

EDITORIAL

Access for all

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Editor-in-Chief

We invested in our first home computer when our elder son was born. I was doing my orthodontic masters degree, so we bought a state-of-the-art desktop PC with a 25 MB hard drive. We had never heard of the idea of connecting computers in a world wide web or internet. I spent many hours in the library finding, reading and photocopying research papers.

It is incredible to think what changes have occurred in the lifetime of my children. Fourteen years later we shop, bank, download music, exchange photographs, view other people's video clips and even watch television programmes over the internet. It has revolutionized the way that schoolchildren, students and academics work. I rarely visit the library nowadays. I can access almost all the research papers using my office or home desktop computers. I can even access them anywhere in my house using a laptop connected to a wireless network.

I am lucky. I work at a university which pays the subscriptions for a substantial number of journals so that staff and students have access for education and research. Until recently the only way authors could get their work published was by assigning the copyright for their work to a publisher, who then bears the cost of preparing, publishing and distributing the article, recouping this through a subscription fee for the journal paid by individuals and institutions such as universities and libraries. This way of producing a journal can limit access to important information, particularly in developing countries, who cannot afford expensive subscription fees. To protect the publisher's income journal articles are protected by copyright law, which assigns exclusive rights, preventing copying and free dissemination.

A new way of publishing work, pioneered first in biology and medicine, is the principle of open access. In an open access journal submitted work is rigorously peer-reviewed in the normal way, but once accepted it is available immediately online and can be read, copied, printed and distributed for free, as long as the authors are credited. This ensures that the article is available to everyone with a computer connected to the internet and also guarantees that important results do not languish unpublished for months or even years until there is an available slot in a conventional print journal. Another advantage of open access articles is that they can be

placed in a public repository of work, such as PubMed Central, which allows the archiving of information that can be found using sophisticated search tools.

Who pays for this service? Usually the authors do through a publishing fee, which can be quite substantial. Publishers of open access journals take the risk of setting up the enterprise and hope they receive sufficient submissions to make it pay for itself.

Open access is seen as desirable not only by readers and authors, but also by funders of research who wish to have the work they have paid for disseminated as widely as possible. Many of the major funders now make it a condition of providing research money that any subsequent publications will be freely and quickly available in an open access journal or deposited in an open access depository. They even allow researchers to include publication fees in their applications.

This provides a dilemma for a traditional publication such as the *Journal of Orthodontics*. The concept of open access publication is attractive, but the journal relies on subscriptions to pay the costs of producing each issue. One solution is called hybrid or optional open access. In hybrid open access, authors are given the option of paying a publication fee to allow their article to be freely available online. If they choose not to pay the fee then the article is available only to subscribers in the conventional way. Maney Publishing is introducing this service for some of its journals soon and will review whether this might be an appropriate approach for the *Journal of Orthodontics*. Some articles in the journal are already freely available on open access. This includes the winners of last year's *Journal of Orthodontics* Scientific Paper of the Year prize, sponsored by Maney Publishing and the European Federation of Orthodontics (FEO) prize, which can now be downloaded, copied and distributed free of charge. In addition, time-limited free trials are regularly offered at conferences to enable readers to access content for a fixed time period.

The editorial team will continue to work with Maney to enable readers to access new and important clinical or professional content from the *Journal of Orthodontics* by balancing the provision of free content with that which is available to subscribers only as a privilege of their subscription.

I would like to thank the previous Editor-in-Chief, Friedy Luther, and her Editorial Assistant, Ana Johnson, for such a well organised handover and for all their hard work in maintaining and improving the standard of the journal over the last four years. I hope to build on this over the next four years.

European Federation of Orthodontics Prize 2008

It gives me great pleasure that an article in the Journal has again won the prestigious FEO prize.

This annual award is made to the authors of a publication in the national journal of an FEO member society, which has been judged to have made a significant contribution to clinical orthodontics and research. The article chosen for the prize in 2008 is entitled 'Elective orthognathic treatment decision making: a survey of patient reasons and experiences' and was written by a team of researchers and clinicians in the north of England: J. Stirling, G. Latchford, D. O. Morris, J. Kindelan, R. J. Spencer and H. L. Bekker. It can be found in volume 34(2), pp. 113–27. This article will also be made freely and openly available for all to access.