

# Maintaining Relevance: Strategies to Drive User Engagement with Journal Articles

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KGL Editorial

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Frontiers

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Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery

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Promoting engagement with journal content is essential to maintain relevance in today's competitive environment. As a result, publishers are rising to meet the demand of this new ecosystem.

Co-moderators Laura Lander of KGL Editorial and Kelly Lenox of National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences/National Institutes of Health opened the session by providing a brief background on enhanced publication content and what it can be used for. "Enhanced publication content" refers to content outside of the published article that enhances and promotes the article. Examples include video abstracts, graphical abstracts, audio-visual content, infographics, blogs, plain-language summaries, and podcasts. This type of content can be used to increase visibility, accessibility, and readership; disseminate information on social media; engage with young readers; attract non-scientists, such as educators and policy makers; and increase article impact. Content can be created at the journal level or the organizational level. This session focused on how journals, societies, and publishers handle this type of material to promote engagement with researchers and audiences far beyond an article's original readership.

Ginny Herbert of Frontiers provided some context as to why reader engagement strategies are so important. There are numerous ways to engage with research that won't show in article citations or Altmetric activities. Publishers should delve into what limits reader engagement, both

for researchers and the public. Ginny proposed building a "reader engagement roadmap," which will help publishers identify target audiences, understand existing gaps and attitudes, and select relevant strategies for filling these gaps. Ginny used Frontiers for Young Minds<sup>1</sup> as an example—this initiative promotes science for kids, edited by kids. However, a different strategy would likely be needed in order to engage with clinicians or policy makers.

Next, Cathi Siegel spoke about some ways the American Physiological Society (APS) drives engagement. One example is a graphical abstract, which is a visual summary of the main findings of an article. It is a single, concise, informative picture that allows the reader to quickly understand the main takeaway of an article, regardless of whether or not the reader has a background in science. A graphical abstract can be a brand-new image or a repurposed figure from the article. Graphical abstracts appear in PDF ahead of print, and the final version appears at the beginning of the HTML version of an article. They also show up in the table of contents when readers browse an issue. Graphical abstracts were slowly implemented 2–3 years ago and are now required by some APS journals but available for all APS journals. Due to their layout and design, graphical abstracts are a great way to promote an article on social media.

APS also offers the Spotlight Cover Program.<sup>2</sup> Authors are invited to submit artwork for this program when they upload their revised manuscript. A limited number of images are chosen, and there is a fee to participate in this program. The cover appears on the journal webpage with a direct link to the article, appears on the article page, and serves as the monthly issue cover for the journal. Spotlight covers should be colorful and engaging, have minimal text but enough scientific information to entice a reader to learn more, be original and unpublished with no trademarked or copyrighted images, and be scientifically accurate and visually appealing. APS promotes these covers by posting the artwork on their social media channels and encourages authors to do the same. Data have shown that articles featured under the Spotlight Program are cited and downloaded more frequently than those not in the program.

Siegel also spoke about first author highlights, which is a new feature that elevates the profile of young up-and-coming authors.

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**Figure.** Statistics for increased readership, engagement, and impact for articles published with an alternate format (provided by Cactus Communications).

Christina Nelson then spoke about ways that the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (JBJS) drives user engagement. JBJS has a media section on their homepage<sup>3</sup> that is used to house videos, podcasts, infographics, news, and audio in one place. The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for picking which articles to feature—typically, the journal will partner with a vendor to produce 2 video summaries and 3 infographics per month. The authors have enjoyed this process and appreciate having their work highlighted in different formats.

JBJS Author Insights videos are generally 2–3 minutes long and are provided by the author. The podcasts “Your Case Is on Hold” and “OrthoJOE” are relatively new, but have been gaining listeners. JBJS also offers OrthoBuzz, a blog designed to keep readers informed of new literature, and OrthoCorps, an audio archive of stories. There is also an audio app that provides a collection of articles read in entirety by qualified med students. All these initiatives are showcased on social media by the JBJS marketing department. Impact is measured by checking subscription numbers, sales generated from emails, and number of listens.

Up next, Chirag Jay Patel discussed how Cactus Communications, a scientific communications/technology company, works with other organizations to generate and amplify content in order to drive engagement. Cactus offers

a science-driven approach to communicating research and solutions. They help transform research into content that can be consumed by a wide range of stakeholders—as Chirag points out, there is a never-ending amount of content published, so it’s important to make yourself stand out (Figure). Cactus has worked with *Neurology* to help drive engagement by transforming articles into short-form articles, which are 250- to 300-word summaries of lengthy articles that allow readers to stay up to date with new content. Additionally, Cactus has worked with JBJS and the Royal Society of Chemistry on infographics and video summaries.

Patel also cited a 3M survey<sup>4</sup> that indicated the public’s trust in science is increasing. Currently, interest in science is high, making it all the more important to drive user engagement and disseminate as much information as possible to as many people as possible, opening the borders of scholarly publishing far beyond the initial intended audiences.

## References and Links

1. <https://kids.frontiersin.org/>
2. <https://journals.physiology.org/spotlightcovers>
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