

## The Wireless Frontier: PDA Delivery of Scientific Content

### Speakers:

**Kent Anderson**

*New England Journal of Medicine*  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Bernard L Hecker**

HighWire Press  
Stanford, California

**R Michael Segroves**

Palm Digital Media  
Sunnyvale, California

### Moderator:

**Anna G Trudgett**

American Physiological Society  
Bethesda, Maryland

### Reporter:

**Kathleen M Corey**

ScholarOne, Inc  
Boston, Massachusetts

This session addressed from three perspectives the delivery of journal articles or other scientific content through personal digital assistants (PDAs).

Kent Anderson spoke on "Handholding the Handhelds". He noted that the *New England Journal of Medicine* offers users of PDAs the *Journal's* latest full-text articles or complete issues, abstracts, editors' summaries, and tables of contents. Full text requires signing in as an individual subscriber. Those services are available from the *Journal's* Web site. However, the *Journal* has not promoted them.

Users have downloaded 38,000 articles and 7000 complete issues. The services have been used by physicians (60%), residents (30%), students (5%), and others (5%). There have been no reports of technical problems.

Anderson gave the following reasons for maintaining these services: they offer an alternative format at low cost, they keep in touch with user needs and wants, they are useful to subscribers, they signal active requests by users, and they potentially create an "installed base" for other applications of handhelds. However, several cautions should be noted: Only a small fraction of subscribers download actively, use data need to be captured and compared, it is not known how the services help the business and contribute to fulfilling the mission, it is still hard to read and print, and handheld devices are changing quickly, so a commitment to keep up is required. In spite of the caveats, Anderson is an enthusiastic proponent of PDAs.

Bernard L Hecker, of HighWire Press, spoke on "Handheld Services: Do They Fit for Scholarly Journals?" He provided the following main points to keep in mind: current technology has crossed substantial functional thresholds, future developments may be transformational, and "fit" depends on the precise application and data.

HighWire's application is called HighWire Remote. HighWire Remote is offered as a service by individual HighWire journals. It delivers tables of contents, abstracts, and selected full-text material

from current journal issues to handheld PDAs. PalmOS was now supported, and support for PocketPCs was expected in summer 2003. Those applications are available from the "My Email Alerts & PDA" section of the HighWire database.

On the subject of whether a given journal should offer such a service, Hecker said that the goals, finances, and constituent requests depend on the individual journal, and he specified four kinds of target audience: clinicians, researchers, students, and the general public. HighWire provides the optional service for its journal clients.

R Michael Segroves, of Palm Digital Media, spoke on "Palm-Powered Mobility". Palm has an installed base of 25 million users. Palm Digital Media is the leading eBook technology on the Web today. Segroves reported that 110,000 people order the Palm weekly newsletter of available electronic books. He also stated that every week 20,000 people buy an online book. Palm's Digital Media Publishing Partners include AOL Time Warner Book Group, HarperCollins, John Wiley & Sons, Merriam-Webster, Penguin Group (USA), Random House, St Martin's Press, Simon & Schuster, and Walker & Co.

Segroves demonstrated several PDA devices. He believes that as these devices are able to deal with equations, mathematics markup, and special characters, and as the screen size grows, the market will increase. 