A tribute to the past and a look to the future

Steven J. Lindauer

It is truly an honor for me to have been chosen to become the new editor of The Angle Orthodontist and to succeed all of the dedicated people who have steered this journal from its founding. The first published issue (January, 1931) declared that the journal was established in the memory of Edward H. Angle. During the intervening 80+ years, all of the significant changes that have occurred in the art and science of orthodontics are recorded on these pages. What an appropriate tribute to the founder of our specialty! Over time, the style of the journal and the information presented within it has varied somewhat in reflection of the character of the era and the leaders who controlled its content. Yet, for all its historical significance, today The Angle Orthodontist undeniably serves as a source of peer-reviewed, cutting-edge information, proudly reporting scientific breakthroughs in our field almost as they occur. Due to its Open Access policy, its contents are available electronically and without restriction to all practitioners, researchers, students, and any other interested persons throughout the world, merely with the click of a button!

Robert J. Isaacson has served brilliantly as Editor and Editor-in-Chief of The Angle Orthodontist for the past 12 years. He is responsible for many of the journal’s attributes that you, as readers, have loved and over time, indeed, have come to expect. He took the journal into the electronic age with all the enthusiasm of a young adolescent with a new video game in hand. It wasn’t long before the entire archives, back to 1931, were digitized and available to readers online. He opened the journal for all the world to access; no prior registration, passwords, or other barriers were put in place. What a magnificent gift from Bob Isaacson (and The Angle Society membership) to the international orthodontic community! Manuscripts that were accepted for publication were formatted for presentation and posted online immediately so that readers could view future issues before they were even printed. The residents in my orthodontic program back then would joke that Angle allowed them to “see into the future” but, now we all expect to be able to read ahead, to be able to access information of all kinds at the touch of a button. Bob’s ideas changed the way we receive our scientific information!

I remember in 2000, when Bob Isaacson first took on the role of editor of The Angle Orthodontist. He and his wife, Delores, would actively solicit manuscripts at meetings, professional gatherings, and wherever they traveled. Their goal was to raise the quality of what they were publishing to the highest level possible. They sought to increase international submissions and the worldwide visibility of the journal. To put it modestly, they were able to attain their goals. To put it truthfully, they were wildly successful! Over time, an increased number of pages in each issue of the journal were required. Subsequently, a 3500 word limit imposed on each submitted manuscript helped boost the quantity of articles and, hence, the number of new ideas, that could be published each year. I still hear occasional grumbling from submitting authors about the length restriction but, undoubtedly, this limitation forces writers to think more clearly about what they are trying to communicate and inspires them to say it better and more concisely.

In 2011, The Angle Orthodontist received close to 800 submissions from all over the world. A great many of those were good papers, worthy of publication but, sadly, The Angle Orthodontist only has the resources to publish about 150 of them in its pages each year. That means that many good papers are rejected and it is the most painful part of an editor’s job. How those manuscripts get prioritized is not by the editor's whim but through the peer-review process. Throughout his term, Bob Isaacson maintained and built on the scientific integrity of The Angle Orthodontist. The peer-review procedure remains the centerpiece of the journal’s publication process. I have witnessed it in action and it is a system of review by recognized experts in their respective fields that yields objective scores used to make publishing decisions. It is not a flawless process but it is an unbiased process.

So, you might ask, where is The Angle Orthodontist headed and is its new editor ready to take on the challenge? I will start my answer by stating that I have been working with Bob Isaacson very closely on the journal for a few years now and I am quite happy or, more accurately, overwhelming ecstatic, with the position that the journal has attained during his term as editor. That’s not really a surprising answer if you know that Bob and I previously worked together for
12 years in the orthodontic department at Virginia Commonwealth University, right up until the time he took the position as editor of the journal. I have stood by his decisions to uphold and reinforce the peer-review process, ensuring that the papers published are only those that are supported by the best scientific evidence that modern methods can provide. One change that I have already instituted is the addition of Assistant Editors to further strengthen that process by putting in place experts in the field to disperse incoming manuscripts to the right people for peer-review as quickly as possible. In this way, I expect that we will be able to maintain or even improve on the journal’s rapid turnaround of submitted articles so that authors will feel comfortable sending their best material to *The Angle Orthodontist*, knowing that their findings will not be held up by unexplained delays. This, along with continued Open Access, also benefits the readership as timely publication makes *The Angle Orthodontist* a primary source for the orthodontic community to discover and explore the newest findings of interest to the specialty.

I expect, during my time as editor, that the paper version of *The Angle Orthodontist* will continue to dwindle in importance and eventually become unnecessary. We are not quite ready to make that leap yet but the suggestion is in the air. At the university, we have bound volumes of all the journals on our shelves but incoming residents rarely, if ever, choose to open those “dusty old books” when searching for an article in the literature. It is no secret that the internet allows us to consume information at an alarmingly fast pace and the upcoming leaders in our field are more accustomed to reaching for their computer, a tablet, or even their phone, when researching a topic. To that end, a new mobile app has recently been released for smartphone and tablet use that is available without charge by accessing the Angle website.

No tribute to my immediate predecessor would be complete without acknowledging the significant contribution that has been made, and continues to be made, by his wife and closest companion, Delores Isaacson. She is the infamous “staff” to which Bob often refers, who takes care of the little glitches that happen from time to time in any “big” operation such as *The Angle Orthodontist*. The journal can not function smoothly without her sincere and caring touch and, to my delight, she has agreed to continue on in her position with the journal. No doubt, I can count on Bob’s continued help when I need it as well. With their help and your support as contributors, readers, and reviewers, I look forward to beginning what I hope will be many successful years as your editor of *The Angle Orthodontist*. 