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**The Road to Publication**

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# Spreading Publication Cost Information with the Electronic Journals Library (EZB)

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**Abstract**

The Electronic Journals Library (EZB) presents e-journals to library users in a clearly structured, user-friendly interface and provides its member libraries with an efficient administrative tool for e-journal licences. Furthermore, the EZB offers information on more than 110,000 e-journals from all subject areas, including 75,000 freely available titles. Over 650 libraries and research institutions – mostly from German-speaking countries – jointly maintain the EZB data, ensuring that journal information is of a high standard and constantly updated.

This makes the EZB a reliable hub for high-quality, up-to-date data in the library world. It provides data for various user services delivering literature and research information. Within the scope of the openCost project, the EZB will be further extended by additional data on publication

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costs and new functionalities for displaying and delivering these cost data via various existing EZB interfaces. These innovations include enhanced user information on whether their institution covers these publication costs, either via transformative agreements or via its publication funds. This is also being achieved by means of new journal categories, an OpenAPC integration, and better integration of transformative agreements via ESAC-IDs into EZB data. Following this path, the EZB is making a significant contribution to greater publication cost transparency.

## 9.1    Introduction

The EZB is a service by the University Library of Regensburg which provides information on scholarly e-journals [47]. Established in 1997, it currently offers information on more than 110,000 journals in all subject areas. In addition, 134,000 journals provided by aggregators are listed. The EZB also contains 75,000 journals which are accessible free of charge to everyone. Furthermore, participating libraries provide their users access to the journals they have subscribed to [127].

## 9.2    EZB User Interface

Via the institution-specific EZB front-end, users are given uniform access to e-journals and their full texts. The availability of full-text access is indicated by traffic-light symbols according to the license state at each member library as shown in Table 9.1.

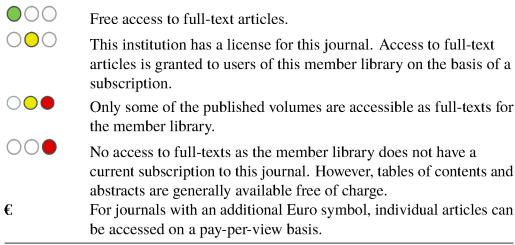| | |
|---|---|
| ●○○ | Free access to full-text articles. |
| ○●○ | This institution has a license for this journal. Access to full-text articles is granted to users of this member library on the basis of a subscription. |
| ○●● | Only some of the published volumes are accessible as full-texts for the member library. |
| ○○● | No access to full-texts as the member library does not have a current subscription to this journal. However, tables of contents and abstracts are generally available free of charge. |
| € | For journals with an additional Euro symbol, individual articles can be accessed on a pay-per-view basis. |

Table 9.1: EZB Traffic Light System

Beyond that, the EZB front-end provides users with journal metadata and information on publisher OA policies [128], including information offered by the Sherpa Romeo service [129] (Figure 9.1) Furthermore, various tools, such as the institution-specific availability check via the EZB Linking Service [130], are also being provided.

## 9.3 Cooperative Management of E-journals

More than 650 institutions, mostly from Germany, use the EZB to manage access and license information as well as metadata on e-journals. All the information on journals is maintained cooperatively, resulting in a high quality and topicality of the EZB data. EZB data is managed via a centralised interface: the EZB administration. It provides a convenient administration interface for the licenses of all participating institutions. In addition, journal packages used by multiple license participants are maintained centrally by negotiating institutions and transferred to all participating EZB user libraries via automated procedures. These journal packages are identified in the EZB via the unique EZB package ID (e.g. WIDEA for Wiley DEAL) and may contain sub-packages, so-called EZB collections, with another unique ID type (e.g. EZB-WIDEA-01707). A distinction is made between consortium packages, alliance licenses, national licenses, national consortia, aggregator packages and publisher packages [131]. Thus, all journals of a journal package can be retrieved and managed with the help of its unique ID. The EZB is interlinked with various digital services of other libraries and information institutions such as JOIN² [19], oa.finder [132, 133], or LIVIVO [134]. It provides specialised services as an important component of the infrastructure for the supply of scientific literature and information.

