

Preface

The 25th Volume: Current Editors Look to the First

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As the editors, we read Andrzej Bartke's memoir of the *Journal's* early days with more than passing interest: was it more of the same back then or has the *Journal* changed as much as the field of andrology? The answer, after finishing his description, was not so clear. Some aspects remain a constant, such as the effort to compose a letter of rejection carefully, for example. We might add that in 2004, even a letter telling an author to *revise* must often be done with exquisite sensitivity and discretion. Another common theme at the editorial office then and now is the pressure of deadlines balanced against the need to achieve a table of contents lengthy enough to have something that piques the interest of every andrologist. The *Journal* seems to be succeeding in this regard as judged by the trend of Impact Factors, calculated by the Institute of Scientific Information, which have climbed to 2.48 in 2003 from 2.1 in 2000 (the highest among journals focusing on male reproductive biology).

A quarter century does not pass entirely without change, and many parts of the job appear in contrast with Dr Bartke's experiences. As andrology and the entire field of reproductive biology grew, many new journals appeared, while some already in existence flourished. In some ways, there have been more data evolving from human application of andrology, whereas equal advances in our understanding of the basic mechanisms of human reproductive physiology and andrology exist. As the field has evolved, it has become more difficult to determine which journals compete for our readership and potential contributors.

Transitions in data exchange make the relationships with the publishers of the *Journal*, Allen Press for the printed version and Highwire Press for the Web-based version, progressively more interesting. Changes in the public view of scientific publishing make this an exciting and unsettled time. The free access movement that led to the creation of the Public Library of Science creates a paradox. Yes, the taxpayer should have a right to read the results of publicly financed research in andrology. If, on the other hand, publication costs are \$10,000 per manuscript, as some predict will be necessary to allow free access for everyone, will authors be able to afford to publish? Will this draw funds from research resources to pay for the "unfounded mandate" of free access? The implications of this move are unclear. We have taken the opportunity, with the support of The Publications Committee and the American Society of Andrology, to make the *Journal* accessible, all

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the way back to volume 1, for readers online. However, increased accessibility to published work could result in a loss of institutional and individual subscriptions that could undercut our ability to produce a scientific journal!

It is clear that electronic media are displacing paper, which affects the economics of journal communications. What has not changed is the commitment of the American Society of Andrology, The Publications Committee, and the *Journal's* editors to promote and publish the best andrological science in our pages and on the Web.

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