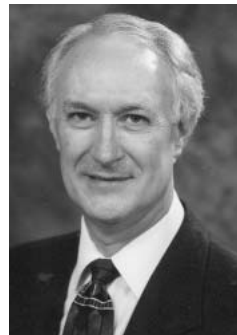

Editorial

Online Journals, a Journey to the Future That Will (or May Already) Benefit You

The occasion of my writing this editorial column (the first I've written in this journal) is that our editor, John Ogren, is hospitalized with some complications following a routine surgical procedure. We wish John the very best as he recuperates. He has been a faithful and reliable editor for ASM for about 25 years. I don't know that we've ever had an occasion such as this, where John was not available to write his editorial. We look forward to his return for the next issue.

I thought this might be a good opportunity to present some thoughts on online journals. As you may be aware, ASM has been providing our journals both in print and online, following the move by all publishers towards putting more and more of information online. This has not been a rapid or inexpensive process. Since we still provide a print journal, and that journal has to be processed more or less in the traditional way, our costs as a publisher have not been reduced. However, now we are also adding some coding to the electronic version and providing it electronically to Ingenta, who hosts our online journals. The degree of complexity in moving towards the online versions was not foreseen when we embarked on the process. Not only did we need to convert past journals to the desired format and coding, we also had to add elements to our process for publication. And there's more, as I will discuss later.



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The first result was that our journals were 'online.' That was a major milestone. But, in addition to having the journals online, it was desirable to 'link' the references in our journals to other journals. This required more effort on the part of Ingenta, and, of course, some costs for ASM, both for hosting the journals, and also for linking to other references. We have successfully accomplished this improvement and our journal citations are now linked to the original source journals.

Taking a breather for a moment, let's consider the benefits to the user of this information. First, you are able to search the archives of the journals for about five years (more years will be provided if the demand is sufficient). Second, you can link to journals that are cited in references at the end of articles. If you or your library is subscribed to the cited journal, you will be able to access the cited article, free, with a mouse click from your desktop, and print it out if you desire. Think of the benefits to research! Now you not only can access public databases of abstracts to find the latest articles, but you can look at those articles (if you are a subscriber) and download them free, or, if you're not a subscriber, you can purchase the article and download it.

Now, expand the concept. What has happened in the 'journal world' is that consortia of multiple libraries have formed. Let's use the example of the California Digital Library. This consortium involves 13 libraries in the state, and they are linked seamlessly with a single interface. Any user in a California library that is part of the consortium can search through all of the journals subscribed to by the consortium and download articles, or print them, for no cost. The power of this concept boggles my mind when I remember how I used to spend days and days going through Metadex and Chem Abstracts and then searching for the articles in the library archives!

But, this adds another expense to ASM as a publisher – the cost of selling online journals to consortia. As the number of consortia is now in the hundreds, the sales and pricing approaches for this totally new distribution channel need to be developed, and the resource (people), or a competent sales agent, for selling need to be hired. Each consortium has a different buying profile, different rules, different legalese in the contracts, etc. More challenges.

You, as a subscriber, are really in the driver's seat today. You have access through your personal subscription in print or online. Or, you can utilize your library, or perhaps your library is part of a consortium, to access broad arrays of journals of which you may not even be aware. You can do research online, assured that the result of your work will include the very latest publications in your chosen field. As you get more skilled in the means to access the information, you will find that there are 'alerting' services to let you know when articles are available that meet your selected profile. Some even show you articles that are accepted

but not yet in print! And, as you might expect, as we move down this electronic road, you will see more color online, video clips, sound bites, etc., as part of journal content. You will also see print journals becoming less vital, because they won't be able to incorporate sound or color, etc.

What a world to live in! You should take some time to find out how best to take advantage of the online services that are available. And, while I'm at it, perhaps I'll include a note on some other ASM online products. ASM members have free access to the ASM Desk Editions, comprehensive handbooks on metals and other engineered materials, that will answer many of the general questions that you encounter on a daily basis. If you need more detailed information, try the ASM Handbooks Online for a small annual license fee (or your company may already license it). And if you're looking for alloy data, trade name data, stress-strain curves, heat treating recipes, etc., you can license our Alloy Center database, which is also available for a small annual license fee. The beauty of the Handbooks Online and the Alloy Center is that you can search across both sources of information with one search, get a prioritized search result, and link to whatever results look promising.

I hope that this glimpse of how the electronic world is changing for the benefit of the user will be helpful to you, the reader.

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