

## Role of Editors on the Web

### Webmaster???

For my job and, I expect, for the jobs of most biology editors, the quick transfer of our skills to Internet publishing is a done deal. If we are not already publishing electronically, we are expected to be able to do so if the need arises. So the question arises as to

what this involves and whether such transfer is reasonable.

At the same time, when I hear the term *Webmaster*, I think of computer gurus—those infamous children who can create a software program or access a checking account with equal ease. Well, of course, that picture isn't

accurate. But what does a webmaster do? How do the tasks differ when those editors publish on the Web?

According to *WebWeek* (1), which reported 72 responses to their survey asking a version of that question, Webmaster duties in order of frequency were as follows:

- Designing Web pages/graphics
- Coding Web pages
- Maintaining Web pages (for example, checking hyperlinks)
- Answering the questions of visitors to the Web site
- Planning a Web site as part of overall company strategy
- Compiling and analyzing "hit" statistics
- Making hardware/software purchasing decisions

Here in the Radiology Department at Brigham and Women's Hospital, most of those duties are performed by people with the word "editor" somewhere in their job titles. In addition, these same people generate or adapt the content for the site and worry about such issues as focusing on the intended audience and capturing the attention of the reader—traditional concerns of the writer/editor. What's your experience?

## Will 'Zines Replace Traditional Print Media?

Not likely. At least so far, online-only publications apparently cannot gather enough advertising to pay their bills unless they have a parallel print publication. An example supporting this point of view is the failed *Web Review*, which was published only online. Thinking about this matter, I find that I search and screen information online, but articles worth reading carefully are printed out so I can highlight and review without eyestrain. So the Internet becomes an additional source of information, but no a substitute. What's your experience?

## More on URL Style

Keith Ivey writes: "I think setting off URLs with quotation marks is a good solution for people following a style (like those of CBE and the American Chemical Society) that uses the logical order of punctuation with quotation marks. Unfortunately, most editors in the United States are still expected to

put the commas and periods inside the quotes even when they do not belong there. In *The Editorial Eye*, we use boldface to set off URLs, but this is not a perfect solution. At some point we just have to assume that people will learn that commas, periods, and other punctuation following a Web or e-mail address are not part of it."

Ivey also pointed out that URLs need to be carefully proofread to assure that breaks at the end of the line don't have a hyphen added. If a URL must extend to the next line, the probable solution is to simply split the URL without adding a hyphen and assume people will know that no space should be added.

Let's chat: [sedwards@ulna.bwh.harvard.edu](mailto:sedwards@ulna.bwh.harvard.edu).

## Reference

1. Gardner E. Rewards, and duties, trend u for keepers of corporate webs. *WebWeek* 1996;2(14):1. Note: *WebWeek* also has a home page at <http://www.webweek.com/>.