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“The endeavours of author-pays publishers such as PLoS . . . to widen access to scientific publications are admirable and they are to be commended for the vigour with which they have pursued their aims.”
— United Kingdom House of Commons Science and Technology Committee

PLoS Institutional Memberships: Background Information

The First Year

Since its launch in January 2004, the PLoS Institutional Membership program has been a resounding success.

- In its first six months, more than 100 colleges and universities joined—from Harvard and Yale to the University of Amsterdam to Kalamazoo College.
- The Open Society Institute recently announced a program to pay for PLoS Institutional Memberships on behalf of universities and other organizations in 44 developing countries.
- At the request of a number of funders of research, we have now begun to accept memberships from foundations on behalf of the investigators they support.
- A complete list of our expanding membership is posted at <http://www.plos.org/support/instmembers.html>.

The generous support from our Members has allowed PLoS to engage in outreach and advocacy activities that have begun to change the face of scientific and medical publishing. Certainly, neither PLoS itself nor PLoS' Institutional Membership program is solely responsible for these events, but in the calendar year 2004:

- A Parliamentary committee in the United Kingdom recommended that the entire published output from UK institutions of higher education be made freely available online.
- The European Union launched an investigation into scientific publishing.
- The United States Congress and National Institutes of Health have jointly planned revisions to NIH policy on taxpayer access to articles resulting from federally funded research, with substantial changes expected by the end of 2004.
- The Open Access Working Group, a coalition of libraries and other organizations (including PLoS) committed to increasing access to scholarly communications, and headed up by the Scholarly Publications and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), has been promoting open access with policy makers, funding agencies, and other constituents.
- Perhaps most importantly, a number of existing scientific journals such as the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Nucleic Acids Research*, and more have begun to experiment with, and in some cases even embrace, open-access publishing by offering open-access options to authors.

Thanks in no small part to the political leverage and funds provided by our Institutional Membership program, PLoS was able to contribute to a number of these investigations and developments.

"PLoS challenged the world to rethink scientific communication. With PLoS Biology they turned rhetoric into action, achieving impressive results. The new PLoS Medicine promises to be a worthy next step. SPARC encourages libraries to support PLoS with their institutional memberships."

— Richard K. Johnson, Director, SPARC

PLoS Publications

PLoS Biology

The first issue of *PLoS Biology* went online on October 13, 2003, and was promptly overwhelmed by the astonishing volume of Web traffic it attracted. Since then, our premier journal has won a World Summit Award for e-science content; its articles have been featured countless times in the international media, from the *New York Times* to *Le Monde* to the *BBC*; and—perhaps most importantly—authors like Manuel Llinas have been rewarded with faculty positions at Princeton University and elsewhere for the outstanding work they have published in its pages.

While *PLoS Biology* will not receive an impact factor until 2005, all indicators suggest that it has already become a must-read journal in many biological disciplines. In its first year of publication, *PLoS Biology* published over 140 research articles, doubling in size from nine articles in the October 2003 inaugural issue to 18 in September 2004, with a jump to 23 expected for November 2004. With this increase in volume, *PLoS Biology* has now gone to weekly on-line publication, with research articles and front section pieces being bundled together for monthly issues as well.

Readership has been steadily increasing as well, with over 50,000 individual readers (as identified by unique IP addresses) coming to the *PLoS Biology* site in September 2004 alone. These September readers downloaded over 100,000 articles (a COUNTER-compliant number), representing a steady increase since the launch a year ago. In total, since going live on October 13, 2003, the *PLoS Biology* web site has received over 43 million hits. Combined with an increasing number of *PLoS Biology* papers being cited by papers in other prestigious journals and frequent coverage by the popular press, these first year statistics are indeed impressive for any new journal in the biological sciences.

PLoS Medicine

Even before its launch, *PLoS Medicine* scored a number of important victories in 2004. Its professional staff includes former editors from *The Lancet*, the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, and the *British Medical Journal*. *PLoS Medicine*'s editorial board consists of nearly 100 prominent physicians and researchers from around the world—ranging from the Chief of the Department of Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital to an AIDS researcher in Rwanda. And in August, PLoS was pleased to announce that the former Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, Richard Smith, joined our Board of Directors. The first issue of *PLoS Medicine* went online on October 19, 2004 (www.plosmedicine.org). Like all PLoS content, it is openly and freely accessible to anyone in the world via the Internet.

