

# Flexible, Powerful Publishing for Small- and Mid-Sized Organizations

Bill Trippe

New Millennium Publishing

SSP 2005



## Aren't the following reasonable goals?

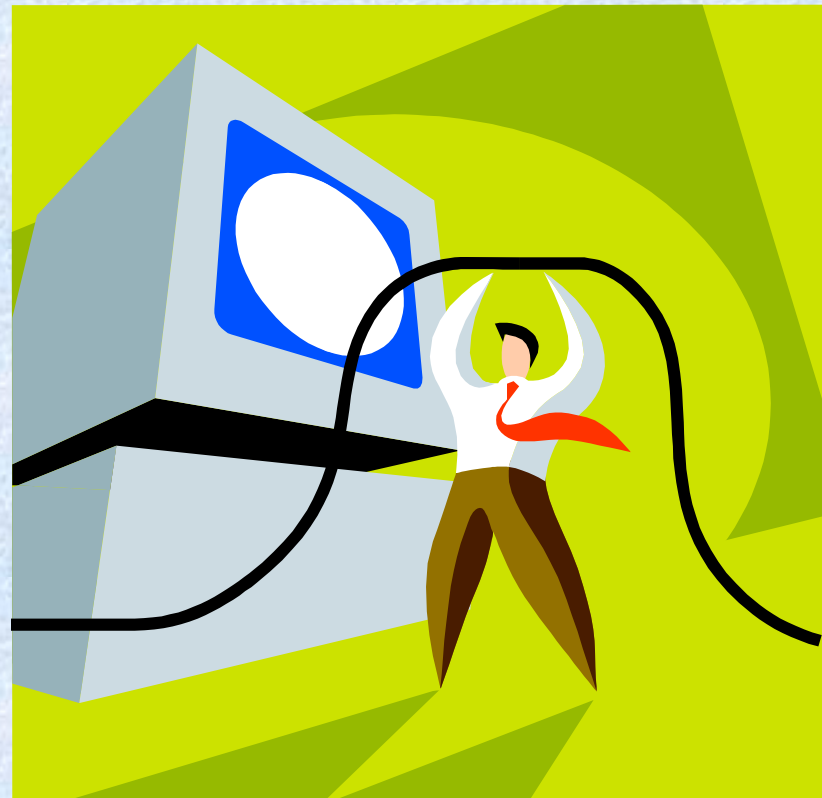
- Publish something of appropriate quality at a reasonable enough cost
- Respond to new channels (Internet, library consortia, aggregators, platform companies) without:
  - breaking the bank
  - giving too much away
  - ruining your health
  - or setting your colleagues' hair on fire

# Why then is it so damn hard?

- As with all things in publishing, the devil is in the details
- Not all the details of multi-channel publishing are yet fully understood or codified in the way print publishing is codified
- If you are dealing with commercial enterprises, my one industry joke applies

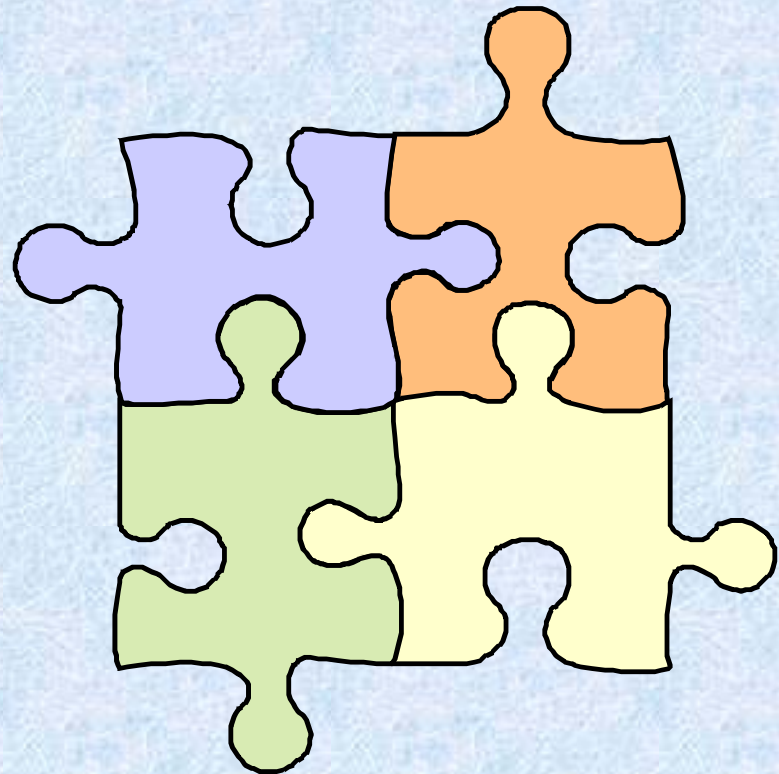
# One View: *If you build it, they will come!*

