research methodology – both qualitative and quantitative,
- ★ courageous – makes decisions,
- ★ autonomous,
- ★ unafraid of change,
- ★ able to communicate well, network, and recruit,

- ★ connected to the journal’s subject matter – a leader in the field.

Although the publishers admitted that this was a “wish list,” the editors in the audience added to the list by saying, a “good” editor is also:

- ★ skilled at writing and editing,
- ★ committed to international perspectives,
- ★ diplomatic,
- ★ committed to move the profession forward,
- ★ able to mentor young authors, and
- ★ aware of the time commitment that is required.

The corresponding list of what makes a “good” publisher was strikingly short. The responses from both the editor and publisher groups included that a “good” publisher is an advocate, able to gather resources to help editors do their jobs, and able to communicate well.

The INANE 2007 conference also featured sessions on copyright, ethics, working with editorial boards, international issues, using the internet,

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entrepreneurial ventures, evaluating citation patterns in nursing literature, and data from a study on the quality of manuscript reviews.

One well-attended session was a presentation of data on editor compensation. The study (Freda, M.C., & Kearney, M.H. [2007, July/Aug]. *Editor compensation: What no one wants to talk about!*)

sample included a majority in editor-in-chief roles with doctorates, editing scholarly journals. The majority did not feel that their pay was sufficient for their work.

Greetings from Talley Management Group

ISMTE is managed by a professional association resource company: Talley Management Group, based out of Mount Royal, New Jersey. Talley will provide administrative services (such as handling membership dues), business planning and, when required, conference support.

Gregg H. Talley, CAE, President, founded TALLEY MANAGEMENT GROUP, Inc. with his partner and father Robert K. Talley in July 1987.

From the beginning, Gregg and Bob committed themselves and TMG to finding and hiring the best professionals possible to deliver the highest quality management services. The growth and addition of a committed team of professionals who consistently provide exceptional service has helped the company grow to its current size and reputation for association and event management. TMG employees are recognized by their clients, peers and suppliers for their knowledge, experience and ability to achieve results.

TMG is currently headquarters for 17 national and international Societies and provides contract convention planning and/or strategic facilitation to 25 other non-profit organizations. TMG has 60 full-time employees.

TMG maintains adherence to the professional ethics prescribed by the

American Association of Association Executives (ASAE) Standards of Conduct and the International Association of Association Management Companies (IAAMC) Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. As a company, TMG is accredited by both the American Association of Association Executives and the Association Management Company Institute.

The corporate home office in Mount Royal, New Jersey (a suburb of Philadelphia) is housed in a converted elementary school. TMG also maintains satellite offices in Alexandria, Virginia and Austin, Texas.



TALLEY MANAGEMENT GROUP, Inc.
19 Mantua Road, Mount Royal, New Jersey

Greetings from Talley Management continued

In discussions with Jason Roberts, ISMTE President, Gregg recognized there was an unmet need for a society for managing and technical editors. Working in partnership with Jason and colleagues in the publishing industry, a core group was established to create ISMTE. TMG offered its services pro bono to get ISMTE off the ground, arranging for the filing of incorporation documents, the writing of the business plan, bylaws and filing with the IRS for not-for-profit status. With the recent

corporate sponsorship from Sage Publications and corporate membership from Wiley-Blackwell, the launch of the Web site and plans for the inaugural spring meetings, ISMTE and TMG have formed a great partnership to take ISMTE forward.

The staff of TALLEY MANAGEMENT GROUP looks forward to a long and productive partnership with the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors.

Gregg Talley Before founding TMG, Gregg worked with convention bureaus, a hotel development company and another multi-



management firm. Gregg has specialized in medical association management. He has personally planned and managed several major international conventions of groups from 3,000 – 50,000.

In addition, he has extensive experience in planning and managing events throughout the world. Gregg has served as chair of the Professional Convention Management Association and currently serves as a Trustee on the PCMA Education Foundation.

Meridyth M. Senes Meridyth was appointed as Executive Director when the process to establish ISMTE began and will lead a team that will include an Administrative Assistant, a Meetings Manager, and staff from the Registration, Membership and Accounting departments.

Meridyth has more than 20 years experience in finance, employee development, risk management and human resources. She last worked as Senior Program Officer at the Annenberg Foundation where her primary responsibility was the 18 site \$500 million Annenberg Challenge for School Reform. Meridyth supervised program support staff, revised financial and program reporting systems for grant management, planned and facilitated major conferences, and negotiated and wrote grant agreements for large initiatives.

