Editorial

Guiding Methods of Information in Medicine into the Next Generation: Welcome Note from the New Editor-in-Chief

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I am pleased to have the opportunity to take over Methods of Information in Medicine after Reinhold Haux and to continue his excellent work into the next generation. I feel honored, challenged and excited. I feel honored to have been appointed as the new Editor-in-Chief of the “longest running journal devoted to information in biomedicine and health care” [1] with a history of publishing high quality papers in the fields of biomedical informatics, biometry and epidemiology. I feel challenged to follow Reinhold Haux and his predecessors who have formed this journal and left it in great shape, and I feel excited to have the privilege and the opportunity to guide this journal in the years to come and to serve my colleagues in their research and authorship endeavors.

Discussions about our field as a discipline have been numerous, starting from how the field should be entitled. This variability in naming has been called the “adjective problem” of our discipline [2]. Many discussions and debates about our discipline have been published in Methods during the years. These discussions focussed on the scientific nature of biomedical and health informatics [3–5], on research challenges [6], on educational practices and recommendations [7], as well as on lessons learned and guides for the future [8]. The “for-discussion-format” as a publication type [9] follows this tradition in a systematic way. This format aims to stimulate scientific discussion and progress and will certainly be continued.

Together with our Schattauer sister journal Applied Clinical Informatics (ACI), we have already explored possible bridging effects between theory published in Methods and practice published in ACI [10–13]. Whereas in the 2014 year’s analysis some overlap in themes but no direct links were uncovered [10, 11], we could find more direct links in the 2015 year’s analysis by including citation analysis [12, 13]. The methodological basis in Methods from which ACI cited was, however, almost exclusively related to evaluation as topic. Based on this exploratory exercise, systematic methodological reviews, clarification of possible practical implications of theoretical work, or specific focus themes on topics discussing both theoretical gaps and practical applications of methods and theories might be considered in future [13]. Another lesson learned was the fact that the majority of Methods’ first authors have European affiliations albeit the journal having the aim of being international with official affiliations to the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA), the European Federation of Medical Informatics (EFMI) and the German Association for Medical Informatics, Biometry and Epidemiology (GMDS). This has already been discussed by Maojo et al. [14].
When analyzing biomedical informatics journal publications from 2008–2010 and will be discussed further by the core editorial team.

Furthermore, my vision for the future of Methods is straightforward: to assure fair and timely processing and reviewing of manuscript submissions without compromising the high quality of the journal’s content. Scientific publishing is undergoing major changes regarding the openness of both accessing and evaluating papers [15]. These changes will certainly influence our editorial policies in the near future. Reinhold will, as senior consulting editor, lead the Trans-O-MIM project [16], funded by the German Research Council (DFG), to develop strategies and evaluation metrics for transformation of subscription-based journals into open-access-based journals. We will further improve our social media presence and I am glad that Rainer Röhrig will continue to serve Methods as its communications editor. To date it is unclear whether social media, and tweeting in particular, lead to long-term increases in citations [17]. There are, however, some examples stating that twitter mentions are positively correlated with rapid article downloads and citations appearing shortly after publication [18]. Single studies reported that highly tweeted journal articles were 11 times more likely to be highly cited versus articles without strong appearance in social media [19]. As a journal we need to explore in how far social media-based metrics and other alternative metrics unveil research impacts that are not reflected in traditional scientific metrics.

A journal is a discipline’s face towards the scientific community at large but also to undergraduate and graduate students. I would like Methods to take a share in providing a learning platform for students but also to continuously develop the journal inspired by the ideas of young generations. The student editorial board, initiated by Dominik Aronsky and Tze-Yun Leong in 2008 [20] will receive even more focus through a dedicated assistant editor and I am very happy that John Holmes, Philadelphia, accepted to take on this role.

I am most thankful to the invaluable support of Olaf Gefeller, Erlangen, and Neil Sarkar, Providence, who will continue as associate editors with their respective fields of competence and to Reinhold Haux who will remain as senior consulting editor. I am also indebted to Schattauer Publishing company for their trust and support. The new editorial office will be placed at Karolinska Institutet with Marie Lind serving as editorial assistant. We are very thankful that Ina Hoffmann, who filled this role over many years in an excellent way, will enable a smooth transition. It is with great pleasure I “take over the fire” [21] trying not to burn anybody nor extinguish it. On contrary, I am sure to be able to “keep the flame burning” with the support of an excellent core editorial team, the editorial board and student editorial board as well as the invaluable work of all reviewers and authors submitting high quality work to this journal.

References


