

Report of the Editor of the News Bulletin to be presented at the Executive Meeting in Sao Paulo, October, 2010

Some reflections on being Editor of the News Bulletin

In the first edition that I produced in 1995 I proposed a plan for coming editions. I said that I was introducing colour into what had been a black and white production, and that I was introducing photographs of people. The first person to appear on the front page was the now retiring President. I said that I would report IAP business and that I would do feature articles and news from the Divisions. I would continue to print notices of coming meetings, but to a lesser extent than had been done before.

As time passed I progressively expanded the view that the function of the News Bulletin is to inform pathologists in all countries about those in other countries, and to report items that might be of general interest. Photographs increased and the Bulletin was published in full colour from edition number 2/2000. I began to make the central 3 pages the focus of feature articles on particular Divisions. You may see this in relation to the German Division in edition 2/2010 which you have in front of you. I hope that this policy has been useful in bringing members of the IAP together.

The business reported to the meetings of the IAP Executive and Council has increased exponentially over the past 16 years with the increasing activities of the world wide Divisions. This made reporting the business meetings of the IAP quite impossible. Dr. Mullick suggested in 1999 that the Chief of Telepathology at the AFIP, Bruce Williams might help in making a web page for the News Bulletin. Edition number 3/2000 was the first to have the address of the web page included on the front page. The page was expanded until Bruce became too busy with AFIP business, and in late 2003 it was transferred to Brisbane where Luke Perkins who designs the News Bulletin took over as webmaster. The new address for the page – iaphomepage.org appeared on edition number 1/2004.

Luke has experimented with some different formats for the web page, and in the past 2 years he has produced a nice method of presenting the News Bulletin in dpf format on the web page. It is easy to post the reports of Committee meetings of the IAP with the unabridged reports of Vice Presidents on the web page, and this has freed up space in the News Bulletin for less formal communications. Charles Ramey, Executive assistant to the Secretary, David Hardwick, is working on a new format for the webpage for the IAP, and when this is completed the webpage will be transferred to the new IAP Secretariat.

Copies of the News Bulletins are now on the web page back to edition number 1/2002. As well as this, copies of the News Letters of other Divisions are also on the web page. A few years ago George Clay was employed by the USCAP to monitor its web page and to provide statistics about the usage of the page. Fred Silva kindly allowed George to provide a similar statistical service for the iaphomepage.org. The statistics for the month of September 2010 show figures that appear to be fairly steady for the past year or so.

There were 168,076 hits, 17,582 visits and 18,718 page views. Taken over the second last week in September there was a low of 4,127 hits on Saturday and a high of 8,550 on Wednesday.

Edition number 1/1995 had a printing of 9,000. Edition number 4/1999 had a printing of 17,000, and edition number 3/2010 had a printing of 23,000. Mercury Press, the printer and primary distributor, usually has quite a few extra copies of each printing, and these have been used fairly effectively in recent years to be sent to new Divisions to be distributed as advertising.

Some years ago when I was still using a camera with a glass lens and print film, I began to mail printed photos to some of the people I had photographed while collecting material for News Bulletins. Now that I have a digital camera, I can do the enhancing of the images myself, and by saving them in jpg I can send them by email to the 'subjects.' I think that this has helped to further enhance the interest of people around the world in the activities of the IAP.

I have found that to be effective as an Editor it is a good idea to go and visit pathologists in their own environment. This makes them feel wanted and part of the international 'family.' Then I can get stories and write them in 'Cooke style English' and illustrate them with pictures that I have taken myself. This has a number of advantages. Those who have English as a second or third language can speak fairly easily, but it is extremely difficult for them to write idiomatic English. It is also difficult to get photos because the photographers do not know what I want, and their skill as photographers is often below an acceptable standard. Doing it all myself maintains a certain standard and style.

If you look at previous editions of the News Bulletin, every editor has complained that he did not get any information from anyone to put in the Bulletin. This is a normal experience of anyone who wants to create a News Letter for any purpose. I knew that I would have to make almost all the content myself, so I did it from the first edition. As a result, I have not been short of material. Now, I am even getting a few contributions from other people. However, this has problems particularly of English expression and quality of photos.

We are now debating whether the News Bulletin should continue to be presented in hard copy or whether it should be presented only in digital format. We have been doing both since 1999. The webpage presentation is very nice and it certainly can be done. As we have it now it is very user friendly, even if one has limited computer expertise. Edition number 2/2010 took me only a second, and about 3 key strokes to open and 5 minutes to print. Each page fills my computer screen and it is set at the correct size to be read easily.

I think that there are still advantages in having a hard copy of some documents - books as well as more ephemeral material. The impact of having all 6 pages open at once is, I think, greater than scrolling through 6 pages one at a time (easy as that may be.)

Hard copy has a nice 'feel' and it can be read in a lounge chair or in bed, and it can be stored easily for retrieval without having to use a computer. The hard copy is also something tangible that can be given to members who might wonder what, if anything they get from belonging to the IAP. I have seen copies pinned to notice boards of departments to show the pictures of the people who are illustrated in them. (Perhaps an expensive reason for having a printed version.) The printed version is more useful as a publicity tool than is a web copy.

Sao Paulo 2010 Editor of IAP News Bulletin Report

Not everyone will regularly go to the iaphome page when they are being faced with having to look at an increasing number and variety of web pages to find information. I think that fewer people will read the Bulletin on the web than now read it in printed form. However, I know of no way that this can be checked statistically.

If we decide to present the News Bulletin only in digital format, someone will still have to produce the content. This will require attention to getting good articles and making high quality images. It is easy to take lots of pictures at a meeting and to put them unedited and unenhanced onto the internet, but if they are not good pictures and they do not have captions that show names and places, they are virtually useless. Anyone who has tried to produce a news letter for whatever purpose will know how hard it is to keep collecting material that is interesting enough to maintain a readership. There will still be a job for an Editor.

Robin Cooke
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