

Editorial

## Open Access Publishing Policy and Efficient Editorial Procedure

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With the development of Internet, human societies have evolved rapidly with the emerging information society. The way of scientific communication has been changing dramatically. After a few years, the Online Journal publishing has been completely accepted by all scientific communities. The traditional business model of subscription based journal publishing is being challenged by the alternative Open Access publishing model [1-3]. However, financially sustainable Open Access publishing is still a goal difficult to reach.

Dr. Shu-Kun Lin has been identified among the pioneers of Open Access in Natural Sciences, and has been managing online open access journals for about 10 years [4]. Dr. Derek McPhee and Dr. Francis Muguet have tried to help Dr. Shu-Kun Lin in order to make Open Access publishing a sustainable alternative which can be tentatively assessed, *inter alia*, by the quantity (number of published papers) and quality (impact factor of our journals).

*Entropy* is an online Open Access journal and it is the Publisher's full intention to have it continue as such. As a general rule, traditional Open Access journals are working under the assumption that all authors are paying publication fees. However, as a remarkable exception, the journal *Entropy* had been operating without requesting publication charges. However, as the MDPI foundation needs a minimal financial balance to maintain its operations, it is not possible to continue without the kind help of authors who pay publication fees. Therefore, while we will continue to accept papers from authors that are not able to pay, their Open Access publication will be delayed [5]. Should the MDPI foundation receive major grants, the MDPI foundation will be glad to immediately resume totally free Open Access

operation.

Voluntary editorial and publishing work and low cost or institutionally sponsored editorial and publishing operations [6-8] can make totally free Open Access possible. During the three years period of totally free Open Access for all MDPI journals, including *Entropy*, as an example, we were disappointed however not to observe either an increase in the total number of papers or any obvious improvement in the quality of the papers being submitted. Since it was no longer possible to financially sustain the totally free Open Access model, the MDPI foundation was quite reluctantly forced to re-introduce its traditional Open Access system (see [5] and relevant citations) since early 2005, while not observing any significant damage to the journal quality. Surprisingly, both the quantity and quality are steadily improving since early 2005 for these MDPI journals except *Entropy*.

Online journal publishing is attractive because there is no delay in hard copy production and rapid publication is possible for accepted papers. The editorial handling of manuscripts can become even more efficient if the papers are processed by a high efficiency editorial office and if we employ an online submitting system (see: <http://submit.mdpi.org>). Of course the services of an editorial office in Basel and the creation and maintenance of an online manuscript submitting system are quite costly. The peer-review of every paper will be processed by this editorial office in Basel and an editorial board member of adequate expertise will be asked to review the paper and/or identify additional referees. In near future, *Entropy* manuscripts will be processed at [submit.mdpi.org](http://submit.mdpi.org).

There brings us to the existing difference of opinion between some members of the Editorial Board of *Entropy*, who still prefer totally free Open Access, and the Publisher, who has been reluctantly forced to re-introduce the traditional Open Access system. MDPI would have been keen to keep a totally free Open Access *modus operandi* if those dissenting board members had been able to bring in external funding sources to help MDPI to maintain its overall operations which have a cost. Financial needs cannot be fairly assessed by considering only the operations directly related to a specific journal. There is a need of some level of financial contribution to overall MDPI journals operations which cannot unfortunately be manned only by volunteers. As a result of this dissent with the journal's then Editor-in-Chief, some scheduled special issues (proceedings issues and special issues dedicated to a specific topic) failed to be published in time. In this context, the Editor-in-Chief and several Editorial Board members have resigned. Therefore, as an emergency measure and to keep the *Entropy* journal alive, Dr. Shu-Kun Lin, *Entropy* journal founder and the first Editor-in-Chief has been forced to take over the editorial responsibilities.

During a transitional period and until another candidate for the Editor-in-Chief position is selected, we are kindly asking the cooperation of everybody. We have to use our limited editorial and publishing resources in the handling of manuscripts and publications, and we will not be able to moderate or start to moderate any continued discussions and debates regarding general Open Access publishing policies here. Interested colleagues can join some well-known discussion group(s) or mailing list(s).

As we are determined to push forward to realize Open Access in a sustainable way, and to establish an efficient collaboration in the long run between the Editorial Board and the Publisher for this *interdisciplinary* journal, while joining those general Open Access publishing discussions and debates moderated more efficiently elsewhere, we also would like to ask all people, particularly authors and

readers of *Entropy*, to offer your specific and relevant opinions so that we can finally set up practically useful editorial guidelines, rules and Open Access publishing policies, not only for this *interdisciplinary* journal, but also for all MDPI Open Access journals. Please send your replies to us directly by e-mail.

## References

1. MDPI is an NGO accredited to the United Nations's World Summit On the Information Society (WSIS, <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>), and Dr. Shu-Kun Lin, MDPI President, was a plenary speaker at the World Summit in Geneva in 2003.
2. Open Access Advocacy: In 2003, MDPI took the opportunity of the World Summit On the Information Society (WSIS, <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>) to take an active role in promoting Open Access on the world stage.
3. Dr. Francis Muguet, MDPI board member, chairman of the Civil Society Working Group on Scientific Information (SI) the co-chairman of the Working Group on Patents & Copyrights (PCT). Recommendations in favor of Open Access have been adopted by the WSIS in December 2003. For more information, please consult the WSIS SI working group site <http://www.WSIS-SI.org>.
4. Shu-Kun Lin was an invited speaker at Wizards of OS 3: The Future of the Digital Commons (<http://wizards-of-os.org/>), 10-12 June 2004.
5. Lin, S. -K. Editorial: Delayed Open Access or Permanent Non-Open Access. *Molecules* **2006**, *11*, 496-497 (<http://www.mdpi.org/molecules/html/11070496.htm>).
6. Under this model, all the people involved are working on a voluntary basis, as there is virtually no income. See: Petitjean, M. Editorial: Editor-in-Chief's Report. *Entropy* **2006**, *8*, 110-112 (<http://www.mdpi.org/entropy/htm/e8020110.htm>).
7. Lin, S.-K.; McPhee, D. J.; Muguet, F. F. Editorial: A New Editorial Office in Qingdao, a New E-Publishing System for MDPI Journals and Beilstein Starts Coverage of Molecules. *Molecules* **2002**, *7*, 855-857 (<http://www.mdpi.org/molecules/papers/71200855.pdf>).
8. Muguet, F. F.; Lin, S.-K.; McPhee, D. J. Editorial: New Development: A Printed Edition. *Molecules* **2002**, *7*, 858-860 (<http://www.mdpi.org/molecules/html/71200858/71200858.htm>).