

Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology: your local grocer online

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Abstract The editorial team of *Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology* believes in three things: visibility, true open access, and quality. We've achieved the first by going online through outsourced online services (Croatian repository HRČAK and online co-publisher De Gruyter Open); we've never compromised as we allow free access for readers and do not charge authors for publication thanks to public subsidies; and we've intensified our focus on NNSE authors to help them present research worth reading to read well, as only editorial efforts invested in quality will produce desired results (greater impact, easier flow of relevant research information by authors from developing countries) in the long run. If we survive the crisis that has hit publicly funded journals.

Keywords: Editing services; indexing; impact factor; journal repositories; online publishing; open access; public interest

Introduction

The trail behind this journal is long; this year it will be 65 volumes, yet the journal looks younger now than when it started. Surprisingly, so does the editorial team (with a bit of averaging anyway). When I joined *Archives* in 1997, it had already been indexed by MEDLINE/TOXLINE/Index Medicus for 32 years and had a circulation of 1000¹. Now in 2014, the circulation has dropped to 300 printed copies, but the cumulative number of clicks has reached 789,939, ranking it the third most visited biomedical journal at the Croatian repository HRČAK (hrcak.srce.hr/aiht) since March 2007. Considering our relatively narrow scope – occupational and environmental health and toxicology – not bad at all.

This is how it all started I guess, by going online, reaching out, so to speak. We joined HRČAK in 2006, when it was in its pilot stage. A year later we went online with Versita (now DeGruyter Open) when it was very new in this part of Europe. They provided MetaPress services back then, and it turned out to be an excellent choice for the work we could not do on our own (as the entire office was a part-time administrative person and myself). Through Versita we were the first journal in Croatia to use CrossRef's

CrossCheck tool to screen manuscripts for plagiarism (in 2009). My point, I guess, is that we'd grab an opportunity as soon as we saw it, strike while the iron was hot.

Thanks to MetaPress we could now feed metadata and full-text articles for the Elsevier SCOPUS indexing services or EBSCO Academic Search Complete, but some things you just can't make happen. What you need is a stroke of luck. In 2007, Science Citation Index decided to expand to include several Croatian journals, *Archives* among them. Even though we were already included in Elsevier's SCOPUS, it was this inclusion in the Web of Science that gave a strong boost to our visibility and authors started to pour in with submissions.

When we received our first impact factor in 2011 for 2010, a new world of possibilities seemed to have opened up, with the sky as the limit. A year later, our IF "soared" to over 1.00, and we thought we were really getting somewhere and fast. There followed a wet slap in the face when the IF "plummeted" to where we are now (0.674). I don't think we've ever thought of ourselves as great achievers, particularly not in comparison with some of the leading Croatian biomedical journals, but our ambition has always been something other than IF.

Free and reader-oriented

Probably because we've always been backed up by government subsidies, which are getting thinner by the year for reasons I cannot fathom, we feel that it is our privilege to mediate other people's knowledge, also publicly funded, for free. Even the subscription to the printed copy is just to cover one quarter of the production cost, but our primary target is the online reader. Having made our way to the major indexing databases by keeping to deadlines and by sticking to the rules shared by the family of biomedical journals such as ICMJE and COPE, we've gained unprecedented visibility. And even if our IF is not what we've hoped for, we are getting cited (see Figure 1).

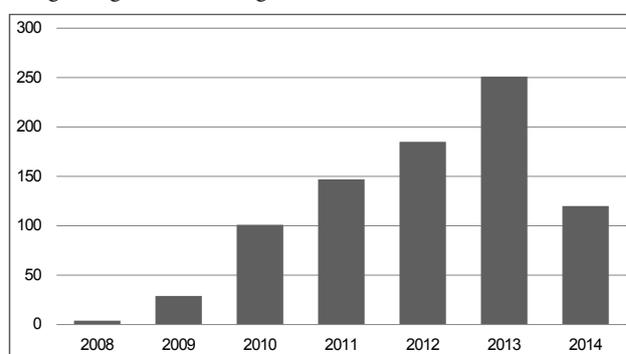


Figure 1: Citations by year

Sum of the times cited: 837 (without self-citations: 747)

