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EDITORIAL

Memories of the first 50 years of the journal *Dentomaxillofacial Radiology*

Stuart C White, Peter Hirschmann, Douglas Benn, Sharon Brooks and Ralf Schulze

As *Dentomaxillofacial Radiology* celebrates 50 years of publication, some former editors who have helped the journal reach this milestone reminisce on their time at the helm of the journal.

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Stuart C White

Editor 1984–1988

I recently reviewed the manuscripts published in the journal during 1984–1988. There were 76 articles covering disease manifestations (34), radiographic technique (28), radiation protection (9) and education (5). Then, as now, disease manifestations pertained largely to either oral conditions or oral presentations of systemic conditions. The technique publications pertained primarily to film, intensifying screens, panoramic imaging, with a few articles on xeroradiography, MR and CT. Our good friends storage phosphor plates, CCD and CMOS sensors, and CBCT only existed in the imagination of some of our more forward-thinking colleagues in those days. The radiation protection manuscripts measured absorbed doses associated with panoramic or intraoral imaging and occasionally with tomography and transcranial imaging of the TMJ. Do you remember transcranial imaging? Most of the educational papers pertained to computer-assisted instruction. The majority of manuscripts in the journal during those years were authored primarily by individuals in Northern Europe, North America, South Africa, and Asia. The many journal contributions we now enjoy from colleagues in South America and elsewhere were largely in the future.

I recall my time as Editor to be a wonderful experience. The process gave rise to many new friendships and strengthened others. Serving as Editor also helped me to become more broadly versed in our field. I heartily recommend that younger members consider accepting such administrative duties when offered the opportunity.

While serving as a peer reviewer these days, I occasionally reflect on how in the 80s being an Editor involved receiving many packages of documents, duplicating multiple copies of manuscripts, figures and illustrations, and sending these to colleagues around the world for reviews, followed by more correspondence regarding revisions, and finally decision letters. All-in-all, it was a rather labour-intensive experience. On the bright side, my collection of foreign postage stamps improved greatly during these years. I remain most grateful for the support of many thoughtful reviewers including my successor, Peter Hirschmann.



During the academic year 1982–83, my family and I enjoyed a sabbatical year with Lars Hollender at the University of Göteborg, Faculty of Odontology, Sweden. This was a formative experience for me in many ways, but perhaps primarily because it gave me the opportunity to appreciate the rich radiology environment in Scandinavia as well as in Europe through

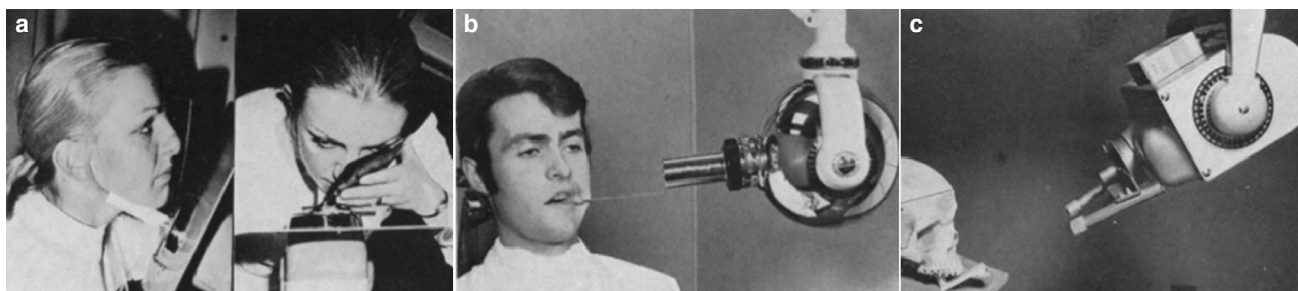


Figure 1 Images of equipment from articles in the first issue of *DMFR*, 1972.

