

New Open Access Initiative Launched

An expression of interest made public in mid-March has already been signed by over 40 organizations



At the conference in Berlin: Chairperson Ulrich Pöschl (third from left) with DFG President Peter Strohschneider (second from left) and Gerard Meijjer, President of Radboud University (left).

A growing number of international research organizations are endeavoring to convert the majority of scientific journals currently published on a subscription basis to open access (OA) publishing. This goal was discussed at the 12th Open Access Berlin Conference hosted by the Max Planck Society in late 2015.

The expression of interest (EoI) was published in mid-March.

The EoI calls on all parties concerned to “work toward a rapid and efficient transition for the benefit of science and society,” and has already been endorsed by more than 40 organizations. “Direct access to specialist articles is a key factor

in achieving scientific progress in the digital age. The time has come to make open access the publishing standard. Only by coordinating our activities internationally can we succeed in achieving this goal,” says Max Planck President Martin Stratmann.

The first signatories include the FWF Austrian Science Fund, the Dutch research organization NWO and the European University Association, which represents more than 800 institutions of higher education in 47 European countries. From Germany, this group includes the German Research Foundation (DFG), the German Rectors’ Conference, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, the Helmholtz Society, the Leibniz Society and the Max Planck Society. The European Research Council (ERC), which has no specific publication funds, also supports the initiative in its own position statement.

According to the EoI, the objective is “to convert a majority of today’s scientific journals from a subscription model to OA publishing.” This transformation is to be achieved by using “funding currently spent on subscriptions to scientific journals to fund sustainable OA business models.”

Studies showing that the conversion from traditional scientific publications to the OA model is feasible with the available funding were also discussed at the Berlin conference, which was chaired by Ulrich Pöschl, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, who is the scientific open access coordinator at the Max Planck Society. The Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL) – which is coordinating the “OA2020” transformation initiative associated with the EoI – also presented such analyses. The plans also call for the establishment of a network with national points of contact in Europe, Canada, the US, China, Japan, South Korea and other countries. As Ralf Schimmer from the MPDL explains, “All parties concerned will agree on specific steps in the transformation process in the form of a roadmap.”

About OA2020

OA2020 is an initiative under the umbrella of the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, which has been embraced by more than 540 signatory institutions. Building on the Mission Statement of 2013, OA2020 aims to accelerate the transition to open access by transforming the existing corpus of scientific journals from their current subscription system to open access.

Over the course of the last 10 - 15 years, open access has become a shared vision of many if not most of the world’s national and international research councils. Open access as a principle is very well established in the international discourse on research policies; however, open access as a practice has yet to transform the traditional subscription-based publishing system, which is as vigorous and prosperous as ever, despite its inherent restrictions on access and usage and its remarkable detachment from the potentials of a 21st century web-based publishing system.

 www.ia2020.org

Kick-off for Cooperation in Hong Kong

Max Planck researchers establish contacts with potential research partners at three-day symposium

Max Planck Society scientists are involved in many projects in China, and traditionally especially with colleagues from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. A total of four Max Planck Directors and twelve Max Planck Research Group Leaders from seven institutes traveled to Hong Kong in early April to share information and ideas on their research work with around forty select junior scientists from five Hong Kong universities. Both the public lectures at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the follow-up workshops in small groups focused primarily on topics in physics and the life sciences.

Joachim Spatz, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, heads up the initiative for the Max Planck Society. A key partner, in addition to the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), is the Croucher Foundation – a private foundation that applies the Harnack principle and supports outstanding junior scientists from Hong Kong. Following the successful kick-off, the partners now want to further discuss how cooperative projects can be set up on appropriate research topics.



Kicking it off with a handshake: Joachim Spatz, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, welcomes King L. Chow from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Alumni Symposium Holds Premiere in Berlin

New platform for exchange of career ideas

What career path should I pursue after leaving Max Planck? Should I go into research or industry? What have other alumni chosen to do? And how can they be better integrated into the Max Planck Society today? These and other questions will be discussed at Harnack House from August 22 to 24 at the first "Max Planck Symposium for Alumni and Early Career Researchers," which provides a new platform for ex-

change between alumni, the Max Planck Alumni Association and junior scientists. "International guests will report on their alumni work, and we will build on their experience with all participants, for example by developing joint projects between the Max Planck Society and its alumni," explains Filippo Guarnieri, co-organizer and head of the Max Planck Alumni Association.

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 ☉ To register, visit: www.mpg.de/symposium2016

Diverse Objectives – Diverse Careers

On a visit to Munich, PhDnet presented its 2016 agenda



The PhDnet Steering Group: General Secretary Cátia Crespo, Spokesperson Martin Grund (front, center), Financial Officer Roman Prinz (front, right) and Sections Representatives Yorick Peterse (BMS), José Martínez (CPTS) and Christian Sternberg for the HSSS, (back, from left).

Whenever the Steering Group of PhDnet visits Administrative Headquarters, it is always a little livelier in the corridors – and this visit, when the new members traveled to Munich for discussions with President Martin Stratmann and Secretary General Ludwig Kronthaler, was no exception.


They came from four different federal states, and this broad array also reflected one of this year’s main issues: the need for diversity. “And this applies in every respect,” says spokesperson Martin Grund from the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig. “A workgroup was set up at our annual meeting specifical-

ly to ensure that doctoral students are actively supported regardless of gender, sexual orientation or background, and with consideration for chronic diseases and disabilities – in short, to ensure that the full spectrum of individual life plans is taken into account.”

The Steering Group, which represents around 3,500 Max Planck doctoral students, has plenty of ideas about how to champion such diversity. “Bringing the number of vacation days into line with that of the collective agreement for civil service employees would be a step in the right direction, as it would send an important signal to doctoral students from abroad,

families and those with disabilities.” The PhDnet workgroup is also considering “diversity days” or special soft-skills seminars.

PhDnet advocates more professional and centrally managed career advisory services covering career paths both within and outside of science. This issue will also be the focus of the career fair, which, following its successful premiere last year, will again bring doctoral students into contact with potential employers at the Visions in Science conference from September 16 to 18.

 www.phdnet.mpg.de