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## Increasing Awareness, Providing Resources

By Meghan McDevitt

Editor

*EON*

As we move into November, we wrap up another European conference, this year held in Brussels, Belgium. If you missed the meeting, check out next month's issue featuring the conference summaries and take some time to scroll through the Twitter feed using the hashtag #ismte2016.

Thousands of article submissions come through Editorial Offices, hoping to find their way to publication. Researchers are often plagued by obstacles such as tedious formatting and journal-specific submission requirements, necessitating a constant back and forth between the author and journal office.

In her article, Kelly Cobey introduces a new way to support researchers and students *before* manuscripts are submitted. The Ottawa Hospital Research Institute's Publications Officer position provides outreach and resources ranging from navigating the journal submission and peer review process to creating

awareness about changes in the publication landscape.

Carolyn Sperry interviews Amanda Capes-Davis, chair of the International Cell Line Authentication Committee (ICLAC), about contaminated cell lines and what Managing Editors can do to make sure their authors are not submitting research based on corrupted cell lines. Amanda explains that awareness is key and provides several resources for cell line information. Increasingly, journals are adding cell line requirements to their author guidelines and this should be considered best practice.

Jenn Deyton offers a preview of the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual ISMTE Asia-Pacific Conference to be held in Beijing next March. Topics from the preliminary program include ORCID and other standards, Open Access, and best practices in the Editorial Office. Be sure to [register early](#)—last year's conference in Singapore was sold out!



## Institutional Publications Officers: Part of the Solution to Improve Biomedical Reporting?

By Kelly Cobey, PhD (ORCID [0000-0003-2797-1686](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2797-1686))  
Sr. Clinical Research Associate (Publications Officer)  
Knowledge Synthesis Group  
Clinical Epidemiology Program  
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Academic institutions are responsible for supporting their researchers and students to produce and publish high quality research. However, at present, most research institutions and universities have few resources available to accomplish this. This gap is particularly unfortunate, as skills in writing and journalology (publication science) are often learned on the job, with little formal training. Longstanding concerns such as publication bias, poor quality reporting, or spin in writing are perhaps better understood in this context. To help address these issues locally, the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI) has recently introduced a new Publications Officer role. The Publications Officer role aims to provide outreach and resources to OHRI researchers and students at the back end of the research cycle, when they are looking to draft their manuscript and ultimately to get it published. This service role also seeks to support researchers and students as they navigate through the journal submission and peer review process, something which would no doubt come as a relief to members of the ISMTE. It is hoped that the role will help facilitate more publications from the institution. More importantly, however, it is hoped that the role will help to ensure that publications produced at the institution are accurate and clearly reported accounts of the research project that took place.

The amount of information researchers are required to provide at the time of manuscript submission is rising, with increasing requests for funder details, reporting guideline checklists, information about author contributorship, study registration information, evidence of ethical compliance, and ORCID numbers. Researchers must also navigate an array of Open Access options. Knowing how to remain compliant with these changing requirements is difficult, especially for clinical investigators.