(a) <https://doi.org/10.1259/dmfr.1972.0001>. (b) <https://doi.org/10.1259/dmfr.1972.0006>. (c) <https://doi.org/10.1259/dmfr.1972.0007>

participation in the IADMFR Congress in Utrecht. After returning to the States in the summer of '83, I became better acquainted with Ulf Welander who was then on sabbatical leave in Texas from his home in Umeå, Sweden. I admired both his scholarship and his contributions as Editor of the IADMFR journal and was pleased when offered the opportunity to follow in his footsteps.

Peter Hirschmann

Editor 1988–2001

In retrospect, I became an editor by happenstance. In 1983 Stu White, who was due to take over as Editor of *DMFR* the following year, proposed moving publication of the journal from Germany to Los Angeles. However, the Board of Directors considered the costs were unacceptable. At the time, I was editing the Newsletter of the British Society of Dental and Maxillofacial Radiology which was printed for us by the University of Leeds Printing Service. My colleague, Douglas Lovelock, asked if they would be interested in putting in a bid. When the Board considered the bids, Leeds proved the cheaper and were awarded the contract. Stu then offered me the position of Associate Editor.

As the papers started to arrive, I found some needed copy editing which was sometimes quite extensive. Inadvertently, I became an “interventionist” editor without anyone seeming to object. When Stu announced he intended to retire after 4 years in the post, I was invited to take over as Editor. I was enjoying the role and, reassured by the fact of the invitation, said yes.

I did not receive any brief, other than an implicit instruction to continue producing two issues a year at minimal cost to the association. However, while both the specialty and the IADMFR needed to grow and the journal was an integral part of this process, there were no resources for marketing or publicity. A colleague with personal experience of the same problem advised me to find a commercial STM publisher. I made some enquiries. Four publishers thought *DMFR* had something to offer and of these, two produced quotations that seemed viable. I presented both offers to the Board at the San Antonio congress. They were supportive, attracted, I suspect, by the prospect that the only expense for the association would be the cost of members' subscriptions for the journal; the publisher would pay for everything else. It was agreed that we should offer the contract to Butterworth Scientific. It seemed a good omen that they already published *Journal of Dentistry*.

The first issue under Butterworth's management was published in January 1989. The journal was now in A4 and had been completely redesigned with an eye-catching, glossy cover. The frequency was increased



Figure 2 Sue Deeley, Butterworth–Heinemann Publishing Editor, and Peter Hirschmann, *DMFR* editor, on the Butterworth–Heinemann stand at the IADMFR Congress in Budapest in 1991.

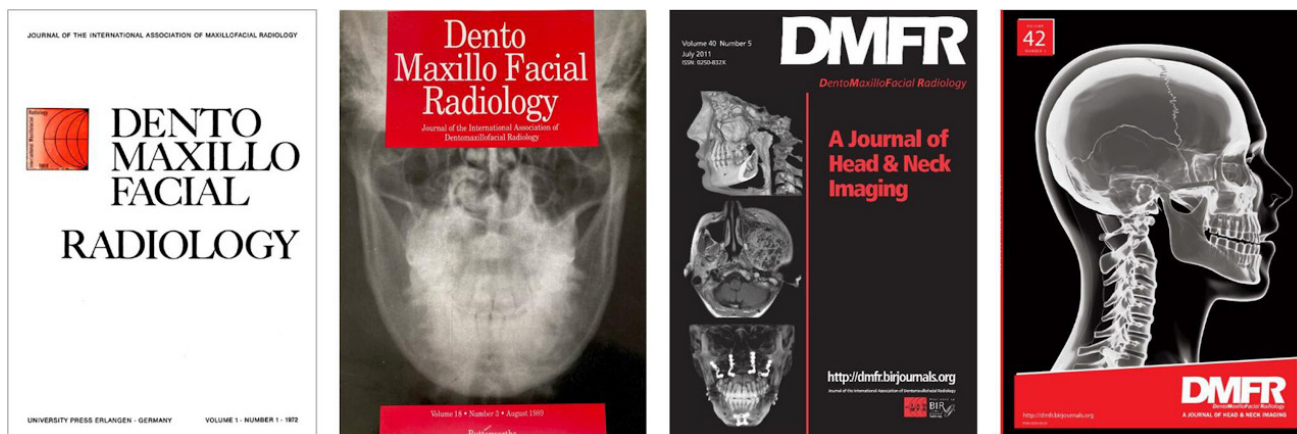


Figure 3 DMFR covers through the years.

from two to four issues a year, with the longer-term aim of expanding to six. There was an editorial team of three people and money earmarked for marketing and publicity.