Citing articles without self-citations: 673

Average citations per item: 2.24; *h*-index: 13

Source: Web of Knowledge citation report, 5 July 2014

Every now and then, our online co-publisher DeGruyter Open tells us we've been included in some new database or indexing service, but we have pretty much covered the key bases. We have applied twice for inclusion in Current Contents and been turned down by this coy mistress on both occasions. We keep comforting ourselves that this database does not tell you anything about your impact or visibility, yet we still fall victim to the widespread bias in our region that Current Contents secures you a place with the elite and allures new authors.

Free and author-oriented

At the MET meeting in Venice in 2012, Jason Willis-Lee made a brief presentation of current models of open-access publishing. It struck me back then that most so-called *open-access journals* had only shifted the burden of publication onto the author. I find this practice questionable from a number of aspects that all come down to ethics and conflicting public and private interests ("a whole can of worms", as Kersti Wagstaff put it in her report on METM12)², especially as this model has dealt a hard blow to the authors from developing countries. We, however, have never considered adopting the author-pay model and will continue to stand our ground for as long as we are being subsidised by the public.

With our relatively broad coverage and free publication, our author pool from developing countries is growing by the day. Before we went online, *Archives* had already been an international journal, as we published articles from all over the world, but the vast majority came from ex-Yugoslav countries. While the percentage of articles from Croatia is still high (after all, we are the official journal of three Croatian associations) the tip of the scale is going more and more international (Figure 2).

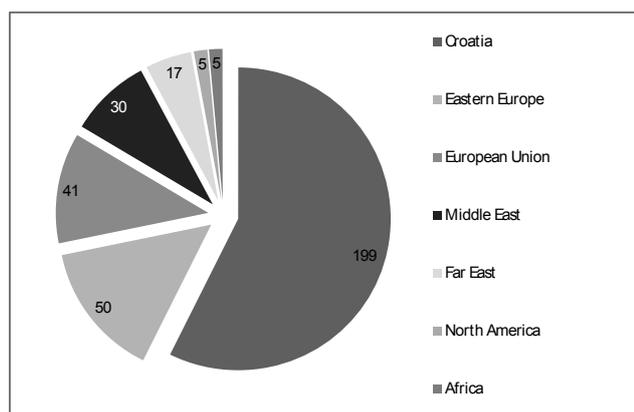


Figure 2: Published articles by region (2008-2013)

Not only do we provide free publication, but we also provide free editing services in order to help our authors who are non-native speakers of English (NNSE) feel more at ease with getting their message across as clearly as possible – provided of course, there is one.

Less is more

This brings me to the third thing we care about in *Archives*: teaching our NNSE authors how to make a point, the first two being high visibility and true open access. The developing countries are catching up with the appalling Western (free market?) trend to hyperproduce, and I do not wish to single out any particular country. Authors are forced to publish at any cost, even when they have nothing to say. NNSE authors face an even greater problem, as they have difficulty pointing out what is important in their research even when they do have something to say. Our mission for the years to come, and this is not yet another pep-word from the world of (publishing) business, is to help them find their own voice and focus on their audience instead of their universities and research institutes. Since we can afford it, we have become very selective with regard to submissions (our current rejection rate is about 65%), but we seek not to discourage our authors, but to encourage them to write meaningful things and avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism and pressure to publish. We've been using the CrossCheck tool for years now, not to police them, but to show them that they can produce even better texts than those copied³⁻⁵. Now that our production team has grown and counts one chief editor (whom I admire for her lack of vanity, open heart and mind, and nearly childish enthusiasm), two young and equally enthusiastic copy editors and whatnots (since they do all sorts of other things as necessary), my dear administrator (who looks after us like a mother), and myself, we intend to dedicate this and future years to teaching NNSE authors to trust their own instincts, use narrative techniques to make their research interesting to read, and keep it short and simple. Unlike this sentence. We see ourselves as the local grocer who has found its place in this global village side by side with huge grocery store chains.

We place our faith in things that will pay off in the long run. For the benefit of all.

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