

# Electronic Copy Editing: What Works?

Chair:

**Margaret Levene**

*Annals of Emergency Medicine*  
Irving, Texas

Panelists:

**William Kasdorf**

Impressions Book and Journal Services  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Maryalice Ditzler**

Cadmus Journal Services  
Linthicum, Maryland

**Shelly Potler**

Williams & Wilkins  
Baltimore, Maryland

Reporter:

**Gary Penn**

*Academic Medicine*  
Washington, DC

After Margaret Levene introduced the panel, Shelly Potler gave an overview of her journal editing department, discussing the size, the variety of journals, the priorities, and the workflow. Priorities in such a production-editorial environment include quality, scheduling, and costs, all of which might be improved by increasing electronic submissions.

Potler described the advantages of electronic editing, which include accuracy, speed, lower composition costs, consistency, and a progressive image for the company. Disadvantages include the

array of formats and platforms in which authors work, the different ways in which authors key in information, the difficulty of translating mathematical formulas into electronic copy, the continuing need for hard copy, and the potentially devastating viruses that infect computer programs. She compared the benefits of creating an electronic editing program internally with

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those of having an outside consultant do it.

Potler then explained how electronic documents get "pre-edited". This process gets rid of the bugs that are present when the files come into her department, making it easier to edit the final products consistently. All files are converted to Microsoft Word 6.0, purged of unnecessary coding, checked for viruses, and matched against hard copy. Journal-specific pre-editing is then done: Codes are added or global changes are made to conform to journal style.

Potler described some of the macros and keyboard functions that her company has developed to ease the electronic-editing process. Finally, she discussed her company's dealings with freelancers and the

issues that arise in training outside people to do electronic editing.

William Kasdorf talked about the advantages of using Word for electronic editing. He discussed in more detail the ability of word-processing programs to streamline the editing process through the use of macros, styles, and templates, and he demonstrated several of these shortcuts with a computer and lecture screen. He mentioned some of the obstacles to electronic editing, including authors' reluctance to think about matters of coding. Kasdorf suggested giving generic templates to authors and having them enter their work directly into those clean, usable formats. His company makes such templates available to authors at its Web site.

Maryalice Ditzler then spoke about her department and the services it provides. She discussed the integrity of the disks that are submitted and the quality of various pre-editing programs. She demonstrated an array of electronic-editing shortcuts. Her programs can make hundreds of style-specific changes, such as standardizing references and checking abbreviations. The programs can also check for rogue codes, deleting extraneous formatting and entering proper codes. The greatest advantage of her programs seemed to be their interactivity. Editors using the programs encounter dialogue boxes at several points in the process that permit them to direct the computer program to take particular steps or skip other procedures.

