

The odyssey of setting up an online journal: The eighth year

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Since 2008, Daniel and I are in charge of IJoDR, a scientific, peer-reviewed, open-access journal without any page charges for the authors. This article focuses on the history of the journal, why we set it up, the aims we had (and still have) in mind, and the accomplishments through the first 7 years.

At that time Daniel was a sport scientist at the University of Heidelberg, now he is at the Institute of Sport Sciences, University of Bern, Switzerland. As he has a long-standing interest in lucid dreaming (having visited Stephen LaBerge's lab in 1999), he carried out – in addition to his teaching duties and administrative tasks – small studies regarding sleep-dependent memory consolidation and sleep quality, nightmares, and lucid dreaming among athletes. The process of submitting these results was very frustrating at that time because sport journals were not interested in sleep and dream topics (interestingly and fortunately, that has changed in the last few years). So, he came up with the idea of setting up an online journal. I gladly agreed to be part of this because at that time several journals – including the IASD journal DREAMING – had very long delays in the process of reviewing and publishing papers. For a “full-time” dream researcher, it is important to get results published as soon as possible to stimulate the communication in the research community. At that time, we were fully aware of the fact that it would be a lot of work but we also anticipated that it would be a lot of fun because it enabled us to realize our own goals regarding publishing dream-related studies.

The first step was to find a software package for setting up the journal. Fortunately, there is an open source program available called Open Journal Systems (OJS). Whereas Daniel set up the first version of IJoDR (International Journal of Dream Research) on his private homepage, we were very soon supported by the University of Heidelberg library technical team who now host and maintain the OJS software. The web address is www.ijodr.org and we are very grateful for their support. Daniel who is good with computers and programming set up the homepage and, for specific problems, we also had help from the team of the university library. Our plan was to publish two issues per year (April and October). We didn't want to set up a high impact journal and compete with other journals in the field but to encourage all dream researchers to publish their studies, even if they were small pilot studies. We also offer help to those who are not that familiar with publishing in a scientific journal. In addition, we added a section called “Commentaries”, not only for responses to the two target articles but for papers that include interesting ideas. Since 2010 we also publish the abstracts of the annual conference of our parent association (the IASD) and include book reviews.

In addition to publishing regular, peer-reviewed research papers we also had the idea to stimulate discussion by publishing target articles and ask fellow dream researchers to comment on those target articles. We had two nice target articles on lucid dreaming (October issue, 2009) and the continuity hypothesis (2011, April issue). Both articles were followed by quite a few commentaries by researchers of many different backgrounds: for the lucid dreaming article

we had 14 commentaries published in the two following issues and for the continuity article, 12. Allan Hobson provided the first target article and helped with the second one. Again, we are very grateful for his support as well.

Our first issue in 2008 consisted of 3 original papers, but in 2013 and 2014 we published issues with more than 10 original papers and brief reports. We are very happy that researchers all over the world sent their papers to us. Thanks for your engagement.

The Open Journal Systems software provides statistics about the number of downloads for each article. Our top article (9182 downloads) is the target article “The Neurobiology of Consciousness: Lucid Dreaming Wakes Up” contributed by Allan Hobson in 2009 (Oct). Other papers on lucid dreaming were also popular, e.g., “An exploratory study of creative problem-solving in lucid dreams: Preliminary findings and methodological considerations (Nov., 2010)” and “Do REM (lucid) dreamed and executed actions share the same neural substrate?” (April, 2008). But also papers aiming at providing methodological knowledge for dream researchers like “Dream content analysis: Basic principles” are well received (3727 downloads). But also more specific topics like “The frequency of déjà vu (déjà rêve) and the effects of age, dream recall frequency and personality factors (April, 2010)” and “Freud's interpretation of his own dreams in “The interpretation of dreams”: a continuity hypothesis perspective (Oct, 2008)” have more than 3000 downloads. If you are interested in the variety of topics, please check “past issues”.

Another milestone in our endeavor to establish IJoDR within the scientific community was the coverage from PsychINFO received from the American Psychological Association in 2011. We already had a good standing in different databases like Google Scholar or Directory of Open Access Journals, however, PsychINFO is used by researchers to search for specific topics and thus the findings published in our journal will also serve as a basis for review articles or newly planned empirical studies by the scientific community.

To summarize, the experiences thus far with the journal have clearly been very encouraging; we made the right decision to start the journal and our plan to run a journal that is free to the readers (open-access) and free for the authors (no page charges) was well received by the research community. We want to thank all people (authors, reviewers, copyeditors, editorial board members) who helped us create and maintain the International Journal of Dream Research. If you are interested in submitting a paper, a commentary and/or a book review, you are very welcome to submit this to our website (www.ijodr.org). If you have any questions about, suggestions for and/or need help with dream research or the journal, don't hesitate in contacting us.

Acknowledgement

A slightly different version of this editorial has been published in DreamTime (2015, April), the newsletter of the International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD).