

General Information

ASM establishes internet discussion groups or listservs where members from the scientific community can exchange communications and get access to specialized information. Among the listserv categories are: those that are offered to member and nonmember constituents (i.e. Discussion groups for Divisions, Branches, Book authors, etc.) and "private" or "closed" discussion groups that are offered to ASM members only including those that facilitate communication among members of the leadership (i.e. Listserv's created for Officers, Boards, Committees, Task Forces, etc.). For any "private" discussion group, there may be a reason to add a nonmember to a particular list, but the decision should be made by the moderator/manager in consultation with the program head and the Executive Director.

Proposal Process

ASM will accept proposals from volunteers to establish discussion groups. These requests should be forwarded to an appropriate staff member for approval by ASM. The proposal will be reviewed for compatibility with ASM's purposes by the appropriate program head and the Executive Director.

Proposals should include information about the purpose of the service, its title or topic, the audience that ASM should reach to promote participation; the duration of the service (if applicable); and information about who will moderate the listserv including name, address, E-mail, and general supportive statements regarding the moderator's knowledge of subject area and his/her willingness to serve. If the listserv proposal is to operate a discussion group that is not moderated, it should contain the name, address, and E-mail of the individual who will be overseeing or managing the discussion group; when considering who this individual will be, please keep in mind that unlike a moderator, the "manager" will not be responsible for approving and steering the discussion but, rather, will monitor the discussion solely to ensure it adheres to the listserv guidelines outlined in this document. Aside from this distinction, the moderator's responsibilities described in subsequent sections also apply to the "manager".

Once the proposal is accepted the following steps are to be taken:

1. The participants will be identified either by creation of an e-mail list from existing files or by a public promotion to appropriate groups. Prospective participants will be asked to sign up for the listserv by sending a subscribe message to the system administrator.
2. Each participant will receive an e-mail that includes a copy of the statement of purpose, the general policy for listservs, the listserv etiquette, the operational guidelines, which will differ slightly for moderated lists, and a list of existing archives for background.
3. The moderator, if there is one, will receive the general information and operational guidelines.

General Policy

There are liability issues that are associated with the management of listserv's, and therefore the ASM has established guidelines for users of the system. They are as follows:

1. The ASM accepts no responsibility for the opinions and information posted by users other than the ASM.
2. Do not post any defamatory, abusive, profane, threatening, offensive, anticompetitive or illegal materials. The ASM does not condone and will not be responsible for any such materials or resulting liability, including antitrust liability. In no event will ASM be liable for any special, indirect or consequential damages or any damages whatsoever resulting from loss of use, data or profits, arising out of or in connection with the use or performance of any information posted on this site.
3. Do not post any information protected by copyright without the permission of the copyright owner. By sending information via the ASM listserv, the sending party warrants and represents that it owns the copyright to such information, or has received permission from the person or entity who owns the copyright to such information. By posting information to the ASM listserv the posting party grants the ASM and users of the ASM listserv the non-exclusive right and license to display, copy, publish, distribute, transmit, print, and use such information. Subject to the grant of this license, the posting party retains any other rights that the party may have to such information.
4. The ASM does not actively monitor the site for inappropriate postings and on its own does not undertake editorial control of postings. In particular do not post commercial messages, such as promotional announcements, advertising, product-related press releases, or other commercial use. In the event that any inappropriate posting is brought to the ASM's attention, the ASM will take all appropriate action.
5. Federal anti-trust laws make it illegal for competitors or potential competitors to fix prices in any way. This prohibition applies to discussion of specific prices, costs, or rate structures among ASM members. The financial and criminal penalties for violating this law are very serious.
6. The ASM reserves the right to terminate access to any user who does not abide by these guidelines.

Listserv Etiquette

Discussion group participants should pay careful attention to the general policy guidelines. Some general tips to enhance the quality and readership of discussion groups are provided as follows:

1. All postings should be signed with the subscriber's name and e-mail address. This is called a "signature" or "tag line" and helps identify you to the people who read your message. If the posting is an announcement, include contact information, such as phone, fax and e-mail address.
2. Subscribers should be willing to make their names known. Subscribers will not be allowed to conceal their names from being seen on a list, and may not post anonymous messages.
3. Postings to the groups should contain questions, comments or information that is relevant to the group topic and of interest to the entire group. If you want to question the opinions and

information presented by others, please do not challenge or attack these people by "flaming". If you have a differing opinion, please support your opinion or comments and use them to express yourselves in a professional manner. Subscribers can learn and benefit from qualified responses to situations or questions.

