

Are You One of These People?

Robert J. Isaacson

Are you one of the people who made some of the over 6,000,000 hits on www.angle.org in the past two years? If you did, chances are you found information that was useful and interesting. Did you feel good realizing that your profession was supplying high-quality orthodontic science to everyone on the globe irrespective of everything else? Did you feel a bit of pride that your profession was doing that which defines a profession—putting the patients' best interest ahead of its own interest? In this day of entrepreneurship, we are besieged by heavy duty marketing, and the service concept is under assault. Does everything that succeeds have to have a profit immutably built into it?

It does not take an MBA to understand that there is no free lunch. However, the important question here is whether the Angle Foundation and its policy of open access is a harbinger of things to come or is it hopelessly naive? Certainly there are costs associated with making this service available free to the world, and why would leaders in orthodontics wish to use their own hard-earned money to make others (even potential competitors) become better at their shared profession?

What is this almost unknown Angle Foundation? It could well be that even its members are only marginally aware of their membership. The Foundation, an offspring of the better known Angle Society, was created to focus on publishing *The Angle Orthodontist* and was a primary mission of the Society when it was originally organized in 1931. Most Foundation business is conducted by its Board of Directors at its biennial meeting, and the Directors are responsible for the journal's current success. The Foundation is unique in serving as its own publisher so no commercial firm can influence the operations. The Board believes it is on the right side of this issue, and the Directors believe that time will prove this position is the correct posture. They are not alone on this since NIH officials and other leaders in medical research and information dissemination have long supported the Open Access movement.

But I digress. No one will disagree on the merits of sharing science. The economic question is the overriding issue. Someone must pay the bills no matter the merits of the issue. In orthodontics most journals have followed the fee-for-service and profit model. The hits

on our Web site and the hits on their Web sites, if known, would speak volumes of the usage. Moreover, how much revenue can a major publisher derive from a \$25–\$35 charge to you every time you want to read a single article? Lacking objective data and based only on hearsay, I'm willing to hypothesize that it's a very nominal amount. If there are data otherwise, it would be a good argument for rethinking our posture, but I doubt such evidence will come. If this hypothesis is true, there is only a relatively trivial piece of a publisher's revenue standing between orthodontics and a leadership role in the communication of scientific evidence between journals in our profession.

Given that the goal of science for all is laudable and economics is the issue, how does the Foundation propose addressing this? Thus far the Foundation has been able to cover expenses with revenue derived from sales of the printed *Angle Orthodontist*. However, the future of newspapers and journals is fairly clear. The digital media is clearly supplanting the printed page, and advertising dollars are following. You might think that we are competing with ourselves, but the consistent erosion of paper subscriptions is universal across almost all disciplines and fields.

The Foundation became aware of this direction some time ago and began a program to lead our change. Their uncommon foresight was mandatory in order to lead and continue our mission. We now have a limited amount of advertising both on our Web site and in the printed journal. Most importantly, the Heritage Campaign is dedicated to developing an endowment fund where only the interest is available for support of the Web site. This drive, led by Rick McLaughlin, has primarily focused on the Angle Society members and to date has raised over \$1,000,000. It is estimated that we will need another million to provide adequate funds to ensure that our Open Access Web site continues to bring all the latest orthodontic scientific evidence to the world for the indefinite future.

My personal contribution to the Heritage Campaign has given me far greater satisfaction and more pleasure than any other cause I have ever supported. Orthodontics has given me a career that would be the goal of everyone if they knew what I have experienced. I have met more outstanding persons, achieved more pleasure, and lived better than I would

have ever imagined possible. Where else could your donation do more good for more people? All of your contributions go to the stated goals (no overhead). This is what a Foundation is supposed to do!

The Angle Web site is free to everyone, but it is not without expenses. We are leaders now and we want to continue to show the way. While donations have thus far been primarily from Angle Society members, we welcome all who want to help. We need your help to continue to make this service available. You can be one of those who helped to keep orthodontics in a leadership role. Information is to help orthodontics and orthodontic patients—it's not a business commodity. Please give generously.

Please make your check or money order payable to the

EH Angle Education and Research Foundation, Inc.

And send to:

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