

Annals of Surgical Oncology: The First 20 Years

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This is the 21st year of publication of the *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, one of the youngest of all the top 10 surgical journals. It is a year to celebrate the enormous impact of the journal as the authoritative surgical oncology journal in the world and also to review its history over two decades. Table 1 provides a timeline of key enhancements in the journal's growth over the past two decades.

THE BEGINNING

At the Society of Surgical Oncology (SSO) Executive Council meeting on June 27, 1992, the Chair of the Publications Committee, Dr. Robert Beart, reported on the Society's efforts to start its own surgical oncology journal. Drs. Beart and David P. Winchester proposed a motion to authorize the SSO to publish a bimonthly oncology journal. The Executive Council authorized Drs. Charles Balch (President) and Donald Morton (President-Elect) to appoint a Search Committee of three to four members, to be chaired by Dr. Robert Beart, to solicit and interview potential candidates for the Society's new journal.

At the SSO Executive Council meeting on October 13, 1992, Drs. David P. Winchester and Kirby Bland proposed and passed a motion to name the new SSO journal the *Annals of Surgical Oncology*. The Executive Council then unanimously appointed Dr. Charles Balch to the position of Editor-in-Chief of the *Annals of Surgical Oncology* and Drs. Donald Morton and Edward Copeland III as Associate Editors. Dr. Mark Roh was appointed as Assistant Editor until 1997, when he was appointed as Executive Editor. In

2010, Dr. Suzanne Klimberg was appointed as a Deputy Editor of the journal, with primary responsibilities in coordinating the educational and Continuing Medical Education functions of the journal, as well as serving as the journal's liaison with the newly created American Board of Surgical Oncology.

Box 1 Vision of the Journal

The *Annals of Surgical Oncology* (ASO) promotes high-quality surgical oncology management by communicating advances in research and education that are relevant and valuable for the provision of contemporary multidisciplinary care for surgical patients with cancer. ASO, the official journal of the SSO and, later on, the American Society of Breast Surgery, purposes to be the journal of choice for surgical oncologists worldwide regarding multidisciplinary oncology management, research and education

Box 2 Mission of the Journal

The mission of the journal is to serve its readers and authors by (1) representing and advancing the profession of surgical oncology throughout the nation and the world, (2) promoting the highest quality multidisciplinary patient care and practice management, (3) providing relevant cancer education and research training materials using print and electronic media, (4) promoting clinical and translational research, with an emphasis on clinical trials, (5) facilitating the career development of surgical trainees and their transition into academic and community-based practice, and (6) promoting public policy and patient advocacy issues relating to the surgical patient with cancer

In 1993, the SSO concluded negotiations with Mary Martin Rodgers and Rita Scheman (Raven Press) and Dr. Balch and James Slawny (SSO). The *Annals of Surgical Oncology* was launched in January 1994 with 6 issues and 534 pages per issue as “an oncology journal for surgeons” (Fig. 1).^{1,2} The first year of publishing of the ASO, the journal was accepted for indexing in the primary medical

TABLE 1 Timeline of *Annals* growth milestones

1991: SSO papers published in various journals, with the Presidential Address in the Archives of Surgery
1992: SSO decides to publish its own journal; contracts with Raven Press
1993: Dr. Balch appointed as Editor-in-Chief, Drs. Donald Morton and Edward Copeland as Associate Editors, and Dr. Mark Roh as Assistant Editor and Coleen Hubona as the Managing Editor
1994: First issue of ASO is published, 6 issues total in year
1998: Publication online as well as in print publishing
1999: Contract renewal with Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
2004: Contract with Springer
2005: Complete electronic peer review process
2005: Video and dynamic manuscripts published
2008: 14 issues published
2009: Color images published at no fee to authors
2010: ASBrS makes ASO their official journal
2013: 16 issues published
2013: MOC Part II CME credit available for selected articles

literature database (retroactive to volume 1, number 1, 1994). This was an important credential for the journal, for this designation was commonly made after 3 years of publishing.³

