

Evolution of a Journal

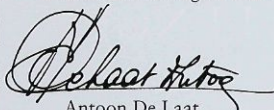
More than 7 years ago, when Hal Perry first asked me to join the editorial team of the *Journal of Craniomandibular Disorders, Facial and Oral Pain*, I considered it both an honor and a great challenge. His experience and enthusiasm were of enormous help as I learned the various processes of reviewing, administering, editing, and all the other details involved in getting a paper from submission to final publication. Gradually, over the years, we established a team of reviewers who came from various backgrounds and had different interests and skills, but all of them shared the same task and goal: to provide the journal with quality papers, from both the basic and clinical sciences, that could support the efforts of our readership in their search for greater knowledge of our field and better service for their patients. Hal was the pilot and the engine of this journal, and it was a pleasure assisting him.

When Hal's plans suddenly had to be changed, Chuck McNeill stepped in with a strong will to continue and refine the existing efforts. Backed by the Publications Committee, he strengthened the review process and set the journal's goals even higher. By tradition, I handled all of the manuscripts originating in Europe; our group of experienced referees, however, was global. As communications technology evolved, our choice of referees was no longer influenced by geography, but based on the topic of the manuscript. Administration of the journal became faster and easier: we moved from airmail to fax and express mail, and more recently to e-mail, which always carries the unspoken question "why did you not answer yet?" From the start, Chuck agreed to lead the journal only for a limited time, and all of us who are closely involved with it are very grateful for the flexibility and time he allowed in the search for a new Editor-in-Chief. It was great working with you, Chuck; you helped the journal through a "pubertal" phase and a name change.

The new directions Barry Sessle referred to in his first editorial fit in perfectly with the developments we've seen over the past few years: he chose a group of associate editors from different fields of interest and gave them the responsibility to manage the manuscripts that match their areas of expertise and to recruit other referees worldwide. In this way, the associate editors can provide answers to authors in a reasonable amount of time. However, to guarantee the uniformity and high quality of the accepted papers, Barry retains the authority to make the final decisions. I was very pleased when Barry asked me to continue my work for the journal, and I will try to serve its goals with similar enthusiasm.

The bottleneck in every review process is the time needed by the reviewers: this difficult work comes on top of all their other duties, and since they are experts themselves, they already have a lot on their mind. In addition, reviewing a paper is not a one-time effort; often, some rereading or research is necessary before one can provide a constructive report. We shall continue to express our sincere gratitude to our many valuable reviewers.

The amount of time needed for the review is in sharp contrast to the speed used nowadays to get information from one place to another, and the evolution in electronic communication will probably continue to facilitate the printing of the journal. In spite of all these swift developments, the hard copy remains the final product. Maybe we should be more grateful when we receive an issue of the journal, because it prompts us to get away from flashing computer screens and busy internets, and to sit down again and read.



Antoon De Laat
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