

Space Savers

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As I write this editorial, my family and I are preparing to move to a new home to accommodate our growing family (twin girls are expected mid March). While packing, I had a startling realization—I have an entire closet full of medical journals. I have almost every issue of *Cutis*[®], the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, and the *Archives of Dermatology*, as well as other journals, dating back to 1994. In Manhattan, a closet is a valuable piece of real estate, especially with one child and 2 pending.

At the same time, I realized that I generally use electronic journals more often than their print counterparts. It is much easier to access an article by making a few mouse clicks than to get up and physically search for it. Electronic journals have been popular for many years. Throughout medicine and other disciplines, individuals have enthusiastically embraced electronic journals.¹ Several factors appear to be contributing to this transition, including the following: a growing awareness of the potential for reaching journals online, direct links from citation databases to full-text articles, and growth in the “critical mass” of electronic collections.

De Groote and Dorsch² sought to determine the impact of online journals on the use of print journals and interlibrary loan. They conducted their study, published in 2001, at the Library of the Health Sciences-Peoria, a regional site of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) library with a print journal collection of approximately 400 titles. Since 1999, students and faculty

affiliated with the university had access to more than 4000 online full-text journals via the Internet. The Library of the Health Sciences-Peoria conducted a journal-use study to assess the impact of 104 online journals, added to the collection in January 1999, on the use of print journals.²

The study indicated that print journal usage decreased significantly since the introduction of online journals ($P < .001$).² This decrease occurred regardless of whether a journal was available in print only or both online and in print. Interlibrary loan requests also significantly decreased since the introduction of online journals ($P < .02$).²

Wulff and Nixon¹ found that while online versions of journals in general are used more often than the corresponding print versions, they showed the same relative behavior in the electronic environment as in the print environment, especially when multiple steps were not needed to locate the journal online. The authors noted that one-click electronic access from citation to article is important to users and an important factor in electronic journal usage.¹

The proliferation of electronic journal usage is revolutionizing and facilitating our interface with the published medical literature. Given this paradigm shift, the interesting question is—how long will printed journals continue to exist? Well, for now, I may have to bite the bullet and throw out some of my old journals. It is a hard thing to do, but I need space for all of the diapers.

REFERENCES

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