

# Electronic Publishing Demystified

Speaker:

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Lynn Foster described the 3-year process by which the American Heart Association (AHA) began to publish 5 journals (15000 pages per year) in electronic form. The actual changeover from paper to electronic formats occurred in less than 2 years.

She advised anyone planning to undertake electronic publishing to ask 3 questions. 1) What processes do you control now? For example, you can control the format of manuscripts received and the format in which they are published. 2) What processes might you incorporate into your work system that would move you closer to electronic publishing when you decide to make the change? 3) What opportunities does the change to electronic publishing offer with respect to time-saving, redundancy in procedures (as in keystrokes

and copyediting), and money-saving? She commented that, unlike others, she has found that electronic submission saves money by eliminating unnecessary keystrokes.

Foster said that the goal should be 100% electronic publication and that that can be reasonably accomplished with the products and services now available. Given that goal, changes can be introduced in comprehensive stages: one journal at a time; at that journal, one process (such as copyediting) at a time; within each process, one procedure at a time; and for each procedure, one person at a time. Staff considerations are especially important. She suggested that journals train their own staff rather than replacing present staff with new, electronically skilled persons.

She outlined the processes involved in producing an electronic journal: file conversion, manuscript tracking, preediting work, copyediting, postediting work, file transmission, scanning (figures and so on), and page composition. One of the secrets of a successful operation is appropriate preediting work, in which standardized formats are imposed, templates are attached, and extra elements (such as standard abbreviations) are added to the manuscript before the copyeditor works

on it. She noted that the preediting work for all 5 AHA journals is done by one freelance who works part-time at home 20 to 25 hours per week.

In response to questions about the time and staff needed to convert to electronic publishing, Foster gave details about AHA's 5 journals. She estimated that one journal could convert to all-electronic publishing in 8 months. The editorial-services staff consists of 10 freelance editors (some full-time, some part-time), 4 production editors, and 1 copyreader. She did not know how many staff members were involved in technical support for the computer systems and maintenance of the electronic journals.

Now that the 5 journals are published electronically, she and her staff are exploring further changes. They are experimenting with direct transmission from each journal's editor's office to the AHA production office. They are also testing the use of e-mail for sending manuscripts from authors to AHA and from the preediting freelance to AHA. They are considering whether to have authors do more of the preediting work. Finally, they are working to ensure that the AHA intranet is properly secure and reliable. 

