

Transitioning a Society Journal Online: A Guide to Financial and Strategic Issues

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C O N N E X I O N S

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Chapter 1

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¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m34278/1.1/>>.

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Chapter 2

About the Author¹

Raym Crow is Managing Partner of Chain Bridge Group (www.ChainBridgeGroup.com), a consulting firm serving nonprofit publishers, located in Arlington, Virginia.

¹This content is available online at <http://cnx.org/content/m34277/1.1/>.

Available for free at Connexions <http://cnx.org/content/col11222/1.1>

Chapter 3

Preface¹

This guide is the outcome of one of three related projects funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the development of sustainable and dynamic electronic structures for scholarly communication in art and architectural history. The report of the first project, published by Hilary Ballon and Mariët Westermann as *Art History and Its Publications in the Electronic Age*,² analyzes obstacles to the development of electronic scholarship in the field and describes how scholarly journals dependent on images could be adapted to an online environment to serve the discipline's research and teaching needs. Such extended online journals would not simply replicate print publications online, but would incorporate interactive image display and manipulation available only in a digital environment. The report recommended that major journals of record develop online prototypes, and that leading professional societies such as the College Art Association (CAA) and Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) explore the establishment of a consortium for online publication to leverage intellectual, organizational, and financial resources.

To demonstrate the potential of online publishing for peer-reviewed journals in art and architectural history, a follow-up project developed a feasibility analysis for the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) to assess the financial implications of evolving the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians (JSAH)* from print-only to online-plus-print distribution. The project was led by Hilary Ballon, then Editor of *JSAH*, and the feasibility analysis was conducted by Raym Crow, the author of this guide. The online version of *JSAH* will provide synchronized text and images, audio and video files, three-dimensional models, GIS map integration, zoomable images, and other features appropriate for publications in art, art and architectural history, and other visually oriented disciplines.

As no existing digital publishing platform incorporates electronic image handling and multimedia features to the extent required by *JSAH Online*, SAH undertook a thorough process to identify a publishing partner capable of providing multimedia publishing services. SAH worked with ARTstor³ to develop a prototype of the multimedia functionality required for the platform, and this prototype provided the basis for developing technical specifications for the journal's multimedia components. As a result of this process, SAH identified the University of California Press as its partner to develop the digital publishing capabilities required for image-dependent disciplines and to provide publishing services, including digital production and process support.⁴

A third Mellon Foundation grant, made to New York University's Institute of Fine Arts (IFA), allowed exploration of the possibility of a consortium between CAA and SAH to develop shared structures for electronic publication, perhaps on the model of AnthroSource, the rich consortial Web site of the American Anthropological Association. Principal Investigators Mariët Westermann of the IFA, Paul Jaskot of CAA, and Hilary Ballon of *JSAH* pursued conversations over the course of a year with the Boards and publication

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m34825/1.1/>>.

²Ballon and Westermann (2006).

³<http://www.artstor.org> (<<http://www.artstor.org>>).

⁴The *JSAH* prototype is non-proprietary, however, and will be available for adoption or adaptation by other journals with medium-rich needs. The University of California Press's significant modifications to the prototype will be proprietary.

directors of the two organizations; with important providers of scholarly publications and images such as JSTOR, ARTstor, INHA, and Aluka; and with museum publication and image rights departments. As the *JSAH Online* project progressed rapidly in the same period, it became evident that a consortium might best be thought of as an advisory group of stakeholders rather than a fully integrated publishing platform for professional organizations with greatly varying constituencies, organizational structures, membership benefits, and publication and resource sharing needs. To extend the benefits of the *JSAH Online* project to CAA and other society publishers in visually oriented disciplines, the PIs commissioned Raym Crow to write this guide.

While many of the considerations in the guide would be germane to any professional scholarly society seeking to transition more fully to online publication, several sections specifically address the challenges and benefits of online publication for journals of art and architectural history. We hope that this guide also will help societies identify areas of mutual concern and potential opportunities for resource sharing. Legal advice and direct procurement arrangements with image providers for scholars, for example, are services that might be provided without full consortial contracts among societies. ARTstor's initiative to provide Images for Academic Publishing, free of charge, from key providers such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art is an example of a service that could be enhanced by bringing in more collections and building in copyright advice services.