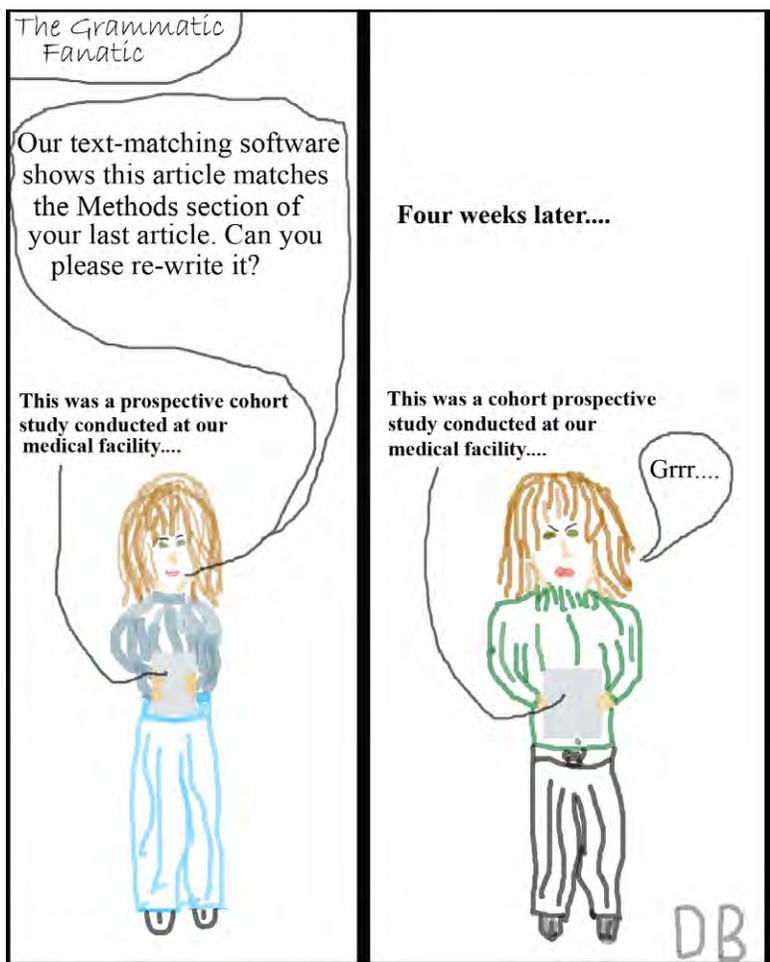
Indeed, researchers often struggle with basic decisions like how to select the journal to which to submit their article, or what format their article should take. As a consequence, Editorial Offices often receive incorrectly formatted articles or articles that are not appropriate for their journal. The need to provide all this additional information at the time of submission is often perceived as burdensome. One contributor to this problem is that researchers are often unaware of why changes are occurring in the publication landscape, how they were decided, the direct relevance to them, and why they matter. Journals and institutions can do more to collectively improve this awareness. Once made aware of the purpose for needing this information (*e.g.*, to increase transparency or to reduce selective reporting), and how it is used, researchers better understand the changes and are therefore more likely to value compliance.

I'm fortunate to serve in the new Publications Officer role at OHRI, which seeks to address the above issues. We announced the role publicly at OHRI at the end of September 2015. Since then, I have provided outreach across the institute on topics including publication ethics, peer review, models of publishing, and publication metrics. I have also contributed to workshops on writing and on how to use reporting guidelines (*e.g.*, CONSORT, PRISMA). In part, this outreach has been accomplished through regular rounds presentations with the medical specialties within our institute. Working with my colleagues in the Centre for Journalology, which is led by Dr. David Moher, I have also developed a [website of resources](#) that researchers and students can use to stay informed of rapidly occurring changes in the publication landscape. Researchers and students also benefit from the opportunity to book one-on-one consults with me to discuss their

specific publication concerns. To date, I have met one-on-one with more than 80 individuals, several of whom have consulted the service multiple times. While the role is still relatively new, anecdotally, there seems to be interest and support.

Interestingly, many researchers I have interacted with since starting in this role were not aware of existing institutional resources for publishing, such as financial support and discounts available for Open Access publishing, or resources available through the affiliated university library. This is regrettable, as it appears that existing resources and support structures are not being used efficiently. Through launching a Publications Officer role, and having someone who is ‘on the ground’ conducting journalology-based research and

providing outreach within the research institution, we aim to form a bridge between internal and external services and raise awareness of problems in biomedical publishing. Knowledge and behavior changes are needed to ensure we promote solutions to these issues. As we progress with the Publications Officer role, we are keen to trial and evaluate innovative services to support researchers and students to improve the quality of their publications. We will document and report on the role as it moves forward, and if proven effective, other institutions may move to adopt similar roles. If this is the case, Publications Officers may become new and important stakeholders that Editorial Office staff could engage and collaborate with to improve publications.



