Supporting independent society publishers has been at the heart of HighWire Press’s mission since it was founded in 1995 as the digital publishing arm of Stanford University. The HighWire Open Platform is versatile, flexible, and scalable to the needs of a variety of publisher sizes and needs. A HighWire partner since 2004, SAGE has been building upon its excellent reputation and is primed to become the premier service source for societies to compete effectively in the online academic market. The powerful combination of SAGE and HighWire provides the tools and the environment to enable societies to balance the conflicting resources needed to serve their members, expand their reach, broaden their audiences and strengthen their relationships with their research communities.

These were exactly the challenges that the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) understood all too well. Since 1989 the association has published their acclaimed Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation (JVDI) in print format and has moved up to rank in the top quartile in all categories among veterinary medicine journals, according to the Institute for Scientific Information. For 20 years, print served them well, however, the time had come to explore further opportunities than simple online delivery had provided. In 2010 a search began for a professional publishing partner that could help take the “pain” out of publishing their journal and help them to realize its full potential.

The Road to Digitization

Since the publication of the first issue of JVDI, core AAVLD staff, amidst their other society duties, worked tirelessly to produce the journal’s bi-monthly issues, overseeing and maintaining the excellent quality that the journal became known for, and using a number of sub-contractors to help with the publishing process. But the multiple roles of the AAVLD staff left some aspects of the process unfulfilled. As Dr Carter, AAVLD Past President, and Director & Professor, Epidemiology at Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, University of Kentucky noted, “Since we were working to publish the journal on our own, it was very time-consuming labor-wise to get the journal out on time. We also were beginning to feel that we needed more professional guidance as to how we could exploit commercial opportunities such as advertising.”

The editors decided it was time to seek professional support from a full-service partner to advise AAVLD appropriately and develop the journal more to take better advantage of the digital options.

Partner Selection

A key priority was to identify a partner that would not only host JVDI, but would also provide value-added services to make content more accessible and promote it to a wider audience. This partner needed to demonstrate that it understood the needs of the AAVLD, that it had the commercial expertise to integrate new business models to generate additional revenues as well as providing the reassurance that the publication of the journal would be in safe hands.

The search began with discussions between the AAVLD editorial board and its members to identify the objectives to be achieved. These included:

- Reduce the burden on society staff
- Streamline workflows and reduce production times
- Improve JVDI’s reach into international markets
- Explore alternative revenue streams
- Consolidate the journal publishing process into a single overall solution

“We didn’t want to have 3 separate contracts – one with a hardcopy publisher, one with an online publisher, and one with a manuscript submission/review system,” said Dr Jeremiah Saliki, JVDI’s Editor-in-Chief and Director & Professor Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. “So finding a full-service publisher was a very important consideration for us in choosing a partner.”

A number of the AAVLD’s members associated with the sister organization, American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP), stated how impressed they had been with the way their journal Veterinary Pathology was being looked after by SAGE. “We’d heard good things about SAGE
from our ACVP colleagues, which made the decision to explore the full service route a little easier,” commented Dr Carter. “At the first meeting, we were shown the dynamic links that we could have in our journal. That was a good start and enough to whet our appetite to learn more,” said Dr Carter.

The award-winning SAGE Journals platform is powered by HighWire Press’ highly acclaimed online hosting platform and provided all the tools and functionality the AAVLD required. From dynamic links and downstream delivery and integration with the major abstracting and indexing providers, to toll-free inter-journal linking and article level metrics and from online manuscript submission and tracking to expert peer review and responsive editorial support, the JVDI still benefits from these and the very latest in online search and discoverability technology.

**Six Weeks from Agreement to Launch**

Another fact that impressed the board was the speed with which journals could be moved to the SAGE/HighWire platform; with their efficient teamwork approach, SAGE has the ability to publish a new journal on the HighWire platform in just 6-8 weeks from initial agreement to live journal launch. “We were looking for a one-stop shop, a solution that could handle all aspects of the publishing process,” noted Dr Saliki, “but we also wanted to streamline the production timeframes – this statistic said it all.”

Given their requirements, AAVLD concluded that SAGE provided the best option. Not only did they publish hundreds of academic journals, including the ACVP’s Veterinary Pathology journal, but their excellent reputation and proven sales and marketing abilities, and their connection with HighWire’s highly visible cross-publisher discoverability solutions, would guarantee the expanded global readership the AAVLD desired. As Dr Carter commented, “Both SAGE and HighWire’s company ethos resonated with our own mission and this, coupled with their strong academic links and sound understanding of our business needs, cemented our decision to transition our journal to SAGE Journals Online.”

With the transition to SAGE, the AAVLD quickly began to reap the benefits of moving to a full-service solution. “A key driver in our search was to improve efficiency in our processes and extend our reach internationally,” said Carter. “Thanks to HighWire’s downstream delivery to PubMed and other major indexers, and their close connections to Google Scholar, JVDI is picked up by more than 140 indexers and is visible to, and accessible by, thousands more readers globally. Additionally article level metrics such as Most Cited and Most Read are driving even greater repeat usage of our content.”

In fact, the move has resulted in improved workflows across all areas of the business as well as providing the much-needed relief for staff. “My previous experience of outsourcing was that it can be quite a difficult and frustrating process to manage, but I am pleased to say that the transition to SAGE was smooth and is working well. Now we can enjoy concentrating on other areas of our business, such as broadening our membership, developing new research and exploring new ideas.”

**Conclusion**

In May 2011, the new JVDI was published on SAGE Journals. In addition to achieving greater international recognition, the partnership has helped AAVLD explore new collaborations for developing the journal. Approximately half of all JVDI article submissions are received from authors based outside of the U.S. and AAVLD were keen to capitalize on this. With SAGE’s support, they are working with the European Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (EAVLD) to provide access to JVDI to EAVLD members and encourage more submissions from international researchers.

So are the AAVLD happy with the way their partnership with SAGE is working? “Very much so,” said Dr Carter. “Our experience has been very positive; I can only wish that every partnership was as easy to establish! Transitioning to the SAGE/HighWire platform has helped us to achieve so much more than would have been possible by ourselves. We’ve had good feedback from our members and are glad that we chose HighWire as our hosting solution. It goes to show that HighWire really is the place to be!”

“AAVLD is a prime example of how a strong independent society works closely as a partner with HighWire, taking advantage of our innovative hosting technologies, strong collegial community, and integration success stories,” noted Tom Rump, Managing Director of HighWire. “By becoming a strategic partner with SAGE/HighWire, AAVLD has the flexibility both now and in the future to direct the evolution of their products and their offerings.”

http://vdi.sagepub.com

For hosting information, contact online@highwire.stanford.edu