

ARTICLE

Data Conversion

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As we all know, publishing has, and continues to, change rapidly. From a relatively stable backdrop for hundreds of years, it is now moving exponentially, and although many love the challenges and opportunities this brings, many are feeling more than a little overwhelmed.

According to Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), the printing press was invented around 1440 and, by 1500, printing presses in operation throughout Western Europe had already produced more than 20 million volumes. In the mid-twentieth century, electronic input for printing presses, rather than the need to build the pages using letterpress, meant electronic forms of content were available. However, most publishers were not thinking about distributing their content electronically (even at a basic level) until the 1990s and onwards using the World Wide Web.

In a nutshell, there is a HUGE

amount of content out there, which, if it has been preserved, is not in an electronic format and so is not accessible to most readers. If this is digitally converted, the concept of *out of print* becomes obsolete because the content can be viewed electronically or can be provided in a print format using services such as print on demand. So, the first concept in data conversion is digitalisation of print copy.

Scanning and OCR

In order to convert paper or microfilm/fiche content into electronic content, the first step in the process is to scan the original documents (a process also referred to as *image capture*). There are two options for scanning – *destructive* and *non-destructive*. With non-destructive scanning the original bound copy is preserved, but the cost of this procedure is significantly more expensive because it requires a more

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manual and labour-intensive process. With destructive scanning, the spine of the print product is cut, the pages cropped to remove any residual glue or other binding material, and then the pages are fed through an automatic sheet feeder attached to a scanner, requiring little manual intervention. Incidentally, books can be rebound after this process.

The output of this process is an *image file*, most commonly either TIFF or JPEG. Image files are like a snapshot: text is treated as a picture and not recognized as the individual characters. It is therefore not searchable. The image file is converted to a PDF, which is an *image PDF* and, as such, still not searchable. Many archives of very old content have been uploaded to the Internet in this format.

Depending on the requirement, image PDFs may be cleaned up (dust and other 'blobs' on the page can be removed) and the text centred on the page. If the content needs to be converted to searchable electronic format (editable text, which can be searched), Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is utilised.

OCR is the electronic translation of scanned images of printed text into machine-encoded text. OCR combines research in pattern recognition, artificial intelligence, and computer vision. OCR can achieve an accuracy of up to 99.9%. Although there will always be concerns about the spelling mistakes generated by the 0.1%, this is not bad for a 100% automatic conversion with little human intervention. It is prudent to remember a key factor enabling maximum possible OCR accuracy is the quality of the input material and initial foundational scan. The output of a textual PDF where all the text is 'grable' and is not an image is called an *electronic PDF* and this is searchable.

Conversions of Electronic Copy to Different Formats

Although the above process produces electronic content, there are still many ways the text can be further tagged or manipulated in order to be accessible to the widest number of readers in the most friendly and useable format. Below I've outlined some of the many different further conversions that may be required.

PDF Extraction of Text

Although there are 49 million PDFs indexed on Google, this includes all the text in each document with no distinction of the content, so targeted information will not be readily found by searching. For instance, if the content is tagged appropriately, searching for authors using an author field would eliminate the names of other people cited in the text or names of authors found in the references that generate a result. Likewise key search term words can be targeted to the title or abstract so a passing reference to a term within the main body of the article would not bring up a result, thus not overwhelming the searcher with bogus/irrelevant citations.

Extraction of text and metadata from PDFs is required in order to process the content into different formats, such as xml, EPUB, and even Word. Even if you have an electronic PDF, depending on how that PDF was generated, you still cannot just extract the text and know the content will be correctly formatted. For instance, line breaks and columns may result in words running together and content being out of order, and tables and

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boxes may not be differentiated. Many vendors have or are developing tools to recognise these issues and fix them automatically in order to reduce the time and resources it takes to manually cross check output versus input.

Conversion from SGML to XML

SGML (Standardised Generalised Markup Language) was introduced in the mid-1980s in order for governments and large organisations to preserve and exchange documents in a computer neutral format. Although a lot of electronic content was generated using this tagging, including by some publishers, XML (Extensible Markup Language) was introduced in 1996 and took over from SGML.

