

◆ *The Future of Print—Cultural and Technical Influences*

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For journals of all specialties and sizes, one of today's most pressing financial and cultural questions is not whether to publish online but when, how quickly, and how completely to make the switch. With so much history behind the printed journal, how can we bear to leave it behind? But with the Internet dominating many other aspects of life, should publishers prolong a dying way of life?

For Meg McGough, who handles marketing and subscriptions for the *Journal of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry*, whether to continue mailing print is a complicated decision. Many scientists still consider print journals of considerable value. Journals serve as signs of a society's legitimacy and repute, connections to new intellectual fields, marks of intellectual property, and archives for the history of a discipline.

But those arguments are losing signifi-

cance. Younger people do not value scientific societies as much as their predecessors do. New ideas are explored—in far greater depth than ever before—online. Copyright laws now extend to online content, and digital archiving is becoming cheaper and easier than storing print.

Printing is cheaper than ever, and in some markets, especially Asia, print is in high demand. The potential advertising revenue from print is still greater than that from online; however, 34% of the total cost of producing a journal goes toward paper, printing, postage, and the like. By discontinuing print altogether, some journals can

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actually increase earnings.

The demand for print varies drastically among disciplines. In general, larger journals should continue printing if it makes sense for their readership and subscription plans. Theresa Pickel, director of association management and publishing services at Allen Press, notes that even though Allen Press has added 150 completely searchable journals to its online publication site since 1998, the number of printed journals has more than doubled in the same period.

For the majority, Pickel maintains, "online is just a better product for what we're doing. It is a richer environment for presenting original research," enabling users to directly and immediately access relevant papers, stories, and supplementary material, hear sound bites, and watch video clips. Online, users can create personal

caches, content alerts, and customized folders, strengthening the scientific community by reinforcing the global network.

Societies should offer more than a print publication as a membership incentive. Young people prefer to engage online, and if societies want to draw younger members and secure the future of their organizations, they need to build membership through an online community. Because advertisers want users online anyway, societies and publishers alike should take advantage by offering online subscriptions and personal options that guide readers to the content that interests them most.

As a librarian, Dennis Dillon must recognize which materials faculty still desire in print form. With one of the largest budgets in the country, the University of Texas library has more than 9 million volumes and adds 150,000 books a year. Since 1998, the library has received pressure to buy more electronic books and think about the necessity of print versions.

The library cancels journal subscriptions on average two out of three years, and although both print and online are vulnerable, print takes the overwhelming majority of cuts. That allows the university to retain vital journals (often through deals with consortia) by buying print at the article level, which is usually all that faculty require. Faculty members prefer instantaneous access to online content and are becoming more comfortable with having papers archived electronically—great news for librarians, who spend a large portion of their budget on physical storage.

Although Dillon, like most librarians, believes that the current situation is unsustainable, he says "we're going to continue to have print in my library as long as I'm around, because I'm committed to it. It keeps people coming into libraries." All presenters agreed: Journals must move online but at a pace comfortable for their readers, authors, and pocketbooks. 📖