

The evolution of ENGINEERING DIMENSIONS

PEO's OFFICIAL PUBLICATION CAN'T AFFORD TO REMAIN STATIC FOR VERY LONG. AS COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY EVOLVES, READERS EXPECT MORE CHOICE AND CONVENIENCE IN HOW THEY ACCESS INFORMATION. **By Michael Mastromatteo**

Section 9 of the *Professional Engineers Act* (PEA) is a short item—in fact, a single sentence—describing PEO council's obligation to establish and designate “an official publication” of the association. Since 1980, PEO has fulfilled that obligation by publishing this magazine, with its central objective of focusing on the legal, regulatory and ethical aspects of the engineering profession, as well as reporting on PEO operations and chapter activities.

The magazine also serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas among licence holders and as a showcase for the achievements of engineers and the profession's public protection imperative. A more high-level intention is to promote public awareness of the PEA, the role of the association and the responsibilities of professional engineers.

PEO's official publication has the additional objective of being an interesting, informative and stimulating periodical.

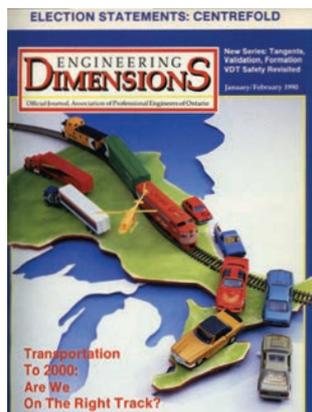
Engineering Dimensions has been the primary vehicle for communication with PEO's licence holders and engineering interns for more than 35 years. The inaugural issue appeared in May 1980. Prior to that, the association's publication was a yellow-paged insert known as *Ontario Digest*, which was carried within a commercial publication called *Engineering Digest*.

Since the early 1980s, the magazine has evolved to the colourful publication it is today.

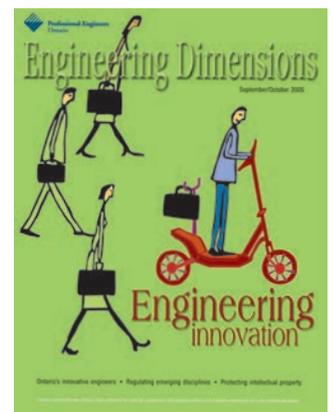
Over the last three and a half decades, there have been several redesigns to help keep *Engineering Dimensions* fresh and inviting to its now more than 90,000 readers. But the technological changes that have disrupted mainstream newspaper



1980



1990



2005

and magazine publishing require that PEO's official publication adapt to changing times.

OLD MEETS NEW

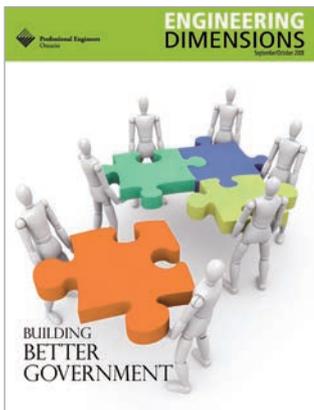
When adapting, however, *Engineering Dimensions* always looks to preserve the best of the old and combine it with the immediacy and convenience of the new. This explains not only the periodic magazine redesigns—the next one is scheduled to debut in January 2017—but also the launch this issue of our web edition.

The web edition was created to allow readers access to magazine content quickly and easily, and should be especially helpful for members who aren't comfortable with the existing digital edition, and those with vision difficulties who require text-to-speech tools. This new platform deliberately keeps photos and other visuals to a minimum. (See web edition feature on page 48.)

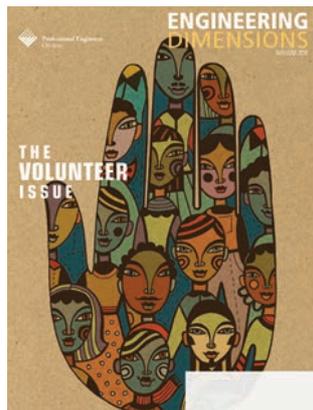
The most recent redesign of the print edition in 2008 was aimed, in part, at creating more white space to make the design less dense, and increasing the use of photos and other graphic elements throughout to increase the magazine's visual appeal and respond to reader complaints of long banks of unbroken text.

That effort also coincided with PEO's decision to offer readers the option of choosing a digital edition of *Engineering Dimensions* instead of the original print edition. PDF (portable document format) files of the magazine have been available from PEO's website since 1999.

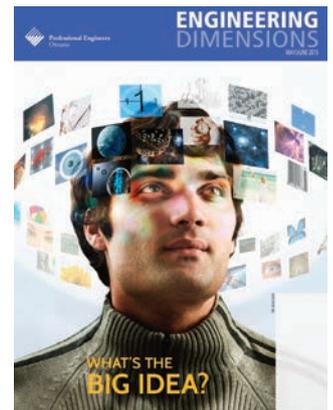
Introduction of the magazine's optional digital edition was seen as an environmentally friendly, cost-conserving move that would allow readers to take advantage of the latest communications technology to read PEO's official publication in an interactive format on computers and other electronic devices.



