

Managing the Electronic Editorial Office: Finding the Right System and Making It Work for Your Journal

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The benefits of an online journal may be a speedier review process, reduction in mailing costs and administrative burden, or an increase in the journal's profile. "However", Joy Moore pointed out, "it all depends on how you use it."

Three issues take precedence when one moves to an online journal: selection, implementation, and preparation of staff. Moore said that success is more than just choosing the right platform and functionality. It is best to start by conducting a thorough internal evaluation. It helps to know why you want to make the move to an online journal and when you hope to do it. Unplanned events must be taken into account, because they will occur. It is possible, though, to have them occur at moments that are not critical (usually the first 2 months will be the best time to get major flaws and malfunctions out of the way). And the functionality of the journal needs to be established early.

When conducting your workflow analy-

sis, ask these questions: What is the lifetime of a manuscript in your office? What are the best parts of the process? What are the weakest parts? It is also helpful for all technically impaired editors on your board to understand that the new system has appeal: it saves money, reduces time, and enhances aspects of usability.

Before approaching a vendor, you should assess your budget by considering what can be replaced and what can be reduced, and you should determine what resources and

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capabilities your office already possesses, such as office equipment and staff skills. University or institutional information-technology support may be necessary.

An external evaluation must be conducted. The first step is to figure out what you want in an online journal, or what you can get. Outline your requirements through the internal evaluation or by surveying other systems that are used in your field by competitors. Some businesses choose to invest in the application-ser-

vice-provider (ASP) model, in which the licensed use of the software is hosted and maintained by the vendor. Others prefer a site license: you install, host, and maintain the site yourself. Some vendors offer both or variations.

To decide which vendor is best for your journal, consider vendors' size and history, major customers, reputation, reliability, and experience. Once you are involved with a particular vendor, it is hard to become uninvolved.

When you are finally ready to implement, you will want to create an implementation plan. Provide system information, goals, and a project plan to everyone involved with the system. Allot extra time when critical steps will be taken; for instance, training the editorial board may take longer than originally expected.

This is also the best time to evaluate the role of the staff. Ask yourself, Does everyone have the skills needed to run the system? If not, the vendor may offer training for some elements of the system; otherwise, it may be best to schedule classes for staff, if needed.

Cleaning up the reviewer database, reviewing and editing forms and letters, and drafting new instructions for authors must also be done by this point so that you can test the system as thoroughly as possible.