XML was introduced as a simplification of SGML with the aim of inducing a wider uptake, as well as better compatibility with the Web. It also reduced the flexibility of SGML, so many people took the opportunity to change their SGML associated Document Type Definitions (DTD) and tighten up their processes. SGML allowed vendors flexibility, so there was no guarantee all content would be coded the same way. XML promoted standardisation and publishers are more able to ensure their content is stored in a consistent format irrespective of the number of vendors they use.

Although some larger publishers had begun structuring their content using SGML, uptake by publishers greatly increased with the introduction of XML and those who started with SGML quickly moved forward using XML. Although some have retained their SGML archive, much has been converted in order to standardise. Many hosts and aggregators have specific requirements for the supply of content (see below).

Conversion of One Flavour of XML to Another

In the journals world, when a Society changes its publisher, the archive of material will usually need to be available on the new publisher's website. Although there is a pretty standard journal DTD, the NLM DTD (produced by the National Library of Medicine), not all publishers use it and not all publishers use it in the same way. I have spent many an hour working out how to use the available tags to present content online, and there are often many ways to achieve it. Requirements can differ based on the online host's display capabilities, requirements of the publisher and society, or requirements of other hosts. For instance, for one of our clients we provide NLM XML to their online host but have to make subtle changes to the tagging before sending it to an aggregator that also takes NLM XML. (Aggregators collect content from many publishers and host it in one place, examples include JSTOR, PubMed and PMC.)

So, there is an ongoing need for conversions despite best efforts to keep standard sets of tags and instruction.

Newer Publishing Outputs

The above conversions are based on representing content in databases and XML is the best method of storing content. What you see on a website is HTML but the source is often taken from XML, especially in the journals world. However, PDF is still a valuable way of presenting information and many publishers produce value-added PDFs as a way to offer their content to online readers. E-books can be in the format of PDF or EPUB (electronic publication).

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Value-added PDFs

Many magazine publishers generate value-added PDFs for reading their content online. Because of the ad hoc nature of the pages, they are manually tagged with cross links. For instance, an image may contain a text box within it saying which page to go to for the article—this text can be converted to a link so the reader clicks on the text to reach the article. Likewise, images can be converted to videos when in electronic format. The contents page and any other cross linking in the articles can be achieved in this way. This work tends to be outsourced offshore and has to maintain fast turnaround times to ensure the online PDF product is available at the same time as the print product.

Many books can be published online in this same way, as value-added PDFs. Contents page data become links to the chapter starts, and references are converted to links out to the relevant website. All weblinks, e-mails, and cross links are converted to clickable links, demonstrating the benefits of reading the PDF online as an electronic product, while maintaining a link to (or feel similar to) the print product output.

Conversion of PDF to EPUB

In the books world especially, conversion of content to EPUB is a large area of growth. EPUB is a free and open e-book standard and is designed for reflowable content for the device being used by the reader, for example iPad, Sony Reader, Nook, and so on. This means that the content, although looking like a pdf, will adjust depending on the screen size and font size. So, if the reader increases the font size, the number of words/lines per page will decrease and the overflowing content will move to the next page and so on—reflowing. This is adjustable so if the font size is reduced,

the content will automatically reflow again. EPUB can also be provided to Kindle, although they subsequently convert it to their own format, Mobi.

Reading devices are radically changing the way people think about and read content. Much as the way the Open Access movement is causing waves in the journals publishing world, self-publishing with companies such as Amazon is doing the same for the books world now. It impacts the role of the publisher and, also, the accessibility and cost of production.

EPUB is not as granular as XML, but it serves the needs of the reader. The key thing about EPUB production is the content can reflow and the text size can be changed depending on the reader's requirement. The table of contents and index are linked so navigation is easy; it is not based on page numbers, hence reflowable and resizable text.

