Last year, we sent to ABA Sections, Divisions, Commissions, and Forums a survey covering their experiences and expectations with respect to publishing periodicals in electronic format (whether in addition to or in place of paper format). We’re grateful for your responses, and the discussions that have occurred in the time since. We write today to summarize key lessons from those responses and discussions, to make available some of the resources you requested, and to showcase a particularly comprehensive and thoughtful transition from paper to electronic publishing.

Key Takeaways from Responses and Discussions.

1. Some publishing entities have surveyed or otherwise endeavored to collect data as to their readers’ preferences; others based their understandings on less empirical foundations.
2. Our publishing entities offer a full range of journals, magazines, ezines, newsletters, annual and other periodic reviews.
3. Most of our publications are currently offered to members only, with a few making their work product available to anyone.
4. Many publishing entities provide paper editions to lawyer members and electronic editions (only) to law student members.
5. Most publishing entities handle the production process themselves or hire third party vendors to assist. A minority currently turn to ABA Publishing for assistance.
6. Most publishing entities offer both electronic and paper publications.
   a. Many produce their more formal publications on paper (e.g., journals).
   b. Many produce their more informal publications electronically (e.g., newsletters).
   c. The data points mentioned above also support the observation that more in-depth, reflective work tends to appear on paper, while work with a more compressed timetable for production tends to appear electronically.
7. Many publishing entities report that their authors have a preference for paper copies, if only “branded” reprints some purchase and provide to clients and select others.
8. Few publishing entities offer subscribers to a given publication a choice between electronic or paper editions.
9. No publishing entities offer specific incentives to subscribers choosing between electronic and paper editions (e.g., price differential, rewards, etc), though differing features may be relevant where such choices are available (e.g., hyperlinks and social media access).

10. Most publishing entities share the view that electronic publishing offers the promise of shorter production and delivery times, and cost savings.
   a. But many are concerned that while younger members may prefer electronic publications, older members may strongly favor paper publications. (Note that a number of older members have confirmed this suspicion where electronic publications have no enhanced functionality over paper, but strongly prefer enhanced electronic publications with hyperlinks and other features not available in paper publications.)
   b. And many are concerned that a paper copy, particularly of their more formal journals and magazines, is a tangible member benefit that lingers on a desk or in a briefcase far longer and more prominently than would an electronic version.

11. Many publishing entities indicated they’d like help with the logistics and messaging necessary to move some of their publications from paper to electronic.

12. Many publishing entities have a general concern about potential loss of readers should they move from paper to electronic publications.

ABA Publishing Resources to Assist With Electronic Publications.

ABA Publishing includes a team of skilled and experienced professionals overseen by Donna Gollmer, our Director of Publishing. Some, like Kyle Kolbe, focus specifically on digital publishing. Others focus on issues relevant to both print and digital publishing. We’re proud of our team, whose members look forward to helping you meet your publishing goals. The following provides contact information and brief descriptions of key areas of focus for some of our team members.

Donna Gollmer, Director ABA Publishing

ABA Publishing

Email: Donna.Gollmer@americanbar.org

Phone: (312) 988-5680

Donna oversees all publishing operations and all publishing associated budgets. This includes providing help to entities in analyzing ways to save on publishing costs.

***************
Bryan Kay, **Director of Editorial & Licensing**
ABA Publishing
Email: Bryan.Kay@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-6153

Bryan manages both the editorial work and licensing for periodicals. He works with Donna Gollmer and Shirley Meyer to create periodical budget forecasts and to explore new periodicals licensing opportunities.

***************

Tammy Williams, **Administrative Assistant**
ABA Publishing
Email: Tammy.Williams@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-6151

Tammy is responsible for all purchase orders for free-lance copyeditors and proofreaders.

***************

Shirley Meyer, **Director, Business Operations**
ABA Publishing
Email: Shirley.Meyer@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-6205
Shirley provides budget information for periodicals worked on by ABA Publishing, and works with ABA Publishing Editorial and entity staff to create the budget forecast for each periodical during the annual budget process. Shirley oversees the business operations group, which administers the licensing agreements, working with vendors who license ABA periodical content, managing the delivery of new issues, and tracking all licensing statements and payments and associated internal allocations, as well as providing quarterly licensing royalty reports to ABA staff (via intranet). The operations group also manages ABA reprint permissions, in each case where an outside author, publisher, or organization wishes to use ABA periodical content in a book, web posting, CLE program, or the like.

