

## *Summary of the North American ISMTE Conference*

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The ISMTE North American Conference was noticeably larger this year, with 89 attendees versus the 55 attendees in Baltimore in 2009. This was one of the reasons prompting the move to a larger venue in Washington, DC and, with a working party dedicated to increasing membership to be launched in Fall 2010, it is expected the meetings will continue to grow. A large range of journals, publishers, disciplines, and job descriptions were represented amongst the attendees, and the evening reception and breaks provided excellent networking opportunities.

The meeting was opened by Glenn Collins, planning committee chair, and Elizabeth Blalock, president of ISMTE. Glenn started by welcoming us to 'our' meeting – a meeting not for our journals but for us, the people in the editorial offices. Elizabeth continued the welcome, discussing the Society's needs and goals and thanking all the volunteers on the committees for their time and efforts.

**John Sack, from HighWire Press,** gave the opening keynote address with an interesting presentation on thinking outside the box when publishing in the post-Web world. He noted how today's successful corporations (Google, Apple, Amazon) had found new markets by transforming traditional service provision and using technological advances to meet the needs of consumers in a unique manner. It was the ability of these companies to solve problems in innovative ways, set new goals, and transform their business models that led to their successes, particularly in comparison to companies that have stayed with traditional models (*e.g.*, newspapers). Similarly, journals need to consider how to meet the needs of readers and authors in novel ways to take advantage of the new opportunities in today's world. A key question driving these transformations is: If the author and reader were in the same room, how would they communicate? A multitude of innovations have occurred in publishing, but it is important to retain the central focus of communicating information and disseminating

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peer-reviewed research. Innovations include reference linking, publishing ahead of press, online letters to editors, topical browsing, customized alerts, and providing supplemental data online.

The presentation reviewed the results of interviews with eight (mostly early-career) researchers to determine how they use technology and how journals can meet their needs. Rather than searching libraries or journals, researchers tended to use relevant search engines (PubMed, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Google Search). It was apparent researchers read articles, not journals, and they largely did this through reading annotated Tables of Content, e-mailed to them, and scanning articles for relevant information. Readers wanted journals to be mobile (*i.e.*, online and available on wireless devices) but also wanted to be able to print articles and take a break from the computer. A need that was not being met was the ability to keep track of reading and take notes in a useful way and manage articles in an integrated manner. The preliminary nature of the results prevented strong conclusions, but the presentation highlighted the importance of experimenting with new technologies to integrate existing communication methods with novel techniques to meet the readers' needs.

**Joseph Barker, from John Wiley & Sons, gave a presentation on “Copyright 101,”** which stimulated a lengthy question and answer discussion and may lead to a regular column in *EON*. Copyright is ‘a property right in an original work of authorship’ in which the ‘original expression’ is protected. This definition includes the format, organization, sequence, and style, but not the facts, information, and ideas presented; and covers all works including literary, dramatic, and

photographic works as well as computer code. A copyright provides its holders with the exclusive right to reproduce the work, prepare derivative works, distribute copies of the work, and display the work publicly. The purpose of copyright is to compensate authors, artists, and publishers, and permission must be sought from the copyright holder before a work can be used.

US copyright law was written in 1923 and revised in 1978. Works created before 1923 are within the public domain and do not require permission. Works created after 1923 have different protection depending if they were created before or after 1978. Copyright exists as soon as the work is ‘fixed,’ which includes being placed on the Internet or being sufficiently permanent or stable so that it can be reproduced. Works can be used without permission for some purposes including criticism, teaching/reporting, commentary, scholarship, and research, but must not be for profit or promoting a service. Under these *fair use* guidelines quotes should not be more than 300 words from a book or full-length source, or more than 50 words for a shorter work including journal articles, or any lines from songs or poems. If a work is prepared by an employee within the scope of their employment or specially commissioned with an expressed agreement, then this is considered a *work for hire* and the employer holds the copyright. This is an important issue for journal editors to consider as some funding agencies may hold the intellectual property rights for research, preventing researchers from submitting manuscripts for publication. It is important that any authors submitting manuscripts based on funded research projects ensure they own the intellectual property to avoid potential problems with funding agencies in transferring copyright to journals and publishers. There were many take-home

