Letter to the Editor

The BIOJ: Evolution or revolution?

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Whilst undertaking a descriptive study comparing the content of the BIOJ with two other clinical journals, a number of differences between the professional publications were observed. Some of these have been outlined; however, we feel other differences warrant further discussion amongst BIOS members.

What is the purpose of the BIOJ?

During our study we were unable to find any clear statement of the journal’s aims and objectives. We believe now should be the time to consider and decide upon these, as we look towards the future of the journal.

Accessibility

Orthoptics is a small profession, but that should not mean we have small ambitions! If the profile and international reputation of our profession is to be built upon, then our research output should be available for all international reputation of our profession is to be built.

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reviewers, and the BIOJ has recently introduced this. Some journals now provide feedback to reviewers too, and this should be considered by the BIOJ to ensure the review process is clear and transparent. This would demonstrate that the journal strives to maintain standards, in terms of both submissions to the BIOJ and the quality of the review given.

We appreciate that much effort goes into producing the BIOJ at every stage, from conducting the research, producing a manuscript, peer review, the editorial process, and finally production itself. Furthermore, efforts of the current and past editors should not go unmentioned. However, evidence-based practice and knowledge is not ‘static’, and the BIOJ should be no exception to that: we must constantly evaluate our aims and objectives. The way in which we access and provide information has changed vastly over recent years, and it would appear that the BIOJ has not been able to keep up with such changes as well as the journals of other professions. There are many reasons for this, which have affected us all in some way. ‘Agenda for Change’, financial pressures and efficiency measures have all taken precedence, and have often taken up any slack there once was in the system. However, there has to come a point when the BIOJ stops slipping down our list of priorities. We feel now should be the time for discussion amongst BIOS members: what do we want from the journal, both now and in the future? Improvement is a two-way process, and may well be guided by the Editor and Council, but BIOS members should ultimately drive it. We all have responsibility for the BIOJ and now may be the time to evolve. We hope that this letter promotes discussion amongst members, and that an agreed strategy for the future of the BIOJ can be reached and acted upon.

References

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Editor’s Response to ‘The BIOJ: Evolution or Revolution?’
(Jill Carlton, Gemma E. Arblaster and Lindsey A. Hughes)
I would like to thank the authors for the points raised within their letter.

Accessibility is something that I wished to address as soon as I became Editor in August 2012. This issue was raised at the BIOS Council Meeting in October 2012. At the meeting I suggested that we need to develop a specific web page for the journal; also an archive system for searching and purchasing PDF files of individual articles, for both non-members and those outside the profession. Following another meeting to discuss the logistics in January 2013, these developments are currently in progress. As discussed in the Editorial, visibility, profile and accessibility of the papers are key if we are to attract more submissions and increase the proportion of original research articles.

Journal format, reporting standards, instructions and adherence to guidelines are all aspects that will be reviewed and put in place for the 2014 edition. The composition of the sections of the journal will also be reviewed for the 2014 edition and I welcome feedback on any aspects members would like to see included or removed.

I have already implemented some changes in the review process, with the introduction of a structured review template. Feedback to the reviewers is also now in place, both in terms of the final decision and also details of the other reviewers’ comments, which provides useful information for the reviewers in terms of the robustness of their own critique.

Evolution of the journal is a continuous process and I agree that we must not only keep up with (and surpass if possible) our counterparts, but also strive to be innovative and not be afraid to think out of the box. The journal needs to move forward to become more widely internationally respected and valued, and to move up the ranking of the decision process when authors ask themselves the question ‘Where shall we submit our research?’ Support, marketing, publicity, accessibility and the contribution of members to the journal will be necessary if we are to succeed.