- Try to do it all, with one big box
- Great potential reward, but great risk
- More projects fail than succeed
- Commercial offerings are out of the reach of many organizations



## Another view: *Hedge your bets*

- Make one or a small series of low risk bets
- Commit yourself to a primary channel or aggregator
- Lower risk, but lower reward
- Inflexibility to deal with new opportunities (Google Scholar, etc.)
- Potentially locked in to wrong channel when the market moves in another direction



## How some organizations have found a comfortable middle ground (1)

- Have turned authoring and page composition into a moderate-cost, predictable process
  - Mix of in-house, outsource, offshore
- Have looked closely and made decisions about print on demand and electronic distribution
  - Changing membership and publication fees, developing low-cost “supply chain” mechanisms with printers and fulfillment houses

## How some organizations have found a comfortable middle ground (2)

- Have developed partnerships where appropriate (peer review, electronic commerce)
- Have adopted “just enough XML”
  - Bibliographic information
  - Cross references
  - Other metadata

## How some organizations have found a comfortable middle ground (3)

- Have recognized the growing role of metadata, databases and Web-based applications
  - Have invested in web infrastructure or partnered for better infrastructure
  - Have begun to shift staff to Web application development and support kind of roles (membership, collaboration, meeting management)

## Example 1: Small society

- 8000 members
- 15 full-time employees
- Growing publishing program, including section publications
- Major annual meeting, regional meetings, and section meetings

# Current Situation

- Heavy reliance on a single aggregator
- Modest, home-grown e-commerce
  - Not flexible enough for all of their desired selling models
- PDF-only distribution from files created mainly in-house

# Needs

- Growing programs straining current staff
- Existing systems older, in need of upgrade
- No peer review system, further straining staff
- Question of whether single aggregator agreement will continue to be as successful
- Growing interest in whether new channels could be profitable

# Decisions...

- Maintain aggregator agreement for now
- Go with a partner for e-commerce
- Outsource more page composition (favorable market right now, but they were mainly looking for more schedule predictability)
- Initially outsource metadata work
- Begin to develop more metadata and Web application development in house
- Will likely go with hosted peer review after current transitions complete

# Impact

- No impact on core systems, and no need for capital investment
- Transition to e-commerce provider still in process, but offers more functionality, more selling models, less work for them
- Will be upgrading some desktop programs
- Will be investing in new Web applications (in-house)
- Are well positioned to evaluate and measure their own marketing versus aggregator efforts
- Shifting, not adding to, current staffing

## Example 2: Large Society with Small Journals Program

- 65,000 members
- 200 full-time employees
- Largest part of publishing effort is special publications, monographs, standards for practitioners
- Small journal program (five journals) in transition

# Previous Situation

- Bit of a hodgepodge editorially and in production
  - One highly successful journal
  - A couple treading water
  - Idea for a new one
- No previous experience in electronic distribution of journals except for one major aggregator
- Began by rationalizing the business, combining a couple of the journals, launching the new one

# Needs

- Each journal had its own print production flow (in-house, outside, different tools)
- No peer review platform
- Intense, manual work to bring products to print
- Journals out of sync with rest of organization's publishing, which is highly automated, XML-based

# Decisions

- Decided scale of journal publishing did not justify XML from scratch
- Developed a MS Word template at some expense that:
  - Pours into page layout software
  - Capture metadata, cross references
- Contracted with ASP for peer review
- Built additional e-commerce capabilities on larger platform, including logins for subscribers, pay-per-view
- Maintaining relationship with aggregator

# Impact

- Single, rational production process has allowed them to boost production with same staff
- Metadata feeds their own e-commerce platform, crossref, other channels
- Peer review platform gives their outside authors and editors much more visibility into process without straining internal staff
- Pay-as-you-go licensing for peer review allows them to plan carefully for growth without additional in-house systems

# Takeaways

- You don't have to build a giant, monolithic system
- Partnerships can be valuable and cost-effective
- "Just enough" XML is probably the best near-term approach
- Valuable product + predictable costs + metadata = flexible, powerful publishing for organizations of all sizes

# Contact Information

Bill Trippe

New Millennium Publishing

Cambridge, MA 02139

781 526 2564

[btrippe@nmpub.com](mailto:btrippe@nmpub.com)

