

# Creating RFPs and Evaluating Bids: How Do You Identify the Real Value?

*Chair:*

**Doug McLaurine**  
John Wiley & Sons Inc  
New York, New York

*Panelists:*

**Sheila MacKay**  
Academic Press  
San Diego, California

**Diana Pesek**  
Wetware Connections  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Raymond Fastiggi**  
The Rockefeller University Press  
New York, New York

*Reporter:*

**Gary Penn**  
Academic Medicine  
Washington, DC

Doug McLaurine opened the session by emphasizing that, to get your product from idea to realization, you need to communicate openly and thoroughly with vendors, asking from them exactly what you want.

Sheila MacKay discussed the process of selecting bidders to compete for contracts. Whether you oversee only one journal or many, whether old journals or new, there are several things to consider in inviting and reviewing bids. What is the content of the journals? (For example, composition requires different talents and abilities for simple text, mathematical symbols, and intricate figures.) If a bidder is offshore, how would that affect production scheduling? What is the bidder's previous journal experience? Can it provide examples of

past work? What other journals do the bidders currently handle? Can the bidder handle HTML? What is the bidder's credibility? How do you feel about the bidder intuitively?

When reviewing the bids, you should make sure that the per-page composition rate includes as much as possible, getting a breakdown of services in the bid. You should send an old copy of the journal in question to the bidder so that it can give an honest assessment of the labor and other costs involved. You should compare

---

*Never assume that the other party  
know what's going on; always ask.*

---

all the bids with each other and with your own budget. Don't hesitate to take time to review the bids, to question the breakdown of expenses, and to negotiate.

Diana Pesek talked about establishing good relations between journals and vendors. Open communication is the key. Journal staffs should provide accurate and complete information to the vendor, provide written specifications, follow written instructions with phone calls, and so on. Never assume that the other party knows what's going on; always ask. Don't cry wolf, but do let others know of true problems as soon as they arise. Problems might include delays or changes by the journal, but they might also include mistakes by the vendor, such as missed deadlines, incorrect pricing, or even bullying by the vendor's representative.

Good management can solve many problems. Flexibility, the ability to set priorities, attacking problems as they arise, avoid-

ing blaming others—all make for good relations between journals and vendors.

Raymond Fastiggi discussed printing bids and the buying of paper. He talked about the factors that you need to consider when taking printing bids: reliability, customer service, scheduling, familiarity with your type of product, plant size, pricing, flexibility, and happy workers. He talked about the services that printers can supply: typesetting and composition, in-house color separations, platemaking, printing, binding, and interface with electronic vendors. Printers can also provide redaction services, insert bind-ins and blow-ins, label, address, bag, store supplies, and deal with copyright and the post office.

He then discussed the pros and cons of buying your own supply of paper for your journal. It might, he suggested, make sense for larger publishers, which can consolidate their paper orders for several journals (even if buying a variety of paper stocks). A savvy customer can play the paper market, buying a large supply at low prices. However, there are disadvantages, including the extra work needed to play the market, the large up-front cash investment, and the danger of damage to stored paper.

Doug McLaurine summarized the panel's remarks. He suggested that when inviting bids you give the same specifications to all bidders to make a true comparison easier. Also, you should assess the future capabilities of bidders (for example, whether they might handle Web publishing). He reiterated the importance of good customer relations, which lead to good products.

