

◆ The Changing Role of the Journal Manager in the Technological World

Presenters:

Diane Scott-Lichter
Brooklyn, New York

C Michael Phillippe
The Mack Printing Group
Easton, Pennsylvania

Judith Jansen
Biology of Reproduction
Madison, Wisconsin

Reporter:

Lori Cagle
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

As computers increasingly take over the jobs of paper and postage, journal managers face the challenge of making the transition to electronic operations. Presenters at this session brought to light the many adjustments and decisions that journal managers, staff, reviewers, and authors must make.

Outlining the process that is replacing photocopying and mailing of manuscripts, Diane Scott-Lichter, formerly of Carden Jennings Publishing, explained that in the future authors will send most submissions electronically. The journal staff will then convert the submissions into PDF files, if this process is not automated, and send them to editors and reviewers by e-mail or other electronic means. Some systems convert authors' files into HTML format so that they are readable directly on the World Wide Web.

Advantages of these systems include ease of distribution, increased processing speed, and lower mailing costs. However, some hurdles must be cleared before the system runs smoothly. Scott-Lichter discussed many changes that managers should think about when considering online submission systems and online publishing, including

- Revised requirements for manuscript submission and review.
- Increased technical capabilities required of staff.

- Altered work flows with extra steps for online dynamic publishing, which involves links, video, audio, and other features not possible on a printed page.
- Need for integrated manuscript-tracking systems.
- Reduced time for manuscript acceptance (2-3 weeks).
- Increased use of foreign editors and reviewers.
- Different amounts and distribution of costs (reduced mailing costs, increased hardware and software costs, and more

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outsourcing of technical tasks).

- New options for obtaining peer review.
- Training and support for editors, reviewers, authors, and staff.
- Unresolved concerns about archiving online-only content.
- More bells and whistles available and requested from authors.

C Michael Phillippe agreed with Scott-Lichter's discussion of the many uncertainties facing journal managers, saying that converting data is just one step in the process. Everything involved in journal operations, he said, must be adapted to the digital world. Phillippe said managers should plan 3 to 5 years ahead to allow time for budget approval, purchase and installation of equipment, and staff and author education.

Phillippe continued with a long list of questions regarding authorship, image transmission, editing, printing proofs, peer review, and system maintenance, illustrating the impact that an electronic environment will have on the journal office.

Phillippe noted that the answers to these questions—and to the question of how managers' roles will change—will probably

differ next year. Problems and solutions will change as technology progresses, he indicated, and staying current with new technology is essential for journal managers.

As managing editor for the journal *Biology of Reproduction*, Judith Jansen gave a first-hand account of her experience in moving into the digital world.

Jansen said her approach to managing the change is to stay within the capacity to control chaos—a small office with a small budget cannot afford big mistakes. Starting by installing a custom tracking system in 1985, Jansen has made changes gradually. In 1990, Jansen introduced author-supplied disks for accepted manuscripts, pre-editing (an automated process that prepares manuscripts for copyediting), and electronic copyediting and tagging (coding a document to automate such processes as typesetting or to identify such document elements as where a paragraph ends). In 1998, the full-text journal was published online by using HTML and PDF.

As submissions increase, Jansen said, so does the pressure to upgrade. She reported that increased foreign submissions and more technologically sophisticated manuscripts have intensified the need to update journal operations.

Jansen has experienced many of the challenges discussed by Scott-Lichter and Phillippe. Software compatibility and author education about new procedures and requirements present continual struggles. To inform authors about procedural changes, Jansen recommends e-mail notification, annual-meeting workshops, and telephone conferences. The constant addition of new equipment and the development of new skills in staff members are also continuing challenges.

The presenters agreed that as journals continue their metamorphosis into electronic entities, managers must be flexible, aware, and forward-looking enough to keep pace with the technologies that will dramatically change their role in journal publication. ■