Numerous interlocutors helped us think through the organizational challenges and potential for joint action in the development of electronic publication. We are grateful first and foremost to Don Waters of the Mellon Foundation for his thoughtful and substantive support of each of these interrelated projects. Also at the Mellon Foundation, Harriet Zuckerman and Angelica Rudenstine provided wise counsel. We could not have wished for a better advisor on our team than Raym Crow; he provided guidance throughout the consortium explorations and wrote a clear and articulate guide. The following colleagues were unfailingly generous with advice and insights: at CAA, Nicola Courtright, Linda Downs, and Eve Sinaiko; Rick Asher at *CAA Reviews*; for the *Art Bulletin*, Marc Gotlieb; at the *Art Journal*, Judith Rodenbeck; at SAH, Barry Bergdoll, Dietrich Neumann, and Pauline Saliga; at JSTOR, Heidi MacGregor and Michael Spinella; at ARTstor, James Shulman, Gretchen Wagner, and Bill Ying; at INHA, Olivier Bonfait; and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Doralynn Pines and Susan Chun. For grant management support at the Institute of Fine Arts, we thank Michele Marincola, Stanley Ng, and Lisa McGhie.

At the time of writing, most scholarly organizations face truly daunting financial challenges. Full mobilization of the Internet's great promise of open, diverse, and vigorous scholarly communication may seem beyond imminent reach as these societies focus on consolidation rather than new initiatives. We hope that, even or especially in this moment of retrenchment, this guide may chart a clear path to the long-term benefits of online scholarly publication.

Mariët Westermann

Hilary Ballon

Paul Jaskot

March 2009

Chapter 4

Introduction¹

4.1 Overview

Of the approximately 24,000 peer-reviewed scholarly and scientific journals, some 60 percent to 90 percent are now available in online editions.² Not surprisingly, large publishers, both commercial and nonprofit, were among the first to move their journals online. However, most society publishers are quite small—almost 90 percent of societies publish just one journal³—and a significant number of these small societies have yet to move online. With library demand for online editions increasing each year, many societies that publish exclusively in print are experiencing mounting pressure to make their journals available online. In many instances, their ability to respond to this market pressure is hindered by a lack of information, resources, and perspective.

Societies publishing in fields that depend on the use of high-quality images—including art and architectural history, studio art, film and media studies, visual anthropology and sociology, and visual culture studies—confront additional challenges. Some of these challenges, such as image permissions costs and copyright restrictions, pertain for both print and digital publishing. Others—including the expanding use of enhanced digital functionality and digital preservation and format migration—apply exclusively to digital publications.⁴

Despite clear market demand for online access,⁵ introducing an electronic edition of a society journal can entail risk both to existing revenue streams and to the value that individual members perceive in belonging to the society. Although this risk can be assessed and mitigated, small society publishers seldom have the business analysis resources necessary to assess the implications of moving their print publications to an online environment.

Absent a systematic evaluation of the benefits and risks involved, many small society publishers hesitate in moving their publications online. However, a society that manages this risk solely by avoiding it may forgo opportunities to strengthen its publishing operation in the long term by better positioning it to serve its members, fulfill its mission, and remain financially self-sustaining.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m34281/1.1/>>.

²One survey suggests that over 85 percent of small nonprofit journals are available online, although this may be skewed by the composition of the survey's respondents. Cox and Cox (2008), 26. An analysis of Ulrich's Serials Database (see Crow (2006)) suggests that about 60 percent of all journals were available online in 2005. For an overview of the size and complexion of the peer-reviewed journal market, see Morris (2007).

³Crow (2006).

⁴See Ballon and Westermann (2006), 30-55; Bielstein (2006); and McGill (2008), 35ff.

⁵See Sections 2.2 and 4.2.

