

◆ *Training Programs in Scientific Publishing for Distance Learners*

Chair:

Margaret Hoppenrath
Hoppenrath Publishing
Escondido, California

Panelists:

Vicky McKinley
Roosevelt University
Schaumburg, Illinois

Stephanie Medlock
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Barbara Gastel
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Reporter:

Judith McIntosh White
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Three representatives from established university training programs presented their prescriptions for successful teaching and outlined how to adapt their methods for distance learning.

Vicky McKinley, associate dean of Roosevelt University's College of Arts and Sciences, discussed Internet adaptation of her 10-year-old introductory laboratory-science course, *Science as a Way of Knowing*, which addresses real-world applications of the scientific method.

Originally intended for science majors, the popular course was expanded to meet the science requirement of nonscience majors. McKinley is considering putting her course on the Internet to support Roosevelt's desire to offer more distance-learning opportunities. Hers is the only laboratory course suitable for distance learning; it features simple, safe experi-

ments that students can do at home.

McKinley's students learn the scientific method by designing and carrying out their own experiments. They use PC software to analyze their data and then write a scientific paper about their work.

"McKinley's course should be good for editors responsible for evaluating the internal validity of a manuscript", said Margaret Hoppenrath, president of Hoppenrath Publishing, who took the course 10 years ago on the Roosevelt campus.

Stephanie Medlock, director of the University of Chicago's Publishing Program, described the recent shift to distance learning for five courses in the Certificate Program in Medical Writing and Editing. The courses originally met for 3 hours one night a week for 8 weeks. Now students can choose to meet 8 hours a day for 3 days, then return to their own locations and continue to complete assignments for an additional 4 weeks and send them to their instructor via the Internet. The University of Chicago added the short courses as a way to make them available to students living outside the Chicago area.

Medlock said medical writers and editors need proper training because "this is a field with consequences." She plans to expand the program's course offerings into science fields like biogenetics, where a need exists for writers and editors to explain this rapidly expanding discipline to different audiences.

Barbara Gastel, associate professor of journalism and of humanities in medicine at Texas A&M University, has served as principal consultant to the China Medical Board's Program in Biomedical Writing and Editing since the program's inception in 1996.

The editor-training component of the program begins with an intensive 6 weeks

of classroom work in China designed to help trainees learn the basics of biomedical editing, build rapport with instructors and each other, and prepare to teach writing courses to Chinese biomedical researchers. For the rest of the 2-year traineeship, Gastel posts lessons, grades assignments, answers questions, and monitors trainees' US internships via e-mail and the World Wide Web.

The China Medical Board program was developed to increase international publication by biomedical investigators in China, Gastel said. The online format is an efficient way to teach in a geographically vast country, and the program can serve as the prototype for other professional education programs.

Gastel had not worked with distance learning before becoming involved in the China Medical Board program. She presented the following suggestions based on her experience and noted that they apply to teaching in any medium:

- Balance consistency and variety in lesson presentations.
- Strive to make each lesson engaging.
- Draw on external resources (for example, articles and Web sites) to supplement lesson presentations.
- Provide various means of timely feedback.
- Try to maintain a consistent weekly schedule for reviewing homework, answering e-mail from students, and preparing and distributing lessons.

The panelists agreed that sound ideas, good instructors, effective teaching methods, and hard work can transcend particular media to further high-quality education. 