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Editorial

To web or not to web, that is no longer a question Or, what is a web-driven scientific publication good for?

“To be or not to be, that is the question” in Hamlet’s famous third soliloquy (Shakespeare 1600/1601), where he finally concludes that the only reason why we want to stay alive is because we are too scared of what comes afterwards. Well, many of us have stayed away from the worldwide-web for too long, because it was not exactly clear what we would get involved in or, like Hamlet, what comes afterwards. As a matter of fact, there is nowadays no way around the worldwide-web. Whether we read and answer our e-mails ourselves or we have our messages printed out by somebody else and typed back into the machine, the fastest way of traceable communication takes advantage of the worldwide-web, and there are numerous other examples – including on-line stock maintenance at our local grocery store.

The Editorial Board of the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* recognized the benefits of electronic manuscript submission and handling several years ago and made this feature available to our authors. The transition to 100% electronic manuscript submission and handling was made in 2001, and we have recently switched to a more sophisticated electronic platform that has the facility not only to track the individual manuscripts and the correspondence linked to it but also to streamline the entire production pipeline by automatic allocation of a manuscript at a specific step in the evaluation/revision process to the next level, thus eliminating a number of redundant manipulations at various levels. Likewise the content of the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* has been made available through several electronic platforms including CTS-net and High-wire Press, Pub Med and the National Library of Medicine, as well as Science Direct and Elsevier, our publisher.

However, the vast majority of the scientific journals in our field have their concept designed for a product based on paper with weekly or monthly issues. Major limitations in presentation and production of these traditional journals are due to the printing process required for production. Although the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* and the other major journals have now been available online for several years, their look and basic backbone are still very much that of a paper journal, which comes as no surprise as the entire content put on the web by issue is printed as such at regular intervals.

There can be no doubt that the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* is a success story with an increasing number of submissions (+133% since 1998), increasing number of subscribers (+34% since 1998), an increasing impact factor (+56% since 1998), and the built-in cross-reference capability in the web edition. We have to recognize the outstanding work of the submitting authors, the staff at the editorial office, and the readers, who have all contributed to this Journal.

However, in the eyes of your editor, there are some limitations of the paper driven publication approach, which does not allow full advantage to be taken of new communication technologies becoming available through the web. Hence, the editorial board of the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* has evaluated, together with our Council and our Publisher, various strategies for the future, including major remodelling of the successful existing journal as well as the creation of an Internet or web driven spin-off publication. Finally the latter approach was adopted, allowing for both a harmonious development of the existing *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* as well as the launch of a new, more flexible (experimental) publication entitled ***Interactive Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery***.

Interactive Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery (ICVTS) is designed as a sister product of the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* and will become available by joint subscription. As announced by its name, *Interactive Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery* is conceived as virtual conference relying on both modern media and interactive discussion.

Modern media includes here, in addition to the focus on more illustrations and less text, the possibility to include for the web edition, short video sequences, addenda with the source data in spreadsheet format (precious information for later meta-analyses), as well as references from the web. All accepted reports are posted immediately online on www.ICVTS.org. An electronic, moderated discussion will be open for 28 days through a corresponding e-mail box. After closure of the discussion period, the reports pre-published on the web, as well as a selection of the most pertinent contributions of the moderated discussion, are published together in the ICVTS archive section on the web and quarterly with traditional paper format.

If the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* is geared to establish the state of the art in our fields by promoting scientifically proven concepts, this is not the *primum movens* for *Interactive Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery* where different ideas, progress reports, institutional experiences (positive and negative) with potential for the future should find a forum for discussion. Likewise the range of acceptable topics for publications in ICVTS will be somewhat broader, provided that there is a link to our fields of interest.

ICVTS welcomes reports on all aspects of surgery of the heart, great vessels, the chest, and related fields, including new ideas, short communications, work in progress, follow-up studies, research protocols, registry information, nomenclature, case reports, images, videos, and, last but not least,

reports on negative experiences. A complete list of acceptable types of reports can be found in the Instructions for Authors at www.ICVTS.org.

To build our future, be on the web now, submit your upcoming work, and join the discussions!

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