4.2 Intended Audience and Purpose

This guide provides an overview of the issues that confront a small society publisher as it evaluates whether to offer an online version of its journal. The guide describes the types of business analyses that a society should undertake, and summarizes relevant literature on key topics to help a society make an informed online publishing decision. Although the guide focuses on issues relevant to visually oriented disciplines producing image-intensive journals, many of the topics discussed apply to society publishers irrespective of discipline.

There are many practical issues—financial, technical, editorial, and cultural—involved with moving a journal online. Although we provide an overview of the types of issues that a move online entails, we do not attempt to treat exhaustively all of the technical, editorial, and outsourcing issues that a society might face. Comprehensive primers to online journal publishing⁶ and guides to selecting an online publishing partner already exist,⁷ and these have been supplemented by detailed examinations of specific issues, including online licensing, technical standards and protocols, and marketing and sales issues.⁸ To complement these existing resources, this guide:

- Describes the current institutional library market for peer-reviewed journals to provide context for a society’s analysis;
- Summarizes information relevant to answering the questions societies confront most frequently as they consider whether they should move an image-dependent journal online, including print and online pricing, online distribution and outsourcing options, cost issues, and member retention; and
- Describes business analyses necessary to assess and mitigate the risks particular to membership societies as they transition to online access.

This guide is intended for professional society managers (including executive directors and publication program managers) who manage journals on a day-to-day basis, as well as for society officers and board members charged with overseeing their society’s publishing program. As the guide aims to serve the needs of small societies, it draws its examples primarily from situations likely to pertain for a small society publishing a single journal, and particularly those societies with publications that depend on a variety of media. Moreover, it focuses on the issues that confront U.S. scholarly and professional societies. While many of these issues will be relevant to society publishers elsewhere, issues specific to online publishing in other regions necessarily fall beyond this guide’s scope.

Society publishers, participating simultaneously in the market economy and in the intellectual commons of the academy, must balance the twin imperatives of financial sustainability and mission fulfillment. Pursuing a surplus-maximizing strategy can result in pricing and market practices that compromise a society’s mission by limiting its ability to disseminate research broadly in its field. At the same time, competitive market pressures require society publishers to operate efficiently to ensure financial sustainability.⁹ The pricing and distribution approaches described in this guide are intended to help societies maximize the output of their publishing programs—with output being measured by access to their research as well as by financial return.

⁶See, for example, Morris (2006) and Waltham (2002). For general introductions to journal publishing, see Page, Campbell, and Meadows (1997) and Brown, Stott, and Watkinson (2003).

⁷See, for example, Powell (2005), Ware (2007), and Page (2000).

⁸The Association for Learned & Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) Advice Notes series covers many of the topics, although access to the notes requires membership in the association.

⁹For a fuller discussion of the structural issues that challenge society publishers, see Crow (2006).

Chapter 5

Benefits of Online Dissemination¹

5.1 Mission Alignment

The first question confronting scholarly societies considering online distribution is *why* they should publish online. It makes sense, therefore, to review some of the principal benefits of publishing online—for authors, readers, and the society itself.

Most societies operate under charters directing them to promote research and the advancement of their field, and a society's publication often represents the most visible manifestation of its mission. Online dissemination further supports the mission by increasing the access, reach, and visibility of a society's journal.

Further, online publication provides a logical component of a more ambitious and progressive online presence for a society, including sponsoring an online community that maintains the society's relevance by engaging its membership more actively.² Although societies have historically been at the center of scholarly communities, they risk being marginalized as their members embrace the emerging scholarly communications mechanisms enabled by ubiquitous networking and digital publishing technologies. Societies should recognize online social networks as a cost-effective means of communicating with their members and increasing their visibility.

Although few small- and medium-size publishers have implemented social networking features—including blogs, online forums, podcasts, and wikis—a recent survey indicates that approximately 15-25 percent of these publishers intend to deploy such functionality in the future.³ Although online social networking media are in the early stages of development, societies should experiment with such media and allow their applications to evolve along with the tools themselves. In this way, a society can exploit the capabilities of digital networking to maintain its relevance within its specific field and as part of the global scholarly community. An online publishing program, in this context, will represent an integral component of a society's broader digital communication and membership strategies.

