◆ *Delivery Modes of the Future—Audio, Podcasts, Blogs, Talking Heads—and the Impact on Editors*

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As it turns out, the delivery modes of the future are actually the delivery modes of the present.

Julie McKeel started by offering some interactive definitions. Through gracious audience participation, McKeel showed the differences among wikis, blogs, and discussion boards. Readers may be aware of one of the most popular wikis, Wikipedia (*www.wikipedia.org/*). A wiki allows people to contribute to a common topic, expanding and correcting information as more people participate. A discussion board is less collaborative and forms more of a dialogue among participants. A blog is the least collaborative of the three, consisting mainly of the author's thoughts; it is possible, however, for readers to post reactions and comments.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Other methods of communicating in cyberspace include the following:

- RSS (Really Simple Syndication): An online subscription service that pushes content to subscribers as new information becomes available.
- Content management systems: Software that manages the workflow of Web-site publishing.
- E-mail marketing: "Blast" e-mails that can be sent to a broad audience.
- Podcasts: Downloadable audio or video files that can be distributed over the Internet.
- Bookmarking tools: Online reference-management tools.

Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses and may require the aid of information-technology (IT) staff to get started. It is important to consider the audience and the level at which the audience will be interacting with the technology. For example, Duke University uses wikis as a method for online collaboration and brainstorming.

As a case study in how the technologies can be used, Larry Husten discussed how *theheart.org* communicates with the medical community. The site covers cardiovascular news exclusively, allowing it to delve deep and offer extensive coverage to its specialized audience. In addition to continuously updated content from across the field, the site can offer dynamic supplemental coverage of special topics.

During a recent controversy over a newly published medical trial, *theheart.org* was able not only to offer timely coverage of the event but to expand its coverage by hosting a panel of experts to discuss the topic. It also produced video interviews on the trial. Finally, the site hosted a forum for members to share their opinions. In that way, *theheart.org* was able to produce comprehensive coverage from multiple angles and offer expanded value for its members.

Along the same lines, Stewart Wills spoke about how *Science* is expanding its online horizons through podcasts and videos. It started producing podcasts in December 2005. Wills stressed that although they started out with professional help, the podcasts are now produced in house and the technology is accessible to any organization. The equipment consists of a laptop, a microphone and stand, audio editing software (Wills recommends the free open-source software *Audacity*), time, and creativity. *Science* produces 30-minute podcasts every 2 weeks, and the topics expand on those covered in the journal. Wills mentioned that journals may want to consider posting transcripts of the audio, as *Science* recently started doing, to ensure that material is accessible in multiple ways.

Science's forays into video have been more limited—mostly restricted to specialized topics that involved professional assistance in producing the videos. For example, Wills explained how *Science* created an interactive poster and teaching resource to complement the release of the macaque genome sequence (*www.sciencemag.org/sciext/macaqueposter/*).

Necessary equipment to produce online videos includes a camera, a wireless microphone, a laptop (Wills recommends Macintosh computers), multitrack video-editing software, an external hard drive, and a lot of time and creativity. However, there is also room for more low-technology options, and videos can be produced with a Web cam and the microphone that comes with most desktop computers.

Wills wrapped up the session by reminding editors that no matter what technology a journal chooses to use, the objective is not to produce broadcast-quality material but to use core editorial principles to communicate information about science. ◉