

## 2011 ISMTE Conferences



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# *Managing the Management of a Virtual Editorial Office*

by **Alice Ellingham**

*Director*

*Editorial Office Ltd.*

*alice.ellingham@editorialoffice.co.uk*

*www.editorialoffice.co.uk*

## **A Brief History**

I met Gill Smith (my co-director) in September 2000 when our eldest children were at playgroup. Three months later we set up a company – Overton Office – offering administrative work to local companies. One pretty leaflet later, an ex-colleague of mine (Mandy Hill, Oxford Journals) asked us if we could help them with an editorial office in Paris. Eighteen months later we were working on six journals and decided that this would be our core business. Editorial Office Ltd. was founded at about 3 am one morning (that's another story) and began trading formally in 2002 with two employees (me and Gill) and four freelancers.

## **Current Team**

Editorial Office Ltd. currently employs 8 members of staff (including me and Gill) and has 37 freelancers who work from 12 to 25 hours per week. Except for Gill and me, everyone works from his or her own home. Two employees (managers) and six freelancers manage traditional print-based journals and are the main contact for editors, academic editors, authors, and reviewers. Four employees (team leaders) and 31 freelancers work on PLoS ONE, which is currently the largest journal in

the world. As a 'PLOSette' they manage a variety of tasks on the journal, but do not oversee the process from start to finish.

## **Assets**

The greatest asset of Editorial Office Ltd. is not its garden office (although it's very nice, especially in the summer when the three office dogs can wander in and out), nor its equipment (although I do love my new MacBook!), but its staff and freelancers. It may sound cheesy, but our freelancers are the backbone of our company. We offer them a fully flexible, well-reimbursed contract with real responsibility, and in return they work their socks off. We have been known to confiscate laptops so that they do not take their work on holiday with them.

## **Freelancers**

From the start we knew that there was a vast untapped workforce that we wanted to concentrate on: parents of young children who wanted to be around for their families while also achieving in the workplace. This is a balance that is so hard to attain in a 'normal' job, but a balance that Gill and I had gained so much from over the previous years.

We do not advertise for our freelancers. Our original freelancers were recruited at the

# *Managing the Management*

*continued*

school gate, and most were friends. We all had the same desire: to continue to work, but to be at home when needed.

Since then, freelancers have come to us via many routes. The overwhelming majority live either in our village or in the surrounding villages and towns. Ninety-five percent live within 10 miles and we only have one real outlier, in Leeds, who moved back north following a brief residence in the south. Our freelancers have all had a career prior to working for us, but few of them have a university qualification. We have found that common sense, good computer skills, and the desire to succeed are far better qualifications than a degree.

## ***Training***

All new freelancers attend a minimum of two weeks initial one-on-one training. This will either take place in the office (the EdShed) or at the home of one of our employees. After that, training is provided remotely with occasional visits back to the office for updates or training on new tasks.

None of our freelancers has editorial experience when we recruit them. We see this as a bonus rather than a disadvantage as there are no 'bad habits' to break and we can train them in the Editorial Office way of doing things.

Training is very hands-on and varies depending on the journal and the freelancer. We have a three-month probationary/training period during which time we can ensure that the new freelancer is settling in well and enjoying the work. Some freelancers do start with us, but then decide that the role is not for them; however that has only been a handful since the company started.

## **Management**

### ***Teams***

Our freelancers are split into five teams. There are four PLoS teams and one Journals team. Each of these teams is headed up by an employed member of Editorial Office.

### ***Instant Messenger***

As a management tool, Instant Messenger (IM) is up at the top of the list. All our freelancers have an 'edoffice' yahoo login, and this is used for work only. As they log on to work, they log onto IM. This is not used as a timekeeping device, purely a management tool – our intranet has an electronic timesheet onto which our freelancers log their daily hours and tasks. At any time, the freelancers can 'buzz' their manager, or other members of the team, to get split-second answers to queries. It builds a good team relationship and gives a visual indication to the team that they are not alone, even though they may be sitting miles away from the EdShed.

### ***Journals Team***

The freelancers in this team mostly have the responsibility for 'whole' journals, although we do provide some workload support. Once trained and settled to the journal, time management becomes the responsibility of the freelancer. Weekly hours are agreed upon and our freelancer contract states that hours should be spread evenly across the week, although they are often weighted towards the start of the week, which tends to be busier. Each freelancer and journal has its own editorialoffice.co.uk e-mail address, and e-

# *Managing the Management*

*continued*

mails are managed via Google mail. This allows the managers to easily log into any account to quickly check on issues or concerns.