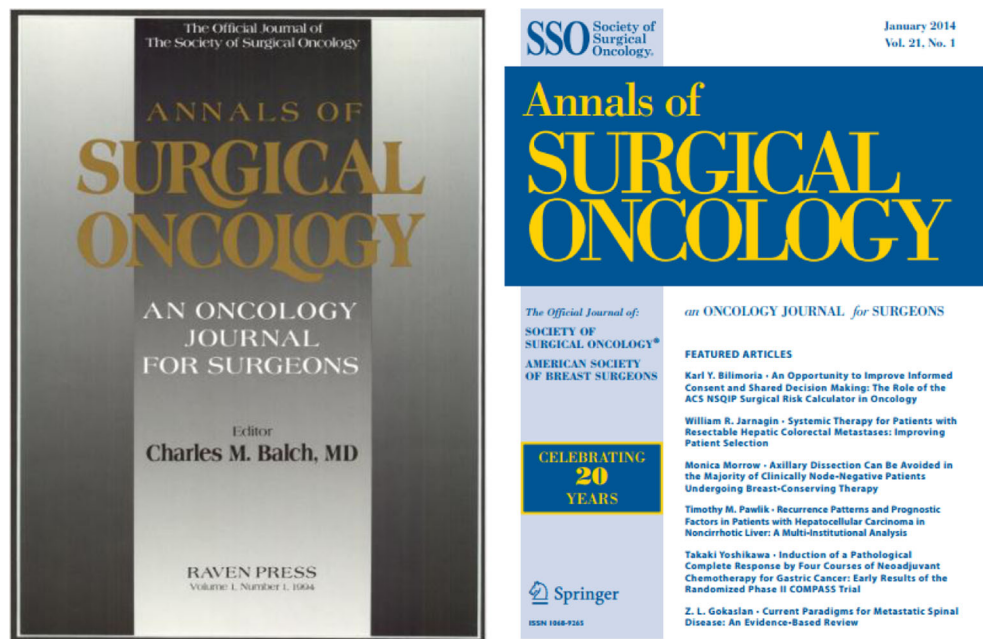
In 1995, Raven merged with L.W. Lippincott Co., forming Lippincott–Raven Publishers. The ASO journal production moved from New York to Philadelphia. In 1998, Lippincott–Raven merged with Williams and

Wilkins to form Lippincott Williams and Wilkins (LWW), and journal production moved to Baltimore.³ In 2004, the SSO entered into a long-term publishing contract with Springer (with US headquarters in New York City), which has continued to the present.

The first Executive Director was Colleen Hubona at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center from 1993 to 1998. Mr. Kurt Fried became the Executive Editor from 1999 to 2000, and Deborah Whippen and Mr. Ken Kornfield from 2000 to 2006. Then Deborah Whippen became the Senior Managing Editor from 2006 to the present. Today, the ASO Editorial Office receives approximately 50 manuscripts each week and engages over 2000 reviewers during the year. In 2013, the ASO published 4,404 pages in 16 issues plus 758 electronic pages offering CME on the various disciplines in surgical oncology, with links to lectures and on procedure videos. Figure 2 provides 20-year trendline data on multiple performance variables.

From the outset, the journal was organized to be a comprehensive journal that covers all topics, with a major focus on those cancers treated by the general surgery-based specialist (e.g., cancers of the breast, gastrointestinal tract, melanomas, and sarcomas), but also information that would be useful for surgeons practicing in other specialties, including the subspecialty areas of thoracic, head and neck, neurosurgery, orthopedics, plastic, endocrine, and gynecology, among others. In addition, from its beginning, the journal provided a venue for publishing significant new information from translational research laboratories.

FIG. 1 *Annals of Surgical Oncology* covers, Volume 1, Issue 1, 1994 and Volume 21, Issue 1, 2014



