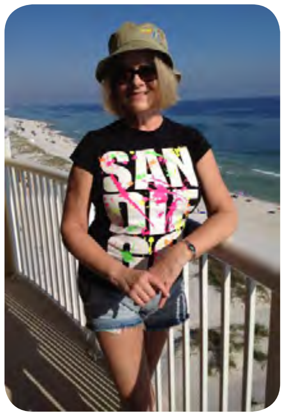
eon

editorial office news

The official newsletter of the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors

IN THIS ISSUE

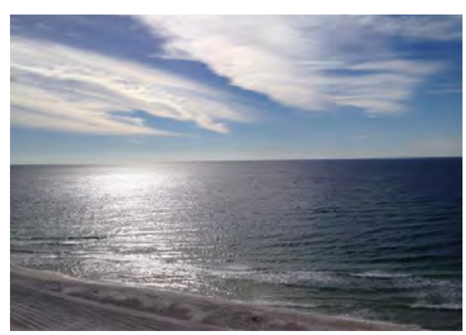


Gentle Reader

Deborah E. Bowman, MFA
Managing Editor
GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
dbowman@asge.org

If you detect a change in attitude from my usual in-your-face editorial greeting (and photo!), it's because I am writing this from a 10-story balcony overlooking the Gulf of Mexico in Gulf Shores, Alabama, where I have rented a condo for a week. I am on a rare (for me) vacation and am thoroughly enjoying the laid-back and friendly attitude of my temporary neighbors and the calming effect of the waves and of water that stretches to the horizon and beyond. Frolicking dolphins are visible in the early morning and the sand is as white and powdery as that found in an hourglass. My personal vacation hourglass is running out quickly, but I am comforted by knowing that I can return next year. The experience has been restorative and invigorating, and I wonder why I waited so long. Believing that we are irreplaceable is an easy trap to fall into. If you find yourself building up more vacation time than you can possibly use, as I had, I urge you to book a vacation and get away from your office. You can gain a whole new perspective.

Meanwhile, my ISMTE family has come through with another great issue. Alethea Gerding tells us about the process she went through for her journal to offer continuing education credits to readers. Bart Wacek from Elsevier discusses the article of the future, a trend we should all be aware of. ISMTE secretary Wendy Krank summarizes the Excel sessions that were held at the recent ISMTE North American Conference.



Peer review problems are always high on our list of issues. This month, Laura Stemmle of Rubriq discusses the possibility of using an independent company to help you find reviewers. In our Whistling in the Dark column, Barbara Pauly explains how her journal exercises complete peer review transparency.

Remember the survey you took a couple of months ago? The results were so interesting and varied, we have decided to break them into several articles. This month, Founding President Jason Roberts gives us an introductory overview of the results. This fascinating series will help to bring us together by showing what other Managing Editors are doing and what their jobs consist of. Look for the results in this issue and in more issues to come.

By the time this appears online, my vacation will be just a memory, but I hope the effects will linger. My wish for each of you is that you find a pocket of peace that will serve you as the hectic times of the holiday season fast approach.

The Philosophy of Editing

An error that I see often from authors submitting to my journal is misuse of "either." For example, they write, "Either anemia, iron-deficiency diarrhea, or weight loss are an indication for undergoing esophagogastroduodenoscopy." The words "either" and "neither" should be used only in comparing two things, as in "either one or the other." How would you re-write this? Some options are these:

Anemia, iron-deficiency diarrhea, or weight loss are possible indications for undergoing esophagogastroduodenoscopy.

Possible indications for undergoing esophagogastroduodenoscopy are the following: anemia, iron-deficiency diarrhea, or weight loss.

Some indications for undergoing esophagogastroduodenoscopy are anemia, iron-deficiency diarrhea, or weight loss.

Treat "neither" the same way, and remember if you are using "or" or "nor," it should be "either…or" and "neither…nor."

Adding Value With the Article of the Future

Bart Wacek, Executive Publisher, Elsevier

The future is now! At least it is for authors who wish to break away from the 350+ year tradition of having a very static article printed on paper. Digital technologies and online capabilities now allow the traditional article format to present material in very non-traditional ways. Many publishers have realized that the printed article should match the medium in which data is collected, exchanged, and stored. Therefore, in the past few years there has been an increasing number of value enhanced features that take the published article away from the static paper copy of the past (including a static PDF, which is tantamount to an online copy of what is in print).

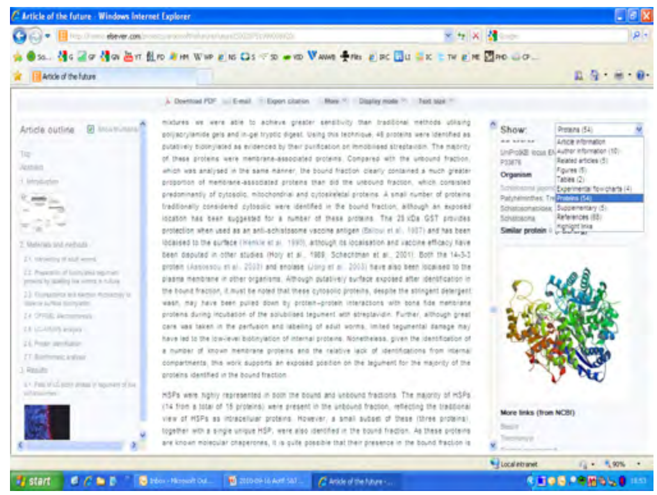
Essentially, the "Article of the Future" is a concept that gives added value to the authors and readers. The simplest value added concept is to think about hot links in the references that allow you to read an article online, click a link in the reference, and then see the referenced article on your computer. No more making a list and then going to the library stacks. This added value has been around for a long time, but it is an easy example to show the concept of adding value.

Some other earlier iterations of the "Article of the Future" concept included the ability to deposit and link to supplemental material (including video files) and the meta-tagging of entities that could provide links to data bases. Other early iterations included the ability to add tabs that take you to different sections of an article, and a bulleted research highlight section. Within the last three years, there has been a concentrated effort to run focus groups and user testing projects to understand more fully what authors and readers want.

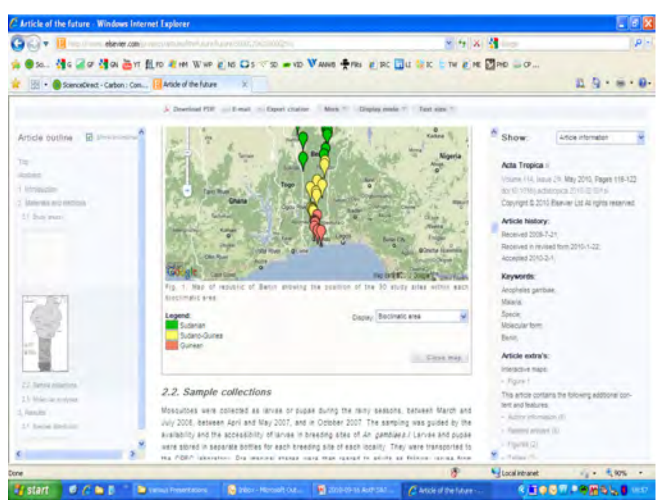
Discipline Specific Added Value

The focus groups and user testing showed that readers desired as much discipline specific added value as possible. For example, readers of journals in molecular biology and protein sciences found value in the ability to show the three-dimensional model of a protein within the confines of the article.

