

## Orthodontic Information—A Lot More Coins in the Realm

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If the generation, transmission and storage of orthodontic information are the coin of our realm, how are we doing? The changes might surprise you!

In 2000 The EH Angle Foundation Board of Directors approved *The Angle Orthodontist* going on line for publication. In March 2002 we began electronic submission and review. Was this a trivial join-the-crowd decision or was it a significant effort to advance orthodontics? Let's look at the track record.

Our web site keeps a record of users based on domains and the results for 2002 are very interesting. Last year the start page of the electronic version of *The Angle Orthodontist* was opened on 40,740 occasions and articles and the various contents of the site were accessed 232,312 times! That means every hour of every day more than 111 people somewhere accessed *The Angle Orthodontist* on the Internet. To give the record some perspective, the data is shown with the same 2001 data.

	View Start Page	Total Site Hits
2001	20,872	96,664
2002	40,740	232,312

The sheer magnitude of the numbers has to be impressive. The user hits on the web site long ago surpassed the subscribers of the paper version by many orders of magnitude. Who would have thought that so many people would want to access the arcane information in *The Angle Orthodontist*! Electronic users are probably not perfunctory users who get a paper journal and put it aside to read later. It is safe to assume that the electronic users wanted to know something about an orthodontic topic and sought it out. If the total number of users does not astound you, look at the growth rate. The use doubled from 2001 to 2002! Somebody somewhere is interested in what orthodontists do.

Who are these web site users? According to our computer reports, they live in over 100 countries. Some US orthodontists once thought of orthodontics as a US phenomenon and of lesser interest abroad. No more. If you still believe in US hegemony in orthodontics, look again—there are a lot of new players in the game and they are located all over the world.

Who is generating all of this information? We hear of the decreasing numbers of orthodontists willing to staff our educational and research programs. Editors of orthodontic journals have all heard comments about the paucity of US

authored articles being published. In 2001 we received about 120 manuscripts. In March of 2002 we added electronic submission and review and received about 215 manuscripts. (Again, the growth rate is amazing.) The interesting point, however, is that 215 manuscripts received last year came from 31 different countries and only about 28% of them came from US authors.

What can we conclude from this information? At least on the short term, the level of interest both in producing and consuming new orthodontic information is increasing impressively. Access to the Internet has surely played a key role in this growth and the globalization of orthodontics is here and growing. Some countries are much more productive than others. When prorated to population size, some countries are already submitting manuscripts at twice the rate of the US orthodontic community.

The EH Angle Foundation does not have a history of directly supporting multiple individual research projects. However, starting in 2000 The Foundation has provided a totally free electronic Internet version of *The Angle Orthodontist* to anyone anywhere. The really interesting point is that, as opposed to paper mailings, electronic journalism does not add incremental costs no matter how many people use your web site. There is a cost to getting a journal into electronic format and maintaining a web site, but after that the more users the better. Perhaps this pioneering effort to advance orthodontic information can be a prototype for future communication in orthodontics. Imagine being able to click on a reference you read in one journal and having it link directly to that article in another journal. It's all technologically possible today—the catch is who will pay to make it a reality?

The distinguishing feature of *The Angle Orthodontist* that made this all possible is The EH Angle Education and Research Foundation. This Foundation is our publisher and it has a mission quite unlike a commercial publisher. The decision to provide this Internet service was made solely in the interest of orthodontics without concern for a commercial publisher. It was made by a group of farsighted and dedicated orthodontists serving a nonprofit foundation with a mission to advance orthodontic information. Spectacular events make the news we see, but the methodical contributors who improve the quality of life for everyone usually are not considered newsworthy. I thought you would want to know about how this came to be and of the contributions of one low profile orthodontic organization. The product is available 24/7/365 at <http://www.angle.org>