Opening this session, which fell at the end of the annual meeting, Stewart Wills joked that he and fellow speaker Margaret Winker would be “playing to the haircuts” as people left. However, the audience remained engaged as Wills provided general advice on redesigning online journals and Winker presented a case study.

**General Guidance**

Points presented by Wills, online editor of *Science*, included the following:

- **Like that of a print journal, redesign of an online journal can be cosmetic, comprehensive, or, more often, in between.**
- **Redesigning an online journal presents special challenges, though, because of the technology, users’ shifting expectations, the continued evolution of Web “best practices”, questions of how print and online versions should relate, and organizational issues (in both senses).**

  Information architecture of the online journal also should be evaluated. Aspects to consider include organizational hierarchy, labels, navigation, and searching. Also, the redesign should be considered in such contexts as business strategy, competition, financial constraints, and technologic constraints.

**A Case Study**

Winker, Web editor for the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the Archives Journals published by the association, discussed redesigning the Web site for these journals. The site became publicly available in 1999, and in 2003 the revamped site debuted. The redesign was done almost entirely in house with a team consisting of Web director, Web designer, graphics editor, medical illustrator, and Web editor.

Difficulties with the old Web site included usability problems, lack of information hierarchy, failure to evoke the print version and so take advantage of branding, and a dated look. Movement to a new vendor and platform offered a logical opportunity for a redesign.

Usability testing of the old site drew on eight clinicians of varied technical background. Among the findings: the journal’s table of contents was hard to find, navigation was difficult, there was too much scrolling, the palette was too dark for easy reading, the extensive use of graphics slowed downloading too much, and the links for accessing PDF files were hard to locate.

Goals of the redesign were to evoke the uncrowded look of the journals, which had recently been redesigned; to include design elements from the print versions; to increase branding; to make it clearer that the journals were a family; to maximize screen space; and to provide easy searching and transparent navigation. The redesign went through a number of “drafts”, some of which Winker showed. Features of the redesign ultimately chosen included use of the color palettes of the journals.

The main lessons learned from the redesign were the following: Know your scope and goals. Treat internal designers as you would consultants (but give them time in lieu of money). Obtain input and feedback from key players, but don’t ask about every detail. Know your vendor’s limitations. And most important: maximize usability—and to do so, watch people use the site.