Tobias Williams, **Business Operations Specialist**
ABA Publishing
Email: [copyright@americanbar.org](mailto:copyright@americanbar.org) (for all reprint requests and other copyright inquiries)
[Tobias.Williams@americanbar.org](mailto:Tobias.Williams@americanbar.org)
Phone: (312) 988-6181

Tobias reports to Shirley Meyer and ensures that new issues of licensed periodicals are delivered to licensing vendors. On the financial side, Tobias receives the royalty statements and, with Financial Services, allocates licensing royalties and reprint fees to periodical accounts. Tobias also manages the reprint permission process for ABA content and responds to all permission requests. Tobias is also accountable for all translation requests.

Natalie Cirar, **Business Operations Project Associate**
ABA Publishing
Email: [advertising@americanbar.org](mailto:advertising@americanbar.org) (for all advertising inquiries)
[Natalie.Cirar@americanbar.org](mailto:Natalie.Cirar@americanbar.org)
Phone: (312) 988-6043
Natalie reports to Shirley Meyer and is the staff liaison to the periodical advertising vendor Mrvica. Natalie receives the insertion orders and run sheets from Mrvica and coordinates those with Editorial and Design. She also provides the monthly advertising sales reporting to Financial Services for posting to the periodical accounts.

*****************

Nick Panos, **Director of Design & Production**
ABA Design
Email: nick.panos@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-6054

Nick manages all design and creative work for many ABA periodicals. His team is responsible for content design, layout, artwork, and cover design for both print and digital. His team also provides concepts and project work for periodical redesigns.

*****************

Kyle Kolbe, **Director Digital Publishing**
ABA Publishing
Email: Kyle.Kolbe@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-5999

Kyle reports to Bryan Kay, and leads all technology initiatives for ABA Publishing. He oversees the editorial platform used for a number of periodicals, creates new periodical digital templates, does digital conversion work for numerous periodicals, and supports the periodicals editorial team. Kyle also has a support role in helping entities to transition their archival electronic publications to the new ABA website.
Marisa L’Heureux, **Director Production Services**
ABA Publishing
Email: Marisa.L’Heureux@americanbar.org
Phone: (312) 988-6109

Marisa manages all aspects of production for periodicals, both print and digital, including warehousing. Marisa manages all RFP processes for outside printers, typesetters, and warehouse vendors.

Karrie Dowling, Digital and Print Publishing Specialist
ABA Publishing
Email: [Karrie.Dowling@americanbar.org](mailto:Karrie.Dowling@americanbar.org)
Phone: (312) 988-6232

Karrie reports to Marisa L’Heureux and manages production for magazines, newsletters, and journals, both print and digital, including the mailing process. Karrie is also responsible for digital work such as converting articles to digital formats, creating web-ready articles, PDF enhancements, and HTML and PDF postings.

Scott Lesniak, Production Specialist
ABA Publishing
Email: [Scott.Lesniak@americanbar.org](mailto:Scott.Lesniak@americanbar.org)
Phone: (312) 988-6010

Scott reports to Marisa L’Heureux and manages production for magazines, newsletters, and journals, including the mailing process.
Case Study.

At the Subcommittee’s request, Rob Salkin, Managing Editor of the ABA Periodicals Department, wrote the following account of GPSolo Magazine’s transition from paper to electronic/digital. It’s a great read, and full of ideas and strategies others may find helpful.
GPSolo Magazine Goes Digital

By Rob Salkin
Managing Editor
ABA Periodicals Department

About two years ago the ABA Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division (GPSolo) decided to eliminate one print issue in FY2018 of GPSolo, its flagship magazine, and distribute this issue in digital form only. This decision was largely driven by budgetary concerns—to save the costs of paper, printing, and postage for the issue—but the Division also wanted to test the waters regarding the members’ response to a digital-only issue.

