e for editing

To you the reader, the most obvious change in the *Annals* today is the new-look colour scheme. We feel this has a cleaner, more attractive, appearance and hope that you will find it easier to read. Behind the scenes, however, there have been changes with much greater impact. Most important was the introduction of Open Journal Systems (OJS), our electronic manuscript handling system.

It would be wrong to pretend that introduction of OJS has been seamless, but the Editors believe that the problems have been resolved, and that the temporary pain is worth the longer term gain that OJS brings. We are grateful to those who have helped in the trial of OJS. This new system will be fully implemented at the start of 2011; the feedback and comments we have received from authors and reviewers have improved its function considerably. OJS enables us to track the progress of submitted manuscripts through the review and editing process, and to handle enquiries from authors more rapidly than before. It provides the Editors with ongoing feedback on the performance of reviewers, and enables us to select the right people to review, while avoiding overburdening busy individuals. We can now easily update our analyses of manuscript handling data. All of this should improve the service we provide to authors, and speed the publication process. This means that readers will get a better deal, with better papers published more quickly.

Throughout this year, we have worked in the *Annals* Office to improve the service we provide to authors. Processing of submitted papers has been quicker, not least as a result of the better tracking we have with OJS. Reviewers now receive reminders to return their review in good time, which was impossible to achieve with our old system. During 2010, we have considerably speeded the whole process: e-mail submissions of original research papers through our previous system get a decision after an average of 55 days; with OJS a decision is made after an average 36 days; research papers are published online an average of 35 days after acceptance (and we aim to reduce that further in 2011).

Readers sometimes wish to comment on papers and we have encouraged the use of our Readers' Pages (<<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/publications/readerspages/>>). This allows early, online publication of correspondence, and rapid responses from authors, which is sometimes difficult to

achieve in print, with publication eight times a year. Please use this route for all comments on published papers and other correspondence intended for publication.

A small change in approach which comes into effect in 2011 is the crisper format we have adopted for book reviews. Many readers appreciate these, but we had struggled to find room for the many good books we have reviewed, with the rather expansive several hundred words allowed up to now. We are now asking our Book Reviewers to give their opinion in 150–200 words.

There have been changes in personnel as well. Our Manager, Tara Nikovskis has moved overseas with her family, and we thank her for her contribution to the production of the *Annals*. Jon Hackett has taken over as *Annals* Manager, and we welcome his clear understanding of publication issues and his commitment to high standards. Adam Brownsell has rejoined the team, providing invaluable help with the implementation of OJS. We have appointed an Associate Editor, Jyoti Shah. Jyoti is a Urologist in Burton, and she has plans to develop a series of reviews covering peri-operative care, which should be of interest to a wide range of Fellows and Members. Our Editorial Board continues to evolve, adapting to changing needs of our readers and authors. The Board now functions as a team of Section Editors, and I find their contribution invaluable, particularly in the selection of appropriate reviewers for research papers. New names appear on our list of Reviewers this year, and I am grateful to all those who have helped in the selection of papers for publication.

Finally, this month we publish on the cover the first in a series of illustrations submitted by readers. Our intention is to have a new image for every issue, and to select the best image of the year for special mention. Every reader will have the chance to contribute to this selection on the website. Many images have already been received, but I hope that more will come. If you have an image of interest, whether scientific, clinical or artistic, please submit it. We hope that the range and quality of cover images will reflect the wide range of surgical practice.

Colin Johnson
Editor-in-Chief