ADVANCES IN THE ELECTRONIC ERA

With this issue, Advances in Physiology Education completes its first year as a quarterly electronic journal, available free online to everyone. Those of you who are members of the American Physiological Society (APS) or who have paid subscriptions to Advances will receive (or may have already received) an archival print copy with the four issues for 2001 compiled into a single volume.

I must admit that a year ago, I greeted the news that Advances would go online with mixed feelings. I still miss having the quarterly print journal to tuck into my airplane carry-on bag. However, I have seen a number of advantages to going electronic. One of the biggest is the accessibility of the journal to physiologists worldwide. In the first 6 mo of 2000, when the journal was still being delivered to APS members in print format, HighWire logged an average of 24,739 completed requests for Advances articles, nearly 195 hits per article! Advances ranked second behind Physiological Reviews as the APS journal with the greatest number of total hits per article published. The online version of Advances is particularly helpful for faculty in developing countries who can search the Internet.

Which articles are being accessed? All of them! The papers from the annual APS Refresher Courses held at Experimental Biology are among the most popular. At the recent International Union of Physiological Sciences Congress in New Zealand, a colleague from Asia thanked us for including these updates, because he must teach topics outside his area of expertise and he uses Refresher Course articles to make sure his information is current.

As I begin my term as editor of Advances, I am considering ways to take advantage of the unique opportunities offered by the electronic format. We now have the ability to incorporate hot links from articles in Advances to contributions in the Archives of Teaching Resources and to web pages.

We are investigating the possibility of creating bulletin boards after each article so that readers can establish a dialogue about the ideas presented in the article. I have had numerous requests for reviews of software that can be used to teach physiology, and we are planning to include more on this topic.

As part of my looking to the future, I looked back to see where Advances started. In Dr. Harold Modell’s first editorial (1), he listed some questions about physiology education: “...what should be taught at various levels...how can we maximize learning...how can we promote active learning...what is the role of ‘alternatives’ to student labs, and...how can we design our training programs to ensure that young physiologists...are able to perform as teachers?” Twelve years later, we are still asking the same questions. I guess the good news is that in the intervening years, we have been talking and doing research to look for answers. In addition, we have new questions about the role of technology and the Internet, about integration of physiology with molecular biology and clinical medicine, and about how we assess student learning. Perhaps our most pressing need now is to communicate what is happening at our own institutions with our colleagues. This is where Advances can play an important role.

Before I close, I would like to recognize the accomplishments of Dr. Penelope Hansen, who succeeded Dr. Modell as editor in July, 1992. Over the last 9 yr, Dr. Hansen guided the development of Advances from a semiannual publication with ~100 pages per year to an online quarterly twice that size. She carried information about the journal to meetings of professional societies in the United States and abroad, and she encouraged colleagues to write about their educational experiments and experiences. Her associate editors and editorial board volunteered their time to support her efforts. Under Dr. Hansen’s able leadership, Advances be-
came the primary resource for physiology education.

As I begin my term as editor, I look forward to hearing from you, the readers of Advances, about what you would like to see in the journal. If you have suggestions or would simply like to let me know which parts of Advances you find most useful, please feel free to contact me at silverthorn@mail.utexas.edu. We are always looking for volunteers to review contributions and, of course, to submit contributions.

I look forward to the honor of serving you as editor of Advances in Physiology Education.

DEE U. SILVERTHORN, Editor

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REFERENCES