

Editorial

Desktop publishing

Computers are verily causing a revolution in the world of publishing. Profound changes in traditional technologic and economic bases have drastically affected the conditions of publishers, printers, editors, and authors. Thus far, the readers have been least affected by the electronics' revolution. Recurring threats that printed journals would be replaced by access to data banks, for display on the TV screen, have not materialized yet.

As late as 5 years ago, the manuscripts accepted for publication in *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* were subjected to final revision in the Editorial Office and then were dispatched to the publishers for a final language check, layout, and printing. The dominant role of the publisher in the production of the journal has gradually shifted to the editor, who in turn will persuade authors to do, for free, some of the work that the journal has paid the printers to do in the past.

More than half of the articles submitted for publication in *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* have been written on a word processor. Hard copies, rather than floppy disks, are used for review by referees because computer display units are still inconvenient for comprehensive revision of content and organization of a scientific article. After final acceptance, however, the revised typescript will now be returned to the author for resubmission of a clean version as both hard copy and floppy disk. This material is subjected to a final language revision and notably layout in the Editorial Office before delivery on a floppy disk to the printer. The articles on pages 593 and 650, the Proceedings' section in this issue, and entire Supplement 228 provide examples of different stages of development of current desktop publishing routines. In addition, all the references are collected from the Medline data base; and this material is also delivered to the printer on a floppy disk.

Finally, the wide availability of telefax has provided virtually instantaneous communication between the editor and authors, with considerable saving of time otherwise lost at the proof-reading stage.

The growing literature on desktop publishing is full of bitter comments on the gap between what is theoretically possible and practically achievable. Most software programs do not draw printable graphs yet, and they still have serious limitations as regards production of tables suitable for printing. On the other hand, the spell-checking software should remove some of the more awkward mipsrints from our pages.

The new technology is not solely concerned with form, but also with the substance of scientific expression. The computer provides the author with immediate access to his data. *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica* has repeatedly emphasized the value of the full publication of all the observations as tables, primarily for the benefit of students engaged in similar research projects. Most authors still probably produce these tables after they have finished writing their article. However, it is much easier to write an article with all the data available in tabular form. This is why the computer should be used early during the accumulation of data for immediate access at all stages of the writing up of the material.

The gradual maturation of the decentralized publishing technology will permit authors to have a more active role in publication, the last step in the research process. Actually, it is within reach of authors to even propose the layout of their articles. The advantage to the authors will be more rapid publication of their articles at a lower price to the subscribers, with, hopefully, more readers.