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BioMed Central: all about open access publishing

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BioMed Central is the pioneer of the open access publishing model whereby all research is freely available on the Internet, without subscriptions or any other barrier to access. BioMed Central is the brainchild of Vitek Tracz, a visionary business entrepreneur who foresaw that the disruptive nature of the Internet would eventually challenge the traditional print subscription model for scholarly publications. The web allows, and makes inevitable, the emergence of a seamlessly interlinked research, and in 2000 Vitek started BioMed Central to facilitate open access publishing and to prove that the new model was financially sustainable.

Among the major publishing houses, Springer was the first one to recognise the benefits of open access and acquired BioMed Central in 2008. BioMed Central's systems and platforms are now used by a rapidly growing portfolio of over 230 journals in biology and medicine, as well as by more than 60 journals in the SpringerOpen programme

which uses BioMed Central technology to expand the open access offer into other research disciplines.

BioMed Central journals are widely indexed, including in PubMed. Within two working days of publication, new articles are deposited in PubMed Central. All BioMed Central articles are also searchable on Springerlink and interlinked with Springer's vast and prestigious journal and book programme.

The main customers for publishers of subscription-based journals are libraries; for open access publishers, the most important customer group are researchers as they decide where to submit their work for publication. Authors can therefore expect first-class services from BioMed Central.

BioMed Central's submissions system is easy to use and allows authors to upload their manuscripts and associated content and datasets, to propose and exclude reviewers and Editors, to select article types, and add keywords and required

statements. Authors are not restricted with regard to article length or number of additional files, which can include data, embedded movie files or 3-D images or models. Complex additional files can be arranged as mini-websites.

The high quality of the website and its systems as well as the services it offers translate into a rapid year-on-year increase in the number of journals, including of society-affiliated journals, published by BioMed Central and of their impact factors, as well as in the number of submitted and, if editorially accepted, published articles. The focus on quality results in high-impact journals, such as *Genome Biology* (9), *BMC Medicine* (6), or *Retrovirology* (6.5).

Transactions and payments

The business model is mostly based on article-processing charges (APCs) payable for editorially accepted articles. Research funders, universities, societies, and charities worldwide are supporting open access by covering APCs on behalf of grantees and staff. At BioMed Central, payments are fully integrated into online processing of articles post-review, and APCs can be paid by invoice or secure online credit card payment. The system also has sophisticated membership functionality to allow Institutions to cover all or part of the APCs, with eligible authors being recognised via IP-addresses or codes.

Journal websites

Each BioMed Central journal is provided with a customised, branded website. Websites come with optional features that allow journals to highlight and rank articles of interest and provide additional content such as editors' profiles, Twitter or blog feeds, conference news, or job opportunities. The websites offer browsing by article type at a journal-level with content discoverability enhanced by community-led features such as Most Popular Articles and expert Editor's Picks. All non-research article types can be highlighted and signposted on the journal homepage, with summaries and images.

Journal websites have a functionality that allows researchers – or members of the public – to add comments with additional information or criticism to published articles, virtually without any delays. This feature is moderated, and on occasion debates on this “informal” level of exchange go into fascinating depth and detail. At the individual article level, there is a wide variety of share options, including CiteULike, Connotea, Del.icio.us, Facebook, Mendeley and Twitter, and each article shows article-level metrics, in the form of accesses over several time periods as well as altmetrics “doughnuts” that reflect the uptake by social media.

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Enigmatic endosymbiont discovered in shrimp-invading parasite
A new symbiotic relationship was discovered between protist parasites, *Hematodinium*, and bacteria-like cells living inside them, raising questions about the benefit conferred by the endosymbiotic bacteria to its protist host, as well as their combined parasitic threat to European brown shrimp populations.
Aquatic Biosystems 2012, **8**:24

Insight into bone therapy failure
Bone morphogenic proteins (BMPs), used to aid fracture healing, do not work on some patients due to an increase in histone deacetylase (HDAC) activity, so inhibiting HDAC activity in combination with BMP therapy may aid healing.
BMC Medicine 2012, **10**:101

Novel software improves identification of peer reviewers
A new web tool which uses author disambiguation and usage based keywords is shown to enhance the automated search of peer reviewers, particularly those who operate in narrow areas of research.
BioData Mining 2012, **5**:14

New model improves thyroid cancer diagnosis
A molecular computational model based on the expression of 8 genes can preoperatively distinguish benign from malignant thyroid lesions and could help identify patients with thyroid nodules who do not require radical surgery.
BMC Cancer 2012, **12**:396

Integration of cancer diagnostics
Pathology and radiology are central to cancer diagnosis, but the two disciplines are often separated; James Sorace and colleagues suggest development of an integrated diagnostic system combining the two specialties to improve quality of patient care.
BMC Medicine 2012, **10**:100

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Website developments

There is a mobile-optimised user interface for the BioMed Central platform and journal-specific apps for both Apple and Android are about to be rolled out.

Finally, BioMed Central is soon to launch Cases, a new case reports database, which will be continuously updated and freely accessible, and will allow users to interactively explore data from peer-reviewed case reports, including those from other publishers, as long as the articles are

open access. The database will offer structured search and filtering by condition, symptom, intervention, pathogen, patient demographic and many other data fields, allowing fast identification of relevant case reports to support clinical practice and further research.

Competing interests

Both the authors work for BioMed Central.

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