In our third and final segment of the ISMTE NA Virtual Event conversation with past presidents Elizabeth Blalock, Julie Nash, Kristen Overstreet, Jason Roberts, and Michael Willis, we will hear what each speaker enjoys most about ISMTE, how to get involved in the organization, and what they imagine the future might look like for scholarly publishing:

(Please note that the question answers and some phrasing have been edited for length and clarity; the question order has been modified based on theme. All opinions expressed are those of the speakers. The moderator, M, is Kristen Anderson.)

M: What advice would you give to someone who wants to get involved, but maybe isn’t sure where to start?

JASON: Well, nobody’s a terrifying personality at ISMTE. Everyone is super approachable. I know it’s hard right now, because we’re all sort of stuck working from home in babies’ bedrooms and things like that. If you’re willing and able to help, the organization is more than willing to bring you into the fold, and it is so rewarding; it really is. I mean, it could be hard work, depending on what you do, but it is rewarding. You meet people that become lifelong professional and personal friends, and you learn from your career. I would say if you’re going to pick anything, pick something that you know you’re either good at, or you’re passionate about, and get involved in that first. Initially, just reach out to people. If you’ve got an idea or interest, I can guarantee that you’re going to have a receptive audience in this organization.

JULIE: I was going to say a lot of what Jason said. We’re a volunteer organization, and I can guarantee that there is not one board member, committee chair, committee member, etc. that isn’t going to jump at the chance to get an email from somebody who’s eager to participate. That’s what we’re founded on: people who are dedicating their time to this organization. I think we’re a very friendly audience, and if you reach out, and say, “Hey, I really want to get involved in EON,” or “I want to get involved in the Membership Committee...” there is going to be a place for you. To extend off of ISMTE, I think there are likely other people that are involved in other kinds of things, whether they’re internal to your organization or in an organization like ISMTE. Also reach out to those folks: ask them what they found rewarding, what they found interesting, and why they pursued those avenues. However, becoming overextended, when you feel like you can’t do anything well doesn’t make it enjoyable, so really hone in on the things that you’re good at, and interested in, and then just put yourself out there. Especially with ISMTE, but I imagine with most organizations, you’re not going to get a cold shoulder.

M: What is the best way to get the word out about ISMTE, and how can we reach people who are in their first few months or years with the society?

KRISTEN: In the beginning, I think we always hoped that the publishers, like the ones who support the organization, would promote ISMTE to the people that they worked with, especially those who are an office of one: working remotely, or working in a university but not feeling connected to the rest of the academic publishing community. It can be hard to get that information out, but ISMTE does a lot with social media, and trying to make its presence felt. I think we can always do a better job, and I think part of that is coming from individuals letting all of their networks know about it.

JULIE: I think we all still imagine that somewhere there has to be a magic list of all the managing editors, and if we could just get everybody on that list to join our organization... but it’s not really that easy. Kristen, you alluded to word of mouth.
We still rely on people telling people telling people who have
gotten something out of the organization, or who think
ISMTE is a great place for professional development, net-
working, and like-minded people who do like-minded things.
I think that’s been very successful. We still have brand new
people who just heard about us. ISMTE is still evolving and
we’re still reaching editorial offices that we many years later
haven’t touched yet.

M: What advice do you have for navigating the
many changes to the industry that arise; both
those abrupt changes, and maybe those longer
burning changes?

MICHAEL: I’m fortunate I work in a large organization, Wiley,
and because of that I don’t need to know everything that’s
going on all the time and I don’t need to steer the ship in every
direction that it needs to go in. That’s not my level in the
company. I think resilience, in terms of skills and things to
develop, is really the top in my list. Being able to flex, and that
sense of sustaining yourself through times of change and
disruption, is a skill that you have to learn over a long period
of time. There are perhaps some very fortunate people for
whom it’s second nature... That’s not the case with me. At the
same time, there are pockets of things I do need to know
about. I can help myself by sort of arming myself with the
information I need to navigate change. For example: take
advantage of relationships with people in the industry to find
out what’s going on; do all the social stuff and social media
stuff to keep abreast of things; look at all the blogs; engage
with researchers. All those sorts of aspects. I can do a certain
amount, but there is a sort of element of soft skills that I need
to develop as well. That’s my perspective on it; I’m interested
in hearing what others say.

JULIE: To piggyback on what Michael said: I would say
flexibility. It kind of goes back to what I said earlier as far as
not being close-minded. I think keeping a flexible, growth
mindset to things, and knowing as you’re coming into this
industry that it is evolving. As opposed to going down the
avenue of “Everything’s changing and I don’t know where my
footing is...” look at it more from a positive perspective like,
“This is exciting. I’m participating in an industry that is
evolving and changing and growing.” I think looking at it that
way is kind of exciting. It’s very interesting to see and watch
how things have grown, and how they’ve changed so much in
such a short period of time. I think: flexibility, to sort of add
another buzzword to Michael’s.

