

The Redesign of *Pediatrics*

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Financial Disclosure: Mr Clarke is an employee of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

“Careful consideration and planning have been given to the form of *Pediatrics*. Medical publications follow an almost stereotyped standard from which there is little chance to vary; but every effort has been made to present *Pediatrics* in an attractive, interesting, and useful way without altering accepted standards.”

Hugh McCulloch,¹ from the inaugural issue of *Pediatrics*, 1948

FROM ITS INCEPTION, the design of *Pediatrics* has been an important consideration for its editors and for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Readability, usefulness, and ease of navigation have been guiding principles in the journal’s evolution from a small “green journal” to a world-renowned publication that reaches beyond the edges of its bindings and into the far corners of cyberspace. Although we have made minor alternations here and there over the intervening years, the last significant redesign of *Pediatrics* was in 1992, when the trim size increased and the dominant color of the journal’s cover shifted from green to white. The journal’s electronic edition has not been redesigned since its introduction 9 years ago.² In 1997, not much was known about Web design, and Web browsers were in their infancy, severely limiting the range of design possibilities. A lot has changed in these last 9 years. The Internet has grown from a promising neonate into a ceaselessly inventive (albeit at times unruly) adolescent. As technology and the practice of medicine have changed, the journal has introduced new features and functions.^{3–6} The editors and the AAP decided that it was time to take a look at *Pediatrics* to ensure that all the journal’s features are brought together in a cohesive design and that the journal remains useful to readers.

We began by asking our readers what they thought of the journal, how they use it, and how they use medical journals in general. We conducted numerous focus groups and reader surveys, and we are appreciative to

those readers who participated in these activities. The results were interesting. We found, for example, that the print journal remains well read and is the preferred medium for a large number of readers. When we launched the electronic edition, there were many who predicted that it would rapidly replace the print journal. Although usage of the electronic journal is very healthy and continues to grow every year, for much of our readership it has supplemented, rather than replaced, the print edition. We also found that, for the majority of readers, the primary purpose for browsing the journal each month is to keep current. Although this is not surprising, it is an important fact to know before sitting down at the drafting table. Many of our readers told us that they scan the cover each month and circle the articles they are interested in with a pen, coming back to them when they have time to read. For this reason we have kept the table of contents on the cover and continue to have a white background (which works best for circling with any color of pen).

Another important finding regards the abstracts of the Electronic Pages articles that appear each month in the print journal. Readers told us that the green paper on which this section of the journal was printed made the abstracts difficult to read. We have corrected this problem in the new design—these abstracts now appear on white paper like every other section of the journal. However, we have placed a green border at the edge of the pages of this section so that it is readily identifiable.

We found the places where the journal is read to be

Abbreviation: AAP, American Academy of Pediatrics

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quite surprising. Readers reported reading *Pediatrics* on a great number of moving objects: airplanes, trains, buses, automobiles (we hope with someone else behind the wheel!), and even exercise bicycles. The most reported reading environment was the home, with the office coming in second. This information factored into our redesign in a number of ways. Recognizing that the journal is not always read under optimal lighting conditions, we have changed the paper on which the journal is printed to a sheet with a glare-free coating; we have added white space to give the eye more places to rest; and we have introduced one color (green, of course) throughout the journal to better highlight key information.

There were many other interesting and useful observations that came out of this research. We took careful note of each one and thought about how we might improve the design of *Pediatrics* to best support the reading habits and information needs of the people who read our pages each month. Our aim was to make the journal easier to read and navigate and to update the style. At the same time, we did not want to reinvent the journal. It was important to the editors and the AAP that we maintain the identity and traditions of *Pediatrics*.

These goals are reflected in numerous design decisions, both obvious and subtle. For example, the modern typeface (Myriad Pro) we chose makes the text easier to read but at the same time resembles the old typeface (Palatino). Although the cover layout is much cleaner, it also evokes the first cover of *Pediatrics* from 1948, with the centered title and the tag line "Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics" immediately below. We have also kept the iconic green bar and the white background, both of which were introduced in 1992.

