

GUEST EDITORIAL



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Associate Editor*

With this issue, the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* reaches another milestone. The *Journal* has a new, distinctive cover, and begins publication every other month instead of quarterly. Each volume will contain six issues. These changes reflect not only the need for more space to publish accepted manuscripts, but also the continuation of significant improvements implemented by our current editor, Abel M. Dominguez, Ph.D.

Fourteen years ago, I accepted the tasks and responsibilities of editor with a shortage of manuscripts suitable for publication and a backlog of manuscripts which had not been reviewed by members of the Editorial Board. Procedures had not been established for timely communication with authors, the documentation of reviews and opinion by members of the Editorial Board, and the transmittal of approved manuscripts to the editorial staff of the publisher. I had the good fortune to seek the counsel of a colleague and friend, D. Murray Angevine, M.D., now deceased, who was the editor of the *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*, and to persuade Abel Dominguez to serve as assistant editor. With their guidance and support, procedures were established to expedite the review, editing, and publication of manuscripts. The first two issues of Volume 18, published in 1973, contained only 83 and 80 pages, respectively. Recovery began in the second half of 1973 and the year ended with the publication of 66 manuscripts on 492 pages. Since then, the numbers of manuscripts and pages published annually have increased more than threefold. In 1985, for example, Volume 30 had 1328 pages and contained 142 manuscripts, 22 letters to the editor, and

20 book reviews. During the past year, the four issues of Volume 31 contained 1552 pages, and supported the decision to publish 6 issues each year.

Consistent with the growth of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the Editorial Board, representative of the various fields of the forensic sciences, has increased in size from less than 20 to more than 60 members since 1973. The paid circulation of each issue of the *Journal* has increased from 1972 to 3777 copies. Over half of the manuscripts submitted to the editor for consideration are from members of the Academy, and approximately 20% of the manuscripts are submitted by persons in foreign countries. From 1973 to 1986, 62% of the manuscripts received annually were accepted for publication. The interval between the submission and the acceptance of a manuscript for publication remains about 9 months and compares favorably with similar journals.

What are some of the noteworthy improvements in the *Journal*? It is my opinion that one of the most important changes began in 1972 when the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), a highly respected scientific organization, was selected as our publisher. The editorial staff of ASTM has provided exceptional service, and the quality of printing is excellent. The procedures I established in 1973 to expedite the review, editing, and publication of manuscripts, including the color-coded, carbonless forms developed for this purpose, have withstood the test of time and they are still used today. Editorials and Letters to the Editor, approved for the first time by the Editorial Board in 1973, have been a source of opinion, comment, and discussion. Three years later, the *Journal* was accepted for inclusion in *Current Contents*, published by the Institute for Scientific Information. The annual index for each volume was arranged in alphabetical order until 1978 when an index by author and by subject was prepared. There were further improvements of the index in 1980 when the style of the *Journal* changed and the reference, abstract, and keywords were published beneath the title of each article. Finally, in 1982, the editor revised the Information for Authors and defined the types of original articles considered for publication.

Once in a while, members or sections of the Academy express their concerns about the *Journal*, and their criticism results in change. A survey conducted by an ad hoc committee of the Criminalistics Section several years ago indicated that 29% of the 201 respondents believed our reviewers were very strict. Twenty-three percent of the respondents felt it was more difficult to have an article accepted for publication by the *Journal*, as compared to other journals, but eighty-four percent agreed the criteria for a refereed journal should differ from those of a newsletter. The committee recommended improved guidelines for authors and reviewers, and this recommendation has been implemented by the editor.

I have appreciated the opportunity not only to reflect upon the changes and significant improvements in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, but also to have participated in the process. The *Journal* continues to serve as a forum for all the disciplines of the forensic sciences and all concerned with it strive to maintain the high quality required by the Editorial Board and the members of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

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