I continued my policy of interventionist editing, based on the principle that a non-Anglophone author submitting to *DMFR* could do so knowing that if accepted, the paper would be comprehensible to other non-Anglophone readers. I never knew if this policy had much impact since I never explicitly asked, but some authors expressed their appreciation and only one ever pulled a paper. The publishers, with one exception, understood my aims and absorbed the extra expense.

What I had not anticipated was the difficulty in filling the increased number of pages and I had to fall back on such unseemly manoeuvres as publishing selected abstracts from national or regional meetings. It caused me continuing anxiety that there was rarely a full issue of accepted papers in hand. However, by 1991, the number of pages increased sufficiently to justify a proper spine, essential at a time when unbound journals were kept in open library boxes. The subtitle, *A Journal of Head and Neck Imaging*, was added to the masthead in an attempt to clarify the scope of *Dentomaxillofacial Radiology*.

Judging by the increase in the number of submissions and the rejection rate, as well as the (albeit modest) rise in the impact factor, I could claim that we were making progress. However, I had reckoned without the turmoil that was about to hit UK, and indeed international, publishing. Butterworth Scientific was bought out by Heinemann in 1992 to become Butterworth-Heinemann. Publication moved from Guildford to Oxford and I acquired a new Managing Editor but otherwise the relationship continued unchanged.

3 years later, Butterworth-Heinemann was gobbled up by Elsevier and the whole atmosphere changed. I had a new publishing team whose remit was to meet their (unspecified) targets rather than support the editor. The previously planned increase to five issues annually with volume 25 in 1996 was only honoured after I complained to the Managing Editor over an

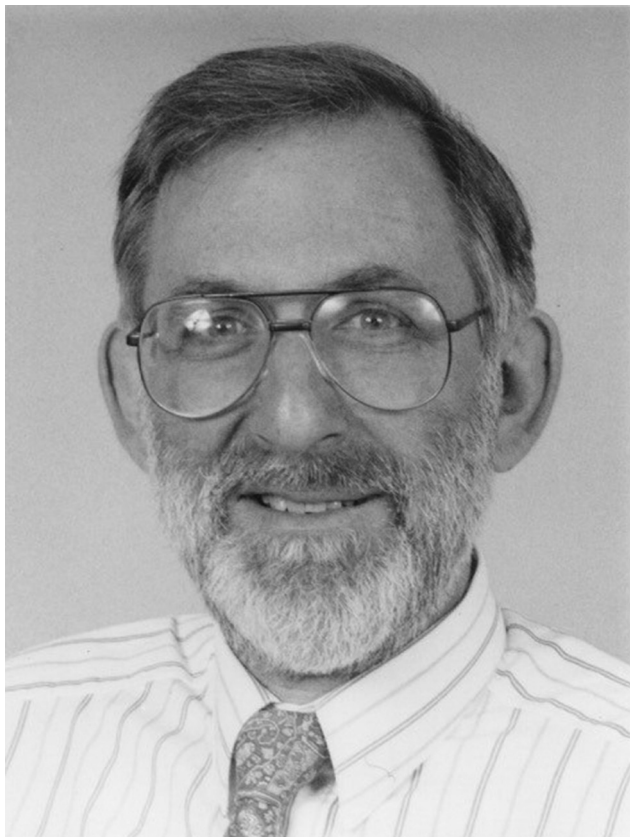
uncomfortable lunch at his Pall Mall club where, he told me, females were not allowed. Within 15 months of the takeover, Elsevier decided that *DMFR* was superfluous to their requirements and I was left to find a new publisher by the end of the year. That October we celebrated, a little prematurely, 25 years of *DMFR* with a party in Amsterdam: it was funded by the publishers who did not attend.

