

## Editorial

### OnlineEarly

The number of manuscripts submitted to the journal has risen sharply over this last year, and we look like having twice as many submissions in 2006 as we did in 2005. No doubt a major reason is our adoption of the Manuscript Central (MC) system for submission, review, and tracking of manuscripts in October 2005. Response to the MC system from authors and reviewers has been overwhelmingly positive. This increase in submissions in turn leads to more papers being accepted, despite the publication rate dropping below 20% during 2006. It's good to have those additional papers coming in, but the downside is that it takes accepted papers longer to appear in print. Publication times (i.e., time between formal acceptance and print publication) are now averaging around 9–10 months, which while similar to those in other major dental journals is still longer than anyone would like. Happily, however, relief from the frustrations of waiting is at hand in the form of OnlineEarly (fashionably spelt as one word though with a capital "E"). While not directly reducing the print queue, OnlineEarly permits public access to and citation of accepted manuscripts prior to a paper's appearing in print. So instead of having the information in an "in press" article available only to the authors while waiting 9–10 months for it to appear in print, with OnlineEarly it is available to everyone as soon as it is accepted for publication.

### What is OnlineEarly?

OnlineEarly is the name given to Blackwell's electronic publication through which manuscripts are put up online on the Synergy service before being printed in the hard-copy journal. The OnlineEarly version of a manuscript is the final, published product and will be identical to the subsequent printed version. The only difference is that the printed version will contain page numbers and volume/issue information, and if necessary some minimal rearrangement of white space/

figures for print purposes: the content will be entirely unaltered. OnlineEarly lists complete articles, with full color figures, all tables, and active reference linking through PubMed and Crossref. For copyright purposes, the PDF version mounted online is considered the definitive version rather than the full-text HTML.

### How Does it Work?

When a paper is accepted after the usual review procedures it goes to the publisher where it is copy edited, typeset, corrected by the authors, and returned to the typesetter. These final ready-to-print articles are then uploaded into Synergy. No corrections or changes can be made to the content of the article from this point on – changes could not be made to a printed page after publication and OnlineEarly articles are treated in exactly the same way.

When the issue compilation stage is reached, the production editor and journal editor submit to the typesetter an ordered list of articles to appear in the next issue. The typesetter then produces a set of proofs that contains volume, issue and page numbers, but are otherwise identical to the articles that are already on Synergy in the OnlineEarly list. When manuscripts are selected for printing, the OnlineEarly versions of the same articles are simultaneously removed. Any article not published in a journal issue will stay on the OnlineEarly list in Synergy and will therefore still be available for viewing. Articles appear in a special OnlineEarly "issue" on Synergy. To view all the articles currently listed in OnlineEarly, readers can visit the journal website at: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/> and click on the 'OnlineEarly' area at the top.

The OnlineEarly list is essentially a reservoir of articles which is constantly being emptied from the bottom as manuscripts go to print and refilled from the top as newly-accepted papers arrive. Authors can decline to have their papers listed in OnlineEarly, though it is difficult to see why an author would want to do that.

## How are OnlineEarly articles cited?

By definition, OnlineEarly articles have no volume, issue or page numbers, so they are cited using their DOI number. DOI stands for Digital Object Identifier. It is a unique number given to each article allowing the article to be accessed online and registered with CrossRef. For more details, go to: <http://www.doi.org/faq.html>

A correct citation of an article on the OnlineEarly list would thus read:

Smith, A., Jones, B. Severity of early childhood caries. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol* 2007; doi:10.1111/j.1234-4321.2004.01234.x

When the paper is printed in the hard-copy journal, it will be deleted from the OnlineEarly list and hence only the citation now used for a printed paper should then be used:

Smith, A., Jones, B. Severity of early childhood caries. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol* 2007; 35: 364-71.

The issue is that the citation information must relate precisely to what is being cited, i.e., the electronic version or the print version. The citation cannot be a mix of information from the two sources, and once the print version is published the OnlineEarly citation would be obsolete.

In summary, we expect that OnlineEarly will relieve some of the frustrations that any author feels with long publication times. It should make procedures like new appointments and promotion reviews work more efficiently, and generally assist the dissemination of knowledge.

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