

# ABOUT AGU

## The Demise of Print

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No print subscriptions to AGU journals will be available after 2010. Since 2002, when the electronic journal was made the version of record, it was clear that the day would come when the print version would be unsustainable.

First, the printed version would increasingly differ from the electronic one. One of AGU's goals for the conversion to electronic delivery was to take the journal beyond the printed page. More authors are taking advantage of the ability to use animations, video, and even interactive material—none of which can be part of the printed journal. Also, more authors are choosing to have color only in the electronic journal.

The second consideration is simply economic. The additional costs of producing a printed version of an AGU journal are borne only by the subscribers to that format. This pricing principle was established in fairness to those who take only the electronic version. As the number of print-only subscriptions continues to drop, there are fewer institutions over which to amortize the costs. Additionally, the production costs keep soaring, especially paper and postage. Thus, the price per subscription has been escalating rapidly.

Rather than set an arbitrary date for the discontinuation of print, AGU decided to let this be a market-driven decision. As there were fewer institutions interested in purchasing the printed journal, the price would have to be set higher than AGU would con-

sider tolerable. The Publications Committee has been carefully monitoring the numbers. At the current rate of decline in print subscriptions, by the end of 2010 there will be too few institutions subscribing to print to justify continuation. For some journals, the crossover point may be reached in 2009.

Some changes will happen as early as next year, when AGU will no longer accept new print subscriptions, although subscribers taking print in 2008 will be able to renew in that format in 2009. A first round of AGU journals (to be announced in early to mid-2009) may become online only in 2010. By 2011, all AGU journals will be online-only products. This applies only to the journals and not to *Eos*.

While printed journals have served scholars for centuries, scientists need products that are easily found, accessed, and utilized in today's digital environment. AGU online journals offer numerous advantages over the printed media. They allow daily publishing, wider distribution with desktop delivery, constant availability, and the use of dynamic content. Subscriptions to online-only AGU journals are also more affordable because only the costs associated with the online product are factored into the subscription price. Any institution can provide desktop access to its researchers, faculty, and students for about 60% of the costs of the print subscription.

There may be some concerns about the lifetime of online journals. AGU understands this concern and has taken steps to ensure the continuing availability of its archived

online material such as using only nonproprietary software, converting text and graphics to file formats that can be carried forward, endowing a dedicated long-term-care trust fund, and arranging to have redundant copies of its online material on three different tectonic plates. These steps not only protect the archive but also assure that the content of journals can be migrated to new formats as technology changes.

AGU also understands that there are parts of the world where the infrastructure will not support online journal access. The Publications Committee and staff are working on plans for how we can serve the scientific communities in these geographic areas. This is a challenge but one that does not alter the reality that print subscriptions are not sustainable.

To help institutions that have print-only subscriptions, AGU will be offering a free trial later this year and other incentives to encourage these institutions to switch to electronic subscriptions. What can you do to help? If your institution is still taking only print subscriptions, please talk to your librarian about the advantages of the electronic version. Let your librarian know that print is going away soon and that he or she should be hearing from AGU staff about how to move to the electronic version for 2008 without further charge.

AGU is very much committed to remaining a leader in Earth and space science publishing. The move to online-only will ensure that costs are kept down, that only a superior product is delivered, and that AGU journals are available to more users.

—FRANCIS ALBARÈDE, Chair, AGU Publications Committee. The Committee: CATHY CONSTABLE, CHRIS DUFFY, STEPHEN FUSELIER, JOYCE PENNER, RUTH PRELLER, DARRELL STROBEL, KIYOSHI SUYEHRO, and MICHEL VERSTRAETE