Sue Deeley, who had been my supportive Publishing Editor at Butterworth-Heinemann, came to the rescue. We moved with her to Stockton Press, a subsidiary of the venerable family house of Macmillan, and in 1997, the journal expanded to six issues annually. However, 3 years later, they too decided that the journal's prospects failed to justify their costs. I therefore agreed to their terminating the contract a year early in 2001, to coincide with the IADMFR congress in Glasgow when I intended to retire as editor. As if to conclude my odyssey, Stockton Press had by then been rebranded as Nature.com.

I started to look for a new publisher, someone who would appreciate that developing *DMFR* required greater patience than commercial publishers could offer. I happened to see a copy of *Imaging*, recently launched by the well-established British Institute of Radiology. They published *British Journal of Radiology*—potentially a good fit with *DMFR*—as well as a substantial book list. Were they seeking to expand, and could they provide stability? There was a positive response to my initial enquiry. I handed over as editor to Douglas Benn in Glasgow and we agreed he would continue negotiations. The partnership with BIR has proved to be one of my better decisions.

I retired fully the following year. 18 years later, I continue to receive the journal but understand less and less. It remains, however, a matter of personal satisfaction that as editor I was one of an international group, mainly dentists by training, who contributed to raising the standing of maxillofacial imaging in both medicine and dentistry. That the journal, and the IADMFR,

continue to prosper is one consequence of this work. Long, may it continue.



Douglas Benn

Editor 2001–2003

Dentomaxillofacial radiology is a subspecialty comprised of a small international group, mostly dentists, of whom a large proportion are academics. It is not surprising that most of the editors knew each other as colleagues and friends, so that succession was really the act of passing a baton in a hurdle race. As alluded to by Peter Hirschmann in his commentary, the hurdles related mostly to the lack of funding for the journal. When I became Editor in 2001, I had no support staff and it was a traditional process of paper manuscript submission by international mail. The process was slow and very labour intensive. Similar to Peter, I made extensive edits to most of the papers. After reviewing the process and also the potential for moving to a digital submission system, I proposed to the IADMFR that I would create a new system. However, I would need some help and IADMFR agreed to fund a student half time as an Editorial Assistant who also provided technical support.

The University of Florida would not allow us to use their information system, so we had to create a

standalone system. We bought the cheapest system we could afford as we had no computer budget. Within a matter of a few months, we had an increase of 30% in the rate of submissions. We had solved one problem but created several others. Beware of what you wish for!

In hindsight, it was predictable that as Editor I would become overwhelmed with work and it happened immediately. I asked the IADMFR to provide extra funding so that I would have more editorial assistance, but that was not possible. At this point I decided to resign as Editor, hoping that perhaps this would increase the support for the journal. In retrospect, this was a hasty decision, which did not achieve the changes I had hoped for. Instead, it depended on the good will of Sharon Brooks to pick up the pieces.

In the subsequent years, the journal has gone from strength to strength, in terms of a broadening scope of clinical diseases and imaging modalities so that it has truly become a Journal of Head and Neck Imaging.

Sharon Brooks

Editor 2003–2011

When I “inherited” the editorship from Douglas Benn the journal was already at six issues per year, rising to eight per year in 2007. I also inherited a manuscript management system that a graduate student at Douglas’s institution had developed—this predated the current manuscript management systems such as Editorial Manager, used at this time by *DMFR*. When the system worked well, it was a joy to use, but unfortunately it had a few bugs in it that were not easily solved, especially since I had no personal relationship with the developer, who had gone on to other projects. I eventually went back to managing the manuscript submission and review process manually, writing things down in a notebook for date of submission, date sent for review, follow-up with reviewers, action on manuscript. The manuscripts were sent to me via the postal service, not online, and I mailed them out to reviewers. I kept track of the status of the manuscripts by coloured dots on the folders so I could tell at a glance in the file drawer which manuscripts were still out for review or were sent back for revision. Eventually, Gerard Sanderink convinced me to try one of the commercial manuscript management software programs, Editorial Manager, so my frequent trips to the post office came to an end and my coloured dots could be put to other uses. My life also became easier.

