

THE EUROPEAN PHYSICAL JOURNAL (EPJ)

CELEBRATES ITS 10 YEARS >>> PUBLICATIONS

As Europe rightly celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome last year, we are left to ponder what aspects of unification may have been overlooked so far. Scientific publishing plays a prominent role as it links economics with scientific and cultural issues and could thus be considered a good testbed for European “self-assurance” in this field. In the following discussion we shall restrict ourselves to the physical sciences, though many facets of this issue are readily transferable to other natural sciences.

By the 1960s it had become evident that the focus of scientific research and publishing in physics had moved from Europe to the US, still it took a long time to realize that the individual European journals would have to team up, in order to present a serious alternative to their efficient US based counterparts. It was only in 1986 that the first significant merger took place when the *Lettere al Nuovo Cimento* (Italian Physical Society, SIF) combined with the *Journal de Lettres Physique* (EDP Sciences/ French Physical Society) to form *Europhysics Letters* (EPL), under the scientific leadership of the European Physical Society (EPS).

The launch of EPL could only be the first step. In the 1990s, further negotiations began between a number of national physics communities and publishers concerned by the prospect of a unified European publishing platform to merge many, if not all of their physics journals. Eventually, in 1998, The European Physical Journal (EPJ, Fig.1) was launched as a merger of *Il Nuovo Cimento* (SIF), *Journal de Physique* (EDPS) and *Zeitschrift für Physik* (Springer). This represented the most important move yet in terms of combined size and impact. Indeed, ten years later, EPJ has succeeded in transcending its national roots, receiving high-level papers from all over the world (by

► FIG. 1:
Logo of
The European
Physical
Journal (EPJ)
www.epj.org



now more than 3,000 per year) and conversely being distributed, mostly electronically, to some 4200 institutions worldwide with an enormous surge of visibility and usage... (Fig 2).

The combined archives of EPJ and of its predecessor journals contain an unparalleled treasury of 20th century physics publications [1]. As of today, EPJ is proud to present itself as a continuation of *Acta Physica Hungarica*, *Anales de Fisica*, *Czechoslovak Journal of Physics*, *Il Nuovo Cimento*, *Journal de Physique*, *Portugaliae Physica* and *Zeitschrift für Physik*. Yet, the European landscape remains fragmented, an issue that the European Physical Society plans to address in a larger context in the near future [2]. Meanwhile, EPL and EPJ (as well as other cooperating journals) are related

to each other through an editorial transfer agreement, allowing the transfer of papers in relevant cases [3].

EPJ currently consists of seven distinct journals: EPJ A - Hadrons and Nuclei, EPJ B - Condensed Matter and Complex Systems, EPJ C - Particles and Fields, EPJ D - Atomic, Molecular, Optical and Plasma Physics, EPJ E - Soft Matter (since 2000), EPJ AP - Applied Physics and EPJ ST - Special Topics (since 2007).

The journal also experiments with new publishing models such as open-access publishing [4] and combines any modern approaches with the traditional careful and personalized evaluation of submitted work as well as thorough copy-editing of manuscripts.

Last but not least, EPJ is an excellent example of cooperation between learned societies and publishers. It is through the combination of their efforts that this platform can exist as an independent, high-quality and economically self-sustained part of the European science industry. ■

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The EPJ Steering Committee

▼ FIG. 2:
Rapidly
increasing
visibility and
usage of EPJ



References

- [1] Currently being built at www.epj.org/archives.html
- [2] O Poulsen: Physics in Europe, *Europhys. News* 37/2 (2006)
- [3] www.epj.org/_pdf/transfer.pdf
- [4] www.epj.org/open_access.html