Our specialty is blessed with a rainbow of journals. We have a gray journal (Radiology), a yellow journal (the American Journal of Roentgenology [AJR]), a red journal (Academic Radiology), and a green journal (Seminars in Roentgenology). These are great journals, and some have been around for a long time, Radiology since 1923 and the AJR for more than 100 years. And then there are myriad subspecialty journals, again wearing jackets of many colors. Suffice it to say that radiology has more than enough scientific journals, providing a spread of imaging information that extends from the esoteric wet benches of academia to the latest practical use of imaging for caring for patients in real clinical situations. In about 2000, to the best of our recollection, the coauthors independently begandreaming of a blue journal. Well, we didn’t think of it at that time as blue, but the way it turned out, it is blue and thus nicely complements the various colors of our literature already in existence.

In 2000, Harvey L. Neiman, MD, had just assumed the position as chairman of the ACR Board of Chancellors (BOC), and E. Stephen Amis Jr, MD, was the vice chair. The two had worked together for years, and both held the growth and success of the College as high priorities. In such a situation, it is perhaps not totally surprising that similar ideas might germinate in each of their minds independently. One day in about mid-2001, Steve sat at his computer and composed a lengthy e-mail to Harvey, setting forth his dream for a new journal for the College that would feature not the science of imaging but rather the many other factors that drive the successful practice of radiology. Steve’s computer has been exchanged at least 3 times in the past 12 years, and search though he might, that original e-mail no longer exists, unless perhaps on some lonely hard drive buried under tons of garbage in a dump somewhere. His e-mail, however, is well remembered. It outlined the idea for a new journal and what its contents might be. Included in a bulleted list of potential topics were economics, politics, quality, safety, product evaluation, managed care, billing issues, regulation, accreditation, guideline development, and many other nonscientific things that affect the way radiology works. The goal would be to not only provide a venue for the dissemination of useful information that might benefit radiologists, radiation oncologists, and medical physicists in their daily practices, there would also accrue to the College the prestige of publishing its own journal with its own name emblazoned across the front.Additionally, this new journal would be expected to add real value to membership in the ACR. Until that time, the major periodic publication of the College had been the ACR Bulletin, a very useful compendium of information about the College and current events, but nowhere near approaching the stature of the RSNA’s Radiology or ARRS’s AJR. A critical part of the vision was the creation of a journal for and by the College so chock full of practical information that, when it arrived in the mail, it would be the first thing opened, and the contents would be perused with great interest.

Harvey responded almost immediately that he had been thinking of essentially the same idea, thus sparking an in-depth discussion of the potential of actually publishing such a journal. Many ideas were fielded. It would provide a venue for the chair of the BOC to publish his or her monthly message. The editor would have a platform from which to editorialize. There could be recurring columns addressing many issues affecting radiology, such as the political climate inside the Beltway, reimbursement issues, developments in managed care, new regulatory requirements, changes in graduate medical education, medicolegal concerns, and a laundry list of other subjects. It might, and perhaps this was a naive idea from the start, serve as a place for comparative reviews of imaging equipment or for review of new technologies as they were introduced and approved for clinical use, although it was understood that such articles might invite displeasure among some vendors. Somewhat like what already occurs on the many online commentary forums maintained on AuntMinnie.com, it was thought that a new journal might allow the publication of roundtable discussions of hot topics, showcasing various viewpoints and inviting written responses from the ACR membership, some of which would be published.

A vehicle for publishing the written results of many ACR activities would allow a much broader audience than the then current tradition of those results simply undergoing
review by the BOC and the Council before being archived. Such output could include white papers generated by task forces, blue-ribbon panels, ad hoc committees, and the like, which now could be available in their entirety for perusal by all members of the College. The journal could showcase new and revised guidelines, technical standards, and ACR Appropriateness Criteria® on a timely basis. It could publish the annual orations of outgoing ACR presidents and the results of the ACR Forum, an annual think-tank initiative focusing on many different issues of timely concern to our specialty, as well as the results of the ACR Intersociety Conference summer meeting results. Opinion pieces could be solicited by the editor or submitted for review by members of the College and others.