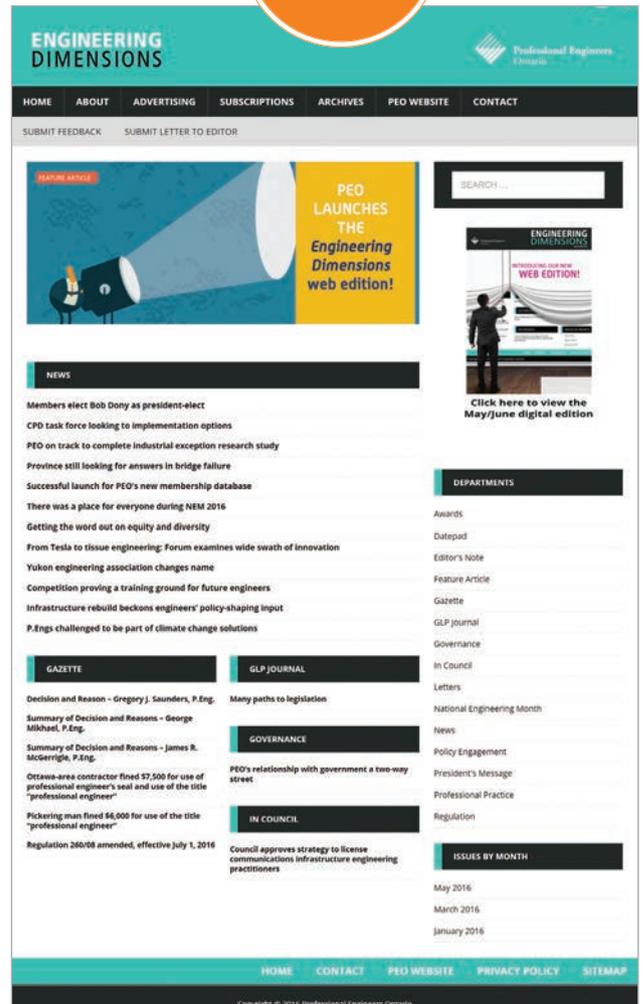
2008



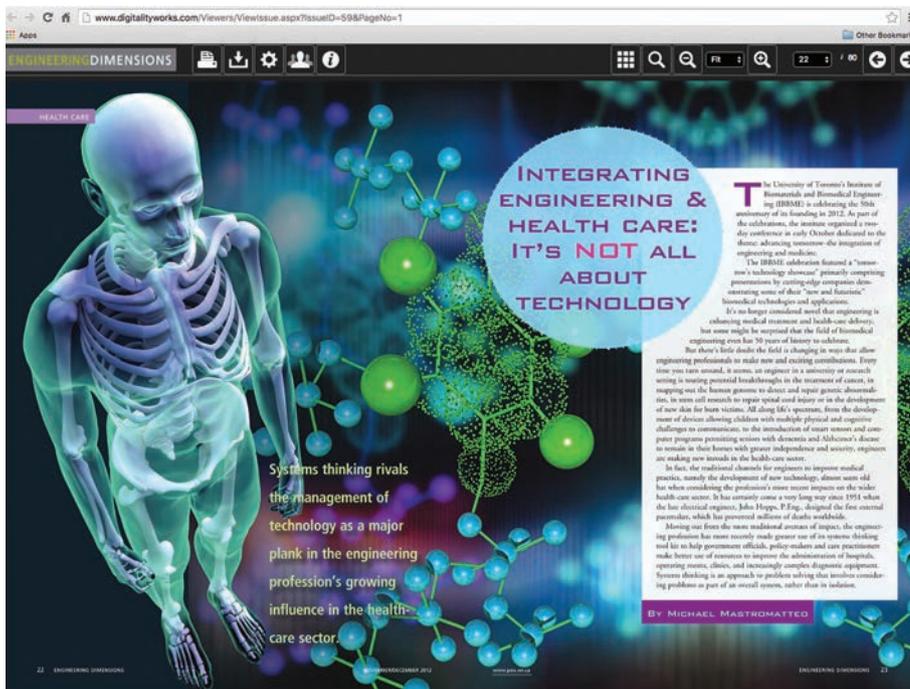
2010



2015



While not replacing the print or digital editions, PEO's new web edition was created to let readers access magazine content quickly and easily.



The *Engineering Dimensions* digital edition electronically replicates the experience of reading a physical magazine.

The digital edition was offered as a voluntary alternative to the print edition on request—and many readers did request it. Members had been telling us for years that we ought to offer the magazine in an electronic format—if only to save some trees.

