

## ◆ Migration from Print to Online

Moderator:

**Patty Baskin**

*Neurology*

Rochester, Minnesota

Speakers:

**Jo Anne Newyear-Ramirez**

*University of British Columbia*

Vancouver, British Columbia

**Judy Luther**

*Informed Strategies*

Ardmore, Pennsylvania

**Denis Baskin**

*Journal of Histochemistry and  
Cytochemistry*

Seattle, Washington

Reporter:

**Barbara Gastel**

*Texas A&M University*

College Station, Texas

More and more journals in the sciences are appearing solely or primarily in electronic form. At this session, a university librarian, a consultant, and a journal editor discussed the transition.

University librarian Jo Anne Newyear-Ramirez made several points: Motivations for moving from print to online include faculty and student demand and budgetary considerations. The transition is largely complete for journals but just beginning for books. Prerequisites for migration from print to online include complete and stable online content, sufficient user demand, guaranteed perpetual access, acceptable license terms, high image quality, and discoverability of content (for example, through indexes). Given those requirements, obtaining online rather than print versions actually saves little money.

Newyear-Ramirez noted issues that libraries face regarding migration from print to online. Whereas print purchases represent

one-time costs, online materials engender recurring costs. Purchasing online publications often entails repurchasing publications that were already bought in print. To cover costs of online publications, budgets for monographs have decreased. When print and online editions differ, the question of which is the edition of record arises. Negotiating online access to individual journals can be time consuming. The need for both online and print materials can require increased staff. Users must be able to find what they need, whether through traditional indexes or with other tools. Thus, “libraries need to be where the users are”, for example, providing access through Google, course-management systems, and MySpace and Facebook.

Judy Luther focused largely on a study, done with Richard K Johnson for the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), titled “The E-only Tipping Point for Journals” (see [www.arl.org/bm~doc/Electronic\\_Transition.pdf](http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/Electronic_Transition.pdf)). The objectives were to understand the outlook for journals available only electronically (“e-only journals”) and to identify forces promoting or hindering the transition thereto. From 2002 to 2006, it was found, the proportion of ARL members’ acquisition budgets devoted to e-only journals rose from 5% to 37%. For libraries, factors promoting the move to e-only include demand from journal users, whose work modes have changed as electronic access has increased, and chances to decrease acquisition costs, operating costs, and space requirements. Among barriers to the transition are lack of electronic versions of some journals, especially in the arts, humanities, and social sciences; aspects of library culture; and matters of digital preservation and long-term access.

Publishers face complex considerations regarding e-only availability, Luther explained. About 60% of the roughly 20,000 journals are available online; fewer than 1,000 are e-only. Drivers of change

for publishers include avoidance of printing and mailing costs, the knowledge that articles tend to be either “online or invisible”, and the chance to eliminate color charges to authors. Among challenges to publishers regarding e-only journals are business models and marketing; persistence of page-design costs, inasmuch as electronic journals tend to be designed as though printed; and continued prestige of and demand for print. Luther also noted that electronic submission systems increase submissions from international authors.

Denis Baskin, executive editor of the *Journal of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry*, published by the Histochemical Society, discussed this journal’s imminent move to online-only publication. The journal, published since 1953, has been available online for more than a decade, and the online version has become the version of record. The journal is suited for online-only publication because it already is accessed mainly online, readers and editors strongly favor the move, and the journal has little paid advertising. However, the savings afforded by providing the journal e-only will be less than expected, because the costs entailed in peer review and editing remain. Readers wanting print versions of material from the journal will be able to buy print-on-demand copies of papers, issues, and volumes produced from PDF files. Contrary to initial concerns, microscopic images produced this way are at least as good as those printed traditionally. HighWire Press, which has hosted the online edition from the start, is providing perpetual access. In response to questions, Baskin said the journal was adding staff to provide for online features. 🔥