

The Publishing Policy of The European Physical Journal C

With the appearance of the Internet the exchange of information in science has gained a new quality. The flawless functioning of the archive systems for electronic preprint distribution has established the Internet as the prime medium. The almost immediate distribution of new results is a great advantage, but *fast* information does not always mean *useful* information. The task of filtering out the results of high scientific value remains as important as ever, and is the traditional role of peer-reviewed periodicals.

The European Physical Journal C, *EPJ C*, has evolved over recent years into a truly *European* forum by merging with the Editions de France and the Nuovo Cimento. Its policy has evolved in parallel with the dramatic changes in the structure of worldwide collaborations and the new forms of data and information exchange. We feel this is a good moment to describe in some detail how *EPJ C* copes with these challenges.

A few years ago the traditional publishing in print was complemented with a new branch, called *EPJdirect C*. This refers to a new section, where manuscripts are published in electronic form only. The same editorial board takes care of this branch also and applies the same refereeing procedure, so the same high standard is ensured. The unique features of *EPJdirect C* are that page limitations are no longer a serious constraint and that it offers the full variety of multimedia facilities. This is particularly interesting for experimental collaborators as they can publish extensive surveys that include valuable experimental details which otherwise would never appear. Another novelty is the *Scientific Notes*, introduced as a subsection of *EPJdirect C* two years ago. This possibility of publishing research work done within large collaborations has been well received by the community – to the benefit of young scientists in particular. All the articles that appear in *EPJdirect C* are citable using the Digital Object Identifier (DOI), an internationally agreed citation procedure which uniquely identifies all published work. The abstracts of the articles accepted for *EPJdirect C* appear also in printed form in *EPJ C*.

We stress the fact that the key steps in handling and evaluating manuscripts are still performed by human beings rather than by programmable software robots. We are convinced that in this way we can provide a better service. Otherwise e-technology has been fully integrated: *EPJ C* makes full use of the Internet for manuscript submission and for internal manuscript circulation and manuscript tracking in editorial work, as well as for production and distribution. The journal uses its own L^AT_EX style files.

It is our longstanding experience that what limits the total processing time is not the technical manuscript hand-

ling, however fast the editorial office is, but rather the scientific evaluation. This emphasises how crucial an issue the very personal relationship between editors, authors and referees is.

Using Springer's L^AT_EX style not only gives the author better control over the final appearance of the article, but it also simplifies the editorial procedure, reduces the formatting for production to a few days, and ensures the well-known highly readable and homogeneous layout.

In particular, digitized versions of all articles submitted to *EPJ C* or *EPJdirect C* can be accessed at Springer's Internet server LINK within 10 days of submission of the final proofread manuscript to the publisher. Articles for *EPJdirect C* will be published there without delay. For the articles to appear in printed form the biweekly publication scheme for the issues of *EPJ C* has to be respected, occasionally causing an unfortunate backlog. This intrinsic time delay has recently been overcome by offering the *Online First* service, i.e. the formatted article is published immediately on the LINK server, together with its DOI, thus ensuring access and citability. Later, when the article is sent to the printer, the final page numbers, citation line and publication date of the printed version are added.

At present, print journals and their associated electronic journals coexist. There is not yet a clear preference for one of these publication forms, or even for a mixture of both. *EPJ C* can adjust to all of these scenarios and, in fact, together with the new *EPJdirect C*, available since 1998, we are covering all possibilities.

As a further support of our efforts Springer's server LINK is developing a number of new ways of allowing access to the electronic versions of the *European Physical Journal* for those who do not wish to subscribe to the printed form of the journal. As a special offer *EPJdirect C* can be downloaded free of charge during 2001 and 2002.

This brief essay is aimed at showing that *EPJ C* is still the old prestigious journal you have been used to. At the same time, it has taken a big step forward to maintain its leading role in the Internet era also. We are working as hard as ever to offer the best possible service to the particle physics community. Suggestions for further improvements are always welcome.

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