To a certain degree, this makes conversion from PDF to EPUB format much easier than from PDF to XML format. However, where input is XML, the production of EPUB files is much easier.

A major issue hindering EPUB for most technical publications is the lack of support for equations formatted as MathML. They are currently included as images. For STM journals, complex tables and unsupported equation fonts also need to be displayed as images. This content is thus not searchable and, depending on the device, does not render well on the page.

Although Unicode is required to support international and multilingual books, the reading devices are not required to provide the fonts necessary to display every Unicode character. This means some characters need to be displayed as images, which will be a fixed size—so if the reader increases or reduces the font size, the image will remain the same size it was produced at. If EPUB output is generated for compatibility with multiple

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devises, the size of the image has to be chosen for optimal size on all so it will be slightly larger on some and smaller on others in comparison with the main text.

However, as with all standards, EPUB is developing and in time many of the current issues will be ironed out, especially with the release of the EPUB 3 standard and its uptake by device manufacturers.

Closing Remarks

Data conversion is a large industry and it is not just limited to the publishing world, but the above demonstrates some of its applications and requirements, which affect

production and editorial staff in publishing. Although many editors, production editors, and authors may still use the printed PDF as their standard for checking content and signing it off for press, the term 'press' can no longer apply mainly to the printed product or the basic PDF output. The need to focus attention on the quality of the content itself, as well as the appropriate tagging of the different components of the article, and not on the display/rendering of this content in only one of many formats (printed PDF) it will be published in is of paramount importance.



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Changing Online Hosting Platforms: Part II

by **Cindy DeLano**
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Introduction

In Part I (*EON*, August 2011) of this two-part series on transitioning our journal from one vendor's online hosting platform to another, I discussed why we decided to change vendors and how we made the decision to do so. In summary, we compared three different vendors: Vendor A, Vendor B, and Vendor C. (I intentionally left out the proper names of each vendor to avoid bias.) For reference, Vendor A refers to the vendor who hosted our site previously, Vendor B refers to the vendor who we chose to transition to, and Vendor C, who does not appear in the following article, is the third vendor we evaluated as part of our decision-making process. In this issue of *EON*, I present Part II of the series, which covers how we prepared for the transition of the journal's site from Vendor A to Vendor B, the process of transitioning the site's content and subscribers, and lessons learned along the way.

The Transition

The Plan

To transition from one online hosting vendor to another, without interruption of the presence of the journal online, an aggressive transition plan was needed. In advance of the final decision to transition the site, our publisher and I made a list of what steps would

need to be taken to transition the site. These steps included the following:

- Determine the timeline for transition
- Design individual items of the new site
- Transfer content
- Go live with the new site
- Transfer subscribers

Once the proposal to change platforms was approved, we settled on the above transition plan and divvied up tasks. However, because our publisher was contracting directly with Vendor B, it made sense for them to do the majority of the work for delivering the new site, with input and assistance from me as the managing editor of the journal and from the editor-in-chief, as needed.

Timeline

After evaluating what would need to take place to achieve each step in the plan, we determined we would need six months to complete the transition. Six months was the amount of time suggested by colleagues and was the timeframe in which our publisher thought they could get the new site designed, transferred, and posted with Vendor B. To begin the process, I notified Vendor A we would be moving the journal to another vendor. Vendor A had requested we give them six months' notice if we decided to leave; therefore, the plan was to have all files

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transferred from Vendor A to Vendor B, with the new site designed and ready to go live on the first day of the month six months from when we formally notified Vendor A. Although this seemed like plenty of time, it proved to be a tight timeframe.

Designing the Site

When we were evaluating the three different online hosting vendors, we noted each had its own basic design template for use with any given journal's website, with varying degrees of customization available and costs for doing so. We chose to use the basic template provided by Vendor B and to customize the site by designing our own banner. We designed the banner to reflect the look and specialty area of the print journal as well as the design of our association's new website. This banner would appear on all Web pages related to the journal. We also took the opportunity to provide any new content we wanted available on the site and to update outdated content.

