

The Culture of a Journal: Building It, Sustaining It, Changing It

Panelists:

Donald Kennedy
Science
Washington, DC

Michael J Held
Rockefeller University Press
New York, New York

William W Hay Jr
NeoReviews
Denver, Colorado

Reporter:

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Mayo Clinic Proceedings
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As the relatively new editor of *Science*, Donald Kennedy described his role as one of sustaining and enhancing the existing culture. Michael J Held has spent the last few years changing the culture of the Rockefeller University Press (RUP) journals (*Journal of Experimental Medicine*, *Journal of General Physiology*, and *Journal of Cell Biology*). William W Hay Jr, the first editor of an online neonatology journal, *NeoReviews*, is defining its culture.

When Kennedy became editor of *Science* a year ago, his intention was not to change the well-established culture of the journal. He believes that new leaders should deal with the cultures they inherit, and the culture at *Science* appeared to him to be several pairs of cultures with generally common goals and occasionally competing or conflicting priorities: news and editorial staffs, biologic and physical sciences, editorial and advertising staffs, and print and online versions of the journal.

An example of the interrelationship of

these groups is the occasional competition between biologic sciences and physical sciences for editorial space. The allocation of pages may be based on financial considerations in addition to editorial priorities. Kennedy's goal has been to maximize the creative tension between such competing forces in the journal office and to engender an atmosphere of teamwork, confluence, and convergence among the cultures. He views his role in these nested and overlapping sets as engendering understanding and cultivating mutual respect between and among all groups.

When Held became director of RUP in 1994, he received a mandate to change the culture. At that time, manuscripts were processed manually, and billing and circulation were handled on outmoded systems. He sees his goal as the seamless electronic flow of manuscripts from submission to publication.

Every part of RUP's journal operation has been updated: staffing (hiring new managing editors, a news editor, a marketing manager, and scientist executive editors), automation (ranging from submission, review, and tracking to author billing and production with links to circulation), and consolidation of resources. Online publication has posed its own set of challenges, and Held mentioned in particular the importance of developing a sustainable business model for online publication. The latest online innovation is to publish online weekly and in print monthly, with the online version becoming the journal of record.

The results of these improvements have been as vast as the changes themselves, affecting authors, reviewers, editors, advertisers, and readers. The culture of RUP's

journals has become one of vision and innovation.

As the first editor of an online-only journal, Hay has the unique perspective of creating a new culture for a new journal in a new medium. Published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, *NeoReviews* includes invited review articles on neonatal and perinatal topics. In addition, the journal publishes case discussions, basic-science insights, and "on the horizon" pieces each month. The journal was started as a print section of *Pediatrics in Review* and in January 2000 was launched as a separate online "publication". Monthly downloads now number about 10,000.

The electronic format may define this journal's culture, as do the characteristics of its subscribers. About half are in private practice and half in academe, in both basic science and clinical practice, and include many non-US medical graduates. A common element among them is that they are interested in "the latest", which seems to correlate with the immediacy of online publication. A popular interactive feature of the journal is "Rapid Response", a spontaneous letters-to-the-editor section.

Despite differences in cultures, several common themes emerged from these three presentations. The traditional culture of journal publishing has become more diverse. The use of online resources to disseminate information is no longer optional, but imperative, and its potential is unknown. The editor must attend to business and operational issues, in addition to the traditional concerns of filling the journal with unique and interesting articles. 