## 9.4 Role of the EZB in openCost

The aim of the openCost project is the creation of a technical infrastructure that enables free and easy access to publication cost data via standardised interfaces and metadata formats. Ultimately, this should lead to cost transparency at institutional, national and international level. With this goal in mind, the EZB will be expanded to include new functions for displaying publication costs, which will also be made available for further usage. For this purpose, an interface between OpenAPC [15] and the EZB will be implemented (Figure 9.2). In addition, institutions will be
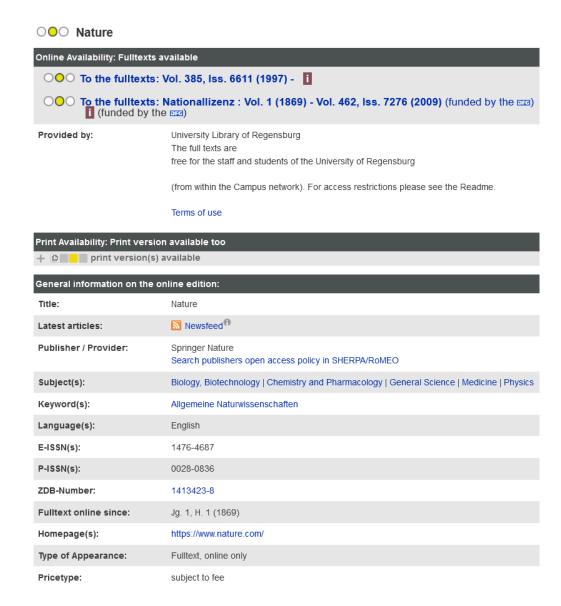
Figure 9.1: Detailed View of a Journal Entry. (Illustration created by the authors, CC BY-NC-SA)
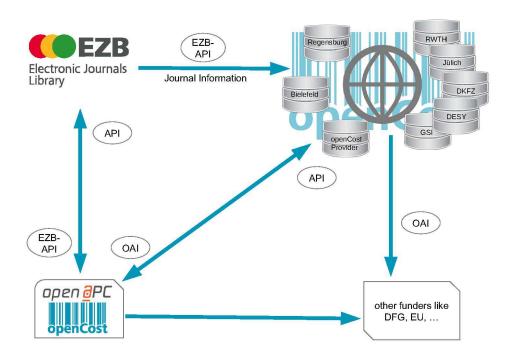
Figure 9.2: Role of the EZB in openCost. (Illustration by Alexander Wagner, CC BY-NC-SA)

provided with an option for entering information on the assumed publication costs for selected journals as well as institution-specific agreements, such as memberships. This information will be displayed in the EZB for the individual journals on an institution-specific basis and made available for further use (Figure 9.2). The EZB can thus be used as a central information platform for communicating OA information to researchers and external data services.

## 9.5 First EZB Extensions in openCost

The recent EZB upgrades and renewals include improved data links to external services, such as OpenAPC and DOAJ [9], as well as enhanced classifications of journals among the various EZB interfaces. Furthermore, better support for transformative agreements will improve publication cost transparency and interoperability of the EZB services. The new features are described in more detail below.

### 9.5.1 OpenAPC Connection

Providing publication cost data to users has become an important task for libraries. Eventually, users will need information not only on absolute costs, but also on available funding. The former involve datasets on fees paid for open access publishing. Therefore, data exchange between the OpenAPC service and the EZB is being established. To facilitate this data exchange, member libraries are required to provide their ROR-IDs [135]. For this purpose, an input field will be created in the EZB administration where each member library can enter its ROR-ID. The OpenAPC publication cost data will then be queried via the ROR-ID and subsequently integrated into the EZB administration interface and, at a later stage, into the user front-end. Thereby, the average APCs are displayed on an institution-specific and global level. With the help of this information, users can realistically estimate APC costs.

