

JPSW Online: A Readership Survey to Assess Open-Access Journal Content for JPSW

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The Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) produces a publication, *The Journal*, that focuses on providing relevant content and resources to those involved in the practice of pharmacy, both within the state and nationally. Currently PSW publishes six issues of *The Journal* annually, each containing a diverse assembly of articles including original works, review articles, and “Business Spotlight” features that highlight various pharmacy practice settings across the state.

The increasing overall rate of online publication in the past decade has been accompanied by an increase in available open-access content.¹ This growing network of open-access content has improved equitable access to content and enabled more efficient literature review.^{2,3} In recent years, *The Journal* has embraced a selective open-access strategy to facilitate effective dissemination of content to a wider audience, including individuals who are not members of PSW.⁴ PSW has made original works and Business Spotlight pieces published since 2017 available without restriction on *The Journal's* website (www.jpswi.org). Efforts have been made to index this content within online research databases (e.g. Google Scholar) to increase searchability, but articles are currently accessed directly through issue table of contents on *The Journal's* website.

Although open-access brings a number of distinct benefits as outlined above, the subject is not without controversy. Some questions exist regarding the quality of content that is published through certain open-access channels, namely by so-called “predatory journals” and those with financial incentive to publish research of suspect value (“author pays” systems).⁵ Prior to this project, no data existed regarding the perspectives of JPSW readership as they relate to the transition

Abstract

Objective: To assess the perspectives and attitudes pertaining to open-access content implementation by surveying *The Journal's* readership.

Methods: An electronic survey was developed that targeted readers of *The Journal* to assess their perspectives towards online content migration. Questions aimed primarily at identifying online content utilization styles, exploring thoughts on content indexing, and determining preferences for online content delivery. The survey contained 15 questions, 12 multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions, and was administered through Qualtrics Survey Software®. A link to the survey was included in Fast Facts emails sent to Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) members. Daily traffic to *The Journal's* website was assessed to identify content utilization trends.

Results: Ninety PSW members, most of whom were readers of *The Journal*, completed the survey. Attitudes related to *The Journal's* open-access content were generally positive. Results also indicated a preference for continued print publication of *The Journal* but respondents largely endorsed the idea of publishing electronically once per year. Indexing was identified as an issue of importance by the majority of respondents. Use of *The Journal's* website increased substantially following publication of the first completely electronic issue.

Conclusions: Open-access is an effective strategy for broad distribution of content through the internet. As the readership is accepting of the open-access concept, continued efforts are warranted to promote *The Journal's* website and enhance *The Journal's* open-access strategy.

toward selective open-access. The objective of this quality improvement project was to assess the perspectives and attitudes of *The Journal's* readership as they pertain to open-access.

Methods

An electronic survey was designed for readers of *The Journal* to assess demographics and evaluate perspectives and attitudes towards online content migration. Questions aimed primarily at identifying online content utilization styles, exploring

thoughts on content indexing, and determining preferences for online content delivery. Additional questions focused on current journal utilization and preferences for physical content delivery; three of these questions were previously used in a similar survey conducted in 2016 and served as a meaningful point of comparison.⁶ In total, the survey contained 15 questions, three open-ended questions and 12 multiple choice questions.

The survey was presented to the JPSW Editorial Advisory Board (EAB)

for feedback and necessary modifications were incorporated prior to survey administration to *The Journal* readership. A link to the finalized survey was included in three emails, which were each sent to approximately 4100 PSW members once every two weeks for six weeks. The survey was administered through Qualtrics Survey Software®. Counts of survey responses were calculated one week after the final email was sent.