On a day-to-day basis, the freelancers take the responsibility for their own work. Gill and their managers are always on hand to help out with any queries, awkward authors, or demanding editors. There is usually at least one concentrated IM conversation going on in the office at any one time

Within the journals team there is some specialization. We have experience across several submission systems and some people have more of a love for one system than another. These 'experts' are often called upon to help less experienced team members, especially at reporting time.

## ***PLoS Team***

This team works in a very different fashion. The four team leaders are constantly juggling the many different tasks that we are assigned to complete, and the number of hours needed for each task varies on a day-to-day basis, depending on the current flow of papers.

The IM comes into its own for this team. Each team member changes his or her status on the IM to show the task that they are currently working on, so that at a glance, the team leads can see how many people are working in the submission queue, the inbox, assigning academic editors, etc. If more people are required in one area, the team lead will either put a 'All hands to. . .' status on IM or, in the case of a more specialist, highly trained task, individually buzz the individuals that are suitably trained until the right level of input is achieved.

We also depend on a document library on our own intranet. This library contains our own 'How tos' for all the tasks assigned to our teams, and these are constantly updated to

ensure that any new information passed to the team leads is immediately disseminated to the freelancers.

Training for the PLoSettes is ongoing and tailored to the speed of each team member. Once per month there is a group training session on a few tasks and these are open to any freelancers who are ready to move on to these tasks. The attendance at these sessions is agreed upon between the freelancer and his or her team lead with the aim of progressing the freelancer at a suitable pace. Some people naturally progress faster than others.

## ***When Things Go Wrong***

All work is closely monitored via access to the peer-review systems and Google mail. Any shortfalls are quickly identified and additional training is put in place. Feedback from our customers is paramount to our management and we regularly ask for comments on the performance of our freelancers.

If a freelancer continues to underperform, a formal warning is issued, clearly stating our concerns and offering additional training to solve the problem. Freelancer contracts have been terminated, but this is a last resort and has only happened three times in nine years.

## ***The Entire Team***

Although the PLoS team gets together for regular meetings, we like to ensure that everyone else also has a chance to get to know each other.

We have two social gatherings each year. Each summer we have our Editorial Office birthday party to which we invite freelancers and their partners. Last year we had a quiz night, also raising funds for a local hospice. Teams were set so that freelancers sat with

## *Managing the Management*

*continued*

those that they wouldn't necessarily know and lots of silly prizes were awarded (mostly chocolate and wine).

At Christmas we treat our freelancers to dinner. This year we occupied half of a local Italian restaurant and then continued the party back at one of our homes in Overton. It's a fantastic chance for everyone to get together and put a face to the name on the IM list.

### **The Future**

Editorial Office is continuing to grow, but our ethos remains the same. We aim to provide an excellent service to publishers, societies, editors, reviewers, and authors while providing a fulfilling and flexible freelancer role to those who wish to achieve the balance between work and family life.



## *Excellence in Research for Australia Initiative – Implications for Journals*

**by Dr. Sally Gainsbury**

*Post Doctoral Research Fellow*

*Centre for Gambling Education & Research*

*Southern Cross University*

*Associate Editor*

*International Gambling Studies*

*sally.gainsbury@scu.edu.au*

***This article is based on an article previously published in the December 2010 Newsletter for the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors.***

The Australian Research Council's (ARC) Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative assesses research quality within Australia's higher education institutions using a combination of indicators and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally-recognised experts. The suite

of indicators includes volume and activity measures, esteem measures, research income, applied measures, background statements, and ranked outlets. The 2010 *ERA Ranked Journal and Conference Lists* have been the most controversial of these measures, where the quality rating of active (during the reference period) scholarly and peer reviewed (or equivalent process) outlets are given a rating of A\*, A, B, or C for journals and A, B, or C for conferences. This has seen universities encourage their researchers to publish in A\*

## *ERA Initiative*

*continued*

and A-ranked journals as they believe it will boost the evaluation of the university's research quality. This is true to some extent, however the ERA has emphasised publications are also assessed on citation analysis and a peer-review process.