For 10 years, Meridyth served on the Lower Merion School Board (Pennsylvania), the last two as President, and is the author of several published articles on education and school board service.



You may contact Meridyth at msenes@talley.com.

ISMTE Training Programs

ISMTE has begun to address the training needs of members. There are still plenty of opportunities to get involved. If you are interested in taking a leadership role, please contact the Training Coordinators (details at the end of this article). In addition to membership-specific training, ISMTE has already been asked by several publishers to consider the provision of on-site training at the behest of a client. Training would be tailored to focus on the needs of a client (likely a publisher), but would reiterate core best-practice strategies.

ISMTE has a core mission to create educational and professional support for all staff that oversee or work in journal editorial offices. As ISMTE grows we will be developing a suite of online training programs, recognizing that many of us do not have the funds to travel. Additionally, ISMTE has begun to explore providing client-based training courses, customizable to the needs of publishers or journal editorial offices.

The training committee is in the process of working with several publishers about theoretical training classes for managing editors new to the job as well as advanced workshops on editorial office issues for all

editors. Such programs would be provided by the Publisher under the direction of the ISMTE and would not represent official society meetings. They would present, however, an opportunity for ISMTE to communicate our educational mission and take some control over the training of our peers.

We have designed a basic outline of training packages for both new and experienced editorial office staff. For new managing editors, we provide information needed to set up an efficient editorial office and go through helpful tips for making the author, reviewer and editor processes run smoothly.

For advanced users, we offer workshops on issues such as working with authors and reviewers, generating reports for editors and societies, and ethics issues in the editorial office.

All of our workshops can be tailored to the interests of the publisher. Our classes focus on issues in the editorial office and are not designed to be technical software training.

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Discussion Forum

ISMTE provides opportunities to pull together as a community to share ideas with and offer support to peers. The centerpiece of our efforts to create a professional network, and a key member-benefit, is the provision of a discussion forum.

The forum will be moderated, but members are encouraged to post on all topics related to professional development. You may wish to ask very specific questions in the hope that you receive a solution. Alternatively you may wish to consider posting open-ended discussion starting-points. Some debates may be quite exclusive, perhaps related to regional issues, or issues concerning particular types of journals (size, subject matter). There will be no limit on how broad, or specific, the forum should be.

The discussion forum will initially be offered at www.ismte.org as a free service to showcase the Society, but eventually we will limit access to members-only. For it to be a success, we urge you to participate. We will be posting rules of use, as is typical with such sites, and remind you that all discussion must be conducted professionally and with respect to differences of opinion.

Training Programs *continued*

Our classes are designed to be onsite classes, with an option of training courses available online in the future.

ISMTE emphasizes that training and learning is an ongoing process. We will advocate with clients that attendance at such courses should include individual society membership for a year, with the intention of supplying follow-up materials as well as providing attendees access to the discussion forum that we envision will be a fertile source of knowledge.

Here are two training courses and a sample of topics we can explore in each training class:

The Ins and Outs of Being a Managing Editor: This course is designed for Managing Editors new to the job. Topics that can be covered in this training include:

- Setting up an editorial office – what is needed to make the office run smoothly
- Moving from a paper process to an electronic online system.
- Working with authors, reviewers and editors.
- Best editorial-office practices from

longtime journal Managing Editors.

- Introduction to journal ethics – how to handle questions on disclosures and conflicts of interest.

Tricks of the Trade:

Advanced Training for Managing Editors: Our advanced training for Managing Editors is designed as topic workshops that can be tailored for publishers, editorial offices and editors. Here are some of the topics we can cover:

- Ethical issues in journal publishing.
- Preparing papers for production.
- Getting the data out of the database: creating the most useful reports.
- Tips and tricks to working with all kinds of authors, reviewers and editors.
- Advanced best practices from longtime Managing Editors.

For more information, please see the ISMTE Web site at www.ismte.org or contact the training coordinators: Julie Nash & Jennifer Deyton kj5001@earthlink.net and Jennifer.deyton@earthlink.net

Call for Articles

Please submit articles and ideas for articles to the *Newsletter* Editor, Kristen Overstreet, at kristen.overstreet@mac.com.

Thank you!

to the contributors of the first issue of the ISMTE *Newsletter*:

Jason Roberts

ISMTE President

Alice Ellingham

ISMTE Secretary & European Conference Coordinator

Taylor Bowen

U.S. Conference Coordinator

Marcia Douthwaite

Editorial Assistant, *Glia*

Meridyth Senes

ISMTE Executive Director from Talley Management

Julie Nash &

Jennifer Deyton

ISMTE Training Program Coordinators