

## DPG Position Paper on the Future of Scientific Publishing

The German Physical Society (DPG) is committed to the universal accessibility of research results, to innovative and quality-assuring publication models, and to establishing a transparent cost structure.

In order to realise and maximise freedom of science, the publication ecosystem should be shaped "by scientists for scientists": Decision making and responsibility should be concentrated with the researchers. In turn, the scientific community needs to take responsibility, by choosing appropriate publication methods for research results; and by arriving at decisions on projects and careers not on the basis of indirect bibliometric indicators, but through direct assessments of scientific quality.

In view of scope and dynamics of current developments in scientific publishing, the DPG has tasked itself with summarising key items from the point of view of practising scientists.

### **General accessibility (Open Access, OA):**

Physics has played a decisive role in developing Open Access publication formats, not only through the preprint server arXiv, but also, for example, through the New Journal of Physics launched by the IOP and DPG. In order to guarantee universal accessibility of research results, we propose recognising the 'last submitted version' of an article as an Open Access version. This would largely, and cheaply, decouple the accessibility of research results from negotiations with commercial publishers. Concerning the financing of Open Access, we further note the following:

- The DPG rejects an arrangement in which the current subscription model is essentially retained and supplemented with additional payments by the authors for Open Access.
- Similarly, 'fixed price models', in which OA articles are essentially remunerated with lump sums, can only be justified as a transition to a transparent, cost-realistic model (see below), unless these sums are in turn regularly adjusted in a cost-realistic manner in fair negotiations between publishers and the scientific community.
- Research funding institutions should support stable financial frameworks for those non-commercial platforms that are for use free of charge by both authors and readers.

### **Cost and data transparency for publishers:**

To ensure a transparency in the cost structure as well as in the use of data, we propose the following measure:

- Realistic costs: pricing for the services provided by publishers must be justifiable against a 'best practice' benchmark.
- Unbundling: it must be transparent what services are rendered at what cost, in order to prevent bundled arrangements (e.g. in the form of journal packages, or by including the provision of metadata) from being overpriced. In particular, agreements between funding institutions and the publishers must be publicly accessible.
- Bibliometric raw data should be made generally available by all publishers in order to open the market for their analysis.
- Non-transparent harvesting and resale of user data by publishers must not take place.
- In this sense, the DPG welcomes the strategy of current 'transformative agreements' such as DEAL, whose current shape should not be seen as the final destination, but rather as an intermediate step of necessary structural reforms.

### **Lowering the entry threshold for new players and models in the publishing sector:**

Markets with only a few, or even a single one, dominant actors inherently offer only limited competition. A central goal of all reforms must therefore be to assure fair market access for innovative forces. Thus, legacy advantages and disadvantages - such as the existence of a back catalogue as a bargaining chip or the lack of bibliometric parameters for new publications - must not lead to an unreasonable impediment to market entry.

Another aim of reforms is to remedy the asymmetry between publishers and individual researchers. In this vein, scope and exclusivity of licences needs to be limited in the sense of a best practise; and imbalanced clauses, which for example settle the authors with excessive liabilities, need to be proscribed.

These goals are not to be achieved with a set of detailed regulations, and we do not expect research funding institutions to declare specific models as mandatory. Rather, we would like to promote the development of a framework within which freedom, innovation and competition can flourish.

### Tasks of the scientific community:

Role and profitability of scientific publishers are viewed critically in parts of the scientific community. A particular point of criticism is the considerable influence on research content and career decisions of editors who are neither active in science nor necessarily obliged to carry out such tasks. It is not healthy for science if, on the one hand, the decision which articles are reviewed is taken by people with limited specific expertise while on the other, the reputation of the journals concerned (as e.g. measured by an impact factor) and not the quality of the articles themselves play a role in funding and appointment decisions. In particular, consideration of indirect parameters such as the impact factor should be rejected in this context as a matter of principle. Formulating an appropriate policy in this regard, and to eliminate such reputational criteria from appointment procedures and performance evaluations is the task of the community of scientists, together with research funding agencies—this is not the task of those publishers who have successfully established certain journals as strong brands.

At the same time, the scientific community needs to address the question to what extent it wants to participate in 'cascaded' publishing models (the transfer of manuscripts to journals of sequentially lower reputation) and thus contribute to extending the market power of the publishers with the most prominent titles deep into the market.

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