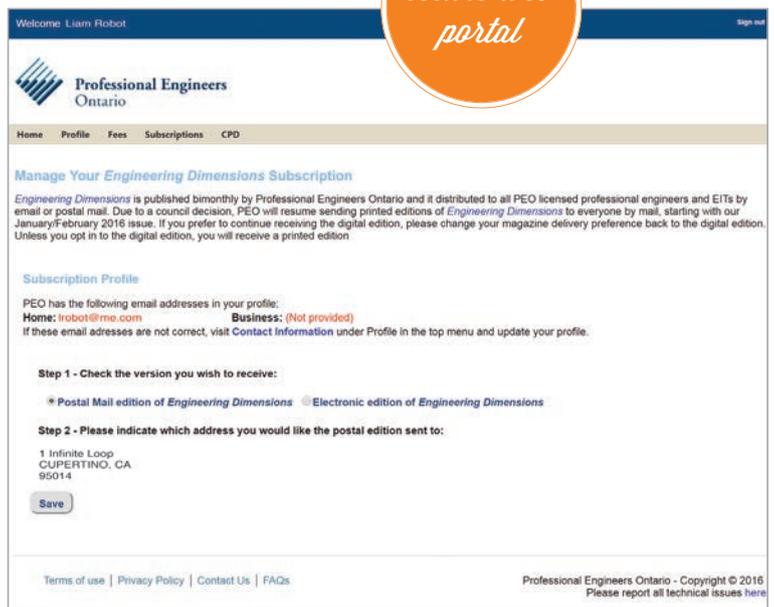
The digital edition allows readers to view the magazine online in the same way you would a printed magazine, by “flipping” electronic pages, with the added opportunity to have more interaction with source material, contributors and advertisers through embedded web links.

Some five years after the introduction of the digital version, PEO council decided the digital edition would be the default edition for members unless they requested the print edition, as part of PEO’s “going paperless” cost-saving, environmentally friendly initiative. The March/April 2013 issue was the first digital edition delivered by default to members who hadn’t requested that they continue to receive the print edition.

Readers were given six months’ notice of the impending digital default and some 15,000 of them opted to continue receiving the print edition in the mail by using the self-serve subscription options through the PEO web portal (www.peo.on.ca, under the Pay Fees/Manage Account tab), or by contacting PEO’s document management centre.

In fact, ever since the introduction of the digital edition in 2008, readers have had the option

of switching from print to digital—and back again—at any time by changing their subscription options. This ability to switch subscription preferences continues today, although licence holders and engineering interns must receive one of the print or digital editions, even if they decide to read the publication online through the new *Engineering Dimensions* web edition.



REVERTING TO PRINT

Despite the interactive and cost-saving advantages of the digital edition, in September 2015, PEO council voted to revert to the print edition as the edition to be sent to readers, unless they explicitly requested otherwise. PEO Vice President Pat Quinn, PhD (Hons), P.Eng., FEC, brought the motion to switch back to print to council.

Quinn explained to councillors the results of several magazine reader surveys and a third-party communications audit conducted in 2015 indicated fewer people actually read the digital edition of the magazine than read the print edition when it was the default version sent to readers. The communications audit stated: “*Engineering Dimensions* is the identified official publication of PEO. The magazine is well known but not necessarily well-read.” The audit report noted that most of the people interviewed during the course of the audit admitted to reading *Engineering Dimensions* less often or not at all since the digital edition became the default publishing and delivery option.

“Because *Engineering Dimensions* represents the most viable and widely recognized communications tool for an interactive relationship with licence holders and future licence holders, PEO must make it as engaging and accessible to as many of them as possible,” Quinn said in his briefing note to council. “Reverting to sending the print edition to everyone who does not request the digital edition would be a step in this direction.”

The January/February 2016 issue was the first of the assumptive “print for all” issues since the January/February 2013 issue.

MANAGING SUBSCRIPTIONS

As previously mentioned, members have been able to switch their personal magazine subscription preference at any time by visiting www.peo.on.ca and clicking the Pay Fees/Manage Account tab.

Although PDF files and the new web edition are available for the convenience of readers, licence holders and engineering interns must choose

between receiving the print edition or the digital edition (not both) for auditing purposes and to fulfill PEO’s requirements under the PEA.

There is an online tutorial that helps readers manage their subscription options, which details what readers must do to switch from one edition to another. It has been linked through the PEO website portal with the new Aptify database that was implemented April 1.

IN SOME WAYS, STATUS QUO

Despite the choice of delivery options, many elements of the magazine remain unchanged. There will always be a blend of news, commentary and in-depth features in each issue. Such departments as President’s Message, GLP Journal, Gazette, Professional Practice, Letters and Viewpoint are integral to the magazine and will remain a part of the next generation of *Engineering Dimensions*.

In particular, one of the most popular sections of the magazine, Gazette, which reports discipline decisions and reasons, enforcement actions, and regulation and PEA amendments, will always have special prominence, when material to fill the section is available.

As Linda Latham, P.Eng., deputy registrar, regulatory compliance, noted in a recent letter to the editor (“Responding to Mr. Baigent,” *Engineering Dimensions*, March/April 2016, p. 48), the Discipline Committee looks to issue its written decisions as soon as possible after each hearing. However, due to the varying amount of time it takes for some decisions to become final, there are times when insufficient material is available to fill Gazette. This results in some issues of the magazine not including any discipline decisions.

LOOKING AHEAD

By making additional platforms available, and by blending traditional with new, the *Engineering Dimensions* team hopes to extend the reach, influence and immediacy of PEO’s official publication, and produce a magazine that delivers content that is not only informative, but interesting, too. Σ