

How Do I Keep Print Publication Costs Down?

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Representatives of small, medium, and large publishing firms discussed strategies for controlling costs at each step of the publication process.

Copyediting

Although the use of freelancers eliminates some costs, such as for employee benefits and the provision of workspace, it unfortunately brings expenses associated with training time and equipment needs. The need for a cost-comparison study of the employment of in-house versus cottage staff was noted.

Composition

Larger companies can afford the staff and equipment costs of in-house composition, whereas smaller firms find those costs prohibitive. Advantages of in-house composition include better control of the production process and the ability to make last-minute revisions. Disadvantages include the need for additional proofreaders, backup equipment, and repair services.

Author's Alterations

Author's alterations remain the "bane of publishers' existence". Authors are allowed many degrees of freedom when making

text changes during production. Some societies, for example, allow their journals' authors to make as many as desired; others limit them to 1 change per page or 5 per article and then bill for anything more. Publishers find it especially difficult to collect fees for author's alterations if page charges are not assessed.

Illustrations

Authors are only beginning to submit illustrations in digital format. Because digital processing is so new, authors are not yet familiar with submission guidelines; therefore, publishers face difficulties with sizing and style requirements. A pitfall in the use of digital files is the risk of introducing error when a copyeditor modifies an author's presentation. In addition, the digital programs used in the United States and in other countries

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are rarely compatible.

Most publishers bill authors before production for the costs of printing color photos. Some journals announce in their instructions for authors an average cost of production of a color photo and have found that most authors are willing to pay the fee. The panel members agreed that publishers should not profit from authors' fees for color printing.

Setting the Press Run

Press-run decisions are based on the number of current subscribers, several years of distribution history, and (in the case of society journals) the effect of forthcoming society meetings. Close contact with the appropriate marketing department can yield valuable information.

Another consideration in press-run decisions is a society's policy on back issues and grace issues. Although many societies once offered back issues to new members, that practice is being modified or abandoned because of the related costs. In the past, some publishers even went back to press if back issues were needed; that service, too, is being abandoned. Many societies send 1 or 2 grace issues when a subscription to a monthly lapses. If publication frequency changes, the policy regarding grace issues should be reconsidered.

Paper

Paper costs can be controlled by buying the least expensive paper that will meet the publication's needs. Suppliers can contain costs by buying in volume and limiting the types of paper offered. Their customers can benefit from knowing the typical stock available and selecting from among those choices. Publishers are wise to let printers purchase paper, because they get lower prices.

Mailing

Finding the least expensive way to mail a publication demands close communication with the printer. Polybags are cost-effective. The label carrier, prepared by the printer with information supplied on disk by the publisher, can also serve as an advertising vehicle.

Opinions differed about mailing a publication bare. The risk of damage during postal handling was acknowledged, but a test mailing by Cadmus Journal Services revealed that damage was less than expected if the journal was bundled to the carrier level.

Reprints and Offprints

Mailing reprints directly from printer to customer eliminates warehousing costs. Firms that process reprints from a warehouse can control costs by keeping mailing lists current. Although most companies do not profit from the sale of reprints, that process was advocated as a source of revenue. ■