

EDITORIAL: Moving HISA's Publications into 2000 and beyond...

It has been apparent for some time that HISA's internal and external publications needed improvement. While *Informatics in Healthcare Australia*, the annual *HIC Proceedings* and the web site has set new standards for professional organisations in Australia and worldwide, the organisation has grown to a point that an 'ad hoc' approach to publications was no longer appropriate. Even members didn't always know the organisation's purpose and the organisation hasn't always been able to authoritatively represent its member's views. In short, we needed a coordinated program for communicating with and between members and the public.

Several groups of members met at HIC 99 to consider what should be done. They accepted that there is a need for several levels of communication on organisational and professional matters. Some members, for example, want regular information on new health informatics products; others want an internationally recognised journal for peer reviewed research results; and others want up-to-date organisational information and a forum for formulating policies on issues facing the profession. Meanwhile, governments, institutions and individuals want to know about HISA, what it does and what its members think on policy issues.

The HIC meetings determined that paper-based publications are becoming too expensive and time-consuming to produce for an organisation primarily staffed by volunteers but that, in general, HISA members have good access to e-mail and web services and have accepted HISA's electronic (CD-ROM) conference publications. However, they knew that HISA members seldom become regular visitors to HISA's current web site. That meant HISA members were not getting the latest news and organisational information, and were not participating in discussions with other members.

A multifaceted publication proposal resulted from these discussions and has been approved by the HISA Board. When fully implemented HISA will have a more accessible and informative web site, fortnightly news updates e-mailed to every member, a fully refereed electronic journal and an annual CD-ROM publication containing both the HIC Proceedings and an annual version of the refereed journal.

The intention is to 'fast track' the provision of information to members and non-members alike. Thus the fortnightly e-mail news update would contain summaries of research and policy documents with easy access to the original documents via the web. Journal articles would be made available on-line to members as soon as they have been appropriately refereed and edited, rather than through a fixed publication schedule. As noted above, an annual compilation of the journal would also be supplied to members with the National HIC Proceedings, at which time it would also be made publicly available on the HISA web site.

Most publications would be available on-line in an easily printed format for convenient reading off-line. Members would have first access to publications but all publications would be appropriately indexed and available for wider access on a scheduled basis.

We recognise that this proposal puts the cost of printing onto members but it will allow HISA to contain costs and keep membership fees as low as possible. There will be some publications that some members will always print and some members will print all their publications. We believe that most members will only print those materials they actually need, knowing that HISA's publications will be readily available on the web site when needed.

Finally, this proposal should improve both the quality and timeliness of HISA's publications and member communications. For example, we will be able to economically add colour, sound and multimedia capabilities to publications as appropriate, we will be able to more quickly deliver information to members and will be able to more easily obtain input and feedback from members.

If you are interested in helping with this venture please contact the National Office. In any event, please send your e-mail address to hisa@hisa.org.au to enable you to receive an e-mail message from HISA.

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