## Discovering Our Roots: So You Think You Can Write?

By: Stephanie Kinnan

Editorial Assistant

*GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy*

Editors are ruthless critics. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. It's just who we are. We read, we edit, and we judge. We judge a writer based on his/her ability to use proper grammar and form coherent sentences. We like people who use appropriate punctuation and know the difference between "there," "their," and "they're." We dislike people who use double negatives and think that "ain't" is an actual word. We can't help but be judgy; it's in our nature. *The irony that I followed my hatred of not-a-real-word "ain't" with the use of not-a-real-word "judgy" is not lost on me.*

Okay, so sometimes we can be a little harsh, and we find our hypercritical tendencies rearing their ugly heads outside of the office. We watch our friends' faces sour as we brazenly advise that the proper word is "whom" not "who." We find ourselves pointing out typos and making punctuation suggestions in the comment sections on social media. Worst of all, we find ourselves unable to relax and really enjoy a piece of writing without our highly-attuned brains shouting critiques inside our heads. *I mean did this mistake-riddled, horrendous book/journal/newspaper/magazine even pass through the hands of an actual editor???* Yes, maybe we can be a little too judgmental; however, sometimes people are just really bad writers, and sometimes those people get published anyway. Take Amanda McKittrick Ros for example; this is a prime example of a writer should have never picked up a pen, but we are secretly really glad that she did because sometimes something can be so bad that it is deliciously good.

Amanda McKittrick Ros, aka, Anna Ross, aka, the worst writer of all time, was a schoolteacher/aspiring writer from a little Irish village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Amanda/Anna wrote 3 unreadable novels (think naming all of the characters in one novel after fruits and vegetables) and quite a bit of horrendous poetry during her lifetime. In fact, her writing was so poor that she became famous for it, drawing the attention of great authors such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and even Mark Twain. The best part? She was in complete denial that the world was laughing at her, and as a result, classic literature now has such gems as, *Irene Iddesleigh*, *Helen Huddleson*, and *Delina Delaney* (clearly, a fan of alliteration). Her novels were known for their incoherent babbling, convoluted and contrived plots, and long and winding descriptions, fraught with conflicting metaphors, that never revealed their meanings. For example, "...the use of the finest production of steel, whose blunt edge eyed the reely covering with marked greed, and offered its sharp dart to faultless fabrics of flaxen fineness." *Could you follow that? Neither could I. Translation: She sewed. P.S. Did you catch that alliteration again?* Anna/Amanda also appeared to have an aversion to calling an object what it actually was, and as a result, her novels were littered with awkward descriptions of simple nouns. A couple of my favorites are "bony supports" and "globes of glare," aka, legs and eyes. She was also particularly creative with her word choice when firing back at critics, creating such brilliant designations as, "bastard donkey-headed mites," "clay crabs of corruption," "hogwashing hooligans," and my personal favorite, "evil-minded snapshots of spleen." In *Delina Delaney*, she even went so far as to include what amounts to a 2-page diatribe on the ineptitude of literary reviewers smack in the middle of the story.

Amanda McKittrick Ros may go down as the worst writer in history, but perhaps we should give her a little credit for putting herself out there and believing in her dreams. I mean, the woman was delusional enough to believe that she was actually in the running for a Nobel Prize in literature. That is some serious self-confidence there. And while it's really more infamy than fame, she actually did find success and made a name for herself as a writer, which is more than most of us who dabble in the literary arts could ever hope for. So, forget the critics and the quality control and the general basics of good composition. Amanda McKittrick Ros, you go girl!

Adapted in part from:

1. Mark O'Connell. Amanda McKittrick Ros, the Worst Novelist in History. Slate. [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2013/01/was\\_amanda\\_mckittrick\\_ros\\_the\\_worst\\_novelist\\_in\\_history.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2013/01/was_amanda_mckittrick_ros_the_worst_novelist_in_history.html). Accessed September 20, 2016.



