
Editorial

Standing still means falling behind

In 2017, the *Australasian Orthodontic Journal* celebrated its 50th anniversary. Since its inception, its constitutional charter has been to publish twice per annum and provide news, information and record events promoted by the Australian Society of Orthodontists. As the mouthpiece of the Society, this brief has largely remained in-house, self-contained and unchanged.

A retired academic from Manchester, in a weekly blog,¹ often laments that the orthodontic literature is shielded from general access by subscription and member protection. It is firmly believed that all information should be freely available so that the orthodontic world and the treated public benefit. The difficulty of literature access creates inconvenience for researchers, academics and clinicians who are unable to retrieve relevant publications and contact colleagues on matters of mutual interest. Unless libraries subscribe to journals, readers are unable to obtain specific articles without the payment of substantial fees.

Like most orthodontic journals, the AOJ has remained closed from general access and only subscribers receive the latest clinical and research information. The notable journal exception is the *Angle Orthodontist*, which changed to an open access format many years ago and remains the only major orthodontic journal that has a non-commercial, non-profit publisher. Its Editorial Board states that the ability to operate exclusively in the best interests of readers and authors is valued and sponsored. The journal's website is completely free and open to all visitors. Not so for other mainstream orthodontic journals.

While the AOJ has not changed its publishing philosophy, the publishing industry has advanced significantly following the advent of computerisation. On-line access to news and information, the explosive increase in the use of social media and improved file transfer systems have fundamentally changed the way that the publishing world operates. Journal boards

have basic obligations to four entities, namely the owner of the journal (ASO), the submitting authors, the readership (subscribers) and other associated bodies (advertisers, lawyers, public).

Currently, submitting authors are severely handicapped by the AOJ's publishing timetable and many have indicated that further submissions will not be considered. Researcher academic advancement is not promoted by a delayed publication of papers. This could be managed by a more frequent (quarterly) publishing timetable but this would double current publishing costs and, since the journal is a non-profit entity, would not be viable.

Promoted by the Journal's Board, the intention is to take the AOJ into the open access world so that all involved parties are treated as fairly as possible. The benefits of open access to the literature are many-fold and include greater access and author ability to address a wider audience. The reach of the articles or materials increases significantly since readers more easily retrieve papers, therefore greater exposure is achieved. In addition, research results can be made immediately available within the scientific community. Authors do not have to wait an inordinately long time for their work to appear.

The greater access to knowledge spurs interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research collaboration and open access articles tend to have a much greater impact in the short-term compared with 'subscription-only' work. Furthermore, additional studies show a slightly larger long-term impact for open access articles. An important aspect is that listing will be facilitated on PubMed, which will attract authors who have deserted the AOJ over recent years.

Members will find an article more easily located and available in the open access domain, rather than through the current citation management system. More readers become aware of authors who publish in open access journals as opposed to subscription-only journals. Institutions enhance their profile by

participating in or hosting open access publishing. Funding agencies supporting the research achieve more prominence.

Open access publications are usually less expensive to produce and disseminate, therefore journals and publishers benefit. It is well known that open access increases visibility and attracts subscriptions.

The AOJ has stood still and, of the many global orthodontic publications, the journal barely receives a mention when impact comparisons are made. The intention is to establish an open access format so that the profile of the journal is enhanced. This then is the

last hard copy issue and all of the contained papers will be available on-line in one main volume to be added to as papers are submitted, reviewed and prepared for immediate uploading.

Open journal access is a much-needed change and great opportunity to ensure that the AOJ receives the global exposure and recognition it rightly deserves.

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¹ <https://kevinobrienorthoblog.com>