PLoS in 2005

In addition to *PLoS Medicine*, we will be unrolling a number of other journals in the coming months. The year 2005 will see the launch of:

- At least three *PLoS Community Journals*—discipline-specific, community-based publications covering a broad swath of biological and medical research (journals under consideration for 2005 include *PLoS Genetics*, *PLoS Pathogens*, and *PLoS Environment*).
- *PLoS Reports*—an innovative online forum for the rapid publication and dissemination of articles in biology and medicine that will benefit from the unrestricted distribution and reuse afforded by open-access publication. *PLoS Reports* will allow communities of scientists and clinicians to create and manage innovative new journals that meet their specific research needs.

Questions about PLoS Institutional Memberships

How is a PLoS Institutional Membership different from an institutional subscription to a non-open-access journal?

PLoS Institutional Memberships are expressions of support for PLoS' mission, and provide an incentive for authors to publish in PLoS' open-access journals.

Membership is substantially different from a journal subscription, in that **everything we publish is freely available online to everyone, PLoS members and nonmembers alike**. Although we certainly hope that many institutions will choose to join PLoS in order help promote open-access publishing, **all of the essential products and services that are available to PLoS Member Institutions are also available to every other organization in the world**. As the Web-based submission form that authors use (reproduced on the following page) makes clear, PLoS waives its publication charge in whole or in part for any authors who say they cannot afford it, no questions asked.

Why do organizations become Members of PLoS?

Libraries and, increasingly, other divisions of institutions and other types of organizations choose to become PLoS members because they support the goal of making scientific and medical literature free online. "The decision to join PLoS," noted Beverlee French on behalf of the University of California, "reflects our unanimous resolve to address the unsustainable economics of current scholarly publishing by directing some of our scarce dollars away from overpriced journals and towards innovation." PLoS Memberships are a voluntary investment in social change; they are not an accession to the demands of publishers to pay fees or be denied access to articles describing the results of largely publicly funded research.

How long do PLoS Memberships last?

For 2005 and beyond, all PLoS Memberships will extend 12 months from their date of activation. Memberships will be activated quarterly throughout the year—on January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1. As in 2004, Membership fees can be paid by credit card, PayPal, check, purchase order, or wire transfer. Authors affiliated with Member institutions are entitled to the discount conferred by Membership only when their papers are submitted while the institution's Membership is active.

How do the publication charge discounts work, and who's entitled to what?

The discount on publication charges is determined by the primary affiliation of the corresponding author. A corresponding author with equal affiliations to multiple institutions is entitled to the benefits of the higher tier Membership. Corresponding authors are asked to identify their primary institutional affiliation upon submitting a manuscript, and are immediately apprised of the discount to which their institution's Membership entitles them.

When authors submit a manuscript to a PLoS journal, they fill out a Web-based form that asks for information on a variety of topics—what competing interests they have, whether they are willing to sign our open-access licensing agreement, and more. The section entitled "Publication Charges" is reproduced on the following page. We double check all invoices prior to sending them out - but please help us encourage authors to claim the discount that they are entitled to. If they have not, we amend the bill to reflect what the charge should actually be.

“Publication Charges” Field that Prospective Authors Encounter

All articles published by the Public Library of Science (PLoS) are open access, meaning that, immediately upon publication, they are freely available on our own Web sites and in toll-free online archives such as PubMed Central.

In order to recoup the costs of publication—including the expenses of mediating peer review, of journal production, and of online hosting and archiving--PLoS requests payment not on the readers' end, but on the contributors'.

We expect this one-time fee of \$1500 to be paid largely through authors' research grants, although in certain cases, an author's institution or even country may have an arrangement with PLoS to offset all or part of the cost. If you are entitled to the benefits of such an arrangement, your institution will be included in the alphabetical list of institutions below. Please click your institution's name to display the charge you will be asked to pay if your paper is accepted for publication.



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