

## From the Editor's Desk

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Change is often quite frightening for many people and the speed with which such change sometimes occurs in our modern digital, information and technological era is especially challenging for some people. On a daily basis exciting developments are becoming obvious and this applies to many scientific, medical and health care fields such as ophthalmology and optometry. Similarly, the impact of rapid advances in knowledge, technology and other digital equipment such as computer tablets applies also to scientific and other areas of publishing including journals, newspapers and popular magazines. In an interesting editorial<sup>1</sup> in the journal *Optometry and Vision Science*, Tony Adams refers to the impact of digital devices such as computer tablets on their readers or subscribers. He mentions that several surveys have suggested that many medical and other health care professions are already using one or another computer tablet and their own investigations indicated that slightly more than one in two of the readers of *Opt Vis Sci* already own such a tablet with many more planning to purchase one in the near future. What Adams<sup>1</sup> suggests is that rather than viewing such developments as threats one should try and see the possible advantages that the digital revolution presents. For example, videos can be incorporated into journal content<sup>1</sup> (and, some journals have already done so for many years; readers should have a look at the *Journal of Vision* and also some of the previous issues of *Optometry and Vision Science*, for example<sup>1</sup>, see volume 89

for the year 2012). So, modern journals (and, for that matter, magazines and newspapers that are popular with the public in terms of their particular interests involving sport, business, art or others) will increasingly need to incorporate and use information-rich digital, video and other electronically-oriented content to enhance reader involvement and thereby also adapt to changes in society. Otherwise, they are probably unlikely to survive as viable enterprises. But, as Adams<sup>1</sup> also concurs, often new technology and change can be more of a positive than negative development and one has only to think of the impact of some of these changes on modern life. Today, aircraft allow us flexibility and mobility that previously would have been impossible. Mobile phones, despite their often annoying public use, nonetheless allow communication that has profoundly changed society and economic activity, especially in the least developed parts of the world. Probably few would argue that digital photography and cameras are not major advances over the earlier versions of such technology using conventional films and cameras. Today, even the humble motor mechanic needs to have an increasingly sophisticated scientific and computer training and experience to analyze and repair our motor vehicles. Cars will soon enough drive themselves automatically and the remote controlled military drone is a clear indication of how technology is rapidly influencing and affecting the world. Human tissue and organs are being grown in laboratories and the medical



and to the lesser extent the scientific revolution are only at their beginning stages. Without digital computers and the engineers and others who developed them these revolutions in medicine and science would not have been even vaguely possible. And, in a similar vein, *The South African Optometrist* will also need to evolve and significantly expand its use and application of suitable digital content and other innovations should it wish to remain relevant for the future.

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## Reference

1. Adams T. The digital age of journals: The present and the possibilities. *Optom Vis Sci* 2013 **90** 103 - 104. [Editorial]