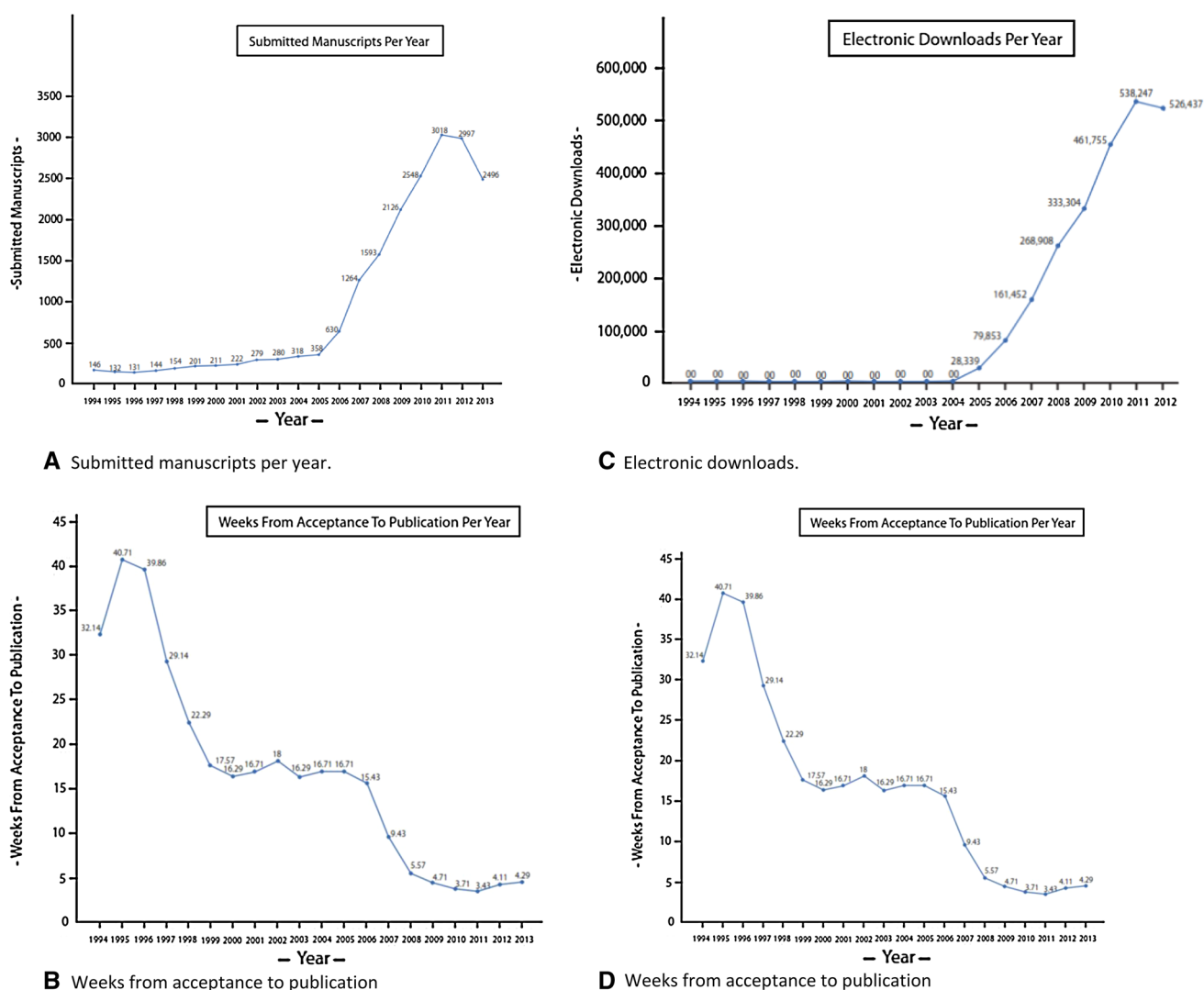


FIG. 2 Twenty-year trendline data (1994–2013)

AFFILIATIONS WITH SURGICAL ONCOLOGY SOCIETIES

From its inception in 1993, the ASO was the official journal of the SSO, whose 2,500 surgical members are predominantly practicing in an academic setting in the United States and abroad. In 2010, the American Society of Breast Surgeons (ASBrS) made the ASO its official journal for all its members. This relationship enhanced the access of its content to over 3,000 community-based surgeons, as well as breast surgical oncologists in academic settings.⁴

Other international societies have also adopted the ASO as an official journal as an optional membership benefit for the electronic version of the journal. These include the Mexican Oncology Society, the Japanese Society of Gastroenterological Surgery, the Indian Association of Surgical Oncology, and the Federation of Latin American Surgeons.

Supplementary important articles from major surgical meetings have been published in dedicated electronic issues, including the Japanese Society of Gastroenterological Surgery and the International Sentinel Node Society.

AUTHORS AS CLIENTS OF THE ASO

The ASO receives about 2,500 manuscripts for review during the year. Authors come from all over the world, with 36 % from Asia/Pacific, 30 % from North American, 28 % from Europe, and 6 % from the remainder of the world.

Traditionally, a medical journal wants to give a high priority to providing a fair, impartial, and timely review by peer experts. The journal editorial office is fortunate to have over 2,000 reviewers from all over the world. Two reviews are usually assigned by the Section Editor, who

provides his or her recommendation to the Executive Editor within 30 days on the average. The primary criteria for acceptance are based on significance, originality, relevance to the surgical reader, and how citable the article will be by peers in the field.

Once a manuscript is accepted in final form, the Editorial Office with support from the Publisher reformats the figures (in color) and tables for maximum visual appeal and exports the readied manuscript to the Publisher. Once received, after author approval of the proofs, the Publisher posts the final manuscript online, usually within 24 days from receipt. This electronic form is the official publication date. A print version is published in one of the 13 yearly print issues.

