

Overview & Summary: The 30th Anniversary of OJIN: Thoughts on Scholarly Publishing in Nursing

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Overview

In the minds of some, online journals are fly-by-night publications that offer minimal scholarly rigor, if any at all. In my years as the Editor-in-Chief of *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing* (OJIN), I have worked very hard to change this perception and to promote OJIN as a high quality source of scholarly content for nurses and others in healthcare professions. There are certainly journals in nursing and other fields that use questionable ethical processes, such as touting a peer review process using a timeline that is almost impossible to achieve, charging exorbitant author fees to publish, duplicating publications with little or no changes, and failing to archive published articles to preserve access for readers.

It is for this reason that I am overjoyed to celebrate the 30th anniversary of OJIN, tangible evidence that a fully online journal can meet the rigorous criteria for a scholarly journal in nursing. OJIN publishes a transparent peer review process, the journal is indexed in reputable scholarly databases, and it is archived on the American Nurses Association (ANA) website with all content published since its inception in 1996. The names of our Advisory and Editorial Peer Review Boards as well as our editorial team are published on the journal website. There are other scholarly online nursing journals, but few that have been in publication for 30 years.

OJIN has persevered, in my opinion, largely for two reasons. First, the original group of nursing faculty at Kent State University who conceptualized this journal were forward thinkers. These nurses valued innovation and creativity. Indeed, they produced such a unique structure for the journal. In my many years of working with OJIN I have yet to see another journal, nursing or otherwise, that is structured in a way that accepts articles that add to any existing topic. You can find more details about this in my article in this OJIN topic about the history of the journal. Second, the early group of editors valued teamwork. The team spirit that they modeled prevails today. The journal has received recognition in the past few years, and this reflects the diligence of the team that we have in place: our team support from ANA, the commitment of our Advisory and Editorial Peer Review Boards, and our editorial team that includes our Associate Editor and Editorial Assistants. For 30 years it has never been about any one person, it has been about the quality of OJIN as a scholarly journal for nurses and nursing.

It has been my privilege to serve as Editor-in-Chief for half of these 30 years, and in other editorial roles before then. I am proud of and extend my thanks to everyone who has been a part of this journal since 1996. I am especially proud that this journal was conceptualized as a gift to nurses – an open access journal free to all nurses worldwide. We have essentially maintained that gift to nurses for 30 years. Even with the acquisition by ANA in 2006 that includes a brief embargo of the most current topic as a benefit for ANA members, 95% of journal content is available at no charge to any reader, anywhere in the world. Mostly, I am thankful for these readers, many of whom share with me how much they appreciate the open access that provides a free scholarly resource important to their endeavors as a nurse, whether academic or clinical. I hope anyone reading this Overview & Summary will make time to check out the five articles linked below in this OJIN topic! You will learn about the history of the journal and its impact, and about trends in scholarly publishing from several well-known editors.

The first two articles are specific to OJIN in the context of the past 30 years. These offer two scholarly analyses of OJIN processes and the journal's impact on policy over its 30 years of content. Following these are three additional contributions that consider scholarly publishing in nursing in other ways. The first of these examines online publishing and technology in a context wider than OJIN. The next article considers the challenges of combining the inherently human task of editing with systems that are currently sometimes crushed under increasing volumes of submissions combined with the complexity of writing and publishing in the rapidly changing environment of technology. The final article describes the impact factor, a commonly used metric for quality that is both useful and sometimes misused, in my opinion quite possibly due to some of the systems challenges described by Nicoll in the article that precedes it.

In the first article, "[OJIN Celebrates 30 Years of Scholarly Publishing in Nursing: 1996 to 2026](#)" I offer a brief history of OJIN by decade, statistics to demonstrate its growth and achievement, and discussion about faithfulness to the original aims of the early editorial team. My article describes the original editorial team of Kent State University faculty who conceptualized OJIN with reflections from the early founders. I also address such changes as the acquisition of the journal by the American Nurses Association in 2006, renaming the journal name to include the acronym OJIN, and officially designating the unique structure of the journal that allows new articles to each existing topic as the Dynamic Publication Model.

