Connecting Scientists Everywhere

Even one of today’s most prestigious journals, *Science*, had a rocky start in 1880. Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell provided initial financial assistance, but the journal still failed to secure a sufficient subscriber base and folded two years after its inception. James McKeen Cattell later resurrected the magazine, but the journal endured additional monetary struggles until 1900, at which point Cattell partnered with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Over 100 years ago, there existed an untapped publishing market for academic periodicals and yet, *Science* faltered.

This difficult beginning might provide little encouragement for a start-up magazine – one eager to make it to the big leagues with exponential expansion of its audience.

Thankfully, the 1980’s welcomed the Internet - a technology that facilitates the sharing of information across great distances quickly and with a minimum of investment. As we all know, no journal can survive without adequate and reliable funding. Fortunately, affordable web publication negates the need for expensive print charges. Various servers offer web space for as little as $6.95 a month, and domain names for under $20 per annum.

In addition, the Internet offers phenomenal global expansion to novel publications. Take for example *Hypothesis*. Approximately 200 copies of each issue are printed, and circulated among students of the sponsoring science departments at the University of Toronto. We encourage privileged recipients to “share” their copy with other readers. With a small print allowance, an exceptional length of time would elapse before the discovery of this journal outside of Toronto, let alone on other continents. A critical mass, *i.e.*, an immense volume of print issues, would predate international growth. However, with publication on the Internet and the advent of search engines, specifically academic tools like Google Scholar, scientists around the world have come to recognize, read and submit to *Hypothesis*.

This issue contains two articles from outside of North America: one on fine needle aspiration by Parikh and Jagtap (India) and another by Fireman and Kopelman (Israel) that describes the use of capsule endoscopy for the diagnosis of Crohn’s disease. Journal publication on the Internet has undoubtedly increased our worldwide visibility and accessibility.

Peer-reviewed e-publication is not the solitary form of science communication to benefit from an Internet broadcast. The advent of e-mail, as well as on-line repositories and conference announcements, has unquestionably accelerated research progress. In an article in this issue of *Hypothesis*, Amsen intrigues us with her discussion of another Internet feature – the weblog. Of note, *Hypothesis* also has its own blog site at [http://hypothesisjournal.blogspot.com](http://hypothesisjournal.blogspot.com), where readers can respond to articles they have read in recent issues of the journal.

Publication on the virtual Internet library has enabled the survival of small niche periodicals (like *Hypothesis*) – many of which would have died, or at the very least struggled – in the present competitive journal environment. However, securing long-term funding and volunteer editorial involvement remain major challenges, but ones that *Hypothesis* is ready to take on.

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