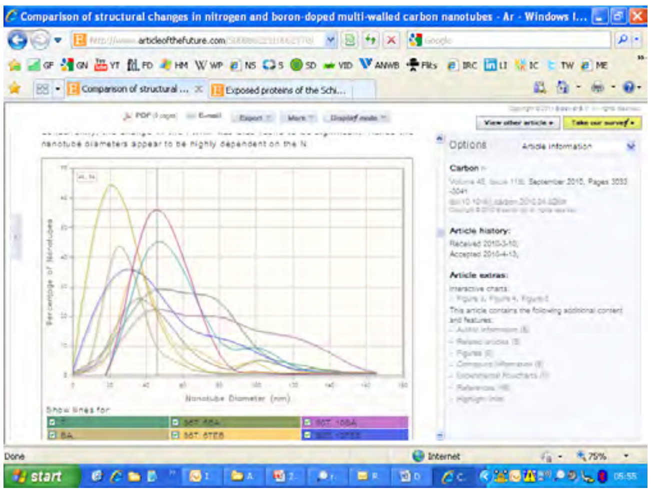
In addition, software could also be embedded into the article that would allow the reader to rotate and zoom in and out of the protein. In other words, there are two added values: the visualization of the protein and the functionality to manipulate the view of the protein.



Another example of a discipline specific feature is seen in epidemiology studies. These studies often have the locations where disease incidents occur. The "Article of the Future" has the ability to embed a Google map into the article whereby the reader can see the incidents on an actual map. In addition, the feature retains all the manipulations you would expect from Google maps. For example, you can switch to a satellite map, or you can zoom in and out.



A final example of an added value is the ability to move the mouse over a table and see the exact data points. If one were to just have a printed copy, it would require the user to take a ruler and pencil to find out the coordinates on a graph. This is an example that is showcasing how much of the reading and learning can be done all in the confines of the computer screen.



Readership Changing as a Result

A survey done before and after the "Article of the Future" design showed a distinct movement in how end users read an article. Prior to the design changes, a majority of readers would either download the PDF version right away or read the abstract first and then download the PDF. After the design changes, the number dropped to less than 10%. Rather, end users were doing their reading on the computer screen rather than downloading a hard copy of the article.

Research also showed that the users were 33% more effective in deciding if the material was something they wanted to read. As all researchers are becoming busier, the ability to sift through material and determine its worth has become a major driving point in how articles are read.

To maximize the reader's experience, "the Article of the Future" uses a three-pane design. The first pane in the left-hand side is a navigation bar that allows the reader to leap to what section he or she wants to read. The second pane in the middle is the actual article, which maintains the readability of a PDF as much as possible. The final pane, on the right-hand side, is where all the value added features are located. As much as possible, the values added on the right hand side will be displayed within the context of what is being read in the middle pane.

Presentation, Content, Context

The new design is based on the principles of presentation, content, and context as applied to the goals of readability, discoverability, and extensibility. For example, the idea of presentation is seen in both readability and discoverability. Since readers found PDF reading to be preferable, the middle pane was kept as close to this as possible. Because readers sometimes need to jump to the conclusion, or back to the data sets, the navigation bar allows for easy discoverability between article sections.

Likewise, content and context fit together with the goals of discoverability and extensibility. The "Article of the Future" presents content and functionality at the right place on the screen, at the right time in the user's workflow. It also has a generic layout that can accommodate discipline-specific content and features as well as future changes and additions. All of this is done without sacrificing readability and discoverability.

Conclusion

While the "Article of the Future" has officially been launched, it is still an overarching concept in publishing that will allow publishers to continuously add value to the written word. All of it is done to be complimentary to traditional reading. Hence any bells or whistles are not directly mixed with the traditional article. Both generic value adds (like reference linking) and discipline specific value adds (like a protein viewer) are part of this concept.

The end result is that scientific research is optimally communicated. This improves scientific communication by publishing the full richness of the research in all of its digital dimensions. Authors benefit by having a much better research outlet to disseminate their life's work. Further, readers can learn from this work in an environment that efficiently provides an optimal experience that offer the most complete and deepest insight. Ultimately, the "Article of the Future" is all about adding value.

ISMTE Commentary – Tom McClung, Excel One-on-One Session – August 14, 2012 Offered during the ISMTE North American Conference

Wendy Krank, Managing Editor, Headache Currents

Why is there never time to properly train oneself to use a software application?

In this technology driven world, I've used Excel admittedly experimenting by my own hunt and peck discovery method that "*sort of*" worked. Recently, at the ISMTE North American conference, I took the time to expand on my fundamental skill with Excel by attending the one-on-one session with tech expert, Tom McClung.

Tom began our session with an Excel sheet using actual spreadsheet data from my editorial office which was clearly what I needed to understand how best to use Excel. It was tremendously easier to understand by seeing my data rather than a hypothetical viewpoint. The reality check for me was that I haven't been using Excel to its fullest potential which ultimately has wasted my time. Tom maneuvered the Excel sheet using the pivot table such that I could easily view where I was missing chunks of information without the constant scrolling up and down through the rows and left then right through the columns. With one click of a button, the highlighted datasheet opened to a new window, revealing the gaps of data in the columns. He suggested that I always use the first column as an anchor column suggesting a title, for example, "*status*." The logic behind the title of the first column is simply for the Excel pivot table to function well and emphasize one column uniformly viewing the remaining data in another window. Tom continued with examples by building several pivot table lists with the drag and drop of different fields. He went on to share that the pivot table is a quick method to screen large amounts of records for errors or creating new reports. I'm certain there are several tips and tricks that I haven't fully used to my best advance, but in the very least I have more functionality with Excel than previously.

I realize to masterfully explain in detail every tip that Tom provided wouldn't serve everyone's needs here in this brief commentary. The one valuable tip that was helpful during the session with Tom was creating a "status" column. For me personally, I gained terrific insight from his expert teaching method. I definitely benefited by attending his one-on-one session. After having experienced the training from Tom, I have to rate the experience as a great value for time spent. Excellent learning opportunities are available through ISMTE. The session with Tom McClung, *Excel One-on-One*, made available by ISMTE membership has *excelled* in my editorial office.

I can rely on ISMTE to provide information that is actually helpful to my business success. I use ISMTE Resource Central frequently to resolve issues and provide solutions to the problems that I encounter daily.

An Independent Approach to Peer Review

Laura Stemmle, PhD
Director of Product Development, Rubriq

Even after hundreds of years, traditional peer review remains a critical step in the process of academic publishing. The rapid pace and globalization of research, however, have left plenty of room for the peer review process to evolve to better meet the needs of the scientific community. Earlier this year, we spent time interviewing researchers to learn more about their experiences as Authors, Reviewers, and Editors. Our goal was to look at the entire ecosystem around academic publishing and try to identify challenges that could be addressed by a company like ours: one that interacts constantly with Authors and journals, but is not a publisher.

The resounding message from **Authors** was that their primary goal is to publish their manuscripts in the highest impact journal that best fits their work *as quickly as possible*. They talked about the importance of speed when it comes to getting published—that tenure, funding, and the progress of their students' and postdocs' careers are all tied to successfully communicating their work before they get scooped by a competing lab.