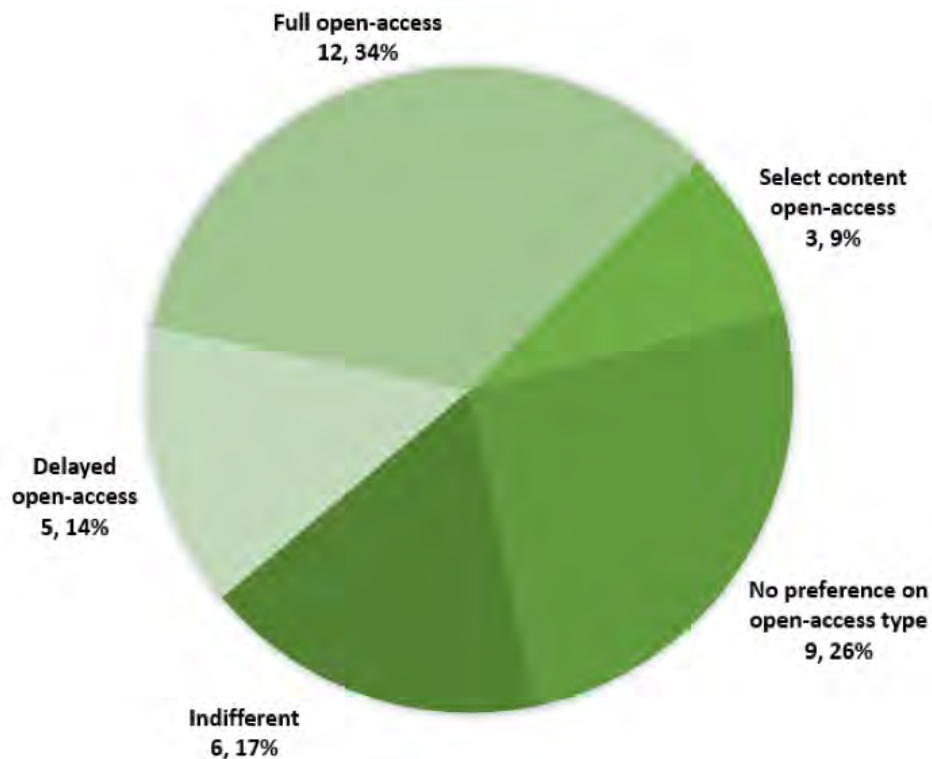
The number of total and unique page views for *The Journal's* website was gathered from the site's domain hosting service (www.weebly.com) to assess content utilization.

Results

A total of 90 individuals completed the survey, a 32.4% increase from the 2017 readership survey (68 respondents).⁶ Of those completing this year's survey, 75.6% indicated that they usually or always read *The Journal*, (compared to 88.2% on the 2017 survey). Hospital and community pharmacy were the primary professional areas for those completing the survey (34.4% and 31.1%, respectively). Other professional areas for survey respondents included ambulatory care, academia, long-term care, industry, specialty, and managed care.

Although 24.4% of participants indicated that continued physical print publication of *The Journal* was 'very important' and 34.4% indicated that it was 'somewhat important', 78.9% of participants indicated that they would be in favor of replacing one physical print publication per year with a 'green' electronic publication. The majority of survey participants (57.8%) indicated that they preferred to read academic journal content in the form of physical print, while only 17.8% preferred to access this content electronically; 22.2% indicated no preference, while 2.2% indicated that they preferred both. Most respondents (53.3%) were not aware of the fact that they could opt-out of physical print delivery of *The Journal* and receive contents entirely electronically. Of those who were unaware of this feature, 22.9% preferred to read academic journal content electronically. The majority of survey respondents indicated that indexing of

FIGURE 1. Respondent References for Open-Access Content Delivery with Number and Proportion of Respondents



content (i.e. making content searchable within online literature databases) from *The Journal* was an issue of importance to them, with 40.0% indicating that the issue was somewhat important and 23.3% indicating that it was very important.

Of the 90 individuals who completed the survey, 35 provided an answer to a free response question related to their preferences surrounding content from *The Journal* being available open-access (Figure 1). The plurality of respondents indicated a preference for full open-access, while select content open-access, the current strategy utilized by *The Journal*, was the least endorsed by respondents.