Evaluation of journals is conducted within each field of research code (FoR) and the ARC acknowledges different fields may have different publishing behaviours. Therefore, in some fields, publishing in A\* and A journals may be considered the most appropriate for high-quality and high-impact research, while in other fields it is appropriate to publish in practitioner-focused medium-quality journals. The ARC worked with over 60 peak bodies and over 700 expert reviewers in the development of ranked lists. The lists were developed in consultation with discipline experts in the field. This means any field-specific publishing behaviour was taken into account when the experts were assigning quality tiers, provided the tier definitions were met. However, in some cases the most appropriate experts to rank each journal may have been overlooked, resulting in rankings of journals in some disciplines being somewhat controversial. For example, several gambling-specific journals were ranked by the Australian Psychological Society, despite many of these featuring work from multiple disciplines, and none were given A or A\* rankings.

The ARC clearly states outputs in B and C ranked journals can have as much or even more impact than outputs published in A\* and A journals. Furthermore, besides the indicator of ranked outlets, all FoRs in ERA use either citation analysis or peer review as an indicator. However, many institutions and researchers in Australia have heavily encouraged publication only in A and A\* journals. The number of papers published in A and A\* journals is being used as a measure for internal evaluations,

including reviews for funding distribution and job promotion. This is expected to result in an increase to the submission rates and rejection rates of journals with these classifications, to the detriment of other journals. Given that certain fields do not have A or A\* journals, it is also expected many researchers will submit articles to journals outside their traditional research domain, resulting in many significant papers having fewer citations and a reduced impact on the field, as they are not as highly accessed as those articles published within the specific field.

The ERA Ranked Journal list will be revised and updated approximately every two years resulting in journals moving up and down the list. This has further implications for authors and journal editors and is expected to impact submissions. Journal editors are encouraged to review their field of research at [www.arc.gov.au/era](http://www.arc.gov.au/era). A further useful resource is <http://lamp.infosys.deakin.edu.au/era/?page=jnamesel10> – a site that provides searches of the ERA 2010 ranking list.

The ARC called for external submissions in February 2011. The public consultation website is available at: [www.arc.gov.au/era/era\\_2012/review\\_of\\_era10\\_ranked\\_outlet\\_lists.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2012/review_of_era10_ranked_outlet_lists.htm). The review occurs in two phases, the first being a public consultation, followed by a second phase where contracted peak bodies and academic groups review the public feedback and make recommendations to the ARC regarding the final determination of the ERA 2012 ranked outlets.

The ERA scheme has wide implications for the international community as this ranking method may be used by other countries. All journals and editors that receive or hope to receive submitted manuscripts from Australian authors or have Australian reviewers or editors may be interested in this dynamic process.





## *Facing Facebook: Part II*

**by Brook Simpson**

*Managing Editor*

*Journals Social Media Manager*

*AGA Institute*

*bsimpson@gastro.org*

*Facebook pages:* <http://www.facebook.com/cghjournal>;

<http://www.facebook.com/gastrojournal>

Welcome back! I hope [last month's column](#) helped you work through the first steps of creating a Facebook Page. Now that your Page exists, it is time to explore the many options available for you to share content with people who *Like* your Page.

Before we begin, I want to draw your attention to one important fact: Facebook is constantly evolving. You'll find that as soon as you are comfortable with the features of Facebook, a change happens without any warning. A perfect example of this is in the time it has taken me to write this series, Facebook has changed the layout for new Pages and added an option to upgrade previously created Pages (this upgrade will likely be mandatory by the time you are reading this). Remaining flexible and adapting quickly to change are important skills for your work with social media!

The new layout provides two major changes to the look of your Page: (1) Tabs are no longer displayed. Instead, links to the items that used to be found on your tabs are now directly beneath your profile picture. (2) A stream of images you have uploaded are now displayed at the top of your page, where your tabs used to be.

Go ahead and log into your Facebook account and bring up your Page. In Part I of this

column, we reviewed the 'Get Started' and 'Info' tabs. In the new layout, you'll find these items directly beneath your profile photo. Some additional options may be displayed as well, one of which should be called the *Wall*. Let's start there and then I'll briefly discuss other sections that may be of interest.

### ***Wall***

The Wall is where you will share information with people who view your Page, including the fans who Like and follow your Page. Typing in the 'Write something...' box at the top of the Page and clicking 'Share' adds content to your Wall for others to see. The Wall is the fastest way to share content with your viewers. Facebook also gives you options to share links to outside Web pages, images, or videos to make your Wall posts more dynamic. If you'd like to post more than just text, do the following:

1. Type the text of your Wall post in the 'Write something...' box. For example, if you are linking to a new video abstract on YouTube, you could write 'Dr. Smith discusses his latest manuscript in a new video abstract!'
2. Click on the 'Link' option, located

## ***Facing Facebook: Part II***

*continued*

directly above your text. Note: When you click on 'Link,' 'Photo,' or 'Video,' the text you entered will seem to disappear. Click on 'Status' and you will see it is still there—Facebook has only hidden it temporarily so you can add the additional content to the Wall post.