Reviewers discussed their motivations for participating in the peer reviewer process: to act as guardians of the literature in their field, to professionally network with high ranking Editors, and to read something of genuine academic interest. They also expressed feelings of fatigue from the constant requests to review papers, most of which they have to turn down due to time constraints.

For **Editors**, the challenge always mentioned first was finding qualified and available people to do the reviews. For every reviewer that says yes, there are usually 10-20 others who have said no. Editors are acutely aware of their journal's metrics, especially time to first decision, which has the ability to attract or repel authors who are deciding where to publish. As a group, they take great pride in their journals and are looking for ways to improve their quality and impact for the benefit of their fields.

A common theme throughout all of our interviews was the need for more time, and as we looked more carefully at the system as a whole, we found tremendous redundancy in the biggest bottleneck of the process: peer review. Rejection is common, and because reviews are rarely passed along from one journal to the next, new sets of reviewers are frequently repeating work that has already been done by their colleagues on the same manuscript. We used data from ScholarOne and several other studies to come up with a conservative estimate for the number of hours spent on redundant reviews. We were shocked at the result.

There are at least 11,500 English language STM journals, each receiving an average of 240 submissions per year. We immediately removed the ~20% of submissions that are rejected without review and the 40% of submissions that ultimately get accepted by the journal (usually after revision) to estimate the number of submissions that get reviewed and rejected each year. There are an average of 2.3 reviewers per submission, and each review takes an average of 5 hours, resulting in 15.8 million hours of time spent on rejected reviews every year. Most of these are either redundant or unnecessary. This is an enormous tax on researcher time, and we were excited by the idea that if we could recover even a fraction of this cost, it could have a huge, positive impact on the pace of research.

Our first step was to attempt to eliminate some of this redundancy by creating a standardized peer review instrument that could be used for any paper that follows the traditional scientific method. We studied dozens of journal scorecards and pulled together common themes, which were organized around the sections of Novelty and Interest, Quality of Research, and Quality of Presentation. We identified the universal elements critical to STM manuscripts, and then surveyed nearly 100 active reviewers to help rank these elements according to their level of importance. Then we performed a series of content validation tests with PhD-level biomedical scientists—including our own in-house staff, external Reviewers, and journal Editors—to clarify the language of the scorecard and create a clear, easy-to-use structure.

Armed with this standardized instrument, we began testing a service for authors where we provide double-blinded peer review from three academic reviewers using the scorecard. Reviewer comments are still a critical feature of the report; however, the comments are accompanied by numerical ratings for each of the sections that can be used to quickly sort papers by overall quality and potential impact. We have aligned our scoring system with journal acceptance rates, which allows us to provide data-driven journal recommendations for our customers along with their reviews.

One critical element of our system is that we turn reviews around in a timely manner. We know that reviewers are more likely to work on a paper that is closely aligned with their own research interests, so we have invested a lot of time building reviewer-paper matching software to optimize these assignments. We also know that reviewers prefer to participate in selecting which papers to review, so we have a claiming system that allows reviewers to choose among the available papers that match their interests. Because we ask reviewers to prioritize these reviews among their many other tasks, we provide a modest honorarium to thank them for their time. The net result is a double-blinded report from three qualified academic reviewers returned to the author in about a week.

Selecting the right journal can be one of the biggest challenges for authors as they navigate the publication process. Poor decisions at this stage often mean months of lost time, as well as re-writing and re-formatting according to the next journal's guidelines; and because authors are incentivized to publish in the highest impact journals, they often overshoot. We are trying to address this issue by creating a platform for authors to broadcast their pre-submission manuscripts to journals once they have been independently reviewed. Editors with journal accounts in our system can use this free tool to search and sort the current papers, look at the reviews, then reach out to authors if a paper strikes their interest. This would help authors make more informed decisions about where to submit and may reduce some of the inappropriate submissions to journals, which consume resources from the editorial staff.

We understand that it will take time to build our credibility to a point where Editors and Managing Editors feel comfortable supplementing their own processes with standardized reports from an independent company. This is why we are initially focusing our attention on producing a service that is valuable to authors. To create a big impact, however, we eventually need the participation of the entire publishing community. Our hope is that by facilitating better journal selection, reducing the number of redundant reviews, and incentivizing reviewers to return the papers quickly, we will save a significant amount of time that can be directed back toward research, which ultimately benefits us all.

Rubriq launches this year with the goal of developing an independent peer review system designed to put more time back into research. To learn more and request an invitation to our beta launch, visit www.rubriq.com.

Results of the 2012 ISMTE Survey – a report on member demographics

Jason Roberts, PhD

Executive Editor, Headache

Introduction

As the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors moves towards five years since its inception, it was felt by members of the Board of Directors that a survey of the members was long overdue. Several questions needed answering. Who are we? Where do we work? What is our work environment like? What are our fellow member's journals like? In addition to supplying some interesting data-driven talking points, it was intended to promote the results to inspire members to adopt new practices, or rethink existing management strategies. For instance, by learning what responsibilities fellow ISMTE members embrace, may help others (re)define their roles, make a case for promotion or request a new job title. Ideally the results will now allow us to peak inside the offices of the ISMTE members as well as provide some illuminating comparative data between journals.

Rather than try and cram the results of 60 questions into one article, several short articles on focused topics such as responsibilities as defined by both Managing Editors and Editorial Assistants, ethics, journal characteristics (e.g. submission levels, online offerings, etc.) along with editorial office practices and policies will be published in *EON* over the coming months. This particular article will kick off the series by looking at some of the member demographics.

Naturally, any survey conducted upon the membership of ISMTE is going to produce skewed results. Though it cannot be proven, it seems likely that ISMTE members are somewhat atypical compared to the majority of staff working inside editorial offices, where most positions are part-time and performed by individuals for which journal work is a secondary activity. Caution is voiced, therefore, about attempting to derive any meaningful industry-wide assumptions about editorial offices – the results simply cannot be extrapolated with confidence. Furthermore, ISMTE is an opt-in organization that means, for the most part, its members are demonstrating a high level of motivation to learn more about editorial office management issues. Members that chose to volunteer at least 15 minutes of their time to complete the survey, one could argue, demonstrate a further level of motivation and, therefore, an element of bias. Another limitation of this study is that we simply do not have any comparative data to work with at this time. By repeating the survey at regular intervals in the future it will be interesting to see amongst those that become repeat respondents what characteristics they report change (beyond obvious temporally-related changes such as years of experience).

It should also be noted that there was one sensitive issue we did not discuss: salary. For an international organization, the responses would simply be too broad and meaningless, desensitized, as it were, to geographic disparity. Even within the two countries that supply the most members (the United States and the United Kingdom) there are north-south regional disparities. Plus, and this is direct testimony from someone who before working in an office used to sign off on editorial office stipend payments for a publisher, there is great variance in salaries that does not correlate with the amount of work or degree of complexity of the tasks involves. Some journals simply generate more revenue, some of which, in turn, can be passed along to the editorial office. Other offices are well/poorly funded due to previous contract negotiations between a publisher and the journal owner.

The Survey By the Numbers

Participants

The invitation was dispatched in June 2012 to the 291 members of the society at the time (as an aside, our membership has blossomed to over 400 since then). 146 members started the survey. 112 completed all questions with 34 failing to complete the survey. Our completed response rate, therefore, was 38.5%. The responses were blinded.