# Cell Line Contamination and the Managing Editor

By Carolyn Sperry  
Editorial Assistant  
*Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*  
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Contaminated cell lines have been making the news in recent years and are blamed for millions of dollars' worth of wasted research dollars.<sup>1</sup> Retraction Watch has warned that one in six researchers are using the wrong cell lines,<sup>2</sup> which could call their findings into question. Although issues with cell lines were first uncovered in the 1960s, these have not been fully resolved and continue to cause serious problems with the reliability and reproducibility of studies.<sup>3</sup> What can a Managing Editor do to make sure his/her journal is on the right track?

To help answer this question, I interviewed Amanda Capes-Davis, chair of the International Cell Line Authentication Committee (ICLAC).

*Q: What is cross-contamination and why is it important?*

A: Cross-contamination happens when one cell culture is accidentally contaminated by cells from another culture. This can happen if two cultures are being handled at the same time, or reagents are shared (*e.g.*, if the same bottle of liquid medium is used to feed two different cell cultures). If you have two different populations of cells in the same space, one will

usually grow faster than the other—it's like your garden, the weeds grow faster than the plants you want! The end result is that, like weeds, the faster growing cells will overgrow and replace the other cells. Scientists who work with a cell culture may think it consists of "human cells" or "breast cancer cells." Instead, the cell culture may be completely different to what they expect—mouse instead of human, or brain instead of breast.

*Q: If the problems were first identified in the 1960s and 1970s, why have they persisted?*

A: It seems incredible that problematic cell lines are still used more than 50 years after the problem was first discovered. Often this is due to lack of awareness. Cell culture is a practical skill that needs to be taught. Young scientists need to learn how to handle cells using what we call "aseptic technique." They also need to learn about the common problems that affect cell culture, including the risk that one cell line can be cross-contaminated by another. Young scientists rely on the laboratories where they do their cell culture to teach them what they need to know. Some laboratories do this very well, but others do not—labs are either not aware of common cell culture problems or believe that their own research is not affected by them. We need training programs that are easily accessible to young scientists and teach them how to do good cell culture from the beginning of their careers.

*Q: What should a journal ask their authors to do to make sure that they are not submitting research based on corrupted cell lines? For example, should the journal ask authors to share information about cell lines in the Materials and Methods section of articles?*

A: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently issued "[Principles and Guidelines for Reporting Preclinical Research](#)." Based on the NIH's guidelines, authors need to report in their Materials and Methods section on the source

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- 1 Fung B. 'Oops, Wrong Cancer': How Contaminated Cell Lines Produce Bad Research. *The Atlantic*. Published April 23, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/04/oops-wrong-cancer-how-contaminated-cell-lines-produce-bad-research/256246>. Accessed September 30, 2016.
- 2 Cape-Davis A. Hundreds of researchers are using the wrong cells. That's a major problem. Retraction Watch. Published December 8, 2015. <http://retractionwatch.com/2015/12/08/hela-is-the-tip-of-the-contamination-iceberg-guest-post-from-cell-culture-scientist>. Accessed September 30, 2016.
- 3 International Cell Line Authentication Committee. <http://iclac.org>. Accessed September 30, 2016.

of all cell lines and their authentication and mycoplasma testing status.

“Source” refers to the cell bank or colleague who supplied the cell line to the authors. If obtained from a cell bank, authors should list the catalogue number, which makes it easier for the reader to obtain the same material for their own work. “Authentication” is testing done to work out whether a cell line corresponds to the original donor of that material or is cross-contaminated by another culture. Mycoplasma is a bacterial contaminant that is difficult to see through the microscope. Mycoplasma contamination, and cross-contamination of one cell line by another, are common problems but they require specific testing to be detected.

An increasing number of journals are adding cell line requirements to their author guidelines and I urge all life science journals to consider this as best practice. For examples, editors can look up the requirements set out by the [Nature journals](#) and the [American Association for Cancer Research journals](#).