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messages from the presentation and subsequent discussion including being cautious, taking legal advice, and checking with authors to ensure no copyright infringements occur. Particular care must be taken with any quotes, images, tables, or figures, even if these are referenced and acknowledged, as this may not avoid copyright infringement. This responsibility should be shared between authors, editors, and publishers.

**Katherine O'Moore-Klopf, from KOK Edit**, introduced us to the world of copyediting, detailing what copyeditors do, as well as explaining why copyeditors are necessary to our journals. Unedited articles may have excellent research, but can be error laden, incomplete, and inconsistently formatted. It is the task of the copyeditor to polish these manuscripts, thus presenting a good image of the authors and the journal and increasing reader engagement. Many examples of copyediting (from correcting spelling mistakes and grammar to checking figure labeling and reference lists) were explained. A competent copyeditor ensures a journal's style is maintained and that inaccuracies are queried to the authors. Copyeditors are needed in part because reviewers are not editing the manuscripts; rather their task is to check the author's technical content. Software can help with some instances of simple mistakes; however, it is clear that as yet the copyeditor cannot be replaced by technology. For those of you dealing with copyeditors—freelance or in-house—Katherine gave a useful set of criteria to ensure you make the most of the copyeditor's skills. Setting realistic schedules and paying your freelancers on time are important, though one thing I think we can all appreciate is praise for good work.

**Iain Craig, from Wiley-Blackwell**, gave a timely presentation on journal metrics, which are becoming increasingly diversified, although Impact Factor still plays a major role.

Two main commercial multidisciplinary products are used for journal metrics: Web of Science (Thomson Reuters) and Scopus (Elsevier), which represent 11,500 and 16,500 journals, respectively. Traditional journal metrics (Impact Factor, 5-Year Impact Factor, Total Citations) are unweighted and treat all citations equally, while newer weighted metrics (SJR Indicator, Eigenfactor, Article Influence, Source Normalised Impact per Publication) treat citations differently—some citations are worth more than others.

Impact Factor has traditionally been used to evaluate journals and individuals, who gain promotions and research grants based on the Impact Factor of journals they have published in. It is based on the number of citations in a given census period (*e.g.*, 2009) to all items from a particular journal published in a given target period (*e.g.*, 2007-2008) divided by the number of citable items published in the particular journal during the target period. Several problems with Impact Factor were raised including: the target period being too short, as it takes some time before papers are cited; differences in referencing behaviour between journals and disciplines; inclusion of citations of 'noncitable' items; and differences in database coverage between subjects.

For these, and other reasons, newer journal metrics have been developed that take some of these factors into consideration and attempt to correct for them. However, despite the extensive time, effort, and calculations involved, two central factors appear to largely determine any journal metric—the quantity of the productive core or the number of publications and the impact of the productive core or total citation counts.

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The presentation explored some of the broader problems with existing journal metrics and the continual attempt to quantify and rank journals as well as some future directions. Suggested developments for journal metrics include measurements based on individual article usage, post publication peer review and feedback, composite measures (usage, citations, and post peer review), as well as individual researcher profiles.

**Philippa Benson, from The Charlesworth Group**, presented tools and tips for working with international authors and their manuscripts. This presentation largely focused on Chinese authors. The audience indicated many of their journals had seen a dramatic rise in submissions from China, and these submissions are the cause of many problems in their editorial offices for various reasons. Dr. Benson discussed the background of Chinese academics including the importance of publishing in high impact journals for career progression, intense competition and incentives for high quality publications, and a lack of education and training in how to appropriately write and structure manuscripts in English. The issues went beyond problems with the English language, which professional translation services could potentially assist with; although this was largely viewed as a substantial difficulty. It was argued that many problems are based on a lack of clear communication of what is expected from authors: Chinese authors read guides on how to write and structure manuscripts, but editors fail to provide accurate and sufficient feedback with rejected manuscripts, resulting in unwanted repeated submissions.