Respondents were drawn from 14 countries with two "unknowns" (actually listed as Afghanistan and Antarctica, though a review of the membership roll suggests this was actually unlikely). 55% of respondents were drawn from the US and 27% from the United Kingdom.

Some other key demographics:

- 77% of the respondents were female
- 70% worked at either a medical or science journal
- 45% of the respondents were self-described as Managing Editors, 17% were self-identified as Editorial Assistants, and 7% as Editors-in-Chief.

Experience

Members were asked to delineate how much experience they possessed working in an editorial office. We did not distinguish in this particular question if they had worked in other editorial offices as part of their total amount of experience. Therefore, we will need to refine the data further to combine responses from other questions on prior work experience in the survey. Furthermore, with 7% of respondents self-described as Editors-in-Chief, it can be assumed some respondents are on term limits that would likely preclude them (though perhaps not exclusively so) from having more than 10 years of experience, if we assume the typical Editorial term is for five years with one additional term.

Length of Experience	% Response
Less than 2 years	18.2%
2-5 years	16.5%
5-10 years	33.9%
More than 10	31.4%

So what did the data show? The typical survey respondent trended towards being quite experienced with almost two-thirds having at least 5 years of experience. Such a result is suggestive of perhaps three things:

- ISMTE members are more likely to be professionals, and not undertaking the task as part of wider responsibilities (such as a personal assistant or departmental administrator)
- Staff with greater experience are attracted to an organization such as ISMTE to keep their professional expertise fresh by having enough contextual knowledge to understand rapidly evolving management philosophies and practices.
- Increasingly individuals, thanks to the genesis of online peer review systems and an increasing perception that there is value in retaining editorial staff, are turning their editorial office roles into careers and not a short term job restricted by the term-limits imposed on the Editor-in-Chief.

To support further the notion of the emergent editorial office careerist, the survey produced some other interesting results. 52.9% (n=121) of respondents reported they had worked at a journal prior to their current title (or titles). Such a shift in workplace was hard to conceive of in days prior to online peer review systems unless one worked in a large academic institution or in a city that represented a publishing node (e.g., Boston, New York, and Washington, DC in the US, Oxford and London in England, etc.). Perhaps most revelatory of all was the fact that 49% of respondents reported working on more than one title. This is very likely a bias only a survey of the ISMTE membership would produce, but nevertheless is still of interest, as it reveals members are filling up their time either with managing two or more titles or taking on a small title part time to supplement their regular editorial office work. Additionally, with the emergence of peer review management companies and publisher-based in-house editorial staff, some members may be employed in roles that see then handle several small titles in various capacities.

Here is another interesting statistic to show our members are diversifying their working hours: 38% of respondents reported being proficient in more than one online submission system.

One final question from which the results could be used to make assumptions about the emerging "career" or "professional" status of Managing Editors concerns the amount of hours dedicated per week to editorial office work. The results of the 121 individuals that answered the question suggest a strong tendency towards full time engagement in editorial office work. Additionally, only 27% reporting working an additional job that was not based in an editorial office.

Hours spent per week	% Response
Less than 10	10.7%
11-15	5.8%
16-20	5.8%
21-25	10.7%
26-30	5.8%
More than 30	61.2%

Employment Status

We asked members to indicate the employment status that best described them. It should be noted that we allowed respondents to make more than one choice so the percentages will not add up to 100%, but merely reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that specific work scenario best applied to them. This author, himself, illustrates the reason why we allowed for this multi-factorial approach, having worked at three journals that all involved a different type of hiring body while also being an independent contractor.

It is perhaps no surprise that being employed by a society is the most common method of employment amongst ISMTE member respondents. But that seemingly short answer option does hide a good deal of complexity that we can only speculate as to what it means. For instance, does employment mean they are a *direct hire* of an association? Do they, therefore work in an office located at a particular

Answer Options	Response Percent
Employed by a publisher	22.3%
Employed by a university or research institute	19.8%
Employed by a government agenda	0.0%
Employed by Association/Society	35.5%
Contracted by the journal	9.1%
Contracted by a publisher	9.1%
Contracted by a company offering peer review services	4.1%
Other (please describe)	16.5%

association? Equally, could the respondent simply be a *hired contractor* of an association? Does the respondent perform other roles at an association (e.g. membership coordinator, meeting planner) or does the association run a dedicated editorial office? Many ISMTE members are drawn from the very large national societies run from Washington DC. Editors may come and go but the professional editorial office staff frequently stays put. This particular scenario is probably more prevalent in the US, simply because equivalent national societies in many other countries are simply too small to have the economies of scale to retain full time professional editorial staff.

It should be noted that nearly all the "Other" responses represented a "freelance contractor" status or variations thereof. This particular response, in some cases, might have been better applied to one of the other answer options, such as "Contracted by the journal" or "Contracted by the publisher." Clearly, if confusion amongst respondents arose, the question was somewhat deficient – the blame does not lie with the respondent.

Finally, it will be interesting to see if these responses shift rapidly in future years. It seems likely that some publishers will hire editorial staff directly. Other publishers, alternatively, are simply outsourcing that task to companies offering peer review management. Should

ISMTE's membership blossom in China, could we see a growth in responses indicating work is undertaken in a government or university/ research institute?

Work Location

Following on from the employment status question, was a further question about work location. One would expect some correlation of results between status and location but a confounding factor is that many ISMTE members do work remotely as data from the following two tables reveal. The first table reveals responses to the question "Describe your predominant work location?"

I would love to have broken down yet further the Work from Home response for fun! How

Answer Options	Response Percent
Work from home	33.1%
Rent/own office space	5.0%
Work in academic or research institution	21.5%
Work in publisher's office	20.7%
Work in government office	0.0%
Work in Society/Association office	18.2%
Other	4.1%
Other (please describe)	1.7%

many of us have worked at the dining room table? Or, perhaps, a favorite armchair in front of the TV at night? I wonder how many of us use a coffee shop as a secondary location when working from home becomes too suffocating.

The second set of data revealed how members described their proximity to their Editor. Unfortunately there is no historic data to which we can refer back, but one can only speculate how very different responses may have looked 15 years ago for the question "Where are you located in relation to your Editor-in-Chief?" I would go so far as to suggest that these responses are amongst the most important from the survey. With 1 in 2 respondents working remotely from their Editor this does lead us to speculate whether the perception that editorial office

Answer Options	Response Percent
In same institution	18.2%
Remotely but local (within 1 hour travel time)	8.3%
Not local, different part of country (over 1 hour travel time)	47.1%
Different country	16.5%
I am the Editor-in-Chief	9.9%

people work in isolation is real. We can answer that question literally:

Of course, it could be argued entire teams can work in isolation, locked in to methods that have worked for them for years and sealed off from new

How many colleagues do you have in the editorial office/ team (excluding the Editor-in-Chief):	Response Percent
0	31.4%
1	19.8%
2	8.3%
3	9.9%
More than 3	28.9%
Not Applicable	1.7%

Excluding people in your office or at the same company, do you communicate regularly with individuals in other editorial offices?	Response Percent
Yes	28.1%
Yes - and specifically through ISMTE meetings and discussion forums	14.9%
No	29.8%
Occasionally	38.8%

practice ideas and philosophies. Developing that point further, we also asked about what level of interaction members engaged in with other offices:

