

PDF or HTML for online presbytery or synod periodicals? Maybe *both*!

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies mails some 12,000 printed copies of its *Presbyterian Life & Times* to pastors, session members, and others. It also makes current and archived issues available on its website, www.lakesandprairies.org, in PDF and HTML formats, and provides links to new *PL&T* issues to the approximately 1,000 subscribers to its bi-weekly e-newsletter.

Why *both* PDF and HTML (Adobe's Portable Document Format and the Web's standard Hypertext Markup Language), especially when the latter requires some vendor and staff time?

Donn McLellan, the synod's interim associate executive for communication and interpretation, says the synod's printer converts the final Quark file of each issue to PDF, and Lori Sheehy, the synod's webmaster, quickly puts it on the synod's site. The PDF version is easy to create and post and preserves the layout and design of the issue, Donn says, "but PDFs can be annoyingly slow to download, especially for all those folks with slow dial-up service, and *reading* those documents often requires users to navigate down, up, and across columns."

Creating the HTML--or ordinary Web--version of an issue requires some hours of work by the printer, Donn, and Lori. The printer exports all story and caption text from Quark back into Word. Donn creates a table of contents with links to each story. Then Lori creates and posts the HTML version, which includes all photos from the issue. A user can scan the table of contents, click on a story that interests him or her, and the story and photo(s) download in seconds.

"Creating PDFs is almost effortless, and they're great for archiving and many other purposes," says Donn, "but they have limitations, and sometimes it's well worth some additional effort to make certain we're giving users the fastest-possible access to information they want and need."

Go to the synod's *Presbyterian Life & Times* [archive](#) and try both versions. You may prefer one or the other, but chances are that you'll get much faster downloads using the HTML version, especially if you have 56k or slower dial-up Internet service.