Transferring Content

Because we were creating a completely new site, all content for the journal held by Vendor A had to be transferred to Vendor B. Therefore, all metadata for the journal's site had to be released by Vendor A and verified and posted by Vendor B. For each article, types of metadata transferred included PDF, HTML, and XML files; DOI (digital object identifier); and any associated metatags (e.g., title, authors, keywords, abstract, article text, etc.). Like most publishers of scholarly journals, our publisher participates with CrossRef and is responsible for depositing DOIs and other metadata for the online journal; therefore, they notified CrossRef on

our behalf that the journal would be changing location. The publisher also was responsible for depositing new DOI and URL information with CrossRef in addition to any other metadata affected by the change in platforms.

Going Live

We began reviewing and testing the beta version of the new site as soon as it was developed so we could work out as many kinks as possible before the site went live; however, six months transition time did not give us enough time to test and evaluate the site to the degree I would have liked. Therefore, much continued testing and tweaking of the site occurred after it went live, which was not an ideal scenario.

In addition, before launching the new site there was much discussion about whether we could retain the journal URL we had used on Vendor A's platform and transfer it to Vendor B's platform. In the end, it turned out to be more efficient to use a new URL for the journal unique to Vendor B's platform. Therefore, we had to carefully coordinate with Vendor A to redirect readers and subscribers to the new site the moment the old site was pulled down. We verified the URL for the home page of the new site several times with both vendors before it went live. The old site was pulled down on the day we had aimed for and the new site went live. We noticed it took some time for the Web to be populated with the new URL and for the new site to appear in search engine results.

Transferring Subscribers

One of the biggest challenges we faced in transitioning the journal's site was how to successfully transfer subscribers without disruption in service. To start, in advance of

Changing Online Platforms II

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the launch of the new site we began sending out e-mails to subscribers announcing the journal would soon have a new website. In addition to notifying subscribers, we also decided to notify anyone who had been involved with the journal at some point, whether as subscriber, author, reviewer, or reader. We did this by running subscriber usage reports from Vendor A's platform before the transition, running usage reports for the table of contents e-mail alert service from Vendor A's platform, and downloading all user information from our online manuscript tracking system. From each of these reports we collected all e-mail addresses available and used these to send notifications about the journal's upcoming new site.

To ensure subscribers would have the same (continuous) access to articles and features on the new site as they had had on the old site we used a *token* system. With this system, a token for each subscriber was generated (in our case a 9-digit number). On the day the new site went live each subscriber received an e-mail announcing the launch of the journal's new site, including instructions on how to activate their subscription using the token contained in the e-mail. This system successfully transferred most of our subscribers to Vendor B's platform; however, as noted below, not every last subscriber was transferred without a hitch.

Lessons Learned

In Part I of this article I described how when I was interviewing for my current position and was looking at our journal's website I thought to myself, 'I want to change that site.' Well, my wish came true but not without some bumps along the way. I'd say the two biggest lessons I learned from the process of transferring online hosting platforms are 1) expect there will be problems and 2) ask as

many questions as possible before, during, and after the transition.

Expect Problems

As we were transferring the site, we ran across some problems we would not have been able to predict. For example, some older metadata did not transfer because it was no longer supported. In addition, the DOIs for some of the articles had been entered manually at some point after the original site was launched, so for those articles, the DOIs were not part of the files transferred from Vendor A to Vendor B. Once the site was launched, we also heard from a few subscribers who were unable to access the new site, presumably because they had not received notification the journal would be moving to a new site.

Although we gave ourselves six months to transfer platforms from start to finish, if I had to do it over again I'd set a timeframe of at least a year. Not only did we run into some problems when we were transferring data, but we also didn't get to test the new site to the degree I would have liked before it went live; therefore, the new site behaved differently than expected and/or differently from how the old site behaved, which caused the editor-in-chief and editorial board members some consternation.

