

From Society Publishing to Partner Publishing



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This is one Managing Editor's perspective of the change from being a self-publishing society to partner publishing with a corporate publishing company. To give some context to this perspective, I would like to share more about my particular Society and our publishing program. I work for the Mathematical Association of America. The Society was originally founded to support *The American Mathematical Monthly*, the flagship journal of our organization. The MAA's small periodical publishing program has three journals, two magazines, and an online journal that all support our mission to advance the understanding of mathematics and its impact on our world. The MAA's periodicals uniquely focus on mathematical exposition rather than research, and they are meant to be enjoyed by a broad audience and spark discussion.

When I began working at the MAA, the publishing industry was largely focused around the publisher, with the authors and readers coming to us. In the last decade that has changed as OA and hybrid journals emerged to become the new norm for publishing. Due to these and other shifts in the industry, it became increasingly difficult for the MAA to sustain its publishing program. In 2016, our organization put out an RFP to see what kinds of partnerships could be forged between our Society and a larger publishing company. While several publishers were interested in a partnership, we eventually licensed our journals and one magazine with Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

In 2017 we began the tedious transition—with a bit of anxiety—from a self-publishing society to partnering with Taylor & Francis. Over a year and a half in, I would say that the benefits far outweigh the challenges that we have faced, and I would like to share what we have learned along the way.

The largest benefit of our partnership was the opportunity to standardize processes across our journals and magazine. We had a history of allowing our editors to decide how to format references, footnote items, caption figures and tables, and some had even taken the liberty of adjusting our style guides. There was also an underlying habit to treat our typesetters like short-order cooks, finding typos and wanting to adjust kerning at the last minute before sending files to the printers. It wasn't unusual for a proof to go back and forth between the editor and the typesetter five times or more. The process had become too unwieldy, and there was growing tension between our editors, staff, and typesetters. Keeping track of all the different preferences and styles was overwhelming and unsustainable. We had previously tried to standardize our references across all the publications, but the end result left everyone equally unhappy and dissatisfied. Partnering with Taylor & Francis gave us the opportunity to create standardized style sheets for the copyeditors. When questions about exceptions were posed, Taylor & Francis helped us maintain our production standards. It worked beautifully. Now we have a single process to track. Our editors eventually adjusted to the new process, and our organization was able to regain the control that had previously eluded us.

In addition to standardized procedures, we have also gained additional stability through Taylor & Francis. Each of our journals and magazine are assigned to a production editor to guide us through the production process. This has provided a great deal of stability for us as we have a dedicated person for each journal and magazine. Production editors can fill in for each other and are knowledgeable about our journals, aiding in publication continuity. When we self-published, the high staff turn-over at our typesetter meant that we constantly had to educate a new person about our journals. The stability that Taylor & Francis's production editors provide is a great benefit to us. It also means that they do all the back-end work of tracking and communicating with copyeditors, typesetters, the online platform team, and the printer and marketing team. This has increased stability and has given our editors a great deal of relief as the production editors greatly assist with quality control, ensuring that the copyeditors do not edit our formulas, equations, and

mathematical notation while also dealing with the intricate details of LaTeX files.

In addition to providing stability, extra quality control, and standardized processes, Taylor & Francis manages our copyright forms and permissions. This has been a great help to us. Their robust marketing strategy and outreach has far surpassed what we could do on our own as a small, member society. Our marketing team works with theirs to keep branding consistent, yet their international reach is far beyond what we were able to do on our own.

On top of the internal benefits brought by the partnership, our end-user experience has also been enhanced. Our members now have a user-friendly online reading platform that supports tablets and mobile devices, as well as reading on computers. Our previous online offerings were clunky and challenging to navigate. Taylor & Francis Online, in contrast, has an easy-to-use, robust publication suite. This isn't to say that some of our members haven't had trouble making the adjustment. In general, though, Taylor & Francis Online has a cleaner interface and more features. Partnering with a large company like Taylor & Francis has also allowed us to offer our members additional, complimentary material, including access to some of Taylor & Francis' in-house mathematical publications.

With all of these benefits, there have also been challenges with the transition. Our Society's value of quality, expository

articles can be at odds with Taylor & Francis' value of speedy publishing. I completely understand how OA has created an undercurrent of speed to publish articles as fast as possible, especially in the research-driven sciences where swift publication is critical for trials and scientific advancement. But the MAA has long valued expository writing over IMFD (Introduction, Methods, Findings, Discussion) formatted articles, requiring our editors to spend significant time on the article structure as well as its content. This discrepancy in values has led to a bit of a push-pull feel when talking about why we continue to publish in an issue-by-issue type set-up as opposed to an article-by-article process, with a first glance, unedited version being made available as soon as possible.

The transition away from being an autonomous, self-publishing society has had its ups and downs and has required a level of flexibility from our editors, members, authors, readers, and staff as we have given up control. This loss of control, though, has allowed us to shift our publications from our small sphere of influence to the much larger context of academic publishing as a whole. It is humbling to see our small journals in the vast portfolio of titles that Taylor & Francis offers to academia at large. As the publishing landscape continues to adapt to a future that we have yet to see, it will be comforting for our Society to make that journey with a large company who has the ability to help us navigate choices yet unknown.

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International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) West Meeting

ISMPP is holding the second ISMPP West meeting on November 14-15, 2019, in San Diego, California. The meeting program—themed *Changing Tides and Technology in Scientific Communications*—will explore different factors impacting medical publications and scientific communications at varied types of companies, particularly those with a presence on the US West Coast.

ISMPP West 2019 will feature interactive workshops and insightful sessions/roundtables on such topics as:

- Developing Publications for the Ultimate End User - The Patient
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- Digital Advances and Publication Planning: Current Practices and Future Directions
- Ethics in Publications Practice: Authorship, Transparency, Consequences, and Beyond

ISMPP would like to offer a 10% registration discount to ISMTE members for ISMPP West 2019, with a special discount code. More information is available at www.ismpp.org/ismpp-west-meeting.