The volunteer members of the GPSolo Editorial Board worked with ABA staff to generate the best options for carrying out this decision. At this point, Division members could read the magazine in three forms: the print edition sent to their mailbox; an e-mail newsletter sent to their in-box and linking to the HTML versions of these same articles on the ABA website; and a simple PDF facsimile of the print issue they could download from the newsletter and the website. The Editorial Board and ABA staff were concerned that Division members would see the elimination of one print issue in FY2018 as a loss in the value of their member benefit. In response, we decided to enhance the value of the existing digital versions of the issue and even create a brand-new digital option. We also knew there would need to be repeated announcements about these changes in the months leading up to the issue’s digital-only publication.

We enhanced the existing PDF by reformatting it to maximize its readability in digital form. The point size and line spacing were increased so each page could be read easily on a tablet or computer screen without the need to zoom in and scroll about from paragraph to paragraph. The entire PDF was also fully hyperlinked, with live links for all external websites mentioned in individual articles and an internally linked table of contents to ease navigation from article to article. The issue was also designed with the understanding that it would be read exclusively on a tablet or computer screen (for example, we eliminated all two-page spreads for article openers, presenting the art, headline, byline, and opening text on a single page).

We also created a new digital option for members: a fully illustrated EPUB document designed especially for reading on mobile devices. The EPUB is particularly suited to reading on a mobile phone, as it presents text in a single column (rather than the PDF’s fixed format of three columns, which are tiny and illegible when viewed on a phone). The reader has the option
of increasing the font size and can easily skip from article to article with a drop-down table of contents at any point. This option is also ideal for members who want to read the issue on a tablet but need to increase the font size for added legibility.

As we developed these new electronic options, we also worked to prepare the membership to receive them. Members had to be alerted that they would receive no July/August 2018 print issue in the mail, and they also had to be instructed where and how to download the EPUB and the enhanced PDF. (They would access the e-newsletter/online version as before.) We sent numerous messages to members via e-mail and social media in the months prior to the digital-only issue’s publication, and we included announcements about the digital-only issue in the two preceding print issues and e-newsletters. We also drafted a set of instructions for members regarding how to download the enhanced PDF and EPUB (and why they would want to do so). We paid particular care to test these instructions on members and staff who had no special technical background—the goal was always to make them simple and clear.

(If you want to see the EPUB and enhanced PDF, you can find download links and instructions at: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/gpsolo/publications/gp_solo/2018/july-august/download/.)

We distributed the issue in early August and followed up with several additional opportunities to download the EPUB and PDF during the next two months. The fact that we received only a handful of inquiries from members asking why they never received a print copy indicates that membership was prepared for the experiment—as did the greatly elevated download rate for the PDF relative to past issues.

Another indication of the project’s success came during a focus group the Division ran at the 2018 Annual Meeting, just prior to the distribution of this electronic-only issue. The Editorial Board held the focus group, which included about a dozen ABA and Division members, to get a better sense of what members wanted from our periodicals, including what they thought of print versus electronic formats. At the start of the session, members were asked, “Who would be disappointed if the magazine eliminated its print edition and went electronic-only?” About half of the attendees raised their hands. Then over the course of the focus group we presented detailed demonstrations of the enhanced digital offerings the members would soon be receiving. At the end of the focus group we asked the same question we had at the start: “Who would be disappointed if the magazine eliminated its print edition?” Only one person raised her hand. The new digital offerings seemed to promise a satisfying reading experience that put to rest the other members’ concerns about the loss of print.

Now that the digital-only issue has been live and in our members’ hands for a few months, we are following up with a formal survey of our membership, asking many of the same questions we asked at the focus group. (The survey can be accessed at www.ambar.org/gpsolosurvey.)
This entire electronic-only experiment, as well as the results of the focus group and the survey, will prove even more important than we realized: The ABA’s New Membership Model will offer free membership in the ABA Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division to all qualifying ABA members. Undoubtedly, the Division will not be able to afford print issues of the magazine for the thousands of new members. An electronic-only option will be necessary. Our experience this past year will inform our decisions moving forward under the New Membership Model.