Suggestions for reducing the difficulties with working with nonnative speakers of English (NNS) authors included keeping

details of why all manuscripts are rejected and creating a wider variety of form letters to accompany rejected manuscripts with more specific details for NNS authors. Submission guidelines also should be revised and improved to clarify the standards and requirements for publication. These should include 'basic' information about plagiarism, the logic of citations, introductions, and other problem areas in submitted manuscripts. Author guidelines may also include examples of abstracts, introductions, and cover letters to assist authors. Editorials can be used to highlight the existence of tools and the importance of authors, reviewers, and editors all being aware of and working to reduce difficulties with NNS authors' submissions.

Prior to the official start of the second day, **Jason Roberts, managing editor of *Headache***, gave a well-attended breakfast presentation on reporting standards to improve the quality of submitted biomedical and science journal manuscripts. Dr. Roberts outlined how reporting problems undermine manuscripts (methodological weaknesses often lead to rejection of papers) and why editorial offices should get involved (vested interest in improving manuscript quality).

One solution is mandating reporting guidelines at the submission stage (to improve manuscript quality, acceptance rate, and future citations). He presented the CONSORT guidelines, which are used for randomized controlled trials, and suggested considerable effort should be expended on implementing these guidelines, including working with authors, reviewers, and editors to increase understanding of the importance of common reporting standards. The conclusion was that common reporting standards are very important and that journals should consider where major weaknesses in submitted

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manuscripts lie and what approach will work optimally for them. Jason suggested clear goals for improving reporting standards be set and resources allocated to accomplish these aims. Finally, the EQUATOR Network was presented as an international initiative set up to improve the reliability and value of medical research literature, and these resources can be used to improve reporting standards.

The invited speaker for the **Social Media** presentation could not, unfortunately, be with us. But the meeting attendees rose to the challenge, forming a panel of ‘experts’ who had in some capacity dealt with social media at their journal offices. Glenn Collins from JACC Journals, Erin Dubnasky from the American Gastroenterological Association, Jessica Rucker from the American Chemical Society, and Margot Puerta from Molecular Medicine, each shared their experiences with implementing new forms of social media at their journals. Glenn discussed his journal’s experience with the iPad, while Erin, Jessica, and Margot talked about setting up and maintaining their journals’ Facebook pages. Several panelists had used YouTube to distribute video abstracts, and all were using podcasts. The discussion among panel members and participants was lively, with both

questions being asked and experiences being shared.

Lastly, conference attendees were treated to another excellent session by **Tom McClung on Excel Tips and Tricks**. Tom made a similar presentation last year to such acclaim, he was asked to come back this year. As a lot of Tom’s tips are best learned by doing, he provided an Excel document with examples so attendees could follow along and try out the various tips and tricks. Topics covered were: basic formatting rules for working with data (e.g. no blank lines), grouping sheets and other fun things you can do with them, applying formatting, filtering, and different formulae. As with last year, there wasn’t enough time to cover everything he planned to talk about. Some slides in the conference packet not covered were: pivot tables and charts, other types of charts, and macros.

As the Excel session ran right up to the last minute, Glenn Collins made very brief closing remarks and sent everyone on their way until next time.



### ***ISMTE Career Center***

Are you looking for a new job, a new contract, or do you want to keep your options open in this uncertain economy? Check out the ISMTE Career Center. You can upload your resume for free. You can even do so anonymously. Employers pay a small fee to view the resumes and post open positions. It’s another great resource provided by your Society.

From the home page, click on “Resources” and then “[Career Center](#)” or just click the link here.