And, perhaps most important, the new journal would strive for academic respectability by having a large part of its content be peer-reviewed papers submitted, rather than solicited. The ultimate goal for the journal, one that would lend it academic credibility, would be that it seek and be approved for indexing by the National Library of Medicine.

Initially, to obtain approval of the BOC for proceeding with what could potentially be a somewhat costly endeavor, it would be essential to seek the best possible contract with a publisher that would minimize the necessity for fiscal outlay by the ACR. Several publishers were approached, and the rigorous interview process resulted in the selection of Elsevier, a highly reputable publisher of medical books and periodicals, which presented the College with very favorable terms for a 5-year contract in starting up the new journal.

In preparing to present the concept of a new journal to the BOC, the ACR leadership realized that another hurdle would be the potential for objection from some BOC members regarding the possibility of competition between the College’s new journal and those already in existence. Such objections were indeed raised, and it was actually suggested that the new journal have no peer-reviewed articles as one means of preventing competition. Such a solution, however, would have resulted in only an expanded version of the ACR Bulletin. Another argument was that the existing journals occasionally published the types of articles that would be showcased by the new journal (eg, socioeconomics, politics, education, management), although admittedly in no organized fashion and in no designated sections. These and other concerns were subjected to thorough discussion by the BOC, and input was sought from the Council Steering Committee before the board reached the decision to approve the new journal and proceed. That decision was facilitated by the favorable financial terms proposed by Elsevier and by the general enthusiasm of the College leadership for this new venture and the benefits it would most likely bring to the College and its members. During all these discussions, a general consensus grew for naming the new journal the Journal of the American College of Radiology, or JACR, as it is now commonly known.

The leadership of the College and the BOC were united in their desire to successfully launch JACR. All were in agreement that the critical factor in ensuring the success of the new journal would be the selection of the right editor. Steve Amis chaired the search committee, and the net was cast wide for qualified and interested candidates. Several well-known and highly suitable applicants were invited to interview with the search committee. Of those, one, like cream in a bottle of milk, rapidly rose to the top of the list being considered by the committee members. Bruce J. Hillman, MD, who at that time was chair of radiology at the University of Virginia, enjoyed a long-standing reputation as an academician and researcher. Several accomplishments in his background made him the perfect first editor to spearhead the successful launch of JACR. These included serving as founding principal investigator and chair of ACRIN® from 1999 to 2007, as editor-in-chief of Investigative Radiology from 1989 to 1994, and as founding editor-in-chief of Academic Radiology from 1994 to 1997. The experience gleaned from these research and editorial positions virtually guaranteed a leader for JACR who could create a high-quality and captivating first issue and build from there. The BOC felt so strongly about supporting JACR that, going forward, its editor was appointed as a nonvoting member on the BOC who would attend all its meetings so that he or she would be familiar with all the functioning and initiatives of the College from the highest level down. Throughout this first decade of JACR, Dr Hillman has remained its steadfast and superb editor, continuing, as expected, to build its relevance to the practice of radiology, its reputation in our specialty, and the overall quality of its content. In January 2007, only 3 years after first issue of JACR was published, the National Library of Medicine accepted the journal for full indexing in Index Medicus, on MEDLINE, and on PubMed, retroactive to the first issue from January 2004. This was a major recognition of the quality of the peer-reviewed content of JACR, an accomplishment accepted by those in the academic community as a stamp of credibility.
Has JACR succeeded? Has it met the expectations of its two proposers, who together planned its birth? We think it has. It may not contain everything we envisioned (there have been no comparative equipment reviews), but in general, its pages are filled with the practical information we felt would benefit practicing radiologists and radiation oncologists. Is there as much advertising as we would have liked, to help reduce the cost of publication? No, but it continues to grow slowly, and across the industry, advertising is down, not up. Is JACR the first thing you open on the day it arrives in your mailbox? Do you flip to the contents page? If you answer yes, JACR has succeeded.

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