

## ***The Angle Orthodontist* in 2000 and Beyond**

My first act as your new editor must be to recognize the fantastic job done for the past 10 years by Dave Turpin, my immediate predecessor. After a couple of months of working with the journal, I can begin to appreciate what he has done, as well as appreciate the accomplishments of those who went before him. Thanks to Dave, the transition has gone smoothly. In the process, Dave distinguished himself not only as a consummate professional, but also as a great human being and a good friend. Dave Turpin: the Angle Society, *The Angle Orthodontist*, and I are all in your debt. In the time-honored tradition of your predecessors, you have carried the journal to a new level of excellence. You have made yourself a tough act to follow!

You may justifiably ask, where is the journal going now? Its purpose is to disseminate information about orthodontics to all interested parties. In a recent editorial, Dave Turpin accurately abstracted from a paper I wrote for the Angle Society's selection panel citing my vision for our future. He quoted me correctly when he referred to my interest in moving *The Angle Orthodontist* ahead as a publication available in both paper and online at the Angle Society's home page. A profound revolution in the printed word is already well under way.

One does not have to be clairvoyant to gain a sense of the direction current trends are taking us. Information is indeed today's coin of the realm. My goal is to expedite the transmission of orthodontic information and to have all articles available electronically as soon as they are ready for publication. To have new information waiting in an editor's queue for space in a printed journal is out of touch with today's fast-moving information world.

Moreover, as you read an electronic article, you may see a reference you want to read. In the future, you need only click on the reference and the article will instantly appear on your monitor, available for perusal. At first, this will only be possible in your own journal, but the total electronic research library is clearly in sight. *The Angle Orthodontist* cannot avoid being caught up in this tsunami. The electronic changes in our communications will rival the printing press in its impact on our society.

Many complex issues arise with this scenario. How will we continue to have peer review and quality control? Electronic sites are already springing up that essentially are nothing more than chat rooms where participants express their opinions. Opinions are fine and make up a large part of communication in our everyday world. If someone thinks something is true, it is true to that person at that moment, but that does not make it fact. No matter how fast we can collect an immense number of opinions, they are still just opinions. Once a person acquires an emotional attachment to a favorite or very logically appearing opinion, that person is at risk of beginning to confuse that opinion with fact.

Human beings commonly speculate when they are without knowledge of any given area. Pooled ignorance, however, does not lead to the establishment of fact. Debates are useful in subject areas where no totally correct data can ever arise. Debates can create consensus, but speculation, discussion, and consensus are not the same thing as facts. In the arena of modern science, we must clearly segregate opinions from established fact. The alternative is a periodic recycling of opinions and debates focused on, "I like what I like better than you like what you like."

It is my goal to make this journal a free and open forum. Openness is fundamental to fostering free and creative thinking. We need a willingness to weigh new ideas for their intrinsic value and not constrain our thinking to those ideas that agree with our established ways. New ideas are not inherently good or bad. A professional journal has a duty to be a leader in facilitating this sorting process. It is imperative to separate those things we know from those things that we think we know, and the best tool we have available is the time-honored scientific method.

A primary mission of *The Angle Orthodontist* is to provide a vehicle for communicating new ideas and information that can potentially affect orthodontics. Expect *The Angle Orthodontist* to facilitate new ideas with an emphasis on testing these ideas. Like other sciences, ours is not a perfect science, but the course toward perfection is best served by a continued adherence to openness coupled with an objectivity based on the scientific method.