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Nature Publishing Group and its partner organizations launch *Nature Precedings*, a free document-sharing service for scientists.

Today Nature Publishing Group (NPG) and partner organisations launch *Nature Precedings* <http://precedings.nature.com> <<http://precedings.nature.com/>> , a free online service enabling researchers to rapidly share, discuss and cite early findings.

Written scientific communication takes place mainly through journals, but increasingly the web provides complementary opportunities for more rapid, participative and informal communication.

Nature Precedings is a free service from NPG that provides a way for researchers to share preliminary findings, solicit community feedback, and claim priority over discoveries. By promoting the rapid and open exchange of scientific information, the site ultimately aims to help accelerate the pace of discovery.

Nature Precedings accepts submissions from biomedicine, chemistry and the earth sciences. These are reviewed by professional NPG curators and accepted only if they are considered legitimate scientific contributions of likely interest to others in the field. Accepted contributions are assigned stable identifiers ('Digital Object Identifiers' and 'Handles') that enable formal citation, and are made available through an open-access archive. Submissions are not subjected to peer review before they are released. Because of this, contributions are usually published within one working day, often much sooner, and no charge is made to either authors or readers.

The new website fulfils the role of a preprint server – like the popular arXiv.org service in the physical sciences – but also accepts other document types, including unpublished manuscripts, white papers, technical papers, supplementary findings, posters and presentations. The site facilitates the discovery of interesting and relevant content through user-driven features such as tagging, voting and commenting.

Authors retain copyright in their work, and all accepted contributions are released under the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (<http://creativecommons.org/about/>). This enables redistribution and reuse while ensuring that authors receive proper credit for their work.

It is anticipated that the content will be mirrored at one or more partner organisations. This federated approach will ensure the long-term availability of the content, and effectively guarantee that the service will remain free and open.

"Helping scientists to communicate their ideas is central to *Nature's* mission, and we are constantly seeking new ways to achieve this," said Annette Thomas, Managing Director of Nature Publishing Group. "Precedings is an important new step for us and, we hope, the research community. We are particularly proud to have conceived and developed the service with the help of a group of such highly esteemed organisations: the British Library, the European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI), Science Commons, and the Wellcome Trust."

Richard Boulderstone, Director of e-Strategy at the British Library, said, "Informal online information sharing represents a tremendous opportunity for collaborative working between researchers and scholars worldwide. *Precedings* is an exciting example of how the British Library is partnering with other institutions to help facilitate and archive this scholarly information in a rapidly evolving digital environment".

Graham Cameron, Associate Director of the EBI, said, "This is a great step forward in the open sharing of

the findings of science. It will further the 'right to roam' scientific information, and thus facilitate connections to our databases and allow the application of our state-of-the-art text-mining tools."

"Science progresses through the open exchange and reuse of ideas and data, but within a system that provides proper credit for their originators," said John Wilbanks, Executive Director of Science Commons. "Creative Commons licenses can help to achieve just that, and we are delighted they have found yet another scientific use in *Nature Precedings*."

Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, said, "I welcome this initiative and encourage researchers, including Wellcome Trust grant holders, to make use of *Nature Precedings*. By providing a means for scientists not only to freely share, but also to claim priority and achieve recognition through citation, this new service will help to provide greater openness in research."

Representatives of the above organisations will form a Precedings Advisory Committee, where they will be joined by a group of senior practicing scientists.

"I strongly support the idea of a preprint server for biological sciences. My colleagues and I will certainly be using it to report findings from our lab as the papers get written," said Ravi Iyengar, Professor of Pharmacology and Systems Therapeutics at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, and a member of the Precedings Advisory Committee.

Timo Hannay, NPG's Director of Web Publishing said, "*Nature Precedings* is the latest in a series of collaborative tools that *Nature* is building to enable researchers to use the web to maximum effect in their work. We hope it will help to foster more collaboration and openness, especially in fields where this is not the norm. We're still at the beginning of this process, and *Nature Precedings* itself will continue to evolve. But with the support of our amazing list of forward-looking partners, and in discussion with other scientists and science publishers around the world, we look forward to enabling this exciting and essential next step in the evolution of scientific discourse."

Nature Precedings is available at <http://precedings.nature.com/>

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About Nature Publishing Group

Nature Publishing Group (NPG) is a division of Macmillan Publishers Ltd. It is dedicated to serving the academic, professional scientific and medical communities. NPG's flagship title, *Nature*, was first published in 1869. Other publications include *Nature* research journals, *Nature Reviews*, *Nature Clinical Practice* and a range of prestigious academic journals including society-owned publications. NPG also provides news content through news@nature.com. Scientific career information and free job postings are offered on Naturejobs.

NPG is a global company with headquarters in London and offices in New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, Boston, Tokyo, Paris, Munich, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Delhi, Mexico City and Basingstoke. For more information, please go to www.nature.com.

About the EBI

The European Bioinformatics Institute (EBI) is part of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) and is located on the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus in Hinxton near Cambridge (UK). The EBI grew out of EMBL's pioneering work in providing public biological databases to the research community. It hosts some of the world's most important collections of biological data, including DNA sequences (EMBL-Bank), protein sequences (UniProt), animal genomes (Ensembl), three-dimensional structures (the Macromolecular Structure Database), data from microarray experiments (ArrayExpress), protein-protein interactions (IntAct) and pathway information (Reactome). The EBI hosts several research groups and its scientists continually develop new tools for the biocomputing community.

About EMBL

The European Molecular Biology Laboratory is a basic research institute funded by public research monies from 19 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece,

Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). Research at EMBL is conducted by approximately 80 independent groups covering the spectrum of molecular biology. The Laboratory has five units: the main Laboratory in Heidelberg, and Outstations in Hinxton (the European Bioinformatics Institute), Grenoble, Hamburg, and Monterotondo near Rome. The cornerstones of EMBL's mission are: to perform basic research in molecular biology; to train scientists, students and visitors at all levels; to offer vital services to scientists in the member states; to develop new instruments and methods in the life sciences and to actively engage in technology transfer activities. EMBL's International PhD Programme has a student body of about 170. The Laboratory also sponsors an active Science and Society programme. Visitors from the press and public are welcome.

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