



Journals: A Vital Tool for Associations

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I have been working in scholarly publishing for about 20 years. In that time, I have mostly worked for specialty societies, and have learned that journals occupy a special place for members. They are regularly ranked as the number one reason why members join associations.

The journal is a tangible way that members see value in their association membership. Also, journals provide a way for members to contribute to the scholarly activity in the discipline. They can act as authors, reviewers, editors, and journal ambassadors. Scholarly and professional associations, like the CAND, play a vital role for its members. Members join associations for many reasons: to keep in touch with colleagues and be aware of their research; to advance their careers; to stay current on updates in the field; and to be more involved in advocacy – all these reasons can be realized through a journal. Journals are not only important educational resources for clinicians, but they provide important data for health policy experts. The impact of the journal on public health is great.

Public health directives are issued in situations when there is a significant risk to the public health. The *Vital Link*, as the voice of naturopathic profession in Canada, is mindful of its impact as a trusted source of information for members, policymakers, and the public. The media also rely on journal articles for their stories; through *The Vital Link*, the CAND has an opportunity to publish and disseminate naturopathic research and clinical guidelines to members. This research can be used by other professionals and can be a building block in the growth of naturopathic medicine.

Apart from being a trusted source for education, journals are also another touchpoint for the association and its members and provide a valuable service to the community.¹ As a recognized stakeholder with the federal government, it would serve CAND well to be relying on published peer-reviewed research in its own journal. This would lend any recommendations legitimacy and credibility.

The scholarly journal is a recognizable product and is a way to promote the association to a wider audience and attract new members to the association and to the profession. Journals are a good way to retain their current and younger members and engage with them.² It

also serves to raise the profile of their discipline among researchers, policymakers, and the public.

Journal publishing contributes to the growing body of knowledge in a discipline. It's one thing to do a clinical trial or chart-based review, it's another thing to write it out, share it, and to allow others to build on the research. This dissemination role of the journal is crucial – it strengthens the core knowledge of the field. By exposing research to others, *The Vital Link* gives others the opportunity to examine the data and build on it.

The first English language journal was published in London in 1665 as the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Henry Oldenburg, the founder and publisher, produced the journal out of his house – which was common even up until the 1990s. In the 1990s, many journals become professionalized and relied less on volunteers and more on professionals to edit, design, and market content.³

Yet with this professionalization and technological sophistication, our mission in scholarly publishing has not changed from Oldenburg's goal: to produce a journal that registered research, certified it (i.e., peer review), disseminated it, and archived it. The journal was considered a “scientific news service” and it still is. 🍁

About the Author

Josephine E. Sciortino, MA, MPS has worked with for-profit and not-for-profit journals; most of her career has been in society scholarly publishing working with national, specialty societies. She currently works as Managing Editor at Canadian Science Publishing, Canada's largest not-for-profit journal publisher. She also works as Instructor in the Publishing program at George Washington University, where she recently completed a MA in Publishing. She lives in Pointe-Claire, Quebec with her husband and two teenage daughters.

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