APEX
Content & Media Solutions

Case Study ■ Image Files and Workflow Efficiencies

PLOS optimizes image management to streamline workflow and accelerate speed to market

Challenge

PLOS

The Public Library of Science (PLOS) is one of the premiere publishers of open access scientific journals - and one of the largest. The efficiency of its complex production process is crucial to managing a high volume of content while ensuring the editorial integrity of its products and retaining its competitiveness and financial viability.

As PLOS management sought to identify bottlenecks in its production process, one issue in particular stood out: image correction.

PLOS publishes more than 2,500 articles per month across seven different journals. Most contain illustrations, graphs, charts, and other image types, and it's here that the breakdown in efficiency begins.

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PACE

"Before **PACE**, we were getting 20 to 30 requests for figure help every single day. Now we're getting less than 10 per day. And five or six of those are from authors who aren't yet using **PACE**."

– Mike Fisher,
Production Manager, PLOS

Like all publishers, PLOS has specific image requirements for its publications. And as a scientific publisher, PLOS must also ensure that the technical information contained within those images is conveyed with 100% accuracy. Yet it was also subject to a problem common to its industry: that of authors regularly submitting images that fail to match publisher specifications. This causes workflow to stop while the image in question is pushed back to the author for correction, or manually corrected by the PLOS staff.

The result is a decrease in speed to market, higher costs, and lower morale for both production staff and authors.

Solution

Apex was tasked with updating and optimizing the PLOS workflow, with the most daunting obstacle being that of image correction. To solve the problem, PLOS deployed **PACE (Picture Analysis and Conversion Engine)**, Apex's unique, customizable tool that eliminates the image specifications problem before the production process even begins.

PACE is a cloud-based image assessment and correction tool, which was easily adapted into PLOS' existing workflow. It enables authors, regardless of their design-savviness, to easily correct their charts, graphs, illustrations, or other image types, before submission.

By eliminating image specification problems, PACE improves editorial quality, accelerates speed to market, and reduces costs. The technology is easy to use, yet the benefits are wide-ranging.

Results

Within a month of **PACE**'s deployment, PLOS experienced:

- **A 75% reduction in issues** related to images and figures. Almost all ongoing image-correction requests are now coming from authors who haven't yet begun to use PACE.

- **A shortened production process** from two to three weeks to five days or less, from receipt of manuscript through publication, thanks to PACE and general workflow adjustments.

- **More than 30,000 authors** have chosen to use PACE, with new adopters daily.

- **High satisfaction** for the technology among authors.

The partnership between Apex and PLOS is ongoing today, as the sides continue to strive to streamline production processes, speed products to market, and reduce costs.
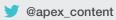
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About Apex CoVantage

Apex is a leading supplier of data conversion, editorial, and content-enhancement services to publishers worldwide. By balancing leading technology and broad industry expertise, Apex delivers exceptional content and media solutions to its customers. Apex has been managing large-scale content projects for libraries, publishers, and media companies around the world for nearly 30 years.

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