4. When replying to a message, include the parts of the previous message that are pertinent to your point or comment. When possible, delete the header information from the previous message, or any other non-essential text. This will make the message more readable for others and help reduce the time it takes for those with dial-up connections to retrieve their mail.
5. Non-relevant topic messages, personal and test messages should be sent directly to the administrative e-mail address, not *via* the discussion group.
6. Do not write postings in all capital letters. This is considered "screaming", and is not appropriate on the Internet. To emphasize or draw attention to text, enclose it in asterisks (*).
7. If inappropriate messages occur and/or guidelines are not followed, subscribers may want to complain about the posting. They should not reply with their complaints to the entire discussion group. This distracts the group from the main discussion topic to a focus on network etiquette. Subscribers should reply with complaints and protests directly to the moderator/manager

Operational Guidelines

All the administrative tasks are done by list manager through the Lyris Mail web site. List manager account is created after the approval of the list. Instructions for list administration will be provided by ASM after the creation of the list.

Once users subscribe, they will be sent a "welcome to the list" message providing the user guidelines and the E-mail to which they should address their messages for participation in the discussion group. The specific purpose of the discussion groups should be explicitly outlined in the initial communication to each subscriber.

Problems or questions with operations should be addressed to: Owner-xxxx@mail.asmusa.org - where you replace the xxxx with the list name. URL for the list is: <http://mail.asmusa.org/read/?forum=xxxx> - where xxxx is the list name.

Moderators of Discussion Groups: General Information

Although direct exchanges among users are encouraged, the main task of a moderator should be to ensure users follow the guidelines set forth in this document. Moderators have the right to terminate access to any user who does not abide by the general policy guidelines. If, in the event that inappropriate postings are repeatedly brought to the ASM's attention, and/or repeated unresolved complaints are received from users about the way a discussion group is being moderated, ASM will notify the program head to take appropriate action and the moderator will be replaced.

ASM prefers that moderators be ASM members; however exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis. Moderators should be familiar with the guidelines, procedures, practices, and traditions for operating and governing the Society's affairs. All documents pertaining to the governance of the Society can be found on the ASM web site at <http://www.asm.org> or can be obtained by requesting a copy of the ASM Volunteer Handbook.

Moderators should be appointed or approved by appropriate program head. ASM suggests that moderators/ managers periodically determine the continued value of the listservs. After making a determination, the moderator or manager should inform the appropriate volunteer leader that the list should either be continued or terminated.

Moderated List: Guidelines for List Moderators

A moderated list requires that all messages, both original postings to the list and replies, are approved by the moderator before being sent to the list. The chief benefit of this requirement is that the moderator will filter out any unnecessary, or inappropriate messages to members of the list. The moderator will also be responsible for approving subscription to a list. The procedures to perform these functions on a ASM list are explained below:

Approval based Subscriptions:

ASM listserv consists of Open, Closed, or Private subscriptions. To subscribe to a closed or private list - members need to send an e-mail to the list manager for permission to join the list. If the member is qualified to join the list then the manager adds this person's e-mail address to the list.

Approving Messages:

If the messages needs moderation then the list manager should go to the Lyris web interface, click 'Mailings', click 'Approval', click 'Need Approval'. This screen you will see all the messages waiting to be approved. You can view, approve, or reject the message from this menu.

Message Rejection

In general, a message should be rejected either because, in the moderator's opinion, it is inappropriate and outside the stated scope or purpose of the list, the message violates the etiquette of the list, or it is a nuisance message generated by automatic e-mail response functions.

Nuisance messages are the most likely to occur, since it is common for individuals to setup automatic response messages that reply to every incoming message with a canned response like "Jake Doe is on vacation for the next week", or "Jake Doe has a new e-mail address...".

Any message that is not Forwarded to the list as "Approved" is considered "Rejected". Which is to say that a moderator can reject any message by simply taking no action, or by deleting the message. It is strongly suggested however that moderators reply directly to the sender explaining the reason for rejection if any breach of etiquette is involved.