5.2 Author and Reader Benefits

5.2.1 Author Benefits

An online edition of a journal provides several benefits to authors, including:

- Access to digital functionality in presenting their research, including images, video, audio, and other media not easily included in print publications;

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m34279/1.1/>>.

²For example, the SAH's online digital image archive not only provides images but has also helped to foster a new sense of community within the society.

³Cox and Cox (2008), 89 and 91.

- Greater reach and access to readers in their field; and
- Greater impact for their research.

5.2.1.1 Digital Functionality

Publishing online provides authors access to digital functionality—including support for large supplemental data sets; multimedia features, including audio and video, animation, and three-dimensional modeling; deep searching and linking through semantic tagging; low-cost color; indexing and searching for charts, illustrations, images, tables, and graphics; the ability to manipulate supporting data sets; and social networking capabilities (e.g., online collaborative authoring, wikis, collaborative taxonomies), tools for communication between readers, support for RSS feeds, and other features not possible in print.

In some disciplines, authors have already begun to take advantage of this added digital functionality. In others, the needs of authors for innovative online features are just beginning to emerge. As an example of the former, beginning with the 2010 volume year, the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) will make its journal available online with enhanced digital functionality. In addition to delivering the articles published in the print edition, the journal's online version will incorporate multimedia features, including film and video clips, sound, 3D computer models, zoomable images, and GIS map integration. As part of the transition, the journal's editors are seeking submissions from authors whose work will take full advantage of the capabilities offered by online presentation.⁴

5.2.1.2 Greater Reader Reach

A number of surveys indicate that researcher preference for online journals continues to increase, allowing online journals to reach larger, wider audiences than do print-only journals.⁵ Significantly, such audience reach is consistently considered among the most important characteristics cited by authors—along with a reputation for quality and selectivity—in selecting publishing venues. Several recent author preference studies—including faculty across the arts, sciences, and professions from around the world—rank wide circulation and readership within one's field as the most important characteristics in selecting a publishing venue.⁶

Online publication also facilitates an author's compliance with a funder-mandated requirement to deposit sponsored research in an online repository. Several large government and foundation research funders now mandate such online deposit, and an increasing number of funders are adopting such policies.⁷ Additionally, online publication makes it easier for authors to voluntarily self-archive their work by posting electronic versions to personal Web sites and to institutional and discipline-specific online repositories.

5.2.1.3 Greater Research Impact

Author surveys consistently report the importance to authors of the impact of their research, whether ranked by ISI/Thomson Scientific Impact Factor or measured by new Web-based bibliometrics.⁸ Not only do online journals get used more heavily than their print counterparts, but evidence continues to mount that online availability increases citation rates for published research.⁹ Additionally, the ability to provide large supplemental data sets or, potentially, a wider variety of visual evidence, can also positively affect citation impact.¹⁰

⁴SAH press release, "JSAH Receives Grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; SAH Will Move JSAH Online Within a Year," dated January 21, 2009 (www.SAH.org).

⁵For an overview, see Rowland (2007); also see Brown and Swan (2007); Inger and Gardner (2008); Tenopir (2003); and Stanford (2002).

⁶Housewright and Schonfeld (2008), 20-21; Rowlands, Nicholas, and Huntingdon (2004); and Harley *et al.* (2007).

⁷On research deposit mandates, see "Open Access," in Chapter Five.

⁸Housewright and Schonfeld (2008) and Rowlands, Nicholas, and Huntingdon (2004).

⁹See, for example, McDonald (2006); Chu and Krichel (2007); Kurtz *et al.* (2005); and Hitchcock, "The effect of open access and downloads ('hits') on citation impact: a bibliography of studies." *OpCit Project* (<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html> (<<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>>)). This site is not limited to studies of open-access models.

¹⁰Piowar, Day, and Fridsma (2007).