*Q: If I were the Managing Editor of a journal publishing research that uses cell cultures, what else could I do to help address this problem?*

A: Your first step is awareness—knowing that if your authors use cell cultures, this is a problem that may affect your publications. There are some freely available resources that every Managing Editor should know about. I particularly recommend the following:

1. The list of known misidentified cell lines from the [ICLAC](#). Journals can use the ICLAC list to see which cell lines are known to be inappropriate research models.
2. [Cellosaurus](#) is an online knowledge resource that editors and authors can use to look up cell line information. I use Cellosaurus myself a great deal and think it is a fantastic way to look up the essential information that is available about a cell line.

Your second step is to work with the Editorial Board on how to address the problem in a way that works for your journal. Adding authentication testing as a requirement can be difficult for an Editorial Board if they do not have much cell culture expertise to draw from. Addressing the problem is a step-by-step process and there is

always something that can be done to improve reporting.

*Q: Similarly, what should my Editorial Board do to be on the lookout for any issues?*

A: The Editorial Board needs to consider what impact this problem has on the journal’s publications. For example, the journal *Molecular Vision* found that one particular problematic cell line, RGC-5, was used in many papers. Their author guidelines now state that any papers using RGC-5 will be rejected without review. There are too many problematic cell lines to be aware of each one, but a few are extensively used and easy to spot in publications. These include KB, HEP-2, and INT-407. These cell lines are used as models for oral cancer, laryngeal cancer, and normal intestine; however, all three are actually HeLa, which comes from cervical cancer.

If the Editorial Board can ask authors to report on the source, authentication, and mycoplasma testing for all cell lines used (as per the NIH guidelines mentioned earlier) that would be a great help. Including cell line requirements in a journal’s author guidelines is best practice and really does help to address the problem.

*Q: How are cell lines authenticated?*

A: The scientist working with a cell line needs to prepare a DNA sample for testing. A genetic test is used to analyse that sample and compare it to results from other cell lines. There are online databases that scientists can use for comparison.

For human cell lines, the field of authentication testing worked together several years ago to develop a standard with a consensus test method for comparison. We decided on “short tandem repeat profiling” (STR profiling for short), which is a test method often used to identify crime scene samples in forensics labs. STR profiling works really well for human cell lines, and is usually done by core facilities or testing labs.

Non-human cell lines need a different approach, since there are many species used in cell culture and these species can be quite inbred. We recommend that scientists should, at minimum, check the species of the cell line—for example, to make sure that a “rat” cell line is not actually human or mouse. There is a very easy genetic test to work out species (DNA barcoding) that labs can do in-house or send out for testing.

## Discussion Forum Highlights

The [ISMTE Discussion Forum](#) is available to all registered ISMTE members and is a great resource to get and stay connected to a network of peers, publishers, vendors, and potential clients and employers. Here we highlight a question about authorship followed by further discussion.

1/5/2016 at 9:43:16 PM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

**Submitting authors**

Hello, do any of you have any experience on a submitting author who is not included in the author list?

I have a single case where a person would like to submit on behalf of an author group, but I have no experience on this and usually we would refuse this possibility.

Thank you in advance for any suggestions you can share.

**Lucia Steele**

Posts: 0

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1/6/2016 at 2:21:19 AM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

In my experience this is actually not that uncommon. Using someone who is not an author as a type of "submitting agent" should be OK (I would think) as long as you can verify that the corresponding author and co-authors are verified as being legit.

**A. Etkin**

Posts: 16

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1/6/2016 at 9:23:07 AM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

It usually occurs when an author asks a secretary or departmental administrator to submit the paper on his/her behalf, and as Adam says it's quite legitimate. ScholarOne Manuscripts has the facility for a 'submitting agent', as distinct from an author, although I don't think a similar facility exists on Editorial Manager and don't know about other systems.

**M. Willis**

Posts: 23

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1/6/2016 at 11:51:28 AM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

In terms of EM mechanics, what we do is create a temporary account with the true corresponding author's name but the emails of the submitting person and the corresponding author. That way the corresponding author is aware of what's going on but can leave the EM work to his/her designee. At final disposition we merge the temporary account into the real account so the manuscript is part of the corresponding author's history.