Ask Questions

Although I went into the process of transitioning sites with as much information as I could gather, I also learned I should have asked more questions about who would be responsible for thoroughly testing the site, how exactly was the new site going to be different from the old site, and who was going

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User Keywords: Steps to Building an Effective Reviewer Pool

by Michael Willis
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Finding experts who can spare the time to provide detailed, informed assessments of your submissions is one of the more challenging elements of the entire peer-review process. While much research has been conducted on the quality of peer review, a brief scan of the programmes for the last three peer-review congresses¹ suggests there have been far fewer studies in the area of optimal searching techniques for locating appropriate reviewers.

The demands of work, whether it be academic research, teaching or clinical practice, erode the time available for reviewers to assess the work of others. Arguably, the more useful reviewers are also the more senior within their field, and the demands placed on them tend to be greater. Not surprisingly, therefore, one might view the education of junior researchers in how to conduct peer review as being a high priority for the scientific community. The recent report into peer review published by the UK Parliament has said as much:

Training for the next generation of authors and reviewers is important.... Given the importance of

*peer review across the research spectrum, from grant applications to publications, we consider that all early-career researchers should be given the option for training in peer review.*²

A dedicated pool of loyal peer reviewers is a precious resource for any journal, but attaining that goal is not easy. This article illustrates how to match keywords³ to reviewers as a means to this end. The advice comes from my experience working alongside a number of journals, of all sizes, as they have sought to refine their reviewer database.

Be Prepared

Implementation of a keyword list involves a significant amount of effort on the part of journal staff, both in terms of planning and in terms of executing those plans. It's critical at the outset of the exercise to be prepared for this. If you have the resources, you might wish to consider taking on a temporary staff member for the exercise. Make time and plan carefully.

¹ 2009: www.ama-assn.org/public/peer/program_2009.html; 2005: www.ama-assn.org/public/peer/program.html; 2001: www.ama-assn.org/public/peer/program_2001.html (accessed 1st September 2011).

² *Peer Review in Scientific Publications*. Science and Technology Committee, UK Houses of Parliament, published 18th July 2011. www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmsctech/856/85611.htm (accessed 1st September 2011).

³ Different electronic systems use different nomenclature: Keywords may also be known as 'attributes' or 'classifications'.

User Keywords

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Explain the Term

‘Keywords’ in itself is an ambiguous term; here we are not talking about a word or phrase whose object is to enable indexing of articles. If your electronic system asks a submitting author to supply a keyword for their paper, however, this is very often precisely what the author has in mind. It is therefore important to explain to the author through on-screen instructions the keyword is to be used to enable the editor to find reviewers appropriate for the paper. Naturally keywords supplied in this way have the added benefit of being able to conduct audits of submitted and accepted papers by searching across these keywords, but for the author the prime motivation to supply relevant keywords is the greater likelihood of swift and efficient peer review of their paper.

Since keywords need to be supplied by reviewers for their account information as well as by submitting authors, the objective of the keyword list should also be made clear to reviewers when announcing it to them. More follows on this in ‘Implement the List’ below.

Define Your List

This part of the exercise arguably requires the greatest thought.

While it may be possible to allow authors to specify their own keywords in a free-text field, it is far more beneficial to the editorial team to provide a defined list of terms from which the author must select one or more terms. Permitting authors to add keywords of their own may appear to be respectful of the authors and allow for flexibility, but in practice over time it can undermine the integrity of your keywords database, as it will almost certainly incorporate misspellings, inconsistent usage, and unhelpful terms.

A key principle to bear in mind is the list must be meaningful to both reviewers and authors. The terms are likely to relate to the major category or a sub-category within which the manuscript falls, but within these there may be further hierarchies (Table 1). It is also worth considering having multiple lists – for example one for major categories and one for specific areas of expertise which may overlap with more than one term from the first list (Table 2).

