



The Journal: Print or Electronic

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The World Nutrition Journal was conceived on the premise of academic and clinical education for healthcare providers caring for patients that require nutritional support.¹ The journal followed the open access (OA) methodology, allowing free access everywhere in the World. The main question that some asked was “why publish this journal electronically and not printed?”

Most of us are aware that one of the most important hallmarks of academic achievement in medicine and other areas is publication of scholarly-written articles. When discussing publishing a manuscript, the primary question is whether the target journal should be electronic or printed version. The many advantages of having electronic publications have created a series of websites, journals, webcasts that are useful for practitioners.²

In times of technological evolution, new technologies often imitate older entities that are not

necessarily related; for example, early photography often imitated painting. Once individuals realized the capabilities of the new medium, photography developed as a distinct art form. Similarly, in the library world, older practices are often applied to the new medium of electronic information. Just as electronic journals (e-journals), have matured and become integral to library collections, so have journal-use studies progressed from those examining barriers to electronic journals' acceptance and desiderata for their design, to studies measuring use counts, to studies examining what the widespread adoption of electronic journals portend both academically and economically. Libraries early recognized that electronic journal design was key to their acceptance and engaged in numerous studies to determine effective design elements.

With so much of our daily communication now conducted online, there are some who feel it is time that scientific journals go the same route, replacing print with pixels. At the opposite pole are those who believe that print still rules when it comes to serious publications. The arguments favouring each are often framed in stark absolutes, with e-journals dismissed as lacking permanence and credibility and print journals scorned as the vestiges of an obsolescent technology. In truth, the

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two forms are complementary, each bringing unique assets to the table.

Print, of course, has served us well since Gutenberg invented movable type over 500 years ago. Many of the first books printed in volume were, in fact, scientific texts, the precursors of today's scientific journals. Virtually every branch of science now publishes scholarly journal promoting news of the latest developments in its field. In that capacity, the printed journal serves four key functions: disseminating information, ensuring the credibility of its content, establishing a permanent archive for scientific research, and offering its authors professional recognition.

Those who support online publishing emphasize several distinct advantages that it offers over print publishing. Some scholars, for instance, argue that electronic publication is more likely to facilitate communication within scholarly communities because of the speed with which it can be written, reviewed and edited, its ready accessibility, and the ease and economy of its distribution. They also point to the democratizing influence of the medium, which would allow greater numbers of authors to publish their work than is possible with print journals.

Print journals are limited in content and frequency by the overriding constraints of time, space, and rigorous adherence to standards of quality. Electronic publishing, on the other hand, free of these constraints, can broadcast research findings quicker and in larger quantities³, to have this freedom allows authors to express themselves in a non-limited manner.

Lack of quality control, in fact, proves to be the most serious charge level against e-journals. Print journals, require stringent peer-review to ensure an article's accuracy before publication.⁴ Applying the same standard to e-journals would necessarily lengthen the editorial process, undercutting the speed advantage promised by e-publishing. This, they fear, might encourage some publishers to shortcut review in favour of speed. Indeed, most scholars today go about their daily rounds without giving a thought to electronic publication.

In the authors' opinion, however, electronic publishing serves an important need in disseminating scientific and scholarly information

quickly and easily, but not at the expense of print. It is not a killer technology, but rather an evolutionary development that adds yet another dimensions to the various ways that we as a society share knowledge. We applaud the efforts of the World Nutrition Journal to have a free-of-charge open-access medical periodical specifically dealing with nutrition that can easily be accessible everywhere in the World. Some of us are concerned about situations in which internet access is limited or non-existent. Where will clinicians get their answers from in those situations?

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