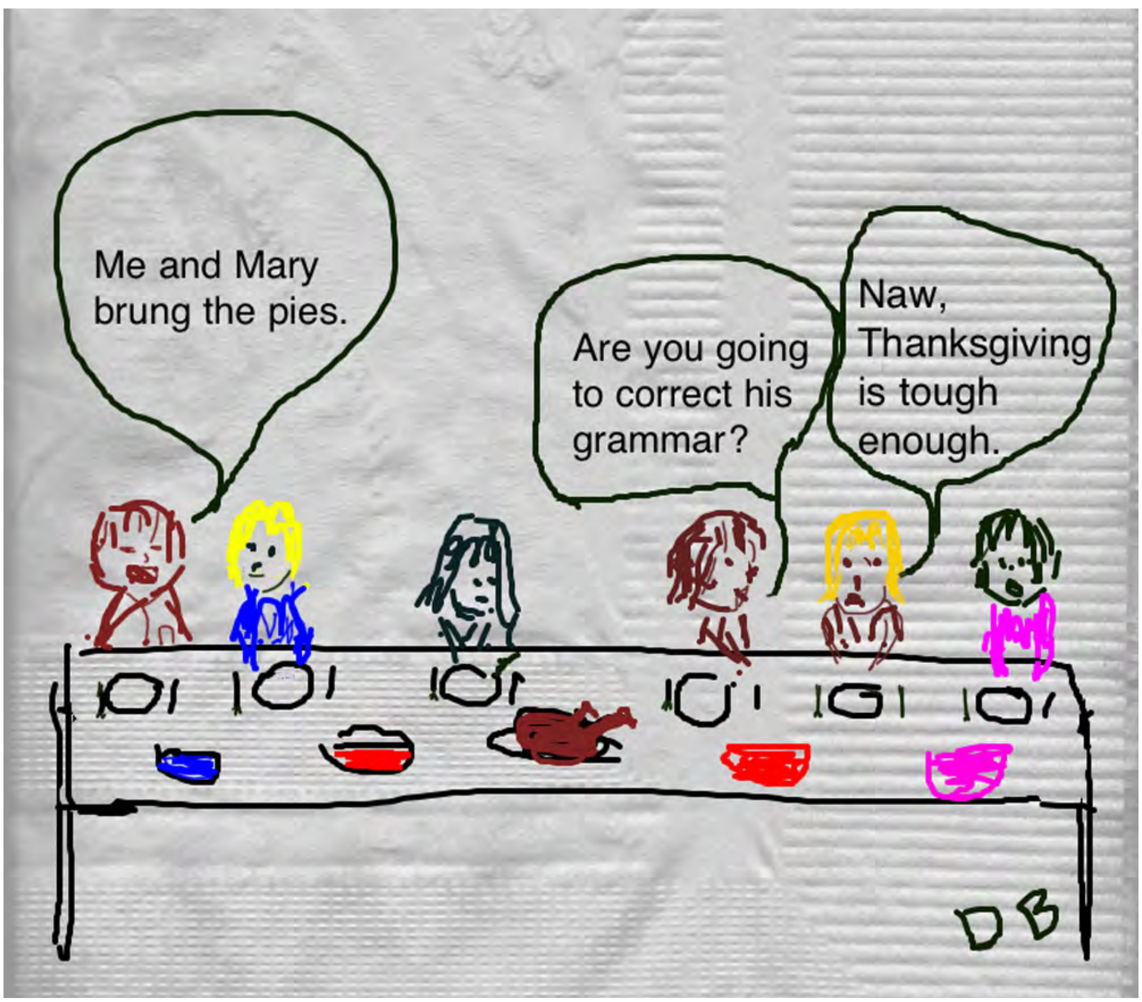
It should be noted that respondents were encouraged to record all the responses that applied to them. Sadly, even with the emergence of an organization like ISMTE it does seem that almost one-third of members have no communication outlet.

Conclusion

We can only speculate what a survey may have looked like in pre-submission system, pre-ISMTE days but it does seem likely that this survey is the first snapshot of a dramatic shift in the way editorial offices are run along with a change in the settings and professional aspirations of the people that populate those offices. This first of several articles has hopefully provided some of the first glimpses of the employment status and work scenarios of fellow editorial office members. How similar, or dissimilar, are you from these results?

Fun Post-script

I thought it would be an amusing sideline to try and define the typical respondent. It seems that if you are a US-based female, with 5-10 years experience, have worked on another journal previously, are employed by an association or society and your journal is a medical title that has between 500-1,000 submissions, you fit the profile of the typical respondent. Interestingly, I think that somewhat closely describes our immediate past President, Elizabeth Blalock. Of course, Elizabeth is exceptional in many other ways!



Offering Continuing Education

Alethea B. Gerding, MA
Managing Editor, *Journal of Prosthodontics*

Nearly three years ago, my Editor-in-Chief sidled into my cubicle and dropped an open copy of *JADA* (the *Journal of the American Dental Association*) onto my desk. Pointing at the open page, he said, "CDE (continuing dental education) questions. They have them for several articles every issue. We should do that." And then, as quickly as he appeared, he left.

My first thought? "Yes! What a great idea! What better way to provide a service to our society's members and to stimulate greater interaction with the articles we publish!"

But then, reality: Do we (the *Journal of Prosthodontics* [JOPR], a relatively small dental specialty journal) have authority to offer CE? Our page budget is tight already—can we afford to use precious page space to print questions? Who would write the questions? Approve them? Grade the answers? How much will it cost us to implement? How much will we charge? Who will collect the money?

Normally, one of my favorite parts of this job is that my EIC gives me the autonomy and authority to spearhead projects just like this, but in the spring of 2010, a few months before I was set to take the summer off on maternity leave, I thought, "What has he just gotten me into?" Thus began my saga to bring the project to fruition. I hope I can share with you some of the lessons I've learned.

Why Offer CE?

You may be asking yourself, why bother? "If it's such a hassle, I'm not sure I need the headache." I thought this to myself several times over the past few years, but once in place and running smoothly, a CE program benefits your **readers**, your **authors**, your **journal**, and (with any luck!) your journal's **bottom line**.

Your readers (your subscribers, your society members)

Requirements for CE hours vary across professions, specialties, and perhaps even from state to state. We offer one hour of CE credit per available article. Not nearly enough to meet anyone's yearly requirement, but more than enough to fill in where necessary. Imagine a prosthodontist three hours short of his/her yearly requirement. Instead of registering for a time-consuming and expensive CE course, that prosthodontist can easily pick up the needed credits by spending a few hours in front of the computer reading JOPR articles. We offer an added benefit to members of our society, the American College of Prosthodontists (ACP): they pay a reduced rate per article.

Your authors

What do your authors truly want? Yes, detailed, superfast peer review followed by immediate acceptance. Other than that? They want people to read what they write! They want colleagues, mentors, and protégés to see what they've been working on, to think about it, and to read it closely. The articles we choose for CE get this treatment. In order to receive CE credit, a user must read the article closely and answer several questions about it. It cannot simply be skimmed for abstract and conclusions.