3. Type in the Web page link you want to include with your Wall post. In my example, it would be a link to the video abstract on YouTube. Click 'Attach.'
4. Facebook should now show you both the text of your Wall post, as well as the link to the Web page. If there is an image available on the Web page, Facebook will automatically add it as an option to include with your post. If you don't want to include an image, select the box next to 'No Thumbnail' (you won't see this option if there is no image available on the Web page).
5. Click 'Share' to post both the text and link to your Wall. You will see it appear immediately on your Page. If you find an error and you want to remove the post, hover your mouse over the top-right corner of the post. When an 'X' appears, click on it to remove the post from your Page and from the news feeds of the people who Like your Page.

When you click on 'Edit Page' as described in Part I of this series, you'll notice a link on the left side called 'Apps.' This is where you can add other areas (such as direct links to your Twitter or YouTube accounts) to your Page to provide more content for your fans. Click 'Browse more applications' at the bottom of this page to see what is available. Here are some of the more popular choices you may want to add to your Page, if they don't already display beneath your profile photo. To add a section, click the 'Edit Settings' link for that App and select 'add.'

### ***Photos***

This option will already have a 'Profile Pictures' album; every time you change your profile picture, the image will be stored there. You can click on 'Create a Photo Album' or 'Upload More Photos' (depending on your Page layout) to add additional photos you want to share with your readers. New photos will automatically appear along the top of your Page when added into albums or through Wall posts. You can remove unwanted images by clicking the 'X' in the top-right corner of the images.

### ***Discussion Boards***

This section is the hub for discussions held by fans of your page. While the Wall is a great place for your fans to comment on what you've posted, the Discussions area is more of an open forum for your fans to talk about your products. You can click on 'Start New Topic' or 'Start a Discussion' (depending on your Page layout) to begin.

### ***Notes***

This is a feature we use often on our Pages. Creating a note allows you to write more content than what you could post on the Wall, and allows you to upload photos and format your text (bold, underline, hyperlinks, etc.). When you create a note, the title and a preview of the content is posted on your Wall. We use notes to post highlighted journal abstracts and other content of interest.

### ***Other Options Include. . .***

1. Links: Any link you post to your Wall is compiled in this section.
2. Events: Publication- or Association-related events can be added to this area

## *Facing Facebook: Part II*

*continued*

and marketed to your fans.

When you are satisfied with the content you've added to your Page, it is time to share it. Make sure you've removed any privacy restrictions and made the Page public before you start promotion.

1. If you select the 'Add Like Box' option under 'Get Started' (if you are using the new profile layout, 'Get Started' should be located beneath your profile photo), you can create a box to post to websites that allows users to easily find and Like your Page.
2. The 'Import Contacts' option under 'Get Started' finds your contacts with Facebook profiles and contacts them to announce your Page. You can also use the 'Suggest to Friends' option to start building your fan base.
3. Check out [Erin Dubnansky's article](#)

from the August 2009 issue for additional marketing ideas.

Make sure you spend some time researching other Pages to help brainstorm ideas for how best to utilize this social media outlet. Remember to keep your content fresh and post frequently. Once you discover what kind of content your fans like best, you'll be on your way to a lively and engaging Page for your publication.

I hope you've found this article series to be helpful in your work with Facebook. You'll find you could spend days investigating the many nooks and crannies Facebook has to offer; I encourage you to take some time to explore. There is no better way to build familiarity and expertise than to practice and experiment.



## *What would you like to tame?*

Do you have questions about specific programs, software, or hardware that you would like to see featured in one of these columns in 2011? If so, please contact Lindsey Brounstein, [LBrounstein@gastro.org](mailto:LBrounstein@gastro.org), the Taming Technology section editor and let her know what lions, tigers, and bears are running amok in your world.



**EON is seeking *column editors* for the *Tips & Tricks* and *Publication Partners* columns. The column editor is responsible for recruiting the column's articles. Interested? Contact the Editor, Kristen Overstreet, at [kristen.overstreet@mac.com](mailto:kristen.overstreet@mac.com). We look forward to working with you!**

## *And Now for Something Completely Different.*

**by Wendie Howland**  
*Editor*

Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning  
*whowland@howlandhealthconsulting.com*

I hold the unpaid position of editor, desktop publisher, and chief cook and bottle washer for the *Journal of Nurse Life Care Planning*, the official journal of the American Association of Nurse Life Care Planners (AANLCP). AANLCP promotes the professional practice of life care planning with particular emphasis on the nursing process as its best conceptual framework. Our members serve personal, financial, and legal clients providing assessment, research, and detailed plans for future care and other lifetime needs, with associated costs, for persons with catastrophic injury or chronic illness, or, in the case of legal defense, critiques of an opposing plan's appropriateness and methodology. We are, therefore, a very evidence-based profession, so our readers need information on resources that is well-sourced and will be defensible in litigation—research literature with citations, equipment, services, and other aspects of long-term complex care.

