

## ***Radiography* - 25 years in the making**

### *A personal reflection*

Dr Brian Bentley, this journal's first Editor-in-Chief, would be very proud of how far his vision of a peer-reviewed journal for radiography has come since he first established *Radiography* in 1995. Admittedly, *Radiography* was initially published in 1934 but it wasn't until its re-launch by Brian in 1995 that it became a fully fledged peer-reviewed scientific journal. Since 1995 it has gone through challenging times and it has made tremendous progress, some of which I should like to outline in this editorial.

Brian launched *Radiography* in a paper-based surface-mail era. He had some support from an editorial office but largely he administered it using handwritten notes made on his dining table in Garforth, Yorkshire. Articles were submitted via surface-mail to his home and not surprisingly getting reviews completed and returned to authors could take several months. The journal did not benefit from huge resource which was typically apportioned to larger, established journals around that time. Brian established the first Journal Editorial Board whose remit was simply to 'represent imaging / therapy modality interests and to assist with editorial policy'. Two original members still remain on the Board today – Professor Gerry McKenna and me.

In 2002 I was asked to take on a new role (Review Editor), with the sole remit of increasing the number of articles published into the journal. This would be through my own authorship and through commissioning others; in 2002/2003 I sole- or co-authored 24 articles, editorials and other 'items'. Sadly around this time, Brian had his first heart attack and quite quickly the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) asked if I would take over as Editor-in-Chief. To help my decision-making SCoR provided me with an honest assessment of the journal's health. They confided in me that they believed the journal was not viable, mainly due to the rapidly decreasing number of articles being submitted for publication, and they were considering ceasing its publication. Notwithstanding this in mid-2003 I accepted the Editorship and an extension to the journal's life was granted by SCoR for one year, after which a formal review would be required. The formal review was never needed...

The first task was for Brian to hand over to me. The enormity of the Editor-in-Chief responsibility hit me immediately as all records were paper-based, mainly comprising handwritten notes. I needed three visits to Brian's home to become fully aware of the status of each paper in progress. Once I had this information I remember sitting on my dining room floor, looking at the paperwork around me with my head in my hands. Interestingly, my handover to Professor Richard Price five years later took less than two hours because of some major changes which had occurred during my Editorial tenure. Within a short space of time following Brian's handover two important things transpired, which I believe saved the journal: use of electronic approaches for journal administration / content dissemination and establishing a supportive community for the journal. Firstly, I was asked by the publishing company Elsevier whether I wanted to try out a new electronic management system for the journal. There was nothing to lose, so I took the decision and *Radiography* became one of the first journals to use the new Elsevier Editorial System. After this the journal's editorial administrative load lightened tremendously, compared with what Brian and I were used to. Having achieved this [minor] victory it meant I could concentrate on increasing copy flow quality and quantity.

Next, I established a supportive community, initially comprising a new Editorial Board, within which I created a range of innovative and active roles. These roles included Associate Editors who were charged with the responsibility of soliciting original research and review article submissions, as well as managing discreet areas of journal business. At the same time I implemented reviewer and writer workshops; conducting these both in the UK and at conferences around the world that I attended in association with my university research activities. The reviewer workshops aimed to help achieve a higher standard of review; writer workshops aimed to inspire and support people to write. I established an annual Special Issue and appointed Special Issues Editors. By the time I completed my Editorship tenure, journal viability was no longer a problem.

#### *Some journal metrics and achievements over the last 25 years*

The number of articles published has risen steadily since 1995, as seen in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows articles submitted, rejected, accepted and withdrawn / removed per year from 2016 to 2018 (year to date). The relatively high rejection rate is important to note because a high rejection rate is an indicator of journal quality (poorer quality journals tend to have low rejection rates because of their need to publish more or less everything to ensure the journal is full enough). Figure 3 shows the speed at which an author receives a decision on their article. What springs immediately to my mind is how far we have progressed in terms of the time it takes to give feedback to authors; in the early days this could be months and now it is a few weeks; - it currently takes an average of 6-7 weeks for an author to receive an editorial decision together with reviewer feedback. Assuming that the paper is accepted without revisions then it takes around 17 to 20 weeks to be published online from first being submitted. Impact factor is a number which denotes how well the articles within *Radiography* are cited by other articles. The rule of thumb is the higher the impact factor the higher the quality of the journal and its articles. As yet *Radiography* does not have an impact factor, but it does have a *Citescore* which is an alternative impact metric calculated by Elsevier that uses citation data from the Scopus database to rank journals and provides a similar metric to impact factor. In 2017 the Journal's CiteScore was 0.9, up from 0.77 in 2016, which places it 178<sup>th</sup> out of 270 journals in CiteScore's Radiology, Nuclear Medicine and Imaging category In 2017. In my opinion, *Radiography's* greatest achievement was obtaining Medline citation, which was acquired under Professor Julie Nightingale's editorship. Achieving this increased visibility and it should assist in increasing the citation rate. A final point worth mentioning is how widely the journal is read, initially it was mainly by UK readers and now it is read by readers in most countries worldwide.

Since my tenure, under the editorial leadership of Richard and then Julie, the quality of articles has risen markedly and this is because of the work they have done together with their respective Editorial Boards. Together with Elsevier they continue to engage in excellent marketing to attract good quality authors and to engage new readers both in print and online. Both Richard and Julie further developed the notion of devolved responsibility to Board members, enabling the journal to continually improve.

#### *Future challenges*

For this section I asked the current Editor-in-Chief, Julie, what she felt the top three key future challenges might be for *Radiography*.

