

Electronic Copyediting

Chair:

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Panelists:

Maryalice Ditzler
Cadmus Journal Services
Linthicum, Maryland

Fran Flavelle
Canadian Journal of Physics
Ottawa, Ontario

Karen Hellekson
Allen Press
Lawrence, Kansas

Reporter:

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National Radio Astronomy Observatory
Charlottesville, Virginia

In this session, speakers explained the benefits of electronic copyediting, addressed how journals can make the transition to it, and provided advice for on-screen editing.

Why do electronic copyediting? Maryalice Ditzler said that Cadmus Journal Services had several reasons for switching: To satisfy authors' desire to submit articles on disk, to increase text accuracy by preserving authors' own keystrokes (instead of rekeying text), to save money and speed production, and to increase product potential. Once an article is on disk it can be typeset, placed on the Internet or on a CD-ROM, and used in electronic media.

Cadmus overcame several challenges in switching to electronic copyediting. Because authors often submitted files in

incompatible formats, the company became able to accept 80 file types on all types of disks. Retaining authors' special characters (important in scientific articles) presented a unique problem, which Ditzler said was solved by special software programming. The company also instituted virus-checking at multiple levels because 5% of authors' disks were contaminated.

Electronic copyediting initially made the production process 20% longer, Ditzler said, because copyeditors also became proofreaders and typesetters. To combat that problem, Cadmus created StyList programs for each of its journals. Each new manuscript is run through StyList,

Always print a final copy and read it.

which fixes repetitive style errors, puts the manuscript into correct format, and enters 90% of the typesetting codes. The process allows copyeditors to concentrate on more substantive editorial matters.

Karen Hellekson provided editors with several tips for editing on-screen. Among her suggestions:

- Write a macro that prepares the file the way you like it.
- Make text very large—in 16- or 18-point type—and set the right margin so that you can see a whole line on the screen at once.
- Single-space the document so that you can see a whole sentence on the screen at once.
- Use the search-and-replace function only when you do not have to confirm every

replacement.

- Use the search-and-replace function in smart ways (to search for character attributes, spaces, case, and so on).
- Invest in a smart, specialized spell-checker.
- Always print a final copy and read it.

Hellekson also advised copyeditors to decide whether they are “keyboard persons” or “mouse persons”, to learn relevant shortcuts, and to use either the keyboard or the mouse exclusively for editing. She said that using the mouse and keyboard in combination is more time-consuming than using one or the other. She suggested that editors take a course in electronic editing.

Fran Flavelle spoke about the word-processing program TEX (pronounced “teck”). In 1996, the Canadian Journal of Physics switched to TEX, she said, because its former page-layout program's equation layout was not up to the standards of Canada's National Research Council (NRC) Research Press.

TEX is platform-independent, public-domain software. Because it has no “owner”, it does not have a formal support system, Flavelle said; most users are self-taught. The NRC purchased a commercial version of TEX, which cost about US\$400 to \$500. Some of its advantages were user support for the installation process, inclusion of a graphical user interface, automatic software upgrades, and continuing consultations. One of the major advantages of using TEX, Flavelle said, is that NRC placed its Canadian Journal of Physics style file on its Web site. Many authors use the style file when writing their articles, which saves copyediting time. 