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The editors of JISfTeH are proud to have met many goals in establishing and maintaining the Journal for over 2 years now. Our gratitude and thanks go to the authors who proffer their papers and trust in us to publish them for the world to see, and to our International Editorial Board for advancing the field of eHealth through sharing their expertise in peer-reviewing, maintaining quality and relevance of content.

Some changes in format have also been instituted for 2015, which can be seen in this current ‘issue’. The first of the Journal’s ‘Special Themes’ can be seen. This Special Theme addresses ‘Women in eHealth’ – we know of no other journal that has dedicated itself to highlighting this important issue within our field. Evidence for the relevance and importance of this topic can be seen in the Journals content. The Journal has guest editorials or invited commentaries from the World Health Organization, the ISfTeH, and several prominent ‘Women in eHealth’. Additional articles – original research and a short report – from ‘Women in eHealth’ can also be seen. This approach - while not unique - marks an important shift for the Journal that brings focus to an essential aspect of eHealth and allows the Journal to be the vehicle for that focus. Special Themes will become a regular feature of JISfTeH, with plans underway for Special Themes on eHealth in Brazil, and eHealth in the Philippines – watch for those in the coming year.

Another significant change is that the Journal now publishes in a continuing manner, and will no longer be published as separate issues throughout the year. In keeping with this change, all papers will now also be identified in a different fashion as can be seen in several other journals, i.e., from 2015 onwards, each published article will be identified with a sequential ‘e’ number (‘s’ for supplements).

As the Journal continues to grow, the Editors cannot help but compare, contrast, and debate. One area of ongoing debate remains our commitment to no-cost Open Access – but this represents a ‘triple edged’ sword!

On the positive side of the blade, open access overcomes the problems of social inequality, and provides any researcher anywhere in the world (who is able to get online) with entrée to the world of knowledge. We each must understand the literature within our field of expertise in order to learn, understand, and contribute. A fundamental step in conceptualising research is to review the available literature, determining if there is a knowledge gap to be filled, and then designing and reporting appropriate studies to fill those gaps. Lack of access to current literature remains a major stumbling block for some, particularly in developing countries, but open access is contributing significantly to overcoming that obstacle.

On the negative side of the blade is ‘cost’. The cost of ‘article processing fees’ (APFs), plus the cost of ‘connectivity’. We can do little to impact the reach or funding of connectivity, but JISfTeH remains ‘no cost’ (i.e., no APF, and no subscription) due to the voluntary editorial staff. Not all journals charge an APF; but for those that do the range extends from about $10-3,900 USD; an average of $900 USD in 2010).1 JISfTeH editorial staff already have ‘day jobs’, but dedicate many hours to soliciting, reviewing, reading, editing, re-reading, type setting, copy editing, and proof reading, before actual publication of each article. This is certainly a ‘labour of love’, but is undertaken to encourage and facilitate publication of quality research by developing country authors – a stated goal of JISfTeH.

On the third ‘side’ of the blade is quality. There has been a huge growth in the number of open access journals in recent years. But the quality of some (both scientific content and editorial dedication) has been questioned.2,3 JISfTeH strives to ensure scientific quality through expert peer review, and frequent and iterative communication with authors of accepted papers. Every effort is expended to clarify issues and remove doubt before publishing. The rewards of maintaining quality are being seen. According to Björk and Solomon “… OA journals ... are approaching the same scientific impact and quality as subscription journals ...”.4 Open access is no longer the way of the future; it is firmly embedded in the research milieu of today.

Challenges have been faced and overcome. Further challenges remain, but we approach the future of JISfTeH with optimism and enthusiasm, and hope you will continue to join us on this journey.

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References