

# Editorial ► The Endangered Behavioral Optometry Journal Act

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“The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed in 1973 in order to protect those plant and animal species that are at risk of becoming extinct. Species that receive protection under the ESA are classified into two categories, “Endangered” or “Threatened,” depending on their status (how many are left in the wild) and how severely their survival is threatened. A species that is listed as Endangered is in danger of becoming extinct throughout a significant portion of its habitat range (the areas where it lives). Threatened species are those that are likely to become Endangered in the foreseeable future.”<sup>1</sup> As of October 2009, 1,361 plants and animals in the United States were listed as threatened or endangered. There have been tremendous success stories as a result of the ESA, including the bald eagle, Florida panther, grizzly bear, and grey wolf. These species have been brought back from the brink of extinction.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to propose the Endangered Behavioral Optometry Journal Act of 2014 in order to protect those journals that are at risk of becoming extinct. Before considering this landmark act, we must lay out the reasons it is needed; what are the pros and cons of having a journal in this aspect of optometry, and what does it truly take to publish a professional journal?

## Cons

### Time

I can only speak from my experiences with the *Journal of Behavioral Optometry* and *Optometry & Visual Performance (OVP)* of course, but I will touch on the process others have relayed to me throughout the years. As I have stated in other pieces, one person cannot possibly put together a journal on their own. *OVP* takes six people who are paid and a review board of almost 20 who volunteer their services. On average, an article takes 30-40 hours of reviewing, editing, proofing, designing the layout, proofing again, creating enhancements for online, proofing yet again, and then publishing online and in print. This does not even include the time the author spent on writing the article in the first place! *OVP* produced six issues and approximately 25 articles in 2013. At a minimum, the 25 articles in the six issues in volume one of *OVP* took about 750 hours. This number does not take into account the four issues of *VP Today* produced last year, which took about 100 hours per issue. That is over 1000 hours spent on *OVP* and *VP Today* last year alone.

Apart from the actual production, we must spend time on planning, marketing, and advertising. For example, this year *OVP* was placed into the Google scholar search system and Directory of Open Access Journals. This took time to do on many levels, including obtaining access and uploading

materials. Advertising, which offsets the cost of the journal, must be obtained and maintained for each issue.

## Money

While I cannot share the exact finances of *OVP*, it goes without saying that a journal is not a money-making venture, nor in my opinion should it be. Let me lay out some of the costs as I bring you through the publication process. We start with the salaries of the editorial team. The Managing Editor, Editor-in-Chief, Advertising Manager, and Production Manager all receive a salary. The journal is laid out and then printed. Of course each issue must get to the readers, which is a tremendous cost and one of the reasons you are most likely reading this electronically. The production company then has to produce a second online version with oodles of links. Once both issues are done, they must be uploaded to the website, Facebook, and the various directories in which we participate. Both Pamela Schnell, the Managing Editor, and I, as the Editor in Chief, go above and beyond to save all of the organizations from having to break the proverbial bank. Yes, we have a production company, but we do not have a contract with a large publishing company. The publishing company is typically responsible for maintaining a website, contracts, advertising, the submission process, design, layout, printing, and much, much more. While it would be nice to have such an entity at our disposal, the cost is astronomical and has led to the demise of many journals across many fields.

Another major issue related to the cost of publishing a journal is the proliferation of what I refer to as pay-for-play journals. These journals reach out to authors and promise quick publication for submitted articles. Hidden in the fine print is that they charge the authors to publish their articles. In some cases they demand costs per page, artwork, or color images. These costs can reach upwards of thousands of dollars per article. They will also charge reprint fees for a copy of a single article ranging up to \$35/copy. This type of relationship between a publisher and author in my opinion can lead to questionable practices and in some cases lower quality materials.

## Pros

### Academia

While the majority of the readership of *OVP* is in private practice, publishing an article is a major aspect of academia. Whether for annual evaluations, promotions, or obtaining tenure, those in academia at schools and colleges of optometry, as well as other undergraduate and graduate programs all over the world, require the presence of peer-reviewed journals

in which to place their work. The peer review process is an important aspect of this. Two reviewers read every paper at least once and in some cases twice. While painful, the process always makes for a stronger article when completed. Another important aspect of the process is the inclusion of the journal in the PubMed, PubMed Central, or Medline databases. While I do not want to get into the differences, this [fact sheet](#)<sup>3</sup> might help. While it is the goal of the publishers of *OVP* eventually to obtain inclusion in one of these databases, the process is not simple and can take months to years. There are both organizational and technical benchmarks that must be met. Even then, the process does not always turn out in favor of the journal requesting inclusion. While inclusion would be better for academics, it would not signify higher quality articles.

### **A Voice for the Profession**

All you have to do is turn to the internet and perform a Google search on vision therapy or rehabilitation and see the rhetoric put out by adversaries. Simply look at the following position papers from [1998](#),<sup>4</sup> [2009](#),<sup>5</sup> and [2011](#),<sup>6</sup> and you will undoubtedly feel your blood begin to boil.

Two courageous optometrists, Merrill Bowan and Daniel Lack, took on the task of responding to the first two documents in [2002](#)<sup>7</sup> and [2010](#).<sup>8</sup> They were both published in *Optometry*, the Journal of the American Optometric Association. Circumstances beyond the scope of this editorial led to the demise of that journal several years ago. The question is: now that there is a new version of this vitriolic, ignorant statement, where will the next rebuttal be published?

### **A Voice for Behavioral Optometry**

In exploring the possible journals in which an article on behavioral optometry would be welcomed, the list is almost non-existent. While there are numerous titles which include the word “ophthalmology,” very few contain “optometry,” and even fewer would be comfortable publishing the type of articles which the readers of *OVP* cherish so highly. The readers of *OVP* have enjoyed a variety of articles from all over the globe, from a variety of authors with disparate views. Both academics and clinicians in private practice have published in *OVP* with equal success.

### **Developmental Editing**

One of the aspects of *OVP* of which I am most proud is that we assist writers in finding their voices. Yes, we get articles that require some minor editing, but there are others that need greater amounts of TLC; writing out one’s thoughts does not come easy for many people. In many cases, these articles become my favorites, and sometimes, in my opinion, they become the best we have published. I enjoy walking with the authors every step of the way.

The Endangered Behavioral Optometry Journal Act is not only needed, but it is needed immediately. We cannot turn a blind eye to the demise of other journals in this profession. Some would question the need for a journal at all; perhaps you are one of them. In creating your strategic plan for your future, I hope that it lines up with that of the two organizations that are standing by *OVP* and making it part of their strategic plan: OEPF and ACBO. Their choice to step up to the plate was immediate and without hesitation. Their decision to continue to support the Journal was bold and decisive; for OEPF and ACBO, the pros outweigh the cons.

Like the work to protect the plants and animals by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Services, protecting our profession from those that wish to do us harm, intentionally or unintentionally, is vital to our very survival. Your membership and participation in OEPF and ACBO are in turn vital to the fight. Let me be clear that both organizations are stable and financially viable.

Do not view this as a plea for survival but for growth and enhancement. You can no longer stand on the sidelines as a casual observer. Do you enjoy reading the Journal, having a voice for behavioral optometry? Have you taken a course or attended a Regional Clinical Seminar put on by one of these organizations? Are you on the DOC list or do you use brochures they produce? Do you wait for the quarterly publications with bated breath? If so, support the organizations that support you and your goals.

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