

# OPEN FOR THE FUTURE

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The BDJ Upfront section includes editorials, letters, news, book reviews and interviews.

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Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible.

Publishing has undergone several significant transitions in recent years to the extent that the landscape has changed to be all but unrecognisable. In the 1980s we saw a move towards standardisation of paper sizes so that A4 became the norm, in the case of the *BDJ* changing it from a smaller format to feel a lot more modern and of its time. Colour printing became much cheaper thanks to major advances in technology meaning that illustrations became much more real, plentiful and of far more value.

The next giant leap forwards came with the arrival of desktop publishing and computer software such as Page-maker. These programs provided not only more efficient ways of designing and laying out pages but radically altered the entire process. Previously all copy and content had been sent off from the editorial office to be laid out by a typesetter, a process which had been in existence for centuries in one form or another. Akin to the John Bull printing sets that some of us remember as childhood toys, the laborious method of adding letters to make words and sentences resulted in the production of 'galley' proofs (a term still used nowadays) which were literally long strips of paper (galleys) with the continuous text that, once corrected by hand were actually cut up and pasted into page form. While this put many traditional typesetters out of work it also opened the door to a huge surge in creativity. Page layout could be originated and changed quickly, making the whole process much more personal and responsive.

Mapped onto this revolution came the Internet. Doing away this time not

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with typesetters but with paper. It is a previously unthinkable revolution which has already seen major changes and which will continue to modulate our relationship with reading methods and materials for years to come.

The *BDJ* has been keen to keep abreast of such changes and in terms of electronic delivery moved to publishing research papers in full online only in 2006. Combined with advanced publication this meant not only more convenient access but also substantially reduced the time between acceptance of a paper and its publication. Previously such waits had been up to one year and are now in the region of two to three months, which is far more acceptable for all concerned.

One of the consequences of online publication has been the advent of universal access to information through the Internet. No longer has this been confined to the delivery

of paper copies and what has dawned has been the realisation that research can be shared more widely than ever before. In turn this opens the possibility of making speedier advances in science and medicine by connecting researchers, their work and their findings for the benefit of mankind.

However, there are also drawbacks. One fundamental problem is veracity. How can we maintain quality? The peer review function of journals safeguards this as far as is possible and the answer has been to extend this into the development of open access journals. Here the premise is that the cost of the publishing process is borne by the author

and not by the reader. But this is not 'vanity' publishing, at least certainly not as far as reputable journals are concerned, because the author's work is only accepted after the same established process of peer review. It is not a question that merely being prepared to pay gets you published.

This is why we have launched a brand new online only, open access journal entitled *BDJ Open*. The world of dental research is very wide and using conventional means only the *BDJ* is constrained by the amount of content and number of papers it can publish. *BDJ Open* will have no such confines and is open, as the name suggests, to research papers across the dental field, full details being available at [www.nature.com/bdjopen](http://www.nature.com/bdjopen). To put this in context we currently receive in excess of 900 submissions a year to the *BDJ* yet we have the capacity to publish only about 150. A quick calculation reveals a 'rejection' rate of about 80% but many of these papers are turned down not because they are substandard but only because they are not appropriate for the *BDJ*'s established content and readership. Our new ability to offer a possible route to publication for many of these papers means that we no longer have to divert them to other journals, we can instead keep them in the *BDJ*'s portfolio of knowledge.

The launch of *BDJ Open* is an exciting new development for the BDA, our publishing partners Nature Publishing Group and, we earnestly believe, for the dental world and outside world in general. With open access fast becoming validated we feel that this is of great benefit, is best practice in publishing and is a vital next step in the rapid development of a continuing and fascinating journey.

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