

The Website and Beyond

In 1979, when Malcolm Robinson took the first printed copies of our journal to the post on behalf of the then-editor, Michael White, he could not have foreseen the way that technology has subsequently evolved. Twenty-five years later, after many delays and frustrations, we are very close to offering an electronic version of the *ANZJFT*, and a whole new era in the journal's life will begin, with substantial benefits not only for subscribers, but also to our authors present and past, who may find themselves reaching a far wider audience than has been possible before. How has it all come about?

In 1999 — although he floated the idea much earlier — Bruce Hart provided the initial impetus to set up a journal website, with the vision of regular email discussions on Journal articles and other topical issues. With Maria Nichterlein as Moderator, and David MacKay as Webmaster, we reignited those e-discussions in 2003, battling technical problems that seemed to refuse to go away. Now Julie Burgess-Manning of Wellington (proud new mother of Nellie) and Benjamin Hansen of Mackay (proud new father of Elijah) have moved into the role of moderators, and with the e-discussion scheduled for September, our new, enhanced system came into use. For this, sincere thanks are due to our Webmaster, David, who has laboured long and hard to get the gremlins out of the system, and make communicating with each other via the website easy and rewarding for those of us who are technologically challenged.

Yet even when participation is made easy, it has proved difficult to attract substantial numbers to take part in our e-discussions — a difficulty that we have discovered is not unique to the *ANZJFT*. Overseas journals have experienced the same problems, with only a relatively small number of stalwarts taking part on a regular basis. *Family Process* was facing the same difficulties in creating interest in e-discussions and has also begun to explore alternative formats.

Part of the practice wisdom of systemic therapy has always been, 'When things are stuck with the individual, or the sub-system, invite more family members to the sessions'. We wondered if the correct solution to the lack of progress on our own e-discussion front was to 'invite the family'. And so we did. Earlier this year, we suggested to *Family Process* and the UK-based Association for Family Therapy and Systemic Practice that we join forces in e-discussions. We would take turns to propose a topic, pool our mailing lists and advertise topics from all three sources, using the British platform, and share costs. One of our goals was to energise *ANZJFT* readers by giving them a potent reminder that we are part of a *global* family therapy movement.

As we write this in August 2004, our understanding is that we shall move to a routine of international e-discussions in 2005. Visit the website and register your intention

to participate, and you will then receive updated information about how the new improved e-discussions will work.

Already on our site (www.anzjft.com) are the papers selected to stimulate website discussions each quarter, and a sprinkling of other past papers whose authors have yielded to the editors' request to convert them to a PDF file. We are steadily progressing towards having available, in electronic form, all issues since Volume 18.

Back issues prior to Volume 18 must first be scanned before conversion to an electronic format. The September 2004 issue included a set of guidelines for scanning past volumes and creating PDFs for posting on the website. Authors who do not want to scan a complete volume or a complete issue may like to read the guidelines and present the editors with the PDF of their pre-1997 article(s), which can then be added to our online archive.

Reading overseas family therapy journals continues to provide painful reminders that Australian family therapy is to a large extent ignored in the northern hemisphere. New articles appear, minus any reference to worthwhile contributions that have been made by our own authors. Overseas contributors to the *ANZJFT* (and there is increasing interest in publishing here, especially from Europe and Latin America) also run the risk of being overlooked, because they have chosen to publish in a journal that many overseas therapists do not read, and have never heard of. The more our archive is housed on our website, the more our authors have a chance of being read and quoted outside our own horizons. Even the small number of papers we had on site before David's upgrade have been attracting notice from students and authors on the other side of the world who would not otherwise know we existed.

From 2005, our intention is to offer subscribers the choice between a hard-copy journal which is posted via mail, and an e-journal which can be accessed via a secure section of our website. Our intention is to keep the three most recent volumes in the secure site, available only to subscribers, but to make volumes more than three years old generally available. Evidence suggests that individual subscribers (who make up a high proportion of our list) will prefer hard copy, and that libraries will want the e-journal.

It would have been preferable to store our current and archival material on a shared site, because libraries prefer 'one-stop shopping'. However, the cost of doing so is prohibitive for a nonprofit journal supported entirely by its own subscriptions. We have approached two other Australian-based journals with an interest in family matters, psychotherapy and critical psychology. Time will tell whether any takers accept our offer of space on our site. However, this editorial shows how things *are* moving forward, and that the vision of 1979 is being fulfilled, in ways the originators could not have envisaged.

Maureen Crago