

## The *IJOEM* Goes All Digital

**T**he moon landing on July 1969, although considered by astronaut Neil Armstrong to be “one giant leap for mankind,” distracted the world’s attention from another landmark event that happened in October that year—the transmission of the first-ever message over the ARPANET, the first “packet switching network.” Although ARPANET did not receive the attention it deserved, its successor, the Internet, has crept into almost all aspects of our lives and changed the world around us much more than space-travel programs have done.

No surprise, the Internet has also affected scientific publishing. With the introduction of the worldwide web, access to many documents, once very difficult, is now just a click away. Development of various file formats, in the meantime, has changed the face of many scientific papers. Now, the methodology of a study can be presented in a short video clip; the salient features of a paper can be explained by the author(s) in a podcast; hyperlinks in an article can provide easy access to relevant studies, even those published after the article was published; and articles can be retrieved and viewed in smartphones or tablets by people round the globe. Searching for and within a journal is also much easier than before. Previously, people worried about preserving electronic documents. However, with current technology, digital data can be well protected. All these advances have made the Internet a reliable platform for ePublishing.

Many prestigious journals have been publishing solely online since they began. Over the past years, numerous journals (eg, *PNAS*) switched from paper-based to online-only publishing for several reasons.

One reason was to avoid the space limitations in the print edition. A print journal receiving a large number of submissions can be very selective because they can afford to publish only so many pages a year. With these limits, the journal has no option but to reject many good manuscripts. Producing the print version is also associated with many unnecessary extra costs, especially the costs for printing and mailing the hardcopies. Looking at these costs from another point of view, having a print edition of a journal requires paper, and the production of paper needs cutting trees—one tree provides 10 000 to 20 000 journal pages. Even a small quarterly journal, such as *The IJOEM*, requires cutting 50 to 60 mature trees each year, which can release enough oxygen into the atmosphere to support up to 120 human beings. Production of paper is also associated with the production of wastewater and greenhouse gases.

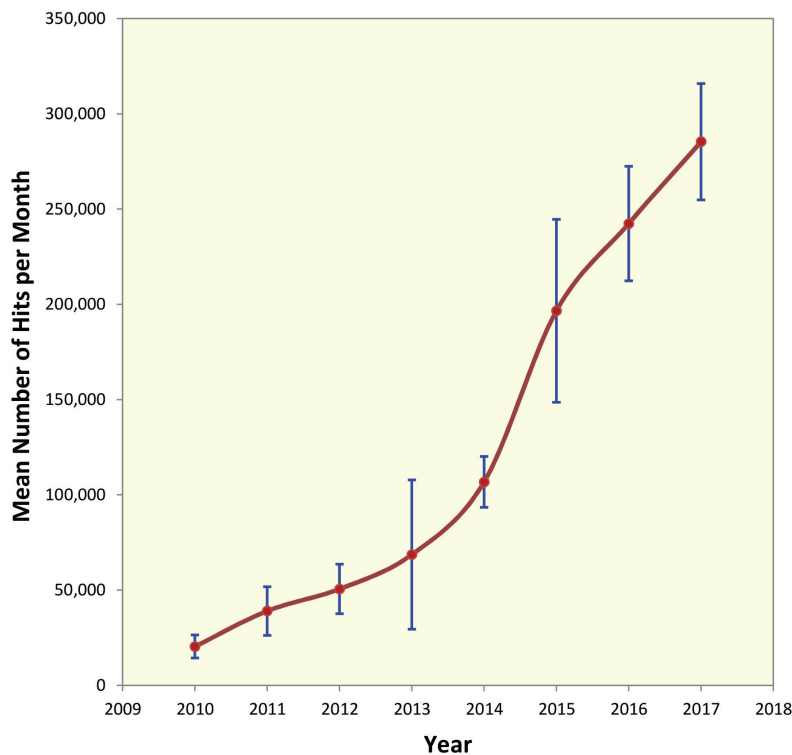
Over the years, we have decreased the number of hardcopies of *The IJOEM* to 500 per issue. After analyzing of the situation, and taking into account several factors, including the potential capabilities of ePublishing, and in support of the already fragile environment, we concluded that printing of even 500 copies was not desirable.

The electronic edition of *The IJOEM* has long been well received. The average number of hits received by the Journal’s Web site has been increasing since it was established in January 2010 (Fig 1). The quality of articles submitted to and published in *The IJOEM* has also been improving over these years and it recently moved from the third quartile of the “Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health” mar-

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**Figure 1:** The mean number of hits per month received by *The IJOEM* Web site since it was established in January 2010. Error bars represent SD.

ket rankings of 526 journals to the second quartile, according to the recent report of *Scimago*<sup>®</sup> in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

*The IJOEM* will stop producing the print edition as of January 2019. We try to take full advantage of the digital world to improve our Journal and reach more and more readers. *The IJOEM* is a diamond open-access, peer-reviewed journal, and

we will work harder to publish quality articles worth our readers' time.

Budget cuts were also considered in making this decision. The recent re-imposition of economic sanctions by the US on Iran, although not the main reason for our decision, was an important motive to think about reallocating our limited budget to other health sectors that might be affected by the sanctions.<sup>2</sup>

Free from the constraints of paper-based publishing, and having an amazing set of tools for publishing online, we hope we can publish more quality articles in forthcoming issues. We will also emphasize more online-first publishing of articles with a sound message. In this new challenge, like before, we count on you—our authors, our reviewers, and our editors.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None declared.

## References

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