Your journal (and its bottom line)

We regularly choose our most citable articles as CE offerings. I don't have definitive data on this yet, but I do hope that their availability for CE leads to even more citations than they'd otherwise receive. I can't help but believe that once users read an article for CE credit, that article will be "lodged in their brain" in a way an article skimmed in the print journal wouldn't be. Once lodged there, I hope it will be recalled and cited. We'll see if it works out this way. As for the bottom line, again, it's too early to tell. We charge $25 to non-members and $20 to members for each article (1 credit). Wiley-Blackwell, our publisher, claims that once initial costs, which will vary based on the extent of your offerings, for setting up an online platform are recouped, then most of the money you collect becomes profit.

How To Do It

If all that sounds like something you'd like for your journal, for your authors, or for your sponsoring society, then it's time to start thinking about how to do it. Below are some of the things you will need to consider and decisions you will need to make. I have listed them in roughly the order I encountered them. Your experience may be slightly different, and some of these steps overlap, but I hope they provide a reasonable guide.

Step 1: Do you have Authority/Accreditation to offer CE (CME/CLE/CDE)?
Here's an easy one: if you (or your publisher) don't have the authority or accreditation to offer continuing education credits, there's no point to moving forward until you do. After my EIC dropped the *JADA* on my desk (and I finished asking myself a million questions), the first thing I did was call my contact at Wiley-Blackwell. Surely they'd done this before. As it turns out, while they are authorized by the American Medical Association (AMA) to offer CME (continuing medical education) credits, they had no authority from the ADA to offer CDE credits, which is what I needed. At this juncture, I called my society's Director of Education. As luck would have it, the ACP *is* authorized to offer CDE credits (as most medical societies likely are). Still, the ACP needed to seek further approval from the ADA, sending them an example of the type of article we would be using, the types of questions asked, the number of questions per article, and information as to how the questions would be written, revised, and approved (see below). We sent all that to the ADA and received conditional approval, based upon the ADA being able to see a final version of the site (we chose online only, see below). Additionally, the ADA asked that we add "justification" to each answer. In other words, in addition to a question and a series of multiple choice answers, we also needed to include a paragraph or two explaining why each answer was correct. Finally, we had to choose a length of time for the credit to be active. We chose one year (an article published in February 2012 will be available for CE credit through February 2013).

When discussing who would approve the questions, we decided the final decision would rest with the EIC, but we also decided to designate a "CE Editor" who would fill the role of an Associate Editor, working with authors to revise their questions when necessary. We were lucky, as our Book Reviews Editor volunteered to take on the project.

Step 2: What Platform? Online? Print? Both?
For us, this was a no-brainer, but you may find otherwise. We went with online only. W-B is already partnered with an online CE vendor (CE City) that inputs questions and answers, links them to articles, collects credit card info, and spits back a PDF CE certificate. Voila! It's that simple.

Even if it weren't so simple, though, we saw other drawbacks to offering the CE in the print journal. Using pages to print questions would tax our already-strained page budget. For printed questions, the users would fill in (or bubble in) answers and fax to . . . who? (Me, probably.) Who would grade the questions? (Me, probably.) Who would collect money? (Me, probably.) Checks? Credit card numbers? Who would mail the certificates? (Me, probably.) From a selfish standpoint, if nothing else, I was firmly against a print offering. Practically, I also saw other potential drawbacks: what if I was out of the office and the fax ran out of ink? What if someone else happened by and accidentally picked up questions off the fax machine? Would I have to file the answered questions? Where? For how long? What would I do with the money when it came in?

I do see one potential drawback of online-only CE. The title page of each CE article includes a CE logo and a blurb directing readers to the CE website. I do wonder if more people would take advantage of the CE offering if it was right there in their hands, and they didn't have to go to a computer, type in a web address, log in, choose the appropriate article, etc.

Step 3: How much to charge, How many credits to offer
Here, we relied on the expertise of the ACP's Education Director. She is familiar with how much the society charges for courses and for credit hours.

I would suggest that you find out what the "going rate" is in your field. Ultimately, we decided that to read an article, to answer 6-8 questions, and to read the justifications for all 6-8 questions should take about an hour. Therefore, each article is worth 1 CDE credit. We felt $25 was a reasonable charge for 1 credit, and then, as a benefit for our members, we offer a discounted $20 rate.

Step 4: Choosing Content
With most of the administrative details out of the way (or on the way to being resolved), we next turned to finding the appropriate content. We publish eight issues a year, and decided that we would designate three to five articles per issue, meaning that by the end of a year, we would have anywhere from 24 to 40 activities available.

Picking the best articles to use has been fairly easy. I ask my Associate Editors to clue me in to potential CE offerings. Even when they forget, I can often tell from their confidential comments to the EIC (i.e., "We should fast track this ... very valuable!" or "Superb research") what articles will be good. We try to keep a balance between heavy basic science research of interest to academic prosthodontists and cutting-edge clinical reports useful to practicing clinicians.

We get a quarterly report as to which articles are most often accessed for CE. Our site has been live for only seven months, but going forward, this data will be invaluable to us in choosing the type of articles that seem to be the most popular or useful.

Step 5: Writing the Questions
Again, another easy step. Who writes the questions? The authors do! They know the material best, and have the best feel for what in their article is important. Believe it or not, I've found the authors to be incredibly responsive, timely, and helpful. Of course, the email I send them asking for their participation highlights the fact that "your article will be of particular interest," (who said flattery doesn't work?) and "I do hope that the articles chosen for CE will be more widely read, and from there, more widely cited."

The authors write 8-10 questions, with multiple choice answers and justifications for each question. They also provide three educational objectives ("Upon completion of this activity, the user will better be able to: . . ."). At this time I also collect any conflict of interest forms, if necessary. I give the authors a deadline of about one month before the questions are due to W-B, because of steps 6-8.

Step 6: Edit Questions
I do a quick edit of the questions. I simply check for readability and house style. We get a lot of inscrutable questions of the "All of the following are true EXCEPT" variety, followed by several multiple choice answers that say "not" or "no" somewhere in the answer. If I have to sit and think, "*Except*? Wait, is he saying Choice B is true? No, wait, B is a *positive* statement, and A is a *negative* statement, so that could be . . ." If I can't figure out what they are asking, I work with the authors to clarify.

Step 7: Approval by CE Editor
Once the questions are readable, our CE editor approves them. I'm no prosthodontist, so I rely on him for valuable insight like, "Question 4 is a little controversial. Some people will argue that that answer isn't correct." Or, "Question 7 is way too easy. You learn that in your first year of dental school." Because authors send 8-10 questions, and we only have to use 6-8 for our activity, the CE editor will also recommend which questions to axe and which to keep. If we have any questions or need clarification from the authors, we send the questions back and get everything in ship shape for . . .

Step 8: Final Approval from EIC
If the CE editor and I have done our job, this should be a simple check in the box, and for the most part it has been. Occasionally, though, something slips by us: we send an article with only five questions or a too-easy question slips by. Even though 90% of the time, I get the EIC's approval within 24 hours, I learned the hard way not to wait until the last minute to send him the questions. If he does have questions or concerns, I need time to go back to the authors for further revision.