JASON: I think you have to reinvent yourself constantly.
Whether it’s professionally or just literally in what you do.
Certainly Kristie and I have seen, Julie is the same, when other
editorial offices are failing, it’s because it’s the same people
that have been doing the same job for 20 or 30 years, and
they’ve decided it is a sealed box: nothing is going to enter it.
You just can’t do that. There’s more and more stuff just being
thrown at us all the time. I like organizations like ISMTE. I like
reading things like Scholarly Kitchen, for example; I don’t
know if everyone’s familiar with that blog. You’ve definitely
got to read it if you’re in your early career. You’ll learn a lot
of information from it. I think that just helps you synthesize a
lot of noise out there, and you can kind of distill it down to what’s
important to you. Don’t rush into something either. Bide your
time. I’ve been doing this for long enough now to know that
the hot thing over here goes cold very quickly. Just bide your
time. See what the landscape is. See what other people are
saying, and then if you want to apply it to yourself, profes-
sonally, or apply it to your journal, see what others are saying.
This is why ISMTE is a great organization for that.

MICHAEL: What do you think the new normal
will look like for us; what challenges do you
think there will be for early career people
that we may not have necessarily faced ourselves?

JASON: I think one thing that we’re certainly going to be
confronted with, all of us, early career or otherwise, is the rate
of transparency in our industry. Things need to be revealed a
bit more and I think we’ve got to face ourselves, in the
spotlight. Already there’s been a demand on researchers that
we serve to be more accountable. Peer review is opening up,
and I don’t just mean “open peer review.” Journals saying,
“This is what we do, and how we do it,” and we may have to be
more aware that people are looking at the things we do a
little more closely. The stuff that I saw going on 15 or 20 years
ago would just be appalling now. If it happened, nobody even
batted an eye at it then, because nobody knew that it was
going on. I don’t think you could get away with that now, and I
think that a lot of journals live in fear of becoming a viral
sensation at this point. That might not be a bad thing, quite
frankly. It keeps us all on our toes, and I think we should be
held to account. I do think transparency is going to be
something that we’ll all have to be acutely aware of.

KRISTEN: I think the rate of change in this industry is
beneficial for early career people, because in a lot of ways
you’ve got as much information as those of us who’ve been
doing it for many years do. We’re constantly learning new
things, and so you might be ahead of us in multiple places.
You may have learned something in your education, or at
another job, that might put you ahead of where we are, that
have been doing this a while. This industry’s not that hard to break into, and it’s a very nurturing community. I think we all try to work together to try and help each other learn and grow.

**JULIE:** I think a lot of organizations already had a lot of content in a virtual place but, I imagine with where we are now, that’s just going to continue. I think a lot of organizations are going to push in the direction of going virtual for a lot of resources and programming. There is just going to be more: more, more, more to read!

**ELIZABETH:** I think the move to digital remote offices and things like that, the things that we’ve been promoting are possible, are being proven in other industries to be true. Right? It’s not just in publishing where you can have a remote office, but in banking and in telecommunications, etc. I think it will make even more possibilities for the people who are good communicators, detail oriented, team players, and constant learners to find a place in the organization near or far. I think there’s opportunity.

It has been a pleasure to share ISMTE NA Virtual Event Early Career Meetup event with you in this article series; I hope your knowledge of ISMTE’s history and vision has grown, and you are inspired to get involved! To conclude this series, I would like to remind our readers and early career members about a few resources that are available to you: First, make sure that you check out the Committees page on the ISMTE website to learn more about where you can get involved with the organization. As our speakers said: if you’re willing to volunteer your time, energy, and ideas, there is a place for you in this Society. Second, are you interested in contributing to EON’s early career column? Do you have any tips from your own experiences you feel may be helpful for early career members, or are you interested in a topic that may help others sharpen their skills? If so, please reach out to Colin Trumbull at colin@jjeditorial.com. Finally, I would like to mention ISMTE’s new Early Career Task Force, which was formed at the beginning of 2020 with a goal of identifying the Society’s existing resources that are applicable to early career members, and brainstorming new ways to engage these members. If you are interested in learning more about this Task Force, or would like to get involved, please reach out to Meghan McDevitt at meghanmcdevitt@outlook.com or Donna Blake-Weems at execdir@ismte.org.

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**ISMTE Elevator Pitch**

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

I will be soliciting elevator pitches over the course of the year. Send yours to me at alethea@ascpt.org. You’re in the elevator with a fellow editorial office professional. You have 6 floors to go. Be quick!