-Nijsje Doman  
Managing Editor, AJKD

**N. Doman**

Posts: 3

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1/6/2016 at 1:53:10 PM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

Hi Lucia,

Do you know yet if the person who is submitting also wants to serve as the corresponding author? If the submitting agent will only submit and your system allows someone else to be the corresponding author, I don't think you will have any trouble. I agree with Michael, Adam, and Nijsje that it's ethical to have a submitting agent who is not an author, but I think Nijsje's workflow of ensuring at least one of the authors is notified of both the submission and the list of authors as input during the submission process is important.

**K. Overstreet**

Posts: 21

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1/6/2016 at 6:12:49 PM GMT



[Permalink](#) [Report](#) [Quote](#)

Dear all,  
thank you for your valuable opinions: they all make perfect sense and hit the ethics point too.

Lovely to count on you all!

**L. Steele**



## Preview of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Asia-Pacific Conference

**Jennifer Deyton**  
ISMTE Asia-Pacific Program Chair  
Senior Partner at J&J Editorial, LLC

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual ISMTE Asia-Pacific is coming up soon. The meeting will be held at the Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center on March 27–28, 2017 and will be preceded by the very popular COPE seminar on Sunday, March 26. [Registration](#) is now open and limited to 200 participants, so do not miss out on this great meeting! Our inaugural Asian-Pacific meeting in [Singapore](#) in April 2016 sold out and we hope for the same success this year. More information on registration can be found at [online](#).

Our preliminary program will include topics relevant to empowering Editorial Offices worldwide, with a specific emphasis on the changing landscape of publishing in the region. I would like to give a special thanks to our committee members: Board liaison and current ISMTE President Michael Willis, Tony Alves, Don Samulack, Charley Miao, Yan Shuai, Bicky Osawa, and Frith Jarrad. If you have any interest in joining the committee, please reach out to me at [Jennifer@jjeditorial.com](mailto:Jennifer@jjeditorial.com).

Some of the topics you can expect to learn more about are listed below in our preliminary program:

- Keynote - future and changing landscape in China
- Standards I - ORCID workshops/relevant to Asia
- Standards II - Panel with Crossref, DOIs, iThenticate, Open Funder Registry
- Metrics - Current trends with Asian focus

- JATS XML
- Open Access
- Servicing the journal breakout sessions: EM, S1, and others
- Scrutinizing the manuscript - is it acceptable for publication?
- Platforms - international as well as local Asian platforms, bridging platform gaps
- Best Practices in Editorial Office
- Best Practices in Peer Review
- Direction of Chinese publishing - government mandates and internationalization
- Social media, mobile applications, new technology bells and whistles of promote your journal

As well as being a major international centre for business, education, politics, and economics, the rich history and culture of China will be fascinating for anyone travelling to Beijing. The ISMTE is organizing special tours, including to the Forbidden City and Great Wall, to help delegates make the most of their trip to Beijing. More information, including advice on visas and tourism, is available on our meeting [registration page](#).



### Ira Salkin Scholarship

The Board has established an annual scholarship in Ira Salkin's memory that will take effect in 2017. The objective of this scholarship is to uphold Ira's goal of ensuring that Editorial Office professionals are educated and vigilant in matters of publishing ethics.

Applications will be taken in the form of an essay relating to a topic in publishing ethics. The award recipient will receive funding to attend one of our three annual meetings.

More information coming soon!