- Transport
 - ⇒ Air
 - ⇒ Plane
 - ⇒ Helicopter
 - ⇒ Rail
 - ⇒ High speed
 - ⇒ Metro/Rapid transit
 - ⇒ Road
 - ⇒ Car
 - ⇒ Coach
 - ⇒ Sea
 - ⇒ Ship
 - ⇒ Hovercraft

Table 1: A simple hierarchical list of keywords

List 1	List 2
Cricket	Refereeing
Football	Rules
Rugby	Team selection

Table 2: Multiple lists

User Keywords

continued

You will probably want the keywords ordered alphabetically, but in some instances this may not be the most appropriate way of presenting the list and you could consider placing more common terms towards the top of the list and niche topics towards the bottom. Always think about how an author will look for a suitable keyword.

Another aspect to consider carefully is the minimum and maximum number of terms you want authors to select. In translational medicine, for example, you may want to allow for a larger number of terms, as the paper may overlap with several areas. The more terms supplied, the greater the likelihood of being able to find an appropriate reviewer; but the greater the risk too of having so broad a set of keywords associated with the paper that they lose all value. Overall, however, if your online system allows you to conduct Boolean (*e.g.* AND/OR/NOT) searches of keywords when looking for reviewers, having more rather than fewer keywords per paper will potentially enable you to find appropriate reviewers more precisely.

Scientific research is ever-changing, so any list of keywords must cater for flexibility in tandem with this—whether it be the removal of obsolete terms or the addition of new ones.

So much for the principles behind the creation of a keyword list. Not a few editors may take fright at the challenge involved, as it is not easy to know where to start—particularly if you have to start with a clean slate. It may be useful to start by examining the keyword lists used by other journals within the field, not just because some of the work is done for you, but also because authors publishing within the field may already be familiar with those terms. You may also find

helpful resources within publications or abstract submission guidelines from learned societies within the field.⁴

Implement the List

With the list created, you will need to ask your configuration contact at the online peer review system supplier to implement the list on the system. Different suppliers have different requirements for how the list should be formatted, so be sure to check and comply with these carefully.

This is the relatively easy part of the implementation process. The harder step is to have your reviewers' keywords recorded in your user database, and a key issue is to consider who will input the keywords: the editorial office or the reviewers themselves? The former will be very time-consuming but allows you to monitor responses more easily; the latter ensures reviewers are actively 'connecting' with the journal and gives them the opportunity to simultaneously check their contact information held by the journal.

Either way, you will need to send a circular or broadcast e-mail to request your reviewers supply their keywords. The wording should emphasise the benefits of having keywords accurately recorded, not least among which are it reduces the risk of reviewers receiving inappropriate e-mails and seeks to ensure they will spend their time only on activities relevant to their areas of expertise.

The e-mail could usefully coincide with a general announcement to reviewers of a recent success of the journal, for example an increased Impact Factor. Given that reviewers play an enormous role in contributing to any journal's success, thanking them for their

⁴ For an extremely thorough example, see the multiple lists used by the Royal Society of Chemistry at www.rsc.org/pdf/journals/refquest.pdf (accessed 1st September 2011).

User Keywords

continued

support is appropriate and helps to further cement their loyalty to you.

You may wish to combine the keyword implementation with an exercise in culling your database, for example sending the e-mail only to those who have a proven track record of loyalty to the journal through previous peer review and/or submissions. The cull could in fact come after the event, the argument going that reviewers who do not reply to the request within a certain period of time have thereby demonstrated they have no clear commitment to the journal and should be removed from your database.

No doubt a broadcast e-mail will generate a large number of ‘undeliverable email’ responses, which—despite the amount of work involved—really ought to be followed up by tracking down a correct address and editing account information, or by noting the reviewer as unavailable and removing them from the database.

One last issue to bear in mind is you should conduct an audit of your list of reviewers within a few months of the implementation exercise. Establish how many reviewers responded to the request and follow up the non-respondents appropriately.

Conclusion

There is no substitute for editorial input in looking for appropriate reviewers for any given submission. While setting up a keyword list will by no means be a panacea for the pain of finding appropriate reviewers, it should provide the benefit to authors of accelerating peer review time and to reviewers of handling only the most relevant manuscripts.



