

Experience of E-Journals: An Inexpensive Publishing

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Abstract

The Author is honored to work at significant editorial posts of APSP Journal of Case Reports (AJCR) and Journal of Neonatal Surgery (JNS). AJCR is an electronic, peer reviewed, and official journal of The Association of Pediatric Surgeons of Pakistan and published thrice a year from Karachi. Journal of Neonatal Surgery is a unique e-journal dedicated only to Neonatal Surgery and published quarterly from Lahore. JNS is a joint venture of Pediatric surgeons from Pakistan and India. Both of these journals are permanently archived on PubMed Central (PMC) and can be accessed through PubMed. The author also acts as publisher of these journals. This piece of text shares author's point of view regarding electronic Journals, based on his experience of these two electronic journals, and describes an economic publishing model and its usefulness in sustaining e-journals compared with print journals. This will provide an insight especially to scholarly bodies that are planning to start a journal about an ideal, cost effective, and sustainable publishing medium.

Keywords: E-journals; Electronic publishing; Future publishing; Cost effective publishing

Introduction

Use of computers and internet as a tool of education, learning, and communication has emerged robustly in the last decade. Electronic publishing is now transpired as one of the most appealing and cost effective medium in the current reign of technology. Cost effectiveness, expedite and more organized online manuscript management, ahead of time publication provisions, no page restriction constrains, powered with possibility of publishing audio/video and other important supplementary data, and global visibility and accessibility are few of many promising aspects of E-journals which are in contrast to print journals.

AJCR and JNS both are true open access journals that do not charge authors or readers. Successful completion of 6th volume of AJCR and 4th volume of JNS vindicates its comfortable sustainability given its publication from a resource challenged country. The author opt a very economic model for running these journals. Both these journals do not have proper publication staff. A team of 4-5 editors manages entire editorial process from submission to publication. Only webhosting and domain name charges are the expenditures which are not more than 100 US dollars per annum. We use Open Journal System (OJS), an open access manuscript processing and publication system, which is a user friendly and does not require extensive computer knowledge for publishing an electronic journal.

The editorial work flow in both of e-journal is as under; when a manuscript is submitted on OJS, it is assigned by the main editor (Journal manager of OJS) to one of section editors who after an editorial review send the manuscript to at least two reviewers. On acceptance, the manuscript is copy edited initially by the section editor himself and finally by the editor in chief. The copy edited version is then checked by authors of the manuscript and on their approval it is formatted on the MS word software and PDF is generated out of it and

uploaded on OJS for publishing. The same copyedited file is used for creating xml file which is uploaded on OJS to create html file. The same xml file is send to PMC for permanent archiving on PubMed database. All these tasks are done by the editors themselves. The entire editorial process is accomplished on OJS.

Few main differences between electronic publishing and print publishing what the author think based on his experience are; online submission of soft copy manuscript and its management is quite feasible and forms an important edge of e-journals on print journals, manuscript can be viewed in a lot of formats (html, xml, pdf, pubreader, ebooks version, MS word version etc.) in case of e-journals, the pagination structure is also different and majority use e-location id instead of print pagination, inclusion of comprehensive metadata to indexing bodies and search engines becomes quite easy in case of e-journals, transportation of journal to various countries is a costly job which is not a case with e-journals, and the manuscripts can be published once accepted in ahead of publication section to disseminate research without any delay is also an important difference with print journals.

There are many limitations with print-only journals. The work flow needs more staff. The cost of publication directly proportional to number of pages and colored photographs; which often put limitations on authors for word count and number of pictures. Most of the times, such costs have to bear by the authors themselves. Submission of the manuscript and correspondence with authors/reviewers is now through emails however still few print journals asks for hard copy submission and send hard copy version of manuscript to reviewers for review which certainly increment publication costs. Moreover, publication of supplementary data in the form of long tables, sheets, photographs etc. is almost not existed or possible without much cost in case of print publication.

For the source of funding, the print journals depend upon educational bodies or societies running these journals and commercial ads are published within the journal pages to meet the expenses. Many journals charge authors and along with subscription fees generate

revenue to continue regular publishing. Lack or deficient funds are a big reason of delays in regular publishing of many print journals. In contrast to print publications, space constrains are not the case with e-journals, any type of supplementary material (data collection sheets, long tables, many photographs, audio and video evidences) in any amount can be published with the manuscript to support the research. In author's model, the cost is very minimal which do not require publishing ads on the website.

The other drawbacks of print publications are related to accessibility, global coverage, and end users user trends towards certain media. The most appealing aspect of e-journals that gives a major advantage over print journals is round the clock global visibility and accessibility. Any one sitting in any part of world, connected to internet through a wide range of internet content fetching devices, can access research articles in just a few clicks. Few studies found end users predilection towards e-journals. Morse and Clintworth conducted a study in a library setting for comparing end users preference for electronic or print journals and found a 10 times more predilection of readers to the electronic journals [1]. Other studies also found similar trends in favor of e-journals [2,3].

The coming era looks exciting as to various improvisations and innovations in electronic publishing. The research articles would become more understandable and interactive with many embedded links for clarification and explanation of various related terminologies.

Intermixing with 3D technology and virtual environment [4] for collaboration and simulation would make reading e-journals a fun. Elsevier is working on a project "Article of Future" for developing an ideal electronic manuscript based on improvements in article presentation, content, and context [5].

Dedication and commitment are all what is necessary to run and sustain an electronic journal. The new editors can be trained to pass on the entire journal publishing system to the next generation for continuing journal publications. This seems a best economic model for continued e-journal publishing especially in resource poor countries.

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