

It's a small world...after all

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Twenty-five years from now, in 2038, I hope someone reads this in the Angle archives and laughs at the simplicity of my thoughts. Many of you may already be smiling because you can foresee changes coming better than I. It takes special talent to predict the future; I don't think I have that talent. So, rather than looking ahead, I am going to marvel about where we are, *The Angle Orthodontist*, and how we got here.

Only 25 years ago, the internet had not quite begun to have an impact on the average person's life. In 1988, the process of communicating by transferring information over computer networks was cumbersome, if not just about impossible for most of us. The majority at that time did not even have access to a computer. When I graduated from my orthodontic residency in 1989, I felt particularly fortunate that I was able to use a university computer to produce my thesis, thus avoiding having to hire a typist to make the final copy. Yet, in that same year, David Turpin envisioned a future (female) Editor of *The Angle Orthodontist* in 2010, reading the daily news online at home before coming to work.¹ From her office, she would transmit manuscripts electronically to reviewers and post final versions of articles (3 weeks to 3 months later) on a computer network where they would be available instantaneously to readers across the country. Looking back, you have to admit this was pretty insightful for 1989. However, there was an exciting piece of reality still missing.

At the time that Turpin was predicting quite accurately an electronic transformation for *The Angle Orthodontist*, the journal was distributed in printed form only, and primarily in the US and Canada. Submitting manuscripts and even sending paper copies of the journal through the mail took longer and cost more from other countries. In 1991, almost 70% of the papers published in *The Angle Orthodontist* (and the *AJODO*) originated in North America. Compare that with 2011, 20 years later, when greater than 70% of the published papers (69% for the *AJODO*) were authored in countries other than the US or Canada. Of course, this transition happened progressively during the intervening time and was certainly nurtured and encouraged under the watchful eye of Bob Isaacson²; I was just the fortunate benefactor.

The absolutely astounding statistics come from examining who reads *The Angle Orthodontist* online. While

printed copies of the journal are still primarily distributed in the US and Canada, the Angle website is visited by more than 25,000 unique viewers in a month's time and only 14% of them are in the US!³ The remaining readers are in 147 other countries throughout the world, the largest share of which are in India, Brazil, China, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Spain, Italy, and Peru, in that order. By contrast, the United Nations has 193 Member States. It is quite remarkable that we consider it routine to be able to access this valuable resource from anywhere...at any time...and without cost!

For me, receiving articles submitted from authors in 60 countries each year and recruiting reviewers from all over the world means that I routinely communicate with orthodontists and researchers all around the globe. It's a dream that I never would have imagined 25 years ago. Having enjoyed traveling to what I considered "far-off places", first in my imagination by studying maps, and then in books, online, and finally to some extent in "real life", it is extraordinary that I now have friends that live and work in those areas, some of whom I have never actually met face to face. Flipping on my computer and saying hello to colleagues across North and South America, in Europe, Africa, Asia, or Australia, happens nearly every day.

In his 3 part series portraying the life of Edward Angle, Sheldon Peck made special reference to the 1904 World's Fair of St. Louis, and the accompanying Fourth International Dental Congress, which helped thrust Edward Angle and orthodontics into "a global spotlight".⁴ Throughout his career, Angle's classes included students from other countries and he maintained contact with friends and correspondents from South Africa, Japan...far reaches of the globe. One can only imagine that the world must have seemed much bigger then. One can only imagine where we will be in another 25, 50, or 100 years.

REFERENCES

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