

Valedictory editorial - New horizons

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Valedictory Editorial - New Horizons

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Introduction

As is customary in this journal, when approaching the end of their terms of office, our previous Editors-in-Chief Dr H. Brian Bentley, Professor Peter Hogg and Professor Richard Price have penned a valedictory editorial, a formal farewell address which reflects upon journal development and progress.¹⁻³ As I am well into my eighth year in office, there is indeed much on which to reflect. However in this valedictory editorial we are breaking with tradition by the outgoing Editor writing this editorial in collaboration with the incoming Editor-in-Chief Dr Jonathan McNulty.

Radiography will celebrate the publication of its 28th Volume in 2022. Guided by our mission to be recognised as the '*premier peer reviewed journal in radiographic imaging and radiation therapy both within the UK and internationally*',³ our revised strategic plan (2019-2023) ensures that the journal continues to showcase excellent radiography research while supporting the development of publishing capability and capacity within the profession. In this editorial we will first reflect on significant strategic developments which have been introduced to continue to address our ambitious mission. We will then share with you some of the journal metrics⁴ which our Editorial Board regularly reviews against our challenging Key Performance Indicators. Finally we will engage in some 'horizon scanning' to consider the challenges and opportunities that may lie ahead for our journal.

Strategic developments

The *Radiography* journal is the official professional publication of the Society and College of Radiographers and is supported by their publishing partner Elsevier Ltd. New partnerships with the European Federation of Radiographer Societies and with individual professional societies including the Irish Institute of Radiography and Radiation Therapy and the Swedish Society of Radiographers have significantly extended the international reach of the journal. Recognition of the quality, reach and mission of the journal has also been acknowledged by the wider publishing community, with selection of the Journal for inclusion on the US National Library of Medicine's Medline and PubMed platforms and Clarivate's Emerging Sources Citation Index.

To better reflect the international reach and impact, the leadership structure of the journal has been revised to include a smaller Editorial Board supported by a new International Advisory Board which includes both experienced researchers and early career researchers from across the globe. This structure ensures greater representativeness and a richness of ideas to inform journal strategy with recent developments including amending the aims and scope of the journal to better distinguish the unique focus of *Radiography* from other radiography and radiology journals, and re-launching the journal with more contemporary colours and logos.

The presentation of the journal to the reader has also needed to adapt to modern ways of engaging with research. The current volume is the first to move fully online, facilitating a more sustainable and flexible delivery of research content to the reader, supported by a generous increase in our page budget to accommodate growth in submissions. We have moved to six issues a year, including four quarterly issues, an annual Special Issue which is commissioned on a topical subject, and from 2021 we welcome an additional 'journal highlights' issue. As a hybrid journal, authors are able to select 'open access' publishing to ensure their article is widely available to readers and free at source, and the numbers of authors selecting this option is increasing. Online publishing has other benefits that *Radiography* is taking advantage of, including promotion of published articles via social media and podcasts to enhance the reader and author experience. These innovations have been ably driven forwards in the last year through the appointment of a new Associate Editor post for Social Media and Engagement.

Benchmarking our progress

A range of metrics are available for review on the journal homepage,⁴ and these provide an insight into current performance and trends. Submissions to the journal within the 2014-2021 period of office of the Editor-in-Chief have increased threefold, with an expectation of more than 400 submissions in the current year. Author outreach strategies which previously relied upon soliciting papers and supporting novice authors, have now moved to a focus on driving up the quality of submissions. Reflecting the recent surge in submissions, the rejection rate has inevitably increased and is at the time of writing 56%. Rejection rates are just one indicator of quality, but with the support of our reviewers and editors between 45-50% of papers since 2018 have been ultimately accepted. We have also introduced a number of measures to support our authors, including options for future resubmission and for automatic transfers to other selected journals.

For authors publishing in *Radiography*, the editorial speed and quality of peer review is vitally important. Almost two decades ago the valedictory editorial by Dr Bentley discussed the 2002 journal publishing times, noting that the mean review time of seven months was "...the fastest recorded times for any issue of *Radiography* to date."¹ In an era of online publishing, one would expect turnaround times to be much faster, but the journal continues to be impressive in this regard. For accepted articles the average time for submission to first decision is approximately 6 weeks and submission to acceptance approximately 12 weeks. This is in no small part down to the prompt and considered responses from our Associate Editors who handle the papers through the peer review process. Our extensive reviewer team need a special mention as they give their time selflessly for no remuneration other than the 'buzz' of being the first to see research submissions in their field, and the knowledge that the published articles have benefitted from their wisdom and advice.

