



Editorial

The Birth of Journals

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“The secret is comprised in three words: work, finish, publish.” –Michael Faraday

Journals are an indispensable part of academia today. They are the means of sharing research across the world and help the scientific community stay abreast with newer upcoming science and technology. They are powerful tools to amplify our collective pool of scientific knowledge. Circulation of journals is so commonplace that one seldom wonders the how, where and when of the beginning of journals.

Derived from Old French “Jornel,” meaning a daily record/book of a person/organization, modern day journals are far different from what the first journals were like. Journals today are published with the goal of enhancing the knowledge and further encouraging more research among the scientific literati. Journals of the yesteryears were periodicals with a wide range of themes.^[1]

Some of the earliest journals have been found to date back to 17th century Britain and France. Circa March 1665, Henry Oldenburg, the first secretary of the Royal Society began publishing a periodical in London, that was dedicated to natural science. It was called the “Philosophical Transactions.” “Philosophical” meant natural philosophy, which centered on how the natural world works. “Transactions” meant ongoing exchanges, much like business transactions of today. It published mainly letters about scientific discoveries and other genres and ongoing experiments along with book reviews and carried advertisements of new books. Unlike today, the language used was interspersed with rhetorical tropes. There was no concept of an editor, rather Oldenburg mentioned himself as an author of the periodical. It is noteworthy that the Philosophical Transactions continues to be published and holds the record for being the longest running journal.^[2]

Around the same time, another French journal “Journal des Scavans” was published and circulated in France. Founded by M. Denis de Sallo, Journal des Scavans chiefly published book reviews and interesting news about science, but rarely had news about experiments and discoveries.^[3] Two years later in 1667, the “Miscellanea Curiosa” was published in Schweinfurt under the aegis of the German Academia Leopoldina Naturae Curiosorum, and dedicated to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold-I. Miscellanea Curiosa was unique in publishing anatomical reports of observations made by dissection of corpses for studying pathologies. It contained illustrations of post mortem reports followed by a brief commentary. These journals did not have any editorial, pre-publishing scrutiny, peer review process, and process of registration of new discoveries. They had in common the four fundamentals of scientific publications- registration, verification, dissemination and archiving. These principles still stand strong today as most journals abide by them.^[4]

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Over the years, journals have progressed while still being based on the four pillars of scientific publishing. There are journals niched in various fields, apart from science. India also released its first journal purely on mental health in 1949 by the name “Indian Journal of Neurology and Psychiatry”.^[5] Today’s journals include an editorial, leave room for debate and comments on research, communications on newer methods/models of treatment, over and above the usual original research articles, case studies and reviews. Journals today are indexed, which are loosely, a reflection of their quality. Impact factor is another qualitative indicator of a journal’s importance in a specific field. Journals have been digitized now to include images and audio clips. Their online presence and open access policy have made research easily accessible to all scientists near and far. Novel journal models like PLOS ONE provide an open platform for research articles catering to an assortment of disciplines. Nowadays, journals are offering additional services post publication that can further contribute to the research published like file sharing on social networks, data sharing, and text & data mining.^[6]

For the doctor fraternity, the use of journals starts with the mandatory publishing of the thesis work. A published article in a journal forms the concluding step in their research. Besides adding more value to their curriculum vitae, doctors engaged in research use journals to share, collaborate and further their works. Research articles are discussed and debated upon, ideas are exchanged and analyzed, which open up more insights into the current understanding of medical science. The number of journals has also steeply grown along with the number of research conducted.

In the days to come, it is expected that more and more journals will accept the open access publishing model for their articles. Archiving will continue to hold significance in publications, to preserve research. Digitization of journals has opened the road for online forums for researchers to discuss their work and collaborate on research works. There is also a pressing need to make scholarly publishing affordable to encourage research across all communities.

Fast forward to 2023, Indian Psychiatric Society-Assam State Branch (IPS-ASB) is stepping up the research scenario in Assam and the northeastern region by bringing out the Academic Bulletin of Mental Health, a semi-annual peer reviewed open access journal. It hopes to encourage the young

budding psychiatrists to engage in mental health research, especially at a time, when predictions such as mental health issues are a silently growing pandemic, are rife.

Declaration of patient consent

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There is no conflict of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology for manuscript preparation

The author(s) confirms that there was no use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology for assisting in the writing or editing of the manuscript and no images were manipulated using the AI.

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