New Training Module!

Publishing Ethics 101: A Guide for the Editorial Office

The ethical handling of the review process and publication of journal research is critical to guaranteeing the accuracy and transparency of information disseminated to the scholarly community. Editorial staff should be familiar with the fundamentals of ethical publishing, including the common types of ethical violations, the primary elements of an ethics policy, and how to correct errors in literature that result from a breach of conduct. “Publishing Ethics 101: A Guide for the Editorial Office” is a quick-reference tool that will provide editorial staff with these fundamentals, as well as resources for more in-depth information about the ethics of journal publishing. This module is a benefit of ISMTE membership.

I Don't Remember Seeing 'Scholarly Publishing' at Career Day: How I Got Here and Why I'm Glad I Did

by **Lindsey M. Brounstein**
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It's the summer of 2006; enter the new college graduate with a BA, having dual-majored in English and Classical Studies. 'So, you're planning to teach?' was the question I heard most often from friends and family. It was a fair question and I wasn't able to give them a straight answer. I was fairly certain I didn't want to attempt teaching, but I didn't know where that left me. By the fall of 2007 I'd gone through a few short-term positions as I tried to figure out what exactly one *does* with a BA in English. Paralegal and bartender both added themselves to my fresh-out-of-school résumé, but neither had the feeling of a real, full-time job with actual career potential for me. Then I stumbled across an ad for an editorial assistant position at the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA). Ignoring the fact I had no idea what an editorial assistant *was* (and that I would most definitely need to learn how to pronounce *gastroenterological*), I eagerly applied. 'I like editing,' I told myself on my way to the interview, 'so this could be interesting.'

The interview began with a brief explanation of scholarly publishing and the general entry-level tasks of the editorial assistant, and how those tasks fit into the

production processes of two medical journals (*Gastroenterology* and *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* [CGH]) and a newspaper (*GI & Hepatology News*). I remember thinking I didn't even know this career field existed; let alone how much work goes into producing high-quality, professional publications. Where was the 'scholarly publishing' table at Career Day?

At the time of my interview, I was thrilled with the very idea of publishing—taking transient ideas and making them permanent via the written word in a form that would endure for centuries! I didn't realize accepting the position at the AGA would not only be the start of my first 'real' job, but also the beginning of my very own career in scholarly publishing.

Likewise, I had no idea I was stepping into a field in the throes of a complete paradigm shift.

When I came on board, we had a staff of ten: nine who handled the production logistics and the publications' daily workflow, and one medical illustrator who drew illustrations for articles in both journals and who also had the monumental task of redrawing the line art (graphs and such) submitted with the manuscripts. I also learned each publication

How I Got Here

continued

had its own editor-in-chief, experts in the field who held important positions at various institutions and universities. Each editor-in-chief had his/her own Board of Editors who were often at yet more institutions, sometimes even in other countries. Although the publications are all united under the AGA banner, each comes with its own set of guidelines, personalities, and challenges. There were manuscripts to check and process, editor and reviewer assignments to coordinate, figures to be checked and redrawn, and files to prepare, all while troubleshooting for authors and meeting deadlines. I was completely in awe of the fact our editorial office managed to do all of this every single month and with only ten people.

In the beginning, I worked solely on *CGH*, the smaller journal, processing submissions, answering questions, and filing copyright forms. It amazed me how quickly I developed an interest in the way our editorial office functioned overall. I knew there was more to publishing than filing copyrights and I was eager to see what else I could learn and how other tasks contributed to our finished products. Luckily for me, the field of scholarly publishing was changing rapidly, which put me in the middle of the new projects taking shape in the AGA's publications department.

In the coming months I learned how to redraw line art and check images for quality. I also began checking proofs for *CGH* and assisting with *GI & Hepatology News* by coordinating the workflow for the associate editors. Eventually I came to manage the journals' redraw process and it seemed to me my fondness for scholarly publishing was growing with each new task that came my way.