Step 9: Send to Publisher or Online Vendor
W-B's online CE vendor sent me a production schedule that roughly aligns with our print

production schedule. I have a due date for all questions and associated forms (i.e., Conflict of Interest statement when necessary) that is about 6 weeks before the questions "go live." I send the questions, answers, justifications, and educational objectives to my contact via email. She usually sends me a test link within a week. I then check the link. I take the test myself, looking for typos, mis-scored answers, formatting errors, etc. I send her any corrections, she makes them, and I get another swing at checking the site.

I also tell my production editor which articles for the upcoming issue will be offered for CE so that she can affix the CE logo and include the CE blurb on the title when the articles go to print.

Step 10: The Questions Go Live

The end. Return to Step 4 and start all over again.

Lessons Learned the Hard Way

1. *The vicious cycle of accreditation.* Early in the process, the ADA was reluctant to provide consent to the project until they had seen an example of our content in the site, including a screen grab. However, W-B wasn't keen to begin building a site until the ADA offered accreditation. Personal relationships smoothed the way here. Our society's education director used her personal contact with the ADA so that we were granted "provisional approval" based on a look at an article and questions. W-B then began building our site. During the test phase, we were able to give the ADA the requested screen grabs and were granted final approval.
2. *A new workflow.* Our manuscript review and publication workflows run seamlessly. Well, OK, there are hiccups from time to time, but for the most part, manuscripts come in, reviews come back, manuscripts get published, and the wheels of review and production grind on. All of a sudden, we had a whole new workflow to incorporate (Steps 4 to 10 above). How early should we identify the content? How soon do we need the questions back from the authors? Do I send questions to the CE editor as they come in? Or do I wait to get an issue's worth of questions? The best advice I can give here is to do everything as soon as possible. If a manuscript is accepted and it seems like a potential source of CE, ask the authors right away, even if it won't appear in print for another 8 months. Reassure them that it will still go online early (if you offer this service). I made the mistake of waiting too long and cutting timelines too tight. I've now learned about how much time it usually takes for me to edit questions, for the CE editor to approve them, etc., but starting out, I cut deadlines way too close. Start out with big buffer times. You can always cut back as the new workflow begins to work as seamlessly as your review and production processes do.
3. *Getting people to use the site.* When the site went live in February 2012, our EIC wrote an editorial about it. I naively thought that we'd tell our readers about this great new service their journal was providing, and there would be a clamor to pick up easy CE credits. Not so. In fact, we've been publicizing the site all year, and usership still isn't quite what we'd hope. W-B will have banners promoting it at our upcoming Annual Session. We tweet links to new activities through the ACP's Twitter account, and post links to the ACP's Facebook page. I've included a link to the site as part of my signature block on emails. An article with screen grabs and step-by-step instructions will appear in an upcoming copy of the ACP's quarterly newsletter. Usage statistics about articles already available for CE will help us refine our picks. Finally, and I don't know why it took me so long to come up with this idea: USE THE AUTHORS. Remember the ones who were so eager to send the questions? I'm sending them the link as soon as it is available, reminding them to post it to their Facebook page or Twitter feed. I've just started doing this, and, trust me, the authors are eager to let people know about it.

This time next year, I hope that our ADA accreditation will be renewed. I hope that authors continue to be eager to supply questions. I hope the CE workflow will be seamlessly integrated into our other workflows. But most of all, I hope that all the hard work will have been worth it, and the site will have become a popular and highly trafficked source of CE credit for prosthodontists nationwide.

Peer review: On EMBO's Initiatives to Make the Black Box More Transparent

Barbara Pauly, PhD
Editor, EMBO reports

All scientists have experienced the frustration of trying to publish their findings. After years of bench work, authors submit their manuscript to a journal of their choosing and hope for the best. Once the manuscript has passed the initial assessment by either part-time academic or full-time in-house editors, it will be sent out for in-depth peer review. After weeks, sometimes even months, the authors hear back from the editorial office: they hope that the editor will tell them that the referees support the publication of the study and that the paper is accepted. More often, authors will be given a list of things to do that the referees believe will improve the paper significantly. In the worst case, the referees will be negative and the paper will be rejected. The time, energy, emotion, and money invested in this process on all sides are staggering, especially since the majority of papers pass through several journals before acceptance. Surely there is a better way?

Many scientists criticize the peer-review system and editorial processes behind it, but nearly all accept there are few viable alternatives. Opponents of the current system argue that referees do not focus on the data at hand, but instead demand more and further reaching analyses during endless rounds of review and revision. The additional experiments requested are often time-consuming and costly and the delay before publication may have a significant impact on the careers of the scientists involved. Moreover, because referees must necessarily be researchers in an area similar to that of the authors, scientists fear that reviewers sometimes attempt to delay or prevent the publication of results for reasons of competition. Researchers dislike the opacity of the editorial processes and the single blind peer review; they worry about what goes on inside the black box and whether they are being treated fairly by editors and referees.

As an organization that publishes four peer-reviewed journals (*The EMBO Journal, EMBO reports, Molecular Systems Biology* and *EMBO Molecular Medicine*), EMBO has launched a number of initiatives in an effort to improve the peer review system and make the whole process more transparent. Since 2009, *The EMBO Journal* is publishing "peer review process files" alongside published articles. These documents contain all significant correspondence between the authors and the editor about a manuscript, as well as the referees' anonymous comments, the authors' response to them, the editor's decision letter (all in unedited form), and the timeline of publication.

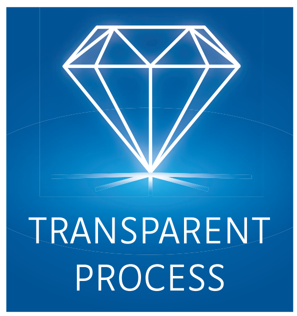
Initially, there had been concerns about publishing all this information. Authors might not want the research community to know about the initial concerns raised on their work and referees might fear exposure of their identity. Last but not least, would the research community make use of even more information added to already overlong papers? To address the first concern, authors can choose not to have the peer review process files published, but very few actually do so (less than 5% at all four EMBO publications). It also turned out that very few reviewers are opposed to the idea of having their reports made available to the public. In fact, referee acceptance rates have increased in the last three years. And download statistics show that readers are indeed interested in the peer review files, as about 10% of web access to an article goes to the peer review process file.

EMBO also hopes that in addition to opening up the black box of editorial assessment and peer-review to scrutiny, the files add value to papers by enhancing the discussion of the published findings, making it clear why the decision to publish was made, and allowing readers to get the most value from the insights provided by the referees.

The published reports can also be used as teaching tools for the next generation of reviewers, as peer-review is not normally taught in any formal manner. In this regard, we encourage principal investigators (PIs) to engage senior members of their laboratories in reviewing papers, but we do ask the PIs to independently read and assess the manuscript and to disclose the names of their co-referees to the editors.

Some people argue that it would be even more informative to publish the reports on rejected papers, but since most of these papers will eventually be published elsewhere, this is obviously not possible. Instead, we encourage transfer of manuscripts between selected journals with referee reports.

Given the positive response from authors, referees and readers to this transparency initiative, all EMBO titles have now adopted the transparent peer-review process. Other journals, such as *eLife*, are following EMBO's lead and will be publishing manuscript-related correspondence alongside accepted papers and several BMC titles also have had good experiences with this policy.