An important benchmark of a medical journal is the number of times a published article is cited by peer experts in the field. An average frequency of 3–4 citations per article or higher is generally considered to be characteristic of a creditable journal. The ASO achieved this distinction after only 7 years and has maintained a 2-year citation index of over 4 citations per article since 2009. Since the journal publishes a larger total number of publications per year than any other surgical journal, its total citations per year average over 2000, which is only slightly lower than the total citations per year of the *Annals of Surgery*, the most cited surgical journal in the world. Google has produced a metric tool called the h5 index, which provides a measure of sustained performance of journals rather than article. The h-index is intended to measure simultaneously the quantity (number of articles) and quality (impact or citations to those articles) of scientific output. The h5 index for the ASO for articles published from 2008 to 2012 is 73 (i.e., there were 73 articles published during that time period that have each been cited at least 73 times). The ASO ranks #3 among the entire universe of 198 surgical journals (*Annals of Surgery* is 88 and the *Journal of Vascular Surgery* is 77) and ranks #16 among all 196 oncology journals in the world.

READERS AS CLIENTS OF THE ASO

From its inception, the ASO purposed to publish original, scientifically important, and relevant articles that cover wide-ranging topics that covered all aspects of cancer patient management for the surgical patient with cancer.¹ It also contains commentary of most significant or practice-changing articles, with editorials by peer experts, educational reviews of contemporary topics, major addresses by the leadership of the SSO and ASBrS, an extensive video library of surgical technique, and abstracts of all presentations at the annual meetings of the SSO and ASBS.

ASO started as a bimonthly journal that published 76 manuscripts incorporating 534 pages in its first year. The

journal has experienced tremendous growth and now publishes 16 issues a year (including 3 supplements), 673 articles comprising over 4,400 pages a year (an eightfold increase), equivalent to four or five major textbooks a year. The journal is available through more than 10,000 medical institutions and libraries located throughout the world. The electronic medium of the journal is important, and access to the journal by readers in this medium has grown dramatically. Whereas in 2005 there were 28,000 downloads of articles, since then there has been a 19-fold increase to over 500,000 full-text downloads a year. Readers who download articles are from all over the world, especially from Asia/Pacific region (33 % of total), North America (31 %), and Europe (26 %). The central repository of published journal content is on SpringerLink (<http://www.SpringerLink.com>), which readers access directly or as a referral from a search result from key websites such as PubMed and Google Scholar, the SSO website (<http://www.surgonc.org>), the ASBrS website (<http://www.breastsurgeons.org>), the journal's web portal (<http://www.annsurgoncol.org>), and other websites relevant to surgeons treating patients with cancer.

ANNALS OF SURGICAL ONCOLOGY AS A GLOBAL JOURNAL

The *Annals'* commitment is to address the readership and author needs of the entire community of surgeons treating cancers of all types throughout the world. As such, the journal has been adopted as a venue for communicating new knowledge by surgeons from all over the world.⁵ One major benefit to authors is the wide reach of information to surgeons of all relevant specialties, anywhere they are practicing in the world. The editorial leadership of the journal has been broadened through the years to reflect the leadership of cancer surgeons not only in the United States, but also around the globe. The Editorial Board comprises members and Section leaders worldwide, and includes both national (US) and international Associate Editors. The journal also has three international Advisory Boards representing the geographic regions of Latin America, Asia/Pacific, and European/Middle East. The addition of these international leaders reflects the increased visibility, usage, and citations of ASO worldwide.

FUTURE OF THE ANNALS

The future of medical publishing is in a constant state of improvement and migration to electronic platforms. To this end, the ASO, working closely with Springer, has adopted a totally electronic platform for manuscript submissions, reviews, and publication. The ASO is enhancing its

multimedia publications of surgical technique and plans to create linkages to the oral presentations at the SSO and ASBrS meetings that are published in the journal. The use of social media is being implemented. With the initiation of Maintenance of Certification criteria, the ASO with the SSO has continued to expand the number of published articles that qualify for readers to use for Continuing Medical Education and MOC credit.⁶ This important educational activity was launched in 2013, with nine articles providing readers with MOC Part II credit.

With optimum care of patients as its ultimate goal, the journal communicates to those involved in this care the most relevant research and commentary. The future of the *Annals of Surgical Oncology* is its continued role as the leading peer-reviewed, international journal publishing important original research and education relevant to surgeons treating cancer patients worldwide.

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