

Transition from Print to Online Publishing

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SPEAKERS:

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In just 21 years, online journal publishing has become mainstream, and in some cases, it is the only medium for content distribution. This may seem like a long time, but considering that the print journal has been in existence for more than 300 years, collective wisdom indicates we are at the beginning of a journey that will continue to evolve in the future. In this session, two journal publishers and a biomedical librarian shared insights to help publishers adapt and remain viable long into the future.

Trish Groves began with a fascinating look into the process from print to online for one of the oldest continuously published journals, the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*. As Groves illustrated, *BMJ* has instituted many changes over the years. For 155 years, *BMJ* was published in print only, and in 1995, it became the first medical journal to have an online platform. Three years later, *BMJ.com* launched, becoming the primary source for full text, and the print version transitioned into 1,500-word abridged articles. From 2005 to 2006, a number of access controls were introduced, and in 2008, a continuous-publication workflow was implemented and formal open access (OA) for research was adopted. *BMJ Pico (little)* was released in 2009, and print became further abridged, with authors writing and *BMJ* editing, saving a great deal of money. Author fees were instituted in 2010. Today, all research is published OA and peer-reviewer notes are attached. The website is updated twice daily, every day, except Christmas.

An online-publishing platform can open the door to greater flexibility and creativity. The next speaker, Helen

Atkins, provided insights into leveraging a continuous publishing program to reduce time to publication. Atkins encouraged everyone to let go of traditional “issues.” She emphasized that very few readers are in a position to appreciate a beautifully constructed issue and directed the audience to group articles by the calendar month and then post a table of contents, officially closing that period of time. This practice decreased time to publication at *Public Library of Science* by one-half. Atkins addressed pagination by suggesting that each article begin with the number one and include the date of publication and the DOI. She added that some use an e-locator. In this model, it is helpful to tell the reader how to cite the article (“Cite this article as . . .”).

There are editorial considerations to factor in when moving to an online-publishing model. Press embargoes, companion pieces, or author special requests will lengthen time to publication but must be accommodated. If it is important to include the date of publication on the PDF of the article, the journal should work with a production partner on a solution to replace the dummy date with the actual one.

The final speaker provided practical advice for ensuring the online journal will endure by following sound practices. David Gillikin encouraged all participants to review and follow current publishing best practices as stated by the National Information Standards Organization in *Presentation and Implementation for eJournals. The Transfer Code of Practice* provides voluntary guidelines to follow when transferring journal titles between publishers. Following these guidelines will guarantee the content remains easily accessible to readers. Errata and retractions are still important, “don’t just go online and change it,” Gillikin shared, “keep journal publishing practices transparent.” Also, maintaining an archive of past mastheads and editorial practices is vital.

The National Library of Medicine has three compliance conditions:

1. Citations must be in XML format.
2. Access to content must be provided under a license that allows efficient support of National Library of Medicine operations, onsite services, and interlibrary loan.
3. A publisher must be actively depositing into an approved repository such as PubMed Central.

Much has happened in 21 years. Following the advice of these presenters will ensure enduring success for years to come.