### 9.5.2 Journal Categories

The EZB journals will get new labels with special categories. Each journal category is a unique keyword that may refer to either an OA type or to an index the journal in question is listed in. These journal categories, which will appear in the EZB user front-end as keyword-like labels, can be used as additional search criteria and also help improve the EZB data export. Moreover, every journal category is provided with a definition, thereby creating a comprehensive glossary of all journal categories available in the EZB. With the help of journal categories, entire lists of journals can be displayed in the user interface or exported as KBART files. In addition, the journal categories serve as a technical basis for mapping journal funding conditions in the future. Furthermore, it is planned to display the OA funding conditions for journals in the EZB on an institution-specific basis. This will initially be implemented as an example for users of the institutions participating in the openCost project.

The sources for these categories include lists and databases that contain information on publication costs. These data sources need to be reliable (i.e., regular updates, transparent data collection and approval by the openCost and EZB community). Each category is defined by its name, a definition, and its source. So far, four provisional journal categories have been defined Table 9.2.

| Journal category | Definition (preliminary) | Auto | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| Indexed in DOAJ | The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. All DOAJ journals are automatically tagged in the EZB. | ✓ | https://doaj.org/ |
| Journal without APC | Full OA journal without publication fees. | ✓ | https://doaj.org/ |
| Mirror Journal | A mirror journal is a fully open access version of an existing subscription journal, with the same editorial board, aims and scope, peer review processes and policies and an editorial board with at least 50% of the same members. The journal may have a similar name as the subscription title, but it must have a different ISSN. | ✓ | https://doi.org/10.26165/JUELICH-DATA/JRBK07 |
| Subscribe to Open (S2O) | S2O allows publishers to convert journals from subscriptions to OA, one year at a time. Using S2O, a publisher offers a journal's current subscribers continued access. If all current subscribers participate in the S2O offer (simply by not opting out) the publisher opens the content covered by that year's subscription. | no | https://subscribetoopencommunity.org/ |

Table 9.2: Current EZB Journal Categories

Constantly updated data sets like DOAJ allow for automated journal category assignments. Thus, there are two types of journal categories: ones that can be assigned automatically and ones that need to be assigned manually. Currently, the Subscribe to Open (S2O) category would be an instance of the latter, as there are no larger datasets with S2O journals available. For journal categories requiring manual assignment, a selection option will be created in the EZB administration.

Figure 9.3: Journal Category Management in the EZB Administration. (Illustration created by the authors, CC BY-NC-SA)

If additional information on a journal category assignment needs to be included in an internal remark, it can be entered in an input field. In addition to the journal categories mentioned above, other journal categories are currently being considered, e.g., a category indicating whether a journal has flipped (either from OA to closed access or vice versa), whether it is a Diamond OA Journal, etc. New categories are jointly agreed upon by the openCost community.

### 9.5.3   Transformative Agreements

Within the scope of the openCost project, EZB collections will be labelled if they are part of transformative agreements. To identify the EZB packages and collections that map transformative agreements, the EZB administration will be extended by a check mark option as well as an input option to include the ESAC-ID [136], if available. This allows package managers to label their EZB collections accordingly. In addition, the terms and conditions of the transformative agreements will be shown in the user front-end so that users have immediate insight into the costs incurred. Thus, the EZB can provide its users with information on transformative agreements maintained in the EZB. This information will also be provided via the existing EZB interfaces.

## 9.6   Conclusion

The openCost enhancements to the EZB integrate information on publication costs and funding conditions into the EZB database and the user interface for the first time. Through the wide reach of the EZB and its various interfaces and data delivery services, this information is passed on to the community and can be used immediately. With these changes, the EZB is already making a major contribution to further cost transparency. In addition, the newly created journal

categories clearly define terms related to publishing and help to further increase the quality of the data provided. This will save a considerable amount of time and effort for both researchers and institutions, as the funding conditions don't have to be checked manually in each case. Furthermore, this would allow a quick comparison of the costs of individual institutions at journal level and improve the negotiating positions of libraries and consortia.

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