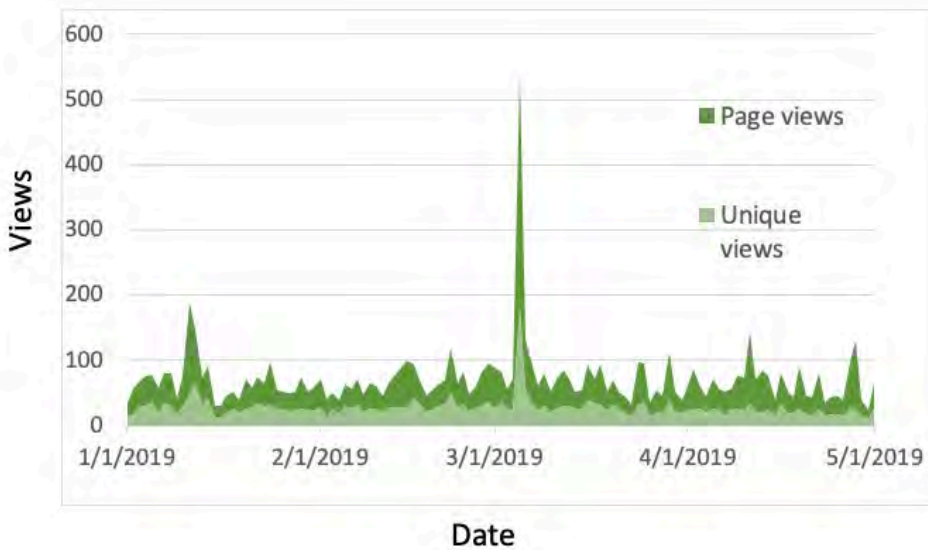
In March 2019, *JPSW* published its first 'Green Issue'. This issue of *The Journal* was made available entirely and exclusively online and was promoted to members of PSW by email. Website traffic data from *The Journal's* website was reviewed following publication of the 'Green Issue' to determine the degree and nature of content viewing. The website averaged more than 54 unique visitors and 93 page views per day in the week following publication of the 'Green Issue', compared to an average of around 28 unique visitors

and 40 page views per day in the preceding two months (Figure 2). On the day of online publication, the website had 183 unique visitors and 353 page views, which more than doubled the previous single day peak website traffic. Although traffic volume was high, the majority of survey participants indicated that they were not fully aware of *The Journal's* website with 18.9% indicating that they were not at all aware and 32.2% indicating that they were only somewhat aware.

Discussion

Taken together, the results of the survey indicate a diverse readership, both in terms of professional background and views on open-access content. The majority of respondents indicated that continued physical print publication was important to them; a similar proportion of respondents indicated that they preferred to read academic journal content in physical print format. Although electronic content delivery has some distinct advantages from the reader (e.g. increased searchability) and publisher (e.g. reduced costs) perspectives, this survey makes clear that physical delivery of *The Journal* should continue.

FIGURE 2. Daily Internet Traffic Data for *The Journal's* Website Around the Time of 'Green Issue' Publication



Despite these findings, periodic online-only distribution is an environmentally-conscious cost-saving measure that appears to be acceptable to readership and annual publication of the 'Green Issue' should continue on an annual basis. Additionally, efforts should be made to further explore eco-friendly measures that align with both readership and organizational interests.

The March 2019 'Green Issue' was the first issue of *The Journal* that was fully open-access (as opposed to the select open-access strategy used in past). In addition to standard academic journal content, this issue included a brief tutorial on how to opt-out of physical print delivery of *The Journal*. A total of 455 active PSW members have opted out of physical print delivery but are still able to maintain full access through electronic delivery of *The Journal*. The publication of the 'Green Issue' coincided with a large jump in traffic to *The Journal's* website, despite the fact that not all PSW members were aware of the website at the time of surveying. The increased traffic volume suggests that online publication is an effective means of distributing content from *The Journal* to a wide audience.

Although efforts have been made to enable content indexing since the transition to open-access, based on current progress it appears that additional efforts will be required.⁴ Advancing this element of the open-access transition aligns perfectly

with the core principles of the initiative: to provide *The Journal's* content to a wider audience. The clear preference for content indexing expressed by survey respondents suggests that enhancing the searchability of online pieces from *The Journal* in online literature databases should remain a priority as the open-access project continues forward.

The primary limitation of this quality improvement project is the limited size of the surveyed population. Only 2.2% (90/4113) of those who were invited to participate via email completed the survey; as a result, the perspectives and attitudes outlined here may not accurately represent those of the entire *JPSW* readership. Strategies like incentivization or alternative methods of survey distribution could be utilized in the future to improve survey completion rates and provide a more a complete picture of readership preferences.

Conclusions

These survey results and previous work on content distribution suggest that the open-access element of *JPSW* is an effective means of delivering valuable content to a broader audience.^{1,2} Although further development is essential to program success, the open-access efforts that have been made by *The Journal* thus far have been well received by readership based on the attitudes and perspectives of the PSW members who participated in this survey.

Future work on the open-access front should focus on increasing the searchability of content (e.g. indexing) and increasing member awareness of electronic delivery features.

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