While submission numbers and turnaround times provide an indication of the journal's value to authors, no research is of any real value if it is never read or used to inform future research and practice. Readership of the journal is therefore a vital metric that we keep under close inspection. Professor Price in his valedictory editorial noted the rapid rise of downloads from 97,000 in 2007 to 140,000 in 2012.³ With the transition to fully digital platforms, it is not surprising that current download figures for the last 5 years in the UK alone are over half a million.⁵ However the readership and

authorship of the journal is now global; in Volume 26 (2020), 58% of corresponding authors were resident outside the UK. While download metrics give an indication of who is reading the journal, citation metrics indicate the utility of the published work. CiteScore™ is one such metric which measures the average citations received per peer-reviewed document published in *Radiography* across a four-year window. The *Radiography* CiteScore™ has continued to rise since 2017, and is currently 2.2 for 2020. However many citations to our articles sit outside the four year CiteScore™ window, because the journal continues to be an important source of reference work for authors studying topics with a historical context, such as advanced and consultant practice and radiographer reporting. The CiteScore™ and other citation-related metrics are important for future journal indexing applications; they will be positively impacted where authors publishing in this and other journals cite appropriate *Radiography* papers from within the publication window.

Journal metrics form only one part of the story of the development of our journal; it is the professionals behind the scenes who ensure that our journal continues to play its part in driving forwards research within the profession. I have been proud to work closely with the Editorial Board and with executives and leaders from the supporting associations. Special mention must go to the vision and leadership of Charlotte Beardmore and her predecessor Audrey Paterson (The Society and College of Radiographers), and to the unfailing expertise and guidance provided by our Elsevier Executive Publisher Cathi O'Hara and Journal Manager Rachel Gibson. A final thank you to our enthusiastic Associate Editors who have over the last few years provided me with their wisdom and support, including Pauline Reeves, the late Hazel Colyer, Jeffrey Legg, Andrew England, Ruth Reeve, Nick Courtier and Dr Jonathan McNulty who I am delighted to welcome as our incoming Editor-in-Chief.

What is next for the Radiography journal?

Our current Editor-in-Chief, Professor Nightingale, has described some key achievements under her leadership of the journal since 2014. She has also referenced her predecessors as Editors-in-Chief, Dr Brian Bentley (1994 – 2003), Emeritus Professor Peter Hogg (2003 – 2009), and Emeritus Professor Richard Price (2009 – 2014); indeed, my first exposure to the *Radiography* journal was as a young first-year radiography student in University College Dublin, when as a student member of the Society and College of Radiographers I received my first ever copy of the journal in late 1996 (Volume 2, Issue 4), together with a copy of Synergy. While looking through both of these publications, admittedly not understanding much of the contents, I was amazed that such publications existed which had the sole focus on our profession, the profession I then hoped I would one day join and make a contribution to. In the editorial of that issue, Dr Bentley described his pleasure “*that overseas contributors are providing papers in a variety of areas*” and he urged the readership to “*continue to use the journal as a vehicle to disseminate your work as it forms a useful medium for studying at all levels*”.⁶ That issue contained just five articles and it is fascinating to read some of these early editorials and papers and to consider them alongside our latest Special Issue on “*The Future Role of the Radiographer*”⁷ to see how much our profession has changed and grown in those 25 years.

It has been an honour to serve under Professor Nightingale since 2016 as an Associate Editor, to be part of the work to grow the journal and, in turn, to grow and

strengthen our profession. In this time, it has been great to see the growth in terms of the quality and number of submissions; the efficacy and quality of the peer review process; contributions from authors and reviewers from a growing number of countries; efforts to better engage with the profession; our readership; our journal metrics; and of the profile of our journal. We have seen more and more authors from around the world choosing *Radiography* as their journal of choice for publication.

Back in late 1996, as a first-year student, never would I have dreamed that I would be trusted with the role of Editor-in-Chief with *Radiography*, the Society and College of Radiographer's international journal of diagnostic imaging and radiation therapy and the official journal of the European Federation of Radiographer Societies. We have a strong leadership team, a strong Editorial Board and International Advisory Group in place, and I look forward to working with them as Editor-in-Chief, alongside the Elsevier team, led by Executive Publisher, Cathi O'Hara, and the team in the SCoR.

So, what can you expect in 2022? Our fantastic reviewers from around the world who freely give up their time to make an essential contribution through the peer-review process help us to ensure that articles of the highest possible quality are published in our journal. I hope to implement initiatives to encourage, and support, new reviewers; to facilitate reviews of the highest quality; and to incentivise and recognise our reviewers. I plan to work to encourage and nurture radiography students and new graduates, many of whom will ultimately become our authors, reviewers, International advisory group, Editorial Board, and Editors of the future. New approaches to how we share the research we publish will help us reach a greater audience and make sure more radiographers, students, and other professions are engaging with this work. We will establish new key performance indicators for the journal and continue to look at our benchmark data described by Professor Nightingale to ensure that our journal metrics continue to improve. Finally, I hope to implement a process to help guarantee the sustainability of our journal leadership, Editorial Board, International Advisory Group, reviewers, and authors, ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion. I look forward to sharing some more thoughts on these areas in my inaugural editorial as Editor-in-Chief in Volume 28, Issue 1, early next year.

As a profession, whether we work in medical imaging or radiation therapy, in clinical practice, academia or in industry, it is essential that we as professionals are actively engaged with the evidence-base underpinning our profession. We can do this through contributing to research, as researchers, authors, reviewers, or critical readers. We can do this as students looking toward entry to our profession and should continue to do so till the end of our professional careers. The *Radiography* journal is one of the main vehicles to facilitate this and is thus of significant importance to our profession as a whole.

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