The most obvious change to the journal is the foldout cover. This cover was selected primarily so that we could fit the titles of the growing number of articles published in the journal onto the cover without resorting to smaller type. The foldout allows us to print all of the journal's contents in a clean, readable design that does not overwhelm the eye. In addition, the foldout serves a symbolic function. We will print the contents of the Electronic Pages on the foldout flap, which symbolizes the fact that the articles in the Electronic Pages are an integral part of the journal yet (aside from the abstracts) reside outside the print journal's bindings.

Another goal of this project was to more closely align the design of the print and electronic editions of the journal. For example, the "content box" used to navigate articles in the electronic edition is mirrored on the first page of each print article in a new, green-shaded "information box." This box, much like the content box of the electronic journal, features key information about each article, including key words, abbreviations, information about related articles, accepted dates, author contact information, copyright notices, and the URL of the electronic article where one can go to find more information.

In addition, author affiliations now appear directly under the authors' names, both because they are easier to decipher there and because this is where they appear online.

Substantive changes have also been made to the electronic edition of *Pediatrics*. The home page has been completely redesigned to both mirror the aesthetics of the print edition and facilitate better navigation throughout the Web site. We have created a "current issue box" with links to lead articles and journal sections, which will allow readers to more readily browse current offerings. Similarly, links to the most recent Early Release⁶ articles and Post-Publication Peer Review³ postings will appear directly on the home page. We have also added a navigation bar that runs horizontally across the page, directly under the title. This navigation bar will appear on every page of the Web site, allowing readers to quickly move about the site regardless of where they enter the journal. We have endeavored to appreciably reduce the number of mouse clicks required to get from any page of the journal to any other page.

We have placed the search box above the navigation bar at the top right-hand corner of the page. The search appears in this location everywhere on the site. We have also simplified the search box to a single field, although a link to the advanced search page can be found directly below for readers who wish to perform more sophisticated queries. Under the hood, we have replaced the old search engine with a faster, more intelligent engine that should noticeably improve searching of the journal.

The navigation bar highlights a change to the site's organization. We have grouped related features and functions into "user centers." The primary center, called "My Pediatrics," aggregates in one place many of the customized site functions that may be used by readers. From this single page, readers can manage their e-mail alerts, access their file cabinets, change their PDA settings, update their e-mail or mailing addresses, or change their passwords. We have similarly built a central page for authors. From this page, authors can find instructions on manuscript submission, samples of copyright and disclosure forms, a description of editorial policies, and links to the journal's online-submission system. A third center groups together journal services such as reprints, permissions, and subscriptions. We have constructed additional centers for journalists, advertisers, and other user groups and will continue to develop these areas of the site to better meet the needs of each constituency.

Attractive, interesting, and useful—those were the guideposts of design described by Hugh McCulloch, the first editor of *Pediatrics*, 57 years ago. We have endeavored to keep sight of these cairns, checking at each stage of this project to ensure that we were on the right path. The result is a *Pediatrics* that we hope readers will indeed find more readable, more engaging, and more useful. At the same time, we hope we have been successful in

preserving the identity and character of the journal of record of both the AAP and the field to which we dedicate our efforts.

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EROSION OF THE US COMPETITIVE EDGE IN SCIENCE

“A panel of experts convened by the National Academies, the nation’s leading science advisory group, called yesterday for an urgent and wide-ranging effort to strengthen scientific competitiveness. . . . ‘Decisive action is needed now,’ the report warned, adding that the nation’s old advantages ‘are eroding at a time when many other nations are gathering strength.’ . . . ‘This report shines a spotlight on the fact our country is losing its competitive edge,’ Mr. Bingham [panelist and Democrat of New Mexico] said. ‘Clearly there are steps we can take to regain our competitiveness, and the recommendations outlined in this comprehensive report give us a good place to start.’ . . . The panel cited many examples:

- Last year, more than 600,000 engineers graduated from institutions of higher education in China, compared to 350,000 in India and 70,000 in the United States.
- Recently, American 12th graders performed below the international average for 21 countries on general knowledge in math and science.
- The cost of employing 1 chemist or engineer in the United States is equal to about 5 chemists in China and 11 engineers in India.
- Chemical companies last year shut 70 facilities in the United States and marked 40 for closure. Of 120 large chemical plants under construction globally, one is in the United States and 50 are in China.

“Thanks to globalization,” the report said, “workers in virtually every sector must now face competitors who live just a mouse-click away in Ireland, Finland, China, India or dozens of other nations whose economies are growing.”

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