To further address transparency and fairness, the EMBO publications have also abandoned confidential comments from the reviewers to the editors as we believe that all concerns that come up should be disclosed to the authors. Only in exceptional situations, for example if reviewers have concerns about potential scientific misconduct or unethical practices, it may be appropriate to approach the editorial office directly.

While transparent peer-review is a first step toward making scientific publishing fairer, EMBO has launched other initiatives as well. As mentioned above, one concern often raised about peer-review is that referees might have a conscious or unconscious conflict of interest when assessing a manuscript if they have competing work in hand. To ensure that referee comments are balanced and fair, all four EMBO journals have begun to encourage referees to comment on each other's anonymous reports prior to making a decision on a manuscript. This has proven to be very helpful in balancing the sometimes opposing views found in referee reports.

While cross-commenting is not mandatory, many reviewers do come back with additional comments within 24 hours, which also ensures that this step does not delay taking a decision on a manuscript. Having the referees comment on each other's reports also helps to reach consensus on the most relevant additional experiments that should be done to make the data at hand conclusive. In this way, editors can avoid requesting the far-reaching and time-consuming experiments that unnecessarily extend a study beyond its current scope. This is particularly important for a journal such as *EMBO reports*, which focuses on conceptually short papers reporting a single key message, and it has resulted in most papers undergoing only one major round of revision.

Other new initiatives introduced by the EMBO publications include encouraging authors to provide the unprocessed source data underlying graphs, gels and micrographs, which adds robustness to the published findings. The publication of unprocessed data was in part pioneered by *Molecular Systems Biology*, and it has been implemented at other journals, including *Nature Cell Biology*.

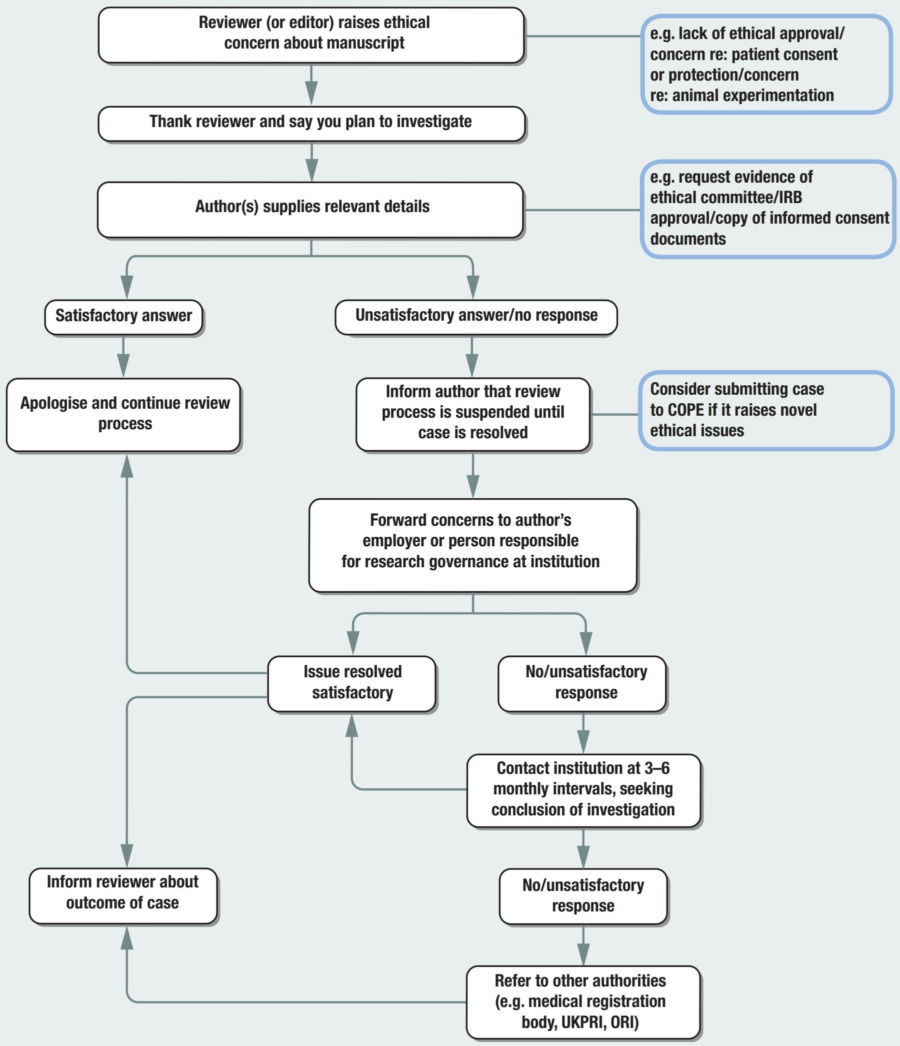
The EMBO publications are also trying to minimize the amount of referee time that is wasted on reviewing the same paper for multiple journals. As mentioned above, EMBO has an inter-journal transfer system in place that allows the authors to transfer not only the manuscript, but also the referee comments from one EMBO title to another. We are currently investigating whether this could be broadened to journals outside of EMBO. Last but not least, in a world of ever increasing competition, we have put in place a so-called "scooping protection" policy, which means that a manuscript is protected from being scooped by others during review or revision. This protection is in place from the day of submission for up to six months after a first decision on the paper has been made.

While we hope that these steps make publishing in each of the four EMBO titles more transparent and fair, much discussion remains to be had in the scientific community concerning the ways in which science and scientists are most appropriately assessed, and what role scientific journals should play in this process.

C O P E COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

WWW.PUBLICATIONETHICS.ORG

What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript



Developed for COPE by Liz wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)

Finish this Sentence....

Here are the answers we received from last month's question:

The best thing about Halloween for an Editor is…

…the spooktacular puns! (D.K. Rodriguez)

…the opportunity to give rejects or accepts. (Wendy Krank)

...when they call you a witch you can tell yourself it's all in good fun. (Wendie Howland)

…the chance to correct your neighbors' grammar as they hand candy to your children. (anonymous)

…dressing up in grammar-inspired costumes that no one gets—but it makes your night when someone finally understands you're the grammar police. (Meghan McDevitt)

For next month, answer the following question. The name of the singer or group is optional.

The grammar-challenged song that drives me the most crazy is…

Examples:
I Can't Get No Satisfaction (Rolling Stones)
We Don't Need No Education (Pink Floyd)

Email me with your answer at dbowman@asge.org, and it will be published in next month's issue of EON.

Follow the ISMTE via Social Media!

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Calendar of Events

COPE Medical Editors Short Course
November 7, 2012
Oxford, U.K.
http://publicationethics.org/events

Beyond the Rhetoric: New Opportunities in Open Access
November 20, 2012
http://www.alpsp.org

Editorial Manager User Group Meeting
December 10, 2012
London, UK
Preprint Manager User Group Meeting
December 11, 2012
London, UK
http://www.editorialmanager.com/

Project Management for Publishing
December 11, 2012
http://www.alpsp.org

2013 European Meeting of ISMPP
January 22-23, 2013
London, UK
http://www.ismpp.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.*

CONTACT

ISMTE Executive Offce:
107 Mantua Pike Ste. 701 #122, Mantua, New Jersey,
USA 08051-1606
TEL: (+1) 856-292-8512
FAX: (+1) 856-292-8513
ismteoffice@gmail.com

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