

## Web-based Enhancements to Print Journals

**Moderator:**

**Crispin Taylor**

*Science's Next Wave*  
Washington, DC

**Panelists:**

**Tony Delamothe**

*British Medical Journal*  
London, England

**Heather Dalterio Joseph**

*American Society for Cell Biology*  
Bethesda, Maryland

**Reporter:**

**Jim Cook**

*The Permanente Journal*  
Portland, Oregon

The panelists for this session spoke about the challenges they faced in putting their journals on the Web and the opportunities that resulted from doing so.

The American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) has made a continuing effort to evolve its electronic content since it went online in 1997. According to Heather Dalterio Joseph, ASCB director of publications, the intent has been for the journal to be as much a tool as a publication; this intent is reflected in the approach to the journal's accompanying Web site.

The ASCB vision—to offer barrier-free, toll-free access to the online journal—forced it to face the potential of losing institutional subscriptions, which in 1998 amounted to 65% of the journal's revenue. But it has been the evolution of the online journal that has allowed ASCB to forge ahead and take additional risks.

In July 1998 the first video essay was

published on ASCB's journal's Web site. Five months later it began recruiting seeds (peer-reviewed videos) and data sets, which would be published as online-only supplements to print articles. In recruiting this type of content the ASCB worked closely with authors to create useful material.

When the videos debuted, visitors to the Web site tripled. Papers that make use of video continue to remain in the top 10 of the most viewed papers each month.

This new way to present information enabled ASCB to reduce its reliance on subscriptions by exploring the following revenue-generating products:

- A video toolkit for classroom use, made possible by indexing submitted videos.
- Corporate sponsorships.
- A targeted commercial reprint program.
- A new class of article that experimented with exporting data into molecular modeling programs.
- A teaching-tool journal.
- Expanded peer review.

Perhaps most interesting for ASCB is that—despite its decreased reliance on subscription revenue—subscriptions to the paper-based journal have continued to climb since the journal went online.

Where ASCB has taken a content-driven approach to creating a more dynamic experience for readers, the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* has taken a slightly different approach. The *BMJ* has offered a full-text online version for the last 2 years; as in the case of ASCB, it has continued to evolve. According to Tony Delamothe, the journal was lured by the attractions offered by the electronic medium, and the divergence between the paper and elec-

tronic versions continues to increase.

To date the *BMJ* has focused its efforts on exploiting the speed, space, and searchability of the electronic medium. Here are some examples of how the Web is used to enhance the journal:

- Rapid responses: Publishes 85% to 90% of all letters to the editor, with a goal of a 24-hour turnaround time.
- ELPS (electronic long, paper short): Publishes full-length versions of articles online, with shortened versions in the paper-based journal.
- Customized alerts: Sends e-mail to readers when articles that meet their predefined interests are published.
- Full peer review: Posts reviews on the Web site in real time.

*BMJ* continues to investigate new methods of using the Web, including the possibility of passing submitted manuscripts through an electronic "quality filter" and then placing them directly online.

Delamothe pointed out that the paper-based journal continues to have advantages over the online version in both readability and portability, but both might change as technology continues to improve. Perhaps echoing the sentiments of many of the session's attendees, Delamothe used a quote from Yogi Berra to indicate the approach toward online publishing: "We're lost, but we're making good time." 