My office is in my 1860s-vintage home on Cape Cod. I can look out the windows and see hawks, sea gulls, pines, oaks, and the march of weather across the sky. Sometimes there's a small band of wild turkeys. There's the occasional cat hauling in a hapless field mouse or garter snake, to present to me in my office with pride and excitement. The wood stove makes it cozy in winter and the sea breezes make it pleasant in summer. Beats cubicle life all hollow.

Our association is small and growing; as the

nursing workforce ages, more seasoned nurses seek autonomous practice outside of traditional hospital settings in a way that is less physically taxing yet still allows them to help people with nursing's unique assessment and problem-solving skills. We promote this by supporting new and old life care planners with conferences, collegial communication, and our fabulous journal.

'Twas not always thus. I joined the organization several years ago, having made the aforementioned journey from critical care hospital nursing to insurance-based case management and consulting to independent practice. The first issue of the journal I received was, to put it charitably, a hash of well-meant but poorly sourced opinion pieces and a complete absence of basic copyediting. With no apparent intentional irony, this last feature was very generously exemplified by an article on how to polish one's professional written work product, loaded with misplaced modifiers, subject-verb mismatch, and tortured syntax. I looked twice to be sure this wasn't an April Fool's issue, I really did.

In a weak moment I wrote a snippy e-mail to the editorial committee about the more egregious problems and suggested they might consider obtaining the services of a real editor. I mentioned I had had a vicious eighth-grade English teacher who beat syntax, grammar, and essays into me; experience in editing medical and other reports; and experience in desktop publishing with InDesign. Perhaps

## *Something Different*

*continued*

predictably, I immediately found myself editing the articles for the next issue.

My editorial committee chair told me production meant that she took typed articles to a local printer, who put them on paper. Distribution involved boxes of journals stacked in her garage awaiting manual labeling and mailing. I learned that to obtain recognition by our professional certification board we needed to have a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal, and she had tried very hard to accomplish that. However, to be able to put out a journal, we needed articles: We begged for them from anyone, and returns were so scanty that we published anything that came over the transom. The peer reviewers were there, but the mechanism for getting and using their feedback was disorganized. Of the first three articles I edited, two said pretty much the same thing on the same topic. One was on how to dress professionally when one goes to deposition or trial—oh, please. One was a reprint of slides from a presentation, complete with little boxes around the words. Hash. Oh, lord, I said to myself, what have I done?

After a long period of negotiation with the Board, and with the heartfelt support of my committee chair, I became the editor. My first move was to cease the established practice of having the Board review all articles before publication. This process introduced agonizing delays and sentence-by-sentence micromanagement that drove me wild with distraction, so I applied the old Jesuit adage that it's easier to ask for forgiveness than seek permission. Truth to tell, I think they were relieved. I set up a more meaningful peer-review mechanism with anonymous feedback to authors, established deadlines, and organized committee members to be issue

'godmothers' soliciting authors and ads. I rewrote the Information for Authors. I learned Apple's Pages is superior for page layout at this level, ditching InDesign without a backward glance.

Best, I was able to persuade the Board to allow us to cease hard copies and become completely electronic. At the time we could ill afford the thousands of dollars we spent on printing and mailing; I also wanted to get us in an indexing service to increase our visibility, and electronic publishing made that more feasible. I wanted to offer live links to video and vendors. I wanted to have our distribution costs essentially zero, so advertising was pure profit—what a concept. Although the Board had wanted to keep the journal solely a member benefit, I was finally able to persuade them nobody would want to spend good money on advertising that would only reach a few hundred people (demonstrably, nobody did); an electronic issue could be shared. This would also increase our influence over people who wanted to be nurse life care planners, or who were looking for something undefined and needed to know about us.