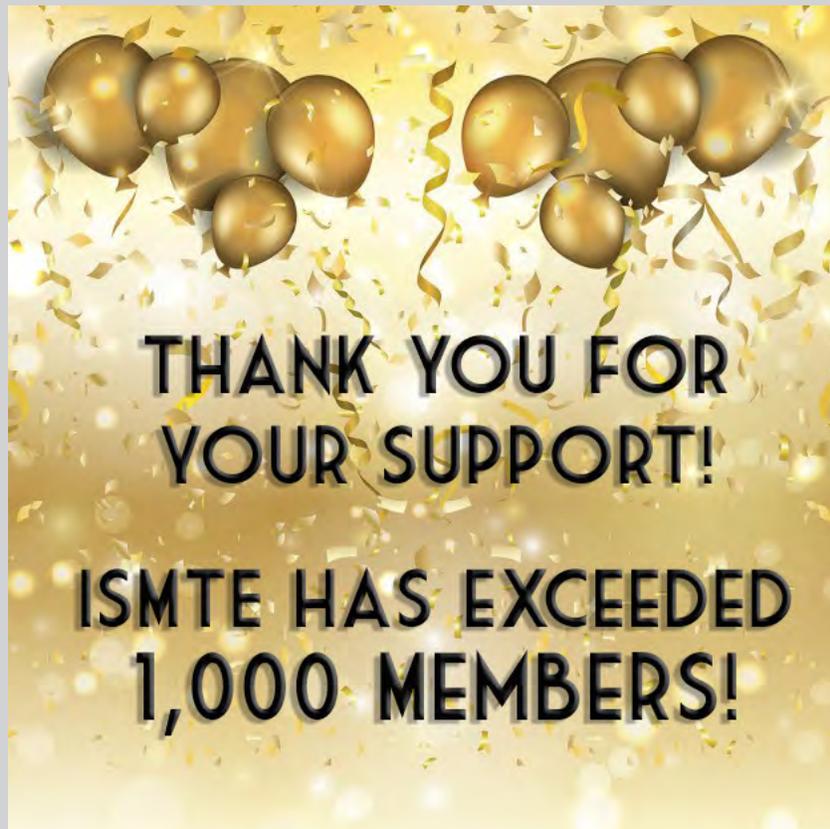
## ISMTE Reaches Membership Goal For 2016!

In 2014 the leadership of ISMTE set forth several strategic goals for growth and development of the society. Number one on the list: membership. A stretch goal of 1,000 members was set.

ISMTE is pleased to announce that we have reached our goal of 1,000 members three months ahead of schedule! This record high includes members from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. Journal types represented include disciplines such as Agriculture, Business, Humanities, Law, Math, Medicine, Nursing, Science, Technology and Veterinary. Membership types include: corporate-sponsored membership, individual membership, developing country membership and, new in 2016, student membership.

Thank you ISMTE members for your time and dedication to the society. We have grown substantially over the past nine years. We look forward to continued growth and success in the coming years.

Submitted by Margot Puerta MS, MBA  
On behalf of the Membership Committee



## Calendar of Events

### ALA Midwinter Meeting

January 20-24, 2017  
Atlanta, Georgia  
[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

### 2017 PSP Annual Conference

February 1-3, 2017  
Washington, D.C.  
<http://publishers.org>

### Researcher to Reader Conference

February 20-21, 2017  
London, England  
<https://r2rconf.com>

### Introduction to Journals Publishing

March 1, 2016  
London, England  
[www.alpsp.org](http://www.alpsp.org)

### ISMTE Asian-Pacific Conference

March 27-28, 2017  
Beijing, China  
[www.ismte.org](http://www.ismte.org)  
*EASE and COPE members receive ISMTE member registration rate*

### SSP 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

May 31-June 2, 2017  
Boston, Massachusetts  
[www.sspnet.org](http://www.sspnet.org)

### ISMTE North American Conference

August 10-11, 2017  
Denver, Colorado  
[www.ismte.org](http://www.ismte.org)  
*EASE members receive ISMTE member registration rate*

### 8th International Congress on Peer Review and Scientific Publication

September 10-12, 2017  
Chicago, Illinois  
[www.peerreviewcongress.org](http://www.peerreviewcongress.org)

### ALPSP Conference

September 13-15, 2017  
Noordwijk, the Netherlands  
[www.alpsp.org](http://www.alpsp.org)

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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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