



“Sorry, we will only allow you to email the PDF to one researcher”

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A brief exchange on Twitter yesterday between [@David_Dobbs](#), [@para-sight](#) and to a lesser extent myself, reminded me of a story from 2007 that until now, has never been told and [prompted me](#) to write this post.

(Essentially, they were trying to share a dead tree copy PDF).



The story in question involved a lot of emails, a few phone calls and I can't be bothered reading through all the emails again, but I've glanced through most of them and recall the story in my head anyways.

In late 2006/early 2007, I established contact with Feature Writer, [Janyce Hamilton](#) in America. I provided her with some useful information for a piece she was working on at that time.

Her next piece which is the one this post relates to was going to be one on [Prions](#) and dentistry which she was working on to have published in the prestigious dental journal, [California Dental Association](#) (CDA).

After review, the piece was accepted for publication and she was sent 100 glossy reprints and I agreed to assist her in the dissemination process at least here in the UK.

We then discussed the fact that this snail mail method was a tad web 0.0 so what could we do collectively to come up with a better methodology?



The CDA at that time was Toll Access (*it flipped to Open Access later that year [as I blogged here](#)*) so neither of us at **stage one** of the dissemination process had an electronic copy. <sigh>

Janyce shipped me 10 reprints so it was my intention to snail mail these to my relevant contacts at The Department of Heath, CJD Surveillance Unit, Health Protection Agency and so on.

Stage two. Dang, we could sure do with a PDF copy. Hhmm. My scanner was defunct and the one we had at work was out of bounds.

So I sent a reprint to a colleague in the UK, but they were in America at the time. A relative of theirs however, scanned a perfect high res. copy for me and emailed me it. **BINGO !!!**

Stage three. In the meantime, Janyce was in touch with the CDA to see whether or not they would send her the actual PDF and after much ado they did.

However, she received three conflicting emails. I can't recall in what order but

- "here is the PDF but we only allow you to email it to [Prof. Stanley Prusiner](#)"
- "we don't want our copyrighted PDF flying about everywhere"
- "Go ahead. We're working on opening access to the Journal so that everything older than six months will be available to everyone".

In the end, the "official" PDF which was identical to our "home made version" WAS emailed to Prusiner, I emailed a large volume of copies in bulk dumps to loads of contacts. For a bit of fun, we both listened simultaneously to "Push The Button (Galvanize)" by The Chemical Brothers when I did this.... As you do

A day or so later, Janyce said:-

More than 100 copies of the article were snail-mailed to every single U.S. dental school dean today, as well as most of the dental editors of journals in the U.S. (and one in Canada). They will get that mailing by Friday. It was an expensive investment in terms of postage and copying costs. I'm about done with the phases, as I'm sure you are in terms of this article".

Man, this whole reprint thing was/is a right pain in the arse and to me is simply another money spinner

for Journals especially so in the digital age we live in (*well most of us*). Science is digital, baby....

The subject matter is not really important in terms of this post, but here is **Prions: Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and Dental Transmission Risk Assessment** This article looks at the complex questions around the implications of emerging data on the abnormal prion protein and infection control during hospital-based procedures as well as dental and oral and maxillofacial surgeries.

Janyce Hamilton

And my response, also published in the CDA.