First, we need to get more people using the material within *Radiography* as this is a proxy to verify its value and there are three ways this can be achieved: articles being used to inform [clinical] practice; articles being cited in student university work; *Radiography's* articles being cited within *Radiography* itself and importantly within other journal articles. Unfortunately the first two are hard, if not impossible, to measure and the last one is traditionally measured through impact factor. Consequently, our journal needs to continue to improve the number of citations that it receives, as this is one of the main criteria for inclusion in the Clarivate database (which issues the impact factor). Achieving a Clarivate listing is a priority objective within the journal's strategic plan.

The second challenge builds on the first; Julie said attaining a [good] impact factor could be difficult to achieve whilst still meeting the needs of the sponsor organisations and readers, and supporting the publications of novice authors. For the latter it is further complicated by many readers not being researchers who are citing the journal within their own publications. *Radiography* as a profession needs to take full responsibility for producing its own knowledge base and more radiographers need to contribute to the knowledge base through research and thereafter all should use the research to improve their practice. Overcoming this problem is not parochial to the UK, as *Radiography* is an international journal and also the official journal of the European Federation of Radiographer Societies (EFRS). The challenge therefore becomes a cultural global one related both to the production and use of research evidence in practice. Luckily most radiographic societies around the world recognise the value of research to patient care and management and good progress is being made around this agenda.

The final challenge lies with making articles more widely available, given the movement towards open access (OA). The proposal here suggests that once published research should be available for the benefit of all and not those who can afford to subscribe. Whilst *Radiography* is a hybrid journal which offers authors both OA and subscription options the journal publishes a lot of unfunded research. At this stage there is no clear way forwards on this matter.

#### *A final thought*

I should like to thank reviewers, editorial board members both past and present, authors and the readership for their commitment to this journal. The achievements made to date would not have been possible without their dedication. In particular I should like to thank former and current Editors in Chief, Brian, Richard and Julie for the time and energy they have invested and SCoR for their belief, support and encouragement.

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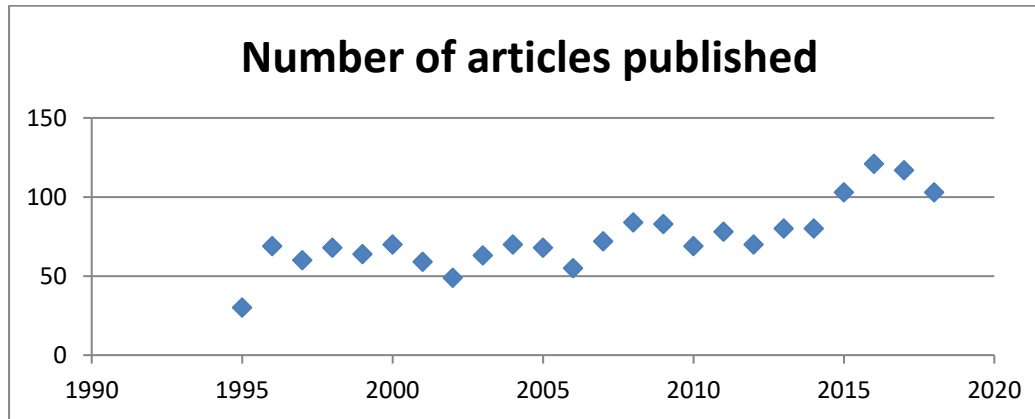
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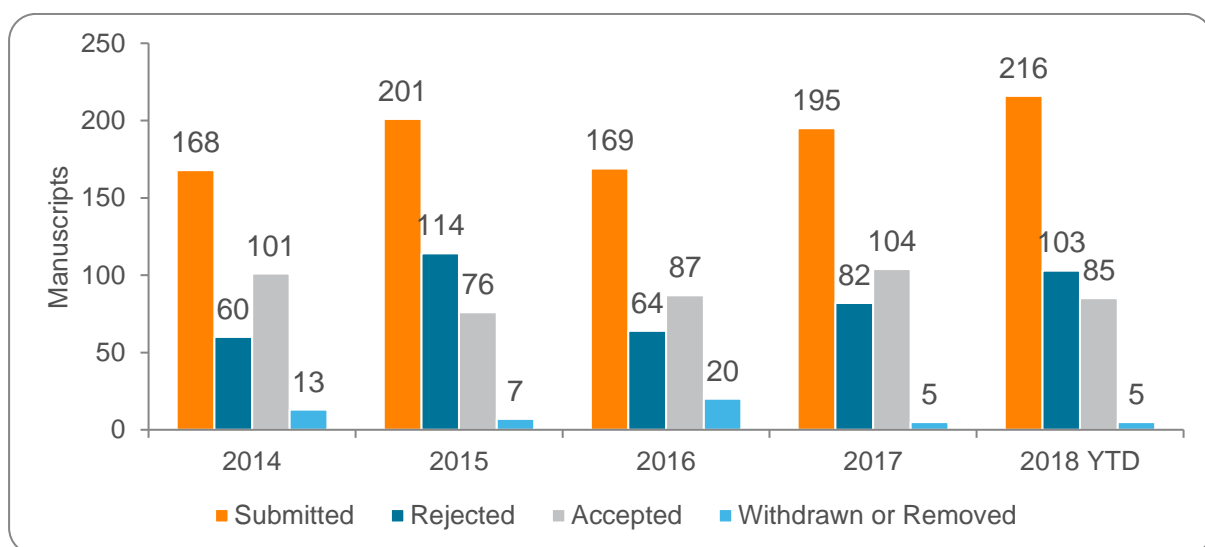


## Figures

Figure 1



**Figure 2 – articles submitted, rejected, accepted and withdrawn / removed**



YTD – year to date

**Figure 3 – Average Editorial & Publication Speed for Published Articles**

