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Editorial: Sixty yet still active!

ALISON Y. FIRTH

The British Orthoptic Society published the first *British Orthoptic Journal* in 1939, the second appeared in 1944 then, with the exception of 1946, annually. In the first copy of the *British Orthoptic Journal* the editorial¹ outlines the events leading up to the formation of the British Orthoptic Society, and this and the subsequent history of the Society is described in the 1987 editorial, the year of the Society's Golden Jubilee.² In the president's letter published in that first edition, Mary Maddox³ wrote: 'This journal will afford a method of recording the progress of orthoptics.'

In the early years, fewer journals were available and perhaps more original work was submitted for consideration for publication in the *British Orthoptic Journal*. More recently the importance of evidence-based practice has been emphasised and we are now more critical of research papers considered for publication. To carry out good clinical research the design of a study, methodology and analysis are important factors. Reviewers are constantly aware of maintaining a high standard and their role, and that of the editor, is to help authors to produce papers of the best possible quality. During my term as editor all papers in which statistical analysis has been performed began to be reviewed by the statistician on the editorial board. This has led to an improved standard in the analysis and presentation of results found in original articles.

Ten years ago the fiftieth journal was published, at the time when graduate entry into orthoptics was about to happen, and in the editorial that year Horwood⁴ wrote: 'I am sure that more scientific papers will be produced by graduate orthoptists who envisage their role as carrying out research'. The *British Orthoptic Journal* receives several submissions from newly qualified graduates who wish to publish work carried out whilst undergraduate students and some submissions are received from graduates undertaking clinical or postgraduate research. Horwood⁴ also encouraged orthoptists to publish in journals where a wider audience would be reached and reiterated the original philosophy of the journal by stating 'balances need to be set: between informing the rest of the orthoptic world about our original work, and informing British orthoptists of what is going on in the

wider literature.' Authors today should seek to publish in highly rated journals and access to those journals is becoming easier as more journals appear in full text through web links.

In today's age of computer searches the *British Orthoptic Journal* failed at its last attempt in 1999 to become accepted for inclusion on Medline. Although the comments made were that it was 'a unique journal on a specific subject' which 'appears to be well done' the scientific content of research and clinical articles was rated as 'fair' and review articles as 'good'. A rating of 'very good' is necessary to be successful. The importance of the journal to researchers, educators, students and administrators was considered of 'no or little import'. Whilst it was judged that the journal was of 'moderate' importance to clinicians and fair importance to allied health professionals, an overall result of 'very important' (top category: 'essential') needed to be obtained.

Has the journal fulfilled the role of recording the progress of orthoptics? To some extent: yes. Will it continue to do so in the future? The role of review articles in recording progress is important to acknowledge. Awareness of other relevant literature was previously presented in the 'abstracts' section of the *British Orthoptic Journal*, but due to the delay between publication and presentation, these are now available on a more regular basis to members of the British Orthoptic Society via *Parallel Vision* (the Society's monthly circular). I doubt whether the journal will fulfil the role of recording original research in all areas pertinent to orthoptics and so it is important, in today's climate of continuing professional development, that orthoptists extend their reading to a wider journal base. However, the *British Orthoptic Journal* continues to play an active role in contributing to orthoptic literature.

References

1. Mayou S. British Orthoptic Society [editorial]. *Br Orthopt J* 1939; **1**: 7-9.
2. Horwood A. Fifty years [editorial]. *Br Orthopt J* 1987; **44**: 1-3.
3. Maddox MC. President's letter. *Br Orthopt J* 1939; **1**: 6.
4. Horwood A. Volume Fifty [editorial]. *Br Orthopt J* 1993; **50**: 1.