

Guest Editorial: Some Additional Thoughts

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I've had the benefit of reading the article written by Dr. Baxter Swartwout and Mr. Bob Williams for this issue before composing this piece. They accurately and entertainingly gave the early history of, and the reasons why, the OEP Board decided to publish the *Journal of Behavioral Optometry (JBO)*. I'd like to add several additional thoughts that are on a personal level.

Their offer to appoint me as the founding editor-in-chief came at the right time. As they stated, my role with *Optometry Times* had just ended. My editorial responsibilities at that publication were to scour the existing optometric journals and continuing educational programs to identify worthy topics. I then contacted the appropriate optometrist, or other health care practitioner, to inquire whether they were willing to be interviewed for an article. When that person agreed, I assigned a professional writer on *Optometry Times'* staff to conduct the interview. The copy was then sent to me for editing. When the particular issue was published I knew I had a part, but I didn't have a sense of being a major stakeholder. When the publishing company of *Optometry Times* decided to reorganize, it was last in, first out, and we were the junior member of the company's health care publications. I felt disappointed, but I wasn't devastated.

The transition from being the editor of what was essentially an optometric trade paper to a peer reviewed journal was one for which I was more than ready. I welcomed the challenge of obtaining sufficient articles for the six issues of Volume 1 in 1990. I aggressively solicited manuscripts from those clinically and academically involved in the vision therapy complex by telephone (e-mail was not yet used by many) and bullying at the various optometric national meetings. It was a pleasant surprise that once several issues of *JBO* were published, there were a respectable number of academic and private practice optometrists who submitted manuscripts. During *JBO's* second year, I was still soliciting articles, but not as aggressively. It became increasingly clear that the OEP Board's decision to launch a peer-reviewed journal was a sound one.

The most gratifying part of being editor-in-chief was that I was able to help authors go through a vigorous peer review process in a constructive manner. This was accomplished by what Dr. Paul Harris has termed "developmental editing." I had served as reviewer for several peer reviewed journals before 1990 and noted that the existing editorial process was for the editor-in-chief to send all submitted articles directly

to members of the review board. In several instances, I did a substantial re-write of articles. However, I was told that the protocol was to make recommendations to the authors, and then rate the article as "accept," "accept with revisions," or "do not accept." When I played by these rules, I felt unfulfilled. But, as editor-in-chief, I was able to institute a different policy. I defined my role as something more than a middleman and final decision maker. The goal was not to change the content of the particular article, but to put it into a form that could be easily read and evaluated by an appropriate reviewer. My primary methods included: re-writing sections to express the author's intent more clearly; recommending documentation of a claim, or stating ... "in my experience"....; and moving sections of the article around in the interest of logicity. Other devices were to limit sentences to 21 words and to avoid redundancy and excessive wordiness. (This resulted in my being called an editorial surgeon by some.) I then sent my edited version, with further recommendations, to the author. When these were made, if the author and I agreed it was ready for peer review, it was sent to that process. It didn't always work, but it worked the vast majority of the time. There were instances where the author and I felt the article was in publishable form, but the reviewers felt otherwise. In virtually all these instances, I respected the reviewers' recommendations.

I'm convinced that without this form of editorial early intervention, a number of articles would not have seen the light of day. Reviewers frequently commented on the quality of the manuscripts they received. Authors have told me that the process was benign, but still demanding, and that they had gained knowledge and good experience as a result. It is noteworthy that the same general process has continued with my successor Editor-In-Chief, Dr. W.C. Maples, and with his successor, Dr. Marc Taub.

The success that the *JBO* has had and its impact on the profession is the result of the dedication of many people. One group has been the people who served as OEPF's Directors over the years and includes the constant presence of Executive Director Bob Williams. Since the *Journal's* inception, that level of administration has provided support, encouragement and a stability that is unique in the world of health care publications. Managing Editor Sally Corngold, in her calm and unassuming manner, has provided an exceptionally professional and efficient publication process from start to finish. Kathleen Patterson, whose creativity has been evident on the *Journal's* covers and in its articles, has enhanced the publication's visual appeal and content. The many people who have served on the *Journal's* peer review board, and others who have been called upon to review manuscripts, represented the quality assurance provider to the *Journal*. Finally, the many authors who submitted their work to the *Journal* gave the necessary fuel to the engine, and made an idea a reality. I thank them all for the wonderful 17 years I was privileged to work with them.