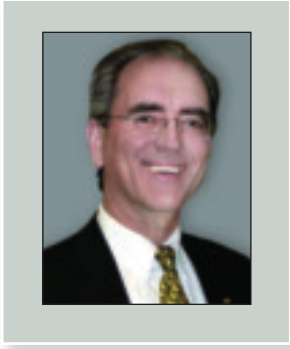


▶ MANAGING EDITOR'S DESK



Nelson Fabian, MS

As the impact of the Great Recession continues to run its course, we hear a lot about “new normals” and how organizations are changing to adapt to the new realities now taking shape in our economy and our world. And yet, despite these strong winds of change, certain features of our organizations continue to stay the course. In the association world and especially among scientific societies like NEHA, one of those enduring programs continues to be “the journal.”

What makes this all the more remarkable is that when the Internet emerged and began to become more of a staple in our lives, prognosticators maintained that scientific journals would be among the first of the Internet's victims. In fact, scorching arguments were made that the very invention of the web was driven by the desire to disseminate scientific research more effectively and improve communication within the scientific community. If this prophecy were fulfilled, surely it would spell the demise of journals as we know them.

And yet, here we stand some 20 years after the web took hold with essentially the same old *Journal!* In the meantime, the World Wide Web has indeed utterly transformed countless other aspects of our lives, business, and even governments. But its impact on journals as an earnest and true method of communication has been surprisingly minimal.

That this has happened takes me back to the question that I began with, i.e., why a journal and why have journals continued to be such fundamental fixtures in associations like NEHA?

If you'll allow me a short history lesson, journals have a fascinating beginning that is

Why a Journal?

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NEHA?*

worth sharing. This history, along with some observations on how journals have evolved, will enable me to explain why this product has staying power and why it remains an indispensable part of the portfolio of products and services that associations like NEHA provide.

Before 1665, scientists communicated and advanced their thinking through letters to each other. By this time, however, the number of people with an interest in such topics had grown to the point that it was no longer practical to advance discussions and understandings of issues through individual exchanges of this nature. The idea developed that people should mail their thoughts to a single person who could typeset, print, and collate these letters into a single document. This “journal,” as it came to be called, was then sent out to everyone who had a subscription to it.

The idea of moving information out to a wider audience gave this new product a compelling reason for being.

In addition, this new mechanism for widely disseminating information also lent itself nicely to the task of registration (as in the registration of a discovery). By securing a publishing date, it became possible to accord the proper credit to anyone who first came up with a new idea, invention, or discovery.

As time marched on and certainly as the web embedded itself into our way of life, more effective mechanisms developed that served the purposes of dissemination and registration. The journal as a product, however, has also evolved and today it provides other important benefits that simply can't be easily replicated elsewhere. These new benefits help explain why journals are such a mainstay in the world of professional scientific societies like NEHA.

First, journals provide validation for material that is published. This is accomplished through the all-important peer-review process that journal programs, like NEHA's, sponsor. In the early days of journals, editors would sometimes review the material that was submitted. It wasn't until the second half of the last century, however, that peer review really took hold and became a fixture in the world of journals. Peer review remains to this day one of the most important functions that is carried out in the course of processing and then publishing papers. Peer review also gives articles published in journals a legitimacy that is simply not available anywhere else.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

=120;D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2009-0856.) No health department in Ohio requested that propoxur be denied. There is *no* letter from Columbus Public Health or from Dr. Messer, yet Dr. Messer's letter to the editor indicates that he is of the minority opinion that propoxur should be denied.

We hope to allay the concern that propoxur would be contacted by "infants crawling about on the floors and [treated] furnishings" given that such an application would be a direct violation of the label and subject to regulatory action. The proposed propoxur label specifies crack and crevice and spot treatment only; it specifies "DO NOT apply as broadcast treatment to entire floor areas. . . ." For treating furniture, the label specifies that the insecticide should be applied to tufts, folds, seams, or hard-to-access areas such as the underneath side. "On furniture, *do not apply* [propoxur] to seating

areas, arms, or areas where direct skin contact can occur." Such label language is to safeguard from human contact while targeting bed bug in their harborages. This proposed label language can be accessed online at the abovementioned Web site. Regardless of the future of propoxur in residential treatment, responsibly applied pesticides used precisely according to the label are a cornerstone to basic integrated pest management principles.

Susan C. Jones, PhD
Associate Professor of Entomology
The Ohio State University
and
Christopher Eddy, MPH, REHS, RS
Director of Placement and Workforce Development
Wright State University

Managing Editor's Desk

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And while there are some discussions that aim to build web-based options for the peer-review systems that journals employ, none has evolved to the point where it poses any serious challenge to the peer-review systems in place for print journals today.

A second major function performed by journals is one of filtration.

When journals first began to appear, keeping up with one's field of interest was a fairly easy proposition. Today, however, with the information explosion going on, it is impossible.

The literature indicates that in 2009, over 10,000 peer-reviewed scientific journals were in existence. Those journals collectively published over one million separate papers.

To enable people to focus on the topic that is of interest to them, journals both filter material and target a topic. As an example, NEHA receives many more papers than it publishes in the *Journal of Environmental Health*. As we process each manuscript that comes in to us, we subject it first to a relevancy review and then a technical review.

We filter these papers so that in the end, we publish material that is both relevant and technically sound for the environmental health audience we serve. That filtering process makes your task of keeping up with this field much easier than if you had to do it yourself. While people are in awe of all that is available on the web, they are also fatigued by the work it takes to locate what they are looking for!

Finally, the third function that journals serve that can't yet be replicated elsewhere is the one of designation. While this function is of less concern to the journal's readers, it is of vital concern to many authors.

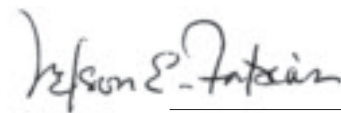
For many scientists, their publication record has a lot to do with their awards, recognitions, funding, and advancement. By having places where they can publish their work, they build a record of their achievements. These records are invaluable to the recognition and support that is needed to continue such work.

Beyond these reasons for being, it can also be argued that for the cost, the *Journal* is one of the best bargains available for the reader.

Projects for which articles are written often take hours and hours if not days and months to complete. Articles must then be written and submitted, also a time-consuming task, to be sure. The peer-review process, which often involves numerous iterations between authors and editors, takes even more time. Add to that the administrative costs involved in running the *Journal* program and ensuring that a *Journal* gets printed and sent to subscribers on time.

It is also appropriate to consider the time that journals save, given what a person would have to do to find similar material in alternative literature on the web.

There is a reason that NEHA often boasts that a subscription to the *Journal* represents one of the main benefits of being a member of this association. I hope that the above discussion helps to explain why we hail our *Journal* in this way.



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Address changes take approximately thirty days to become effective. To ensure that you don't miss a single issue of the *Journal*, please notify us as soon as possible of your new address.

Thanks!