Now, three years into this process, we have gone from 16 to 24 black and white pages of sketchy 'articles' maybe three or so times a year to 40 to 60 pages packed with information, links, illustrations, and research. We have a thriving peer-review group and a great process to provide author feedback, so the quality of our articles is terrific. Each issue is themed, with no content duplication between articles. We are starting to get paid ads. I get requests for reprint permissions. Best of all, I hear the journal has become a useful tool for our members and others. Plus, now I have more submissions than I can use,

***Something Different***

*continued*

so I can really put together the best issues possible.

I'd really like to be able to tell you this all happened overnight and seamlessly. Well, we did go to a regular, quarterly, deadline-or-bust model right away. I did institute monthly conference calls with the editorial committee to keep everyone on track and suggest ways to increase yield on submission requests. But it is taking more than a year to get the Board to approve the Cumulative Index for Nursing and Allied Health Literature contract. The electronic publishing, well, I had some back-up for that, but mostly we were able to get it done in spite of the Board, again using the Jesuitical approach. Once it was out of the bag

electronically, there was no retreat.

I still have my own life care planning practice to run, and I spend probably 80 to 100 hours quarterly on the Journal. My next goal is to get somebody else to learn how to do what I do in case I get run over by a bus or have a stress-induced cerebrovascular accident. No takers yet, but I remain hopeful. Looking at how far we've come, and how much fun I've had in the process, I am optimistic.



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## Calendar of Events

### ScholarOne User Conference

**11-12 April 2011**

London, UK

[www.ThomsonReuters.com](http://www.ThomsonReuters.com)

### Emerging Trends in Scholarly Publishing

**14 April 2011**

Washington, DC, USA

<http://allenpress.com/events/2011seminar>

### Council of Science Editors Annual Meeting

**29 April - 3 May 2011**

Baltimore, MD, USA

<http://www.councilscienceeditors.org>

### Introduction to Journals Publishing

**10 May 2011**

Chicago, IL, USA

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### Introduction to Journals Publishing

**12 May 2011**

Philadelphia, PA, USA

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### The Journal Editorial Office

**18 May 2011**

London, UK

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### Effective Journals Marketing

**19 May 2011**

Washington, DC, USA

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### Society for Scholarly Publishers Annual Meeting

**1-3 June 2011**

Boston, MA, USA

<https://www.sspnet.org/>

### Journal Development

**8 June 2011**

London, UK

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### Understanding Copyright

**16 June 2011**

London, UK

<http://www.alpsp.org>

### Editorial Manager User Group Meeting

**23-24 June 2011**

Cambridge, MA, USA

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/>

**ISMTE  
US Conference  
9-10 August 2011  
Washington, DC-area  
[www.ismte.org](http://www.ismte.org)**

### Effective Journal Editorial Management

**5 October 2011**

London, UK

<http://www.alpsp.org>

**ISMTE  
European Conference  
18 October 2011  
Oxford, UK  
[www.ismte.org](http://www.ismte.org)**

### Editorial Manager User Group Meeting

**28 November 2011**

London, UK

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/>

### 11th EASE Conference

**8-10 June 2012**

Tallinn, Estonia

<http://www.ease.org.uk/>

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## ISMTE *EON*

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Editor:

**Kristen Overstreet**

[kristen.overstreet@mac.com](mailto:kristen.overstreet@mac.com)

Associate Editors:

**Susan Scalia**

[susan@awra.org](mailto:susan@awra.org)

**Emily Mueller**

[emueller@allenpress.com](mailto:emueller@allenpress.com)

Editorial Advisor:

**Sirkka-Liisa Leinonen**

[sirkka-liisa.leinonen@pp.inet.fi](mailto:sirkka-liisa.leinonen@pp.inet.fi)

Section Editors:

Portraits: **Deborah Bowman**

[dbowman@asge.org](mailto:dbowman@asge.org)

Ethics: **Ira Salkin**

[Iraskin@aol.com](mailto:Iraskin@aol.com)

Taming Technology: **Lindsey Brounstein**

[lbrounstein@gastro.org](mailto:lbrounstein@gastro.org)

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ISMTE Executive Office: 107 Mantua Pike Ste. 701 # 122, Mantua, New Jersey, USA 08051-1606

Phone: +1 856 292 8512 Fax: +1 856 292 8513, E-mail: [ismteoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ismteoffice@gmail.com)

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## ***Contact Information for ISMTE***

**Leslie McGeoch, Executive Director**

*International Society of Managing and Technical Editors*

1107 Mantua Pike Ste. 701 # 122, Mantua, New Jersey, USA 08051-1606

Phone: +1 856 292 8512, Fax: +1 856 292 8513

E-mail: [ismteoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ismteoffice@gmail.com)