

Opinion

Frustrated Without Open Access? The ONE Solution

Keeping up with the literature has always been a professional problem that slops over into my personal life. In the 1960s, researching topics for medical school essays, I was repeatedly forced to spend mind-numbing afternoons poring over sequential volumes of *Index Medicus*. Twice each time. The first pass was searching the indexed topics I thought were relevant to my subject; the second was to search the relevant topic headings I hadn't thought of the first time around. And I always arrived home cranky with asthenopia and a list of articles I still had to find in dusty bound volumes.

As a resident, I decided it was cost-effective to subscribe to the major eye journals. I had them delivered at home to avoid having to carry them home from work. Besides, I had all this free time at home to read them. And the piles grew. Piles by the bed, by the chair, by the dining room table. I used to take them along on road trips, and I would try to read when it was my wife's turn to drive. I built bookcases in the basement, and when we moved, I packed up the journals to send book rate. When it came down to a choice between whether I or the journals would continue to live in my house, I recycled them all, hoping to rely on the Internet to access what I needed.

Alas, that's when I learned about the lack of open access for practicing ophthalmologists. Most readers of

EyeNet, while facing a challenging diagnostic or therapeutic problem, want to do a PubMed search on the topic. When they click on "full text," if a journal is not open access, a message appears asking for a subscriber username and password (who keeps those handy?) or a credit card number for the publisher's fee. If you are cheap (like me) or suspicious that the article won't prove to be as useful as it sounds, you have to make do with the abstract. Or more likely, rely on information from open access sources, which may not be as authoritative. Or worse yet, rely on information from blogs, biased sources, or trash. In short, most people who should know better (like me) end up following the path of least resistance to information.

The costs of publishing, even if journals are not printed and mailed, are still substantial. To cover these costs, some have suggested that authors be charged a hefty fee for each article published in an open access journal (creating a different sort of access problem on the author end). Others have suggested that membership societies cover these costs with dues (a quick way to reduce membership!). Some journals, including *Transactions of the American Ophthalmological Society*, have enabled uniformly open access; others, such as *Archives of Ophthalmology*, have enabled it 12 months after publication; still others like the *American Journal of Ophthalmology* and *Oph-*

thalmology, have not enabled it at all.

Fortunately, help is available. The Academy's ONE network has contracted with publishers of most of the major eye journals to allow access to their full content—at no charge to Academy members! (In addition to *Ophthalmology*—a longtime member benefit—these include *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, *British Journal of Ophthalmology*, *Journal of Academic Ophthalmology*, *Ophthalmology Clinics of North America*, and *Survey of Ophthalmology*.) Go to www.aao.org/one, then click on "Journals" under "Educational Content." It's a terrific resource to combat the access problem. Check it out.



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