It was within my first year and a half at the AGA that social media really began to take off. Our editorial office quickly took steps to ensure our journals had their proper place on the Internet. Facebook profiles seemed to appear overnight, followers and all. We harnessed the power of AGA's official Twitter™ feed to keep the micro-blogging world up-to-date with our publications. Our department was strengthened by the addition of a science editor who polished the titles, abstracts, and text of our manuscripts, and she took on the additional task of writing blog posts to highlight critical research in the field. We started soliciting video abstracts from some authors and interviewing others for monthly podcasts. Scholarly publishing was starting to ramp up its online presence and I was thrilled to watch it all unfold for our journals. I started posting to the Facebook page for *CGH* and providing content from the newspaper to Twitter™. I also began to assemble the highlighted content for our newly redesigned journal websites. As things changed and developed, it didn't matter so much I was new to the department or to publishing in general—we were all learning everything for the first time.

Our staffing grew lighter over the next few years, but our tasks only continued to grow. Our Web presence needed continuously more attention, and a very recent shift in the Board of Editors for *Gastroenterology* brought with it new sections for the journals, new ideas, and new adventures for the editorial office. The landscape for our publications was ever-changing and as a result our office developed a distinctive and flexible structure that allowed us to adapt to the new environment.

How I Got Here

continued

One of the greatest benefits of our staffing structure is we all have our hands in many different projects. Your job title reflects the scope of your duties, but not necessarily the specific tasks you do on a daily basis. After four years at the AGA, I've had so much experience with so many different projects, that it is truly amazing how much I've learned. Whenever a new, unexpected project presented itself, either through communications with other ISMTE journals, through research, or just through staff brainstorming, the question that came up (after 'who has the time available?') was 'who is interested?' It's because of this flexibility and structure I was able to develop skills in image screening, proofreading, copyediting, business writing, management, graphic design, customer service, and utilizing social media.

I said earlier I used to be amazed with what we accomplished every month with a staff of ten. We now have nine (seven for the editorial office, one medical illustrator, and one science

editor) and we work on more projects in a month than I would have thought possible. And some of them I couldn't have even imagined occurring four years ago. Twitter™ as a viable marketing tool? Medical research posted to YouTube? Interviews with researchers on iTunes®? The field of scholarly publishing is *still* changing, and the structure of the average editorial office is evolving with it. I may never know whether my office is average or unique among the dozens of others, but I do know there isn't another field where I could have learned everything I did during the last four years. My job amazes me everyday and there is truly never a dull moment. It may have been luck or chance that I found my way to scholarly publishing, but now that I'm here, I don't think I'll ever leave.



ARTICLE

Changing Online Platforms II

continued

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to be responsible for fixing problems with the new site.

The Good News

The good news is the journal's new website has a new, updated look that matches the design of the print journal as well as the

association's website, with a much lower annual cost to the association. In addition, we gained several new subscribers when the new site was launched. And, last but not least, I learned much about how to work on a project like this one, in particular, as a one-woman shop.



Calendar of Events

Effective Journal Editorial Management

5 October 2011

London, UK

www.alpsp.org

Getting the Most from Journal Publicity

25 October 2011

London, UK

www.alpsp.org

Project Management for Publishing

2 November 2011

London, UK

www.alpsp.org

2011 European Meeting of ISMPP

“Trends, Transparency, and Trust: From Insights to Action”

15-16 November 2011

Alderley Park, Cheshire, UK

www.ismpp.org/education/eu_meeting.html

ISMTE European Conference

18 October 2011

Oxford, UK

www.ismte.org

Editorial Manager User Group Meeting

28-29 November 2011

London, UK

www.editorialmanager.com/

11th EASE Conference

8-10 June 2012

Tallinn, Estonia

www.ease.org.uk/

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A note on English: ISMTE aims to be a truly international society. English will represent our lingua franca, but we would like to stress that, in materials published in EON or online, variations in idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.

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