



Editorial

Converting the *JAVMA* and *AJVR* archives to digital files—an important ongoing project

Dear members and readers,

JAVMA was first published almost 150 years ago, in 1877, and *AJVR* over 80 years ago, in 1940. Currently, much of the AVMA's journal content, particularly the historical content before 2000, is unavailable to most members and researchers. For those fortunate enough to be affiliated with a major academic institution that maintains and preserves the backfile content of *JAVMA* and *AJVR* in its stacks, this valuable historical data may still be accessible. Many other readers are out of luck.

Librarians have long wrestled with how best to fulfill requests for single articles pertinent to a historian's or veterinary scholar's work. Indeed, the University of Pennsylvania has received on average 1 request for an archived article per day for the past 6 years. Retrieving and scanning each article is a laborious task, and one that costs considerable staff time and overhead. This is also not ideal for our journals because the important work of our authors is not being cited, and citations are what drive further submissions and impact factor.

Since I began as Editor-in-Chief in 2021, my team has been intent on improving access to the back volumes prior to 2000. You can imagine the mountains of printed issues and hundreds of thousands of pages contained in the archive! Our combined archive is estimated at 350,000 pages of valuable research materials! The immediate answer to this problem might seem obvious: to convert these issues to digital archives, hosted on the journals' websites and findable in scholarly search engines. But we wanted to take an informed approach, so we assembled a Digitization Task Force of experts from the library and publishing communities. Initially, Erin Eldermire, formerly of the Cornell University Veterinary Library, joined the task force until she left that role in December 2022, to be replaced by Margaret J. Lindem, University of Pennsylvania; Erik Fausak, University of California-Davis; and Howard Rodriguez-Mori, Texas Tech University. The critical need to digitize the AVMA print journals, both for easier access and for preservation, has been discussed within the library community for years. Efforts led by Heather K. Moberly (Texas A&M University), Jessica R. Page (The Ohio State University), and the Veterinary Medical Libraries Section of the Medical Library Association (MLA)—

with help from former AVMA Librarian Diane Fagen—laid some of the foundation for the current task force. Appreciating the veterinary section's efforts, Erin recruited the current librarian task force members from the MLA group, recently renamed the Animal and Veterinary Information Specialists Caucus. Our independent publishing expert consultants are Martin Borbone and Morna Conway, and Publications Division staff members on the team are Nick DeLuca, Stacey Geelan, and me.

Meeting monthly, our team has strategically worked through the challenges of inventorying the back issues: we've researched the accessibility of existing digital archives of the journals maintained by HathiTrust and the Internet Archive as well as indexing by CABI and the National Library of Medicine, explored the availability of external funding through foundations, mapped out the cost to convert content to PDF and then create necessary metadata in XML format, and drawn up financial models that might work for librarians and individuals. We are all very excited to inform you of our results and plan.

First, the Library Task force worked with the HathiTrust Digital Library to ensure that previously scanned archival materials be made available to everyone. This included many older issues of the journals, conference proceedings, and historical reports, which had been searchable but not available to read. Presently, all content > 95 years old is CC0 licensed, which places this content in the public domain with no rights reserved, while the remaining content until 2000 is licensed under CC-BY-NC-ND, which means that you can download it and read it but must cite it if referenced and that the content cannot be modified or sold. If you'd like to learn more about these licenses, please visit <https://creativecommons.org/about/cclicenses/>.

To find an archived manuscript, you can visit <https://www.hathitrust.org/>. It's great news that much of our archival content is available to you and librarians, but this is not an optimal outcome for our journals because if you search in PubMed and find a pre-2000 *JAVMA* or *AJVR* manuscript that you would like to read, your search engine results will not link out to the article. You would need to go to HathiTrust and perform a search for that manuscript and download it there.

To prioritize what content to digitize, our

librarians researched recent requests received for AVMA articles with publication dates before 2000. The data clearly indicate a sharp decrease in requests from materials earlier than the 1970s, with 4 or fewer requests per year (depending on the library) for articles from 1960 or earlier. This was important for our next step in strategizing how to digitize articles from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We have formulated a plan to digitize a decade at a time, and we are on track to have 1990s content available in Q1 2024. We will simultaneously be preparing 1980s materials for digitization followed by the 1970s materials, with a goal to digitize a decade a year starting in 2024.

We believe this is a truly monumental contribution to the veterinary literature, as having a digital archive fulfills the following:

- Preserves all the scientific content of the AVMA journals in a form that can be accessed online by anyone with an internet connection at no cost to the user
- Protects the literature from devastating damage should there be a fire, flood, or other destruction of the print issues
- Safeguards the AVMA's invaluable published content from the vulnerabilities of print (eg, degradation due to the acid in the paper stock)
- Provides a great resource to our veterinary college librarians and academic librarians who have had to painstakingly scan individual articles on demand
- Gives the researcher community (AVMA membership and beyond, including international veterinarians and researchers outside the strict confines of the veterinary profession) an easy tool to find antecedents of their current research in literature from years ago

We'll let you know when the first decade is up and running on the website, and hope that you will find it both useful and informative.

Your Digitization Team welcomes your comments, questions, and feedback.

Dr. Lisa A. Fortier DVM, PhD, DACVS
Editor-in-Chief, *JAVMA* and *AJVR*
Division Director of Publications, AVMA

Nick DeLuca BS
Managing Editor, *JAVMA* and *AJVR*
Assistant Director of Publications, AVMA

Stacey L. Geelan
Senior Administrative Coordinator,
JAVMA and *AJVR*

Martin Borbone MSIS
JAVMA and *AJVR* Publishing Consultant

Morna Conway PhD
JAVMA and *AJVR* Publishing Consultant

Erin R. B. Eldermire MLIS
Former Head of the Flower-Sprecher Veterinary
Library at Cornell University

Erik D. Fausak MSLIS, MA, RVT, RLAT
Health Sciences Librarian
University of California, Davis

Margaret J. Lindem MS
Head, Veterinary Libraries
University of Pennsylvania

Howard Rodriguez-Mori MLS, MLIS, PhD
Associate Professor/Librarian
Texas Tech University