



FDI World Dental Federation
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The FDI Homepage on the Internet

The homepage of FDI is now the most visited site targeted for dental professionals on the Internet. Alexa.com is an online program that ranks all web sites on the Internet according to number of visitors. The FDI web site is now ranked as #115687, a remarkable improvement since April 2001 when the site was ranked as #991638. This places the FDI web site as the second most visited web site in dentistry following the homepage of ADA. The closest relevant sites for comparison are the American Dental Educators Association (ADEA) (#289523), IADR (#319647) and NIDCR (#363632).

This extraordinary improvement has been accomplished as a result of both foreground and, more importantly on background developments on the web site. The foreground, i.e. visual, improvements have consisted of substantial additions, redesign and general improvement of the contents of the site. Background, or non-visual, developments have included modification of the coding of the web software to take advantage of how the major Internet searching robots function. Additionally, the web address has been actively positioned on certain key website resources. A more detailed and/or technical description of the activities can be explained by undersigned if warranted.

Perhaps the most noteworthy fact is that these web site developments have cost FDI less than £1000, in consideration that many corporations and organizations allocate substantial resources on design and maintenance of Internet web site to acquire attention by their prime target users.

Web site use

The provider of the server computer located in London monitors the usage of the different parts of the website on a daily basis. The six largest user groups are in descending order USA, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Japan and France. Various principles for registering the usage of the site are available and key figures are e.g. 30.000 to 35.000 referrals to the site weekly, 3000 to 4000 user sessions weekly who access between 13.000 to 15.000 pages of the web site weekly. The two singular topics of interest for our users is information about the Vienna congress (10-25% of the total activity), and use of the guidelines database (10-20%) (percentages refer to weekly variations). Other popular parts of the homepage are the dental resources (10-15%) and dental informatics (5-10%). The sections on various aspects of the FDI organisation are infrequently visited.

History

Undersigned became involved in the development of FDI's homepage in February 2001, when the first version of the "Guidelines database" was added to the website. The idea of such database emerged after participating in the FDI science commission as a newly elected member, and is meant to guide national dental associations to resources on specific dental topics of interest. As I have a formal education in computer sciences and substantial experience in computer use this was fairly easy to structure. In cooperation with Ms Sheila Sheehan, the FDI IT manager, a system was set up so that the master database is located in Oslo and updates are transferred on the server computer in London via a telephone link. This arrangement functioned without problems on a number of occasions when updating the database. I found it particularly important to include in this database all past activities of the FDI committees and commissions and spent substantial time adding and modifying old and new reports and policy statements on the FDI website. When Dr John O'Keefe in CEC submitted in April 2001 a comprehensive analysis on potential FDI homepage developments it followed naturally that I assisted the staff at head office in improving some of the issues Dr O'Keefe had addressed. This assistance increased of course following my appointment as Science Manager from 1 September.

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That the system for data transfer is in function now has been instrumental in updating the FDI web site since mid-December, because the new head office in Ferney-Voltaire can pr. 22.2 still not access neither the new computer server in France nor the old server in London. All modifications in this period have been made on a computer in Oslo following email instructions from Ferney-Voltaire and subsequently transferred to the server computer in London.

Further improvements on the web site will be initiated once the computer infrastructure is in order in Ferney-Voltaire, with a functioning new web site address and control that the site search indexing working properly. Once this is in order the new Internet address will be promoted. A very realistic aim is to develop the FDI web site further to become the most valuable, complete and reliable Internet source available for dental professionals.

More focus on developing dentistry and science developments

The main contents of the homepage have mainly focused on the FDI organisation, FDI World Dental Press, the FDI Congresses and on international dental data. These sections will remain and be improved upon continuously. Two more subjects will obtain more focus on the site than before, i.e. development dentistry and dental resources. The need to focus on oral health in a global perspective should be an essential obligation for a world dental organisation and FDI's commitment to promote developing dentistry will be reflected. The development of this part of the site will be an important task for the development manager, Dr Habib Benzian.

The part of the web site titled "dental resources" includes information of relevance and hopefully of interest for dental professionals. Currently, it contains the database of guidelines in dentistry, now containing about 700 links and references. In addition, there is a link list to 74 dental journals that are electronically available and a link list to about 60 web-based continuous dental education providers. Moreover, I intend to develop further the databases titled "Emerging Health Care Technologies in Dentistry" and "Inquiries - Dental Science". These two last resources site will be developed part on basis of inquiries from colleagues or as the result of a more pro-active promotion of what should be considered new cutting-edge clinical dental science, i.e. a presentation of evidence based dentistry.

Specifically, these particular resources reflect inquiries on scientific matters in dentistry coming from dental associations or individual dentists. I try as best as possible to give some guidance or advice about specific questions by pointing out available information on the WWW, meeting proceedings or clinical guidelines or the best science that is available to answer the question. By best science is meant the hierarchy described on the web site of the Centre for evidence-based medicine in Oxford, UK. The references are hyperlinked to Medline abstracts, and some resources are also freely available on the web. The actual paper is also in most cases hyperlinked to an electronic version, but users will in most cases need to pay to access the paper. I hope FDI in the future somehow can come to an agreement with publishers so identified papers of high scientific quality will be available for downloading from the FDI site.

All identified articles are accompanied with a commentary written either by undersigned, by members of the FDI science commission or following an arrangement organised within the IADR structure. This cooperation will be a topic for discussion between undersigned and IADR representatives at the upcoming IADR meeting 2-4 March. I believe it is imperative that the dental resources section of the web site is quality assured by the science commission.

Since the FDI web site now is the world's most used website by dentists, a question may be raised regarding advertisement on the site. The number of questions that needs to be addressed is too extensive to include in this short report. However, the potential economic gain needs to be balanced against a possible loss of credibility.

Oslo 25 February 2002
Asbjorn Jokstad
Science Manager