5.2.2 Reader Benefits

Online journals also deliver benefits to researchers as readers. These advantages include the ability to search within and across large collections of content; locating specific articles or data; the convenience of locating relevant content via hyperlinks; access outside the library; deeper searching and linking through taxonomic structures and semantic tagging; the ability to copy and save articles; 24/7 availability; the ability to use task-oriented online tools;¹¹ and access to online articles ahead of print.¹²

Researcher behavior studies and preference surveys indicate an accelerating comfort with—and demand for—online access to peer-reviewed journal content.¹³ One indicator of this comfort is the extent to which researchers, at least in North America, have grown willing to accept their library cancelling the print edition of a journal in favor of electronic access.¹⁴ This is true not only of STM (science, technical, and medical) journals, many of which moved online early, but also for journals in the humanities and social sciences. Increasing online access to journals in these fields—bolstered by the reach of the JSTOR online archival collections in academic research institutions—has changed research behavior across all disciplines.¹⁵

Although researchers in the sciences and social sciences use electronic resources more frequently than most researchers in the humanities, usage patterns differ considerably between disciplines. Indeed, usage studies indicate that, on average, art historians use electronic resources more heavily than others in the humanities.¹⁶ This frequent use of electronic resources relates to the discipline's particular research methods, the online resources available,¹⁷ and the widespread use of digital technology for classroom teaching.¹⁸

As Ballon and Westermann note, “[a]rt history is characterized by a computer-literate professoriate, an established commitment to digital presentation, and an appreciation of the analytic potential of electronic tools.”¹⁹ This familiarity with digital resources suggests an openness on the part of art historians to innovations in online journal publishing models, such as those being implemented in the online edition of the *JSAH*.²⁰

5.3 Establishing Realistic Expectations

Online dissemination responds to a growing market demand for electronic content (a topic we discuss in detail in Chapter Four, “Effect of Online Access on Institutional Subscriptions”). It is no surprise, then, that over 60 percent of peer-reviewed journals are now available online—including a significant percentage of society-published titles in the social sciences and humanities. In the face of accelerating market demand, inaction entails real and significant risks, and a society that fails to make its journal available online may jeopardize the journal's relevance and weaken it as an attractive publishing venue.

At the same time, a society should have a realistic understanding of the benefits of online distribution. Online publication is sometimes presented as a solution for many, if not all, of the problems that confront the publishers of scholarly journals. While online information technologies and ubiquitous networking will

¹¹For example, Zotero, Xanadu for course packs, learning management systems, etc.

¹²See Inger and Gardner (2008), 21-25; Schottlaender *et al.* (2004), 34-36; and Diane Harley *et al.* (2006), 6. The advent of the Web has also made it easier for researchers and teachers to identify, locate, and license digital images, although this is not a benefit of online journals *per se*.

¹³See Inger and Gardner (2008); Rowlands (2007); and Tenopir (2003). Another study suggests that, if a desired journal is not available online, users tend to resort to sources of lower quality and less relevance that are available online. See Prabha (2007), 4 and 12, n4.

¹⁴See Schonfeld and Guthrie (2007), 8-9, and Schottlaender *et al.* (2004).

¹⁵JSTOR provides complete runs of over 1,000 journals online to over 4,300 library subscribers. On the effect of JSTOR on researcher behavior, see Guthrie (2002) and Seeds (2002), 120-122.

¹⁶See Harley *et al.* (2006), 4-35ff. and Heterick and Schonfeld (2004), 229.

¹⁷Housewright and Schonfeld (2008), 17.

¹⁸Ballon and Westermann (2006), 56.

¹⁹Ballon and Westermann (2006), 58.

²⁰Starting with the 2010 volume year, the *JSAH* will include articles that apply multimedia capabilities, including audio, video, animation, zoomable images, fly-throughs, and three-dimensional modeling. For a press release describing the online journal, see http://ucpressjournals.com/assets/JSAH_UCP_Press_Release.pdf (<http://ucpressjournals.com/assets/JSAH_UCP_Press_Release.pdf>). Another Mellon-funded project, *caa.reviews*, established an early online presence for art history.

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