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## EDITORIAL

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# Worldwide publication of the EJSO: the IDEAL way forward

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### Introduction

Internet publication is with us. Over the past 3 years, the Editorial Board of the European Journal of Surgical Oncology has sought to harness the Information Technology revolution to the objectives of your journal. To this end, we have published a series of articles to educate our readers about the form and opportunities of the electronic information age for surgical oncologists, against a background of rapidly evolving technology.<sup>1-4</sup> We have explored models by which the distribution, the reach, the impact, the utility and the quality of the journal may be enhanced by the new electronic medium. We have been conscious of the challenge to subscriptions for all printed journals from rising costs and electronic distribution.

We take the view that the printed version of the specialist scientific journal will remain at the heart of the publishing process for the foreseeable future, for reasons previously described.<sup>5</sup> The subscriber base of our own printed journal is founded upon the membership of BASO and ESSO. We plan to grow the circulation of the printed journal gradually, through affiliation with other international Surgical Oncology Societies. However, the impact of such a strategy will be modest in terms of extending access to the content of the printed journal.

Publishers have been hard at work to develop models to secure revenue streams, while taking full advantage of the opportunities of Internet distribution of scientific data. Our own publisher, Harcourt, incorporating the journals of W. B. Saunders, Academic Press, Churchill Livingstone and Mosby, has produced an electronic journal distribution service through a consortium licensing programme. This allows full electronic access to the entire contents of many journals to all members of registered organizations worldwide. In June 1999 there are already 1337 institutions signed up to this model. For UK access, this includes all 168 of the academic institutions affiliated to the Higher Education Funding Council of England. This coverage already provides access online to the entire range of Academic Press journals to the estimated 8 million authorized users world wide.

### The International Digital Electronic Access Library (IDEAL)

IDEAL is the International Digital Electronic Access Library. Its licensing model, known as APPEAL, was designed for corporations or consortia of institutions. APPEAL is a 3-year licence. Consortia pay a fee for electronic access to all journals within IDEAL, and may also take the printed journals at a substantial discount. The fee for electronic access is based on the number of print subscriptions held by the consortium or corporation. In return, all users within the institutions may view, search, download and print out journal articles, for personal use, for course packs or for internal company business. The model has proved successful and satisfactory, both to the information provider and consumer, such that nearly 200 journals in over 20 subject disciplines are available through IDEAL.

IDEAL is distributed across the World Wide Web (WWW) from web servers in the USA ([www.idealibrary.com](http://www.idealibrary.com)) and Europe ([www.europe.idealibrary.com](http://www.europe.idealibrary.com)). Contents and abstracts are displayed in HTML, the current language of the WWW. Articles, figures and tables can be downloaded in Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF), a standard printing medium, to a quality as high as that of the printed journal. The content of IDEAL, which relates to all publications since late 1995, is displayed on conventional Web pages in a systematic way with word search facilities, such that all articles can be readily found and accessed.

All users of the WWW, regardless of institutional affiliation or country of origin, can access the table of contents and the abstracts. Institutional subscribers can download the full contents from any terminal connected to their intranet, thus saving time, expense and effort in finding information.

### The European Journal of Surgical Oncology and IDEAL

The European Journal of Surgical Oncology is now able to accede to IDEAL, with the consent of the executive boards

of the Societies which own the title. The cost of joining will be covered by additional revenues from the sale of licences. The entire contents of the journal are logged onto IDEAL. They are thus available on the Internet to those worldwide users who may not have the luxury of access to the printed journal.

We perceive many benefits to the European Journal of Surgical Oncology from integration with IDEAL. The publisher maximizes distribution, journal awareness, access to content for citation and impact factor purposes, and should generate additional income for the journal. Our effective reach increases from some 2000 copies to the entire subscriber base of APPEAL. The contents and abstracts of the journal achieve a higher profile by virtue of worldwide WWW access on a prominent academic site. For our authors, the potential readership of their work is widened, from Alaska to Zambia. For the electronic reader, there is immediacy of access and downloading from home, from work or using mobile internet communications devices. For our current subscribers, the utility of our printed journal will thus be enhanced. And all this is achieved at minimal cost and risk to the Societies.

#### The future

Future developments will further enhance the utility of electronic publishing. Our publishers are now developing electronic links to databases such as MEDLINE, accessible through public sites such as Grateful Med and PubMed, such that the full text of articles may be accessed seamlessly by authorized users from within the Medline search strategy. Another development will be linkage of the journal with the OCLC (Online Computer Library Centre, formerly the Ohio College Library Centre) FirstSearch Electronic Collections Online service, which allows libraries to search across many journals from different publishers using a single access point. This association will also allow online archiving in perpetuity, thus extending access to issues of the journal to any interested reader for the foreseeable future. IDEAL also provides for direct access from institutional websites where required.

The EJSO now has online electronic presence, and a global reach. There are no models to predict the outcome of our development strategy, but what limited evidence there is suggests that such copublishing in print and electronic form will strengthen the printed journal,<sup>6-9</sup> whose quality and professional ratings we are constantly striving to improve. Flexibility and adaptability will be the key to progress. Some of our earlier ideas for exploitation of electronic information technology, such as multilingual publishing and alternative online content, may lapse. Other opportunities, based on new technologies, a faster Internet,

and better software archiving languages such as XML, to improve Internet searches, have yet to be explored.

The journal continues to have its own web pages on the publisher's web site, at <http://harcourt-international.com/journals/ejsa>, where contents and abstracts are listed for convenient reference. The technical and commercial foundations upon which we can build the scientific and educational quality and reputation of the journal are now in place, and the works are in progress. We are moving with the times, to match our ambition to be a leading international journal in our field.

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