When I took over the editorship in 2003, the cover of the journal featured a sagittal view of the head. In 2008, we introduced a new cover look, with a series of three “advanced imaging” views along the left side of the cover. That lasted for a few years, then the sagittal view returned.

Like my predecessors, I was a hands-on editor, doing a lot of manuscript editing before submitting accepted papers to the editorial office in London. I understand

how difficult it is for authors to write in a foreign language and felt that I could help make the papers more readable. Eventually, I was told that it was not necessary for me to do this because the BIR had wonderful copy editors to polish the language of the manuscripts.



Ralf Schulze

Editor 2011–2020

Considering the fact that I was in service until June 2020, my memories as Editor are still very fresh. In this position as most recent former Editor, it is my pleasure to congratulate *DMFR* on its 50th anniversary! 50 years of achievement on the subject of dental and maxillofacial radiology is a lot; the whole *DMFR* community should be proud of it! *DMFR* is the world's leading journal in the subject and as such is distributed in (online) libraries around the world.

Looking back at my 9 years as its Editor, it is somewhat hard to tell what the major topics that characterised this period were. The transition to a digital electronic management system with fully digital submission and processing of the manuscripts had already been completed by my predecessor, Sharon Brooks. When I took over in June 2011, only minor changes and adaptations to the system were needed.

One of the major changes was the establishment of what is termed continuous publication by our publisher BIR. Continuous publication essentially means immediate publication of an article as soon as it is ready. Ready means that the article has been peer reviewed, finally accepted, copyedited, typeset, and proofread. Hence, an approved article does not need to wait until a particular issue of the journal is ready, thereby enabling faster publishing for the scientific community. Each manuscript after acceptance is assigned a unique article identifier that is not changed again throughout the entire online and later

paper publication process. This change, however, had caused quite some debate among readers and authors as the well-established issue, page number is gone and replaced by the article identifier.

During my terms as Editor the impact factor (IF) gained increasing importance. I think I quite often mentioned that I am not a huge fan of this measure, as it is just a simple figure of merit that does not really tell the full story, particularly not when comparing articles or journals across scientific fields. Nevertheless, the IF, while also heavily debated, is still (mis)used as measure of “journal quality”. Simply due to the fact that it is such an easy figure, it seems to lend itself to all sorts of comparisons regardless of whether these are meaningful or not. For the sake of scientific soundness, we should hope that this misuse will soon be history and more comprehensive measures established.

What else was remarkable during the past 9 years? Well, open access (OA) certainly is a major topic these days. *DMFR* also adopted an OA scheme, where authors can opt to publish fully open access. Once the authors have paid an article processing charge (APC), the article is published with unrestricted access, either including commercial or non-commercial re-use of content with proper attribution. The latter depends on the sort of license the authors opt for. In addition, articles published in *DMFR* are generally free to read 12 months after their initial publication.

Most probably, I have forgotten some more or less important changes or activities during my terms in service. Of course, topics of articles have largely changed over this time, as they have over the entire period *DMFR* has been around. Starting with film-based 2D-projection radiography and the beginning of panoramic radiography in the early 1970s, now artificial intelligence is the hot topic in imaging. It will be exciting to follow novel achievements in this topic in our specialty. Digital data processing, albeit having been around for decades already, still seems to be at its beginning. It will surely further change the world with all its diverse options and novel applications. It will be exciting to see where the journey will go. Although no longer involved as Editor, I will continue to follow the future course of *DMFR* with great interest.

Having said this, it is now time to wish *DMFR* a great and prosperous future! May the next 50 years be as successful and exciting as the first 50 years!



