

NAfME State Editors Respond to a Survey on Digital Publications

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At the NAFME Executive Board Meeting in June 2012 in Baltimore Maryland, the NAFME Council of State Editors attended presentations and meetings to discuss various issues about state publications. Included was a presentation of survey results about state editors' perceptions, experiences, and suggestions relating to online publications. Bill Froom, chair of the NAFME Council of State Editors and editor of the *Illinois Music Educator*, Catherine Hunt, editor of the *Kansas Music Review*, and Troy Johnson, webmaster and technology manager for the Kansas Music Educators Association, developed the questions for the survey, which was available online to the state editors from April 9, through May 15, 2012.

Access to the survey was open to all editors, not just those who manage online publications for their state memberships. A review of the state publications indicated that approximately 29 provided some type of online publication (e.g., newsletter, magazine); however, it was not clear if 11 states offered anything online and 12 appeared to have no online publication.

Of the 52 state editors, 31 responded, including six who indicated they did not provide online publications and therefore did not complete the survey. Listed below are the ten survey questions:

1. Why are some state online issues password-protected?
2. For online editions, are they pdf/flip page format or web-based? Why so? Do you use a formatting service (e.g., Yudu)? What is the cost of that service?

3. Do you have any experience with tablet versions of your publication?
4. How are online editions archived?
5. How are online rates determined? (*Note:* We do not compare online ad rate data among states, as that gives the appearance of price-fixing. This question focused on the process for determining rates.)
6. For the online editions, how is frequency of ad viewing handled?
7. What issues, concerns, or advantages have there been regarding online editions?
8. How many editions are produced per year?
9. What is the publication staff? Job descriptions?
10. Have you considered using an app like Guidebook for conference schedules?

The responses for each question were categorized, totaled, and weighted based on the number of responses per category. For example, for question 1, the response categories included membership benefit, open access—no reason given, open access—good PR, etc., and copyright protection of information. The first category received a total of 12/29 comments, giving it a weight of 41%; however, the total of responses for the combined categories of open access received 14/29 comments, resulting in a weight of 49%. Based on these results, it could be inferred that the editors who responded were almost evenly divided on the issue of password-protected publications versus open access to all. (See a [PDF of all the survey responses](#).)

The survey results generated much discussion among the editors. There was general agreement that digital publications should not be considered cheaper than printing due to their development and maintenance, especially those that are web-based. Many stated that it appeared that memberships could be divided into three

groups concerning online publications: those who prefer online only, those who prefer print only, and those with no preference. Although it was evident that some states are reluctant to move toward online-only publications based on the needs of their memberships, the majority of editors agreed that going digital was to some degree inevitable in the coming years. How to prepare state memberships for this change will continue to be an issue for the editors to discuss. Because of their unique perspective, the state editors recognize the importance of working with their boards of directors and state members as they strive to strike a balance between what has been and what the future will bring.

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