

Technologists' Forum: Online Resources for Methods in Histotechnology

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Histotechnology is such a broad field, covering aspects as broad as clinical work to paleontology, that no one person can expect to be an expert at the variety of methods used. In the distant past the primary resources were hard copy journals, text books, method books, procedure manuals of various institutions, local colleagues and contacts at the rare conference. With the advent of email and the internet that all changed. Email use in the early 1980's and list servers in the mid-1980's made it possible to join a group of like-minded people and share information. Subsequently, with the World Wide Web and the Internet, people could post their own pages of information on any subject. All of a sudden the entire world was open to anyone with a computer.

In 1995 Linda Margraf, M.D. and Debra Jennings-Siena, Histology Manager, at Children's Medical Center Dallas (Texas, USA), and Herb Hagler, PhD, at UT Southwestern, had the idea to start a list server for histotechnologists. At the 1995 National Society for Histotechnology (NSH) Convention Debra collected email addresses of people interested. They coined the term Histonet to describe the list server and from that start of a few dozen people the Histonet grew within a decade to a group of over 3,000 users from 39 countries (Fig.1). Histonet is now administered by John Shelton, on servers at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Those working in almost any field in histology now had access to a worldwide group of experts who could answer questions on almost any subject in histotechnology. Even questions on seemingly obscure topics seem to get quick answers.

The group includes clinical, pharma, basic research, contract research, microbiologists to large wildlife research.

The Histonet may be accessed, at no cost, at <http://lists.utsouthwestern.edu/mailman/listinfo/histonet> . A searchable archive of posts (back to 1998) is available at <http://www.histosearch.com/histonet.html> .

More recently the National Society for Histotechnology started an online forum called The Block on their Society website (<https://www.nsh.org/home>). The Block is open only to NSH members representing over 3,000 individuals worldwide. The Block gets many questions and answers about methods and has a library of materials uploaded by members. Additionally the NSH website has numerous online courses on a wide variety of topics ranging from methods to management, many from recent conventions and webinars.

Other listservers include those for advanced microscopy such as:

- Microscopy Listserver sponsored by the Microscopy Society of America (MSA) at <http://www.microscopylistserv.com/> . There is no charge for this listserv which covers all microscopy methods from high resolution light microscopy to TEM, SEM, X-ray and others.
- Confocal microscopy (<https://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=confocalmicroscopy&A=1>) listserv serving the confocal community.

Non-forum websites also have a wealth of information about histology stains.

- The **Biological Stain Commission** (<https://biologicalstaincommission.org/>) certifies dyes for use in histotechnology and publishes a bi-monthly journal, *Biotechnic and Histochemistry*, which is for members only, however at a very reasonable annual fee. They host a free-use FAQ page (<https://biologicalstaincommission.org/faqlist.htm>) with information about tissue processing and staining and an extensive stain glossary at <https://biologicalstaincommission.org/bscglossary.html> that gives detailed explanations of terms used in a large menu of stains.
- A comprehensive guide to stain methods is the **StainsFile** by Bryan Llewellyn at <https://stainsfile.info/xindex.html>.
- For special stains, immunohistochemistry and molecular biology methods the **IHCWorld** website (<http://www.ihcworld.com/index.htm>) has many procedures submitted by many authors.

Histonet Membership Growth 1996-2005

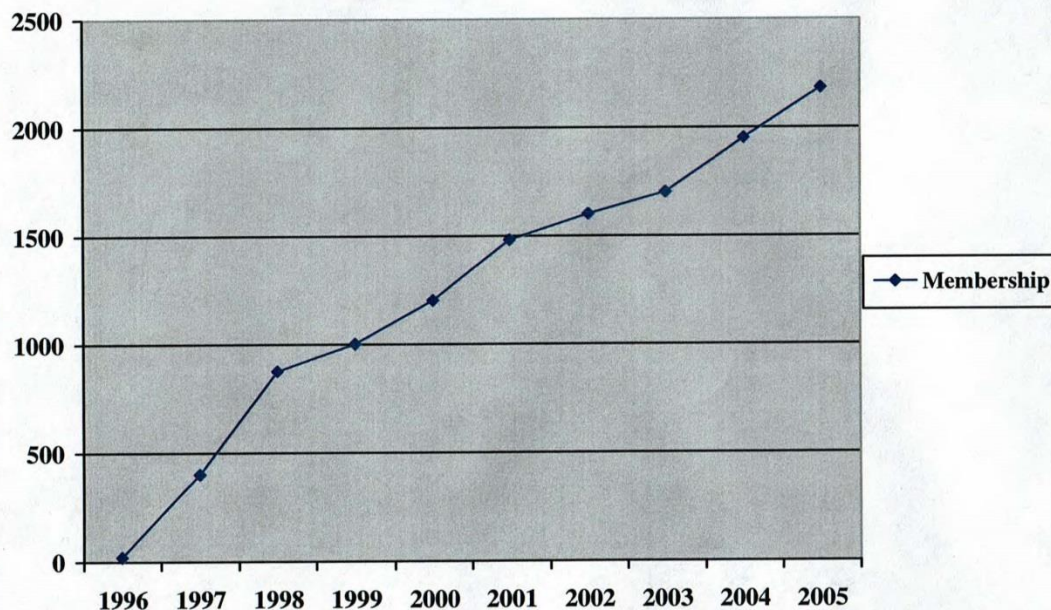


Figure 1. Fig. 1 Growth of Histonet Users in the first ten years.

References

Histonet: The Listserv for Histotechnology; Margraf, L.R. and Hagler H.K, *HistoLogic*, November 1999;XXXI(2):36. Sakura-Finetek