While the opening article considers outcomes related to the original aims of the journal, the second article offers another perspective of OJIN content over the past 30 years. Margarete L. Zalon and colleagues assert that the journal articles offer a robust amount of content related to policy. In "[Bridging the Gap between Nursing Practice and Policy: OJIN's Global Legacy](#)," the authors analyzed 468 peer-reviewed OJIN articles and 138 columns from June 1996 through September 2025 with an aim to provide an overview of the issues discussed in OJIN and evaluate the journal's policy impact over the years. OJIN's global policy perspective was evident from the depth and breadth of authors with diverse expertise and numerous international topics. Their analysis confirmed the success of the journal content in advancing the knowledge and policy expertise of nurses worldwide.

No discussion of scholarly publishing would be complete without considering the evolution of technology. Traditionally, information has taken months to disseminate through print copy journals; such information is now shared globally in minutes. Advances in technology have also introduced challenges related to information quality, misinformation, information overload, and equitable access to digital resources. In the article "[The Technological Evolution of Nursing Literature: Transforming Information Dissemination and Future Directions](#)," Heather Carter-Templeton and colleagues examine and describe ways in which technology has influenced and reshaped information dissemination in nursing. The authors also discuss emerging trends, such as evolving online journals and artificial intelligence, which influence scholarly communication.

The fourth article in this topic considers publishing from a systems perspective. Author Leslie H. Nicoll, in "[Publishing in Nursing as a System: Infrastructure, Judgment, and the Next 30 Years](#)," considers publishing, and specifically scholarly journals, in the context of the Journal Systems Framework. This framework includes the work of editors and reviewers, which remains fundamentally human, and considers the tension between the human element and systems level capacities and constraints of individual journals that can impact editorial teams, publisher support, and internal capacity to triage, synthesize, and develop journal content. Nicoll argues that a vital challenge for publishing in nursing is how to design editorial systems that protect and support critically important human judgment under current conditions of increased volume and complexity.

Finally, Marilyn H. Oermann and colleagues, in their article "[Nursing Journal Impact Factors](#)" address a metric which is often used in many fields to evaluate the quality and prestige of a journal. Journal impact factors are based on the number of citations for articles in a journal. However, the authors assert that this metric was never intended as the only measure of journal quality or as the primary reason for an author to select a journal when considering a submission. There are many nursing journals without an impact factor that are highly influential in the nursing community, especially those that reach international audiences, or inform highly specialized areas of clinical practice. This article describes the journal impact factor, explains how it is calculated, and explores uses and misuses of this metric.

The journal editors invite you to share your response to this OJIN topic addressing the 30th Anniversary of OJIN and Scholarly Publishing in Nursing either by writing a Letter to the Editor or by submitting a manuscript which will further the discussion of this topic which has been initiated by these introductory articles.

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Jacqueline K. Owens is Professor Emerita of Nursing at Ashland University in Ashland, OH. Her scholarly areas of interest focus on electronic publishing, specifically student publications, publication ethics, and predatory journal publishing practices. Since 2011, she has served as the Editor-in-Chief of *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, the scholarly journal of the American Nurses Association, following prior service as the journal's Editorial Assistant (2003-2006) and an Associate Editor (2007-2010). Dr. Owens is an active member of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) and in 2025 was honored with the prestigious INANE Margaret Comerford Freda Editorial Leadership Award. She frequently

presents locally, nationally, and internationally on topics related to scholarly writing and editing. Dr. Owens earned a diploma in nursing from Trumbull Memorial Hospital School of Nursing (1980), a BSN degree from Ashland University (2001), and both an MSN (2003) and PhD in nursing (2010) from Kent State University. She is also a certified nurse educator.

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