

# One Year with Methods Open

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## Background

Since January 2017 (volume 56) the journal “*Methods of Information in Medicine*” (Methods) consists of two tracks [1]. Authors can decide to submit their manuscript to either the subscription track consisting of six print and electronic (non-open access) issues per year, or the Methods Open track consisting of electronic publishing as gold open access only. With this step, Methods aimed to improve the visibility of the journal generally and contribute to sharing research results as timely and as widely as possible so as to promote scientific progress.

The submission and review processes for manuscripts in Methods are identical for all articles irrespectively whether they are submitted to the traditional subscription track or the Methods Open track. The author’s choice of track is not visible for the reviewers who evaluate the manuscript.

In case of selecting Methods Open, accepted manuscripts are immediately online accessible at the journal site after acceptance, copy-editing and typesetting. They are also immediately deposited in PubMed Central®. The copyright regulations are different, with significantly more rights to authors and readers of Methods Open papers through a Creative Commons licence. In

particular, Methods Open articles are published under the Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND. This license means that anyone may freely read, download, distribute and make the article available to the public (in printed and electronic form), provided that the author and the journal as the source are acknowledged (BY=attribution), whereas no commercial use is allowed (NC=non commercial) and the work may not be altered, transformed or serve as the basis for a derivative work (ND=no derivative). For manuscripts, appearing under this license in the Methods Open track, authors have to pay an “Article Publication Charge” (APC) of currently 1650€, which is in the lower region of APCs in the field of medical informatics [2].

Hybrid open access papers have disappeared from Methods in 2017, as open access publications now appear in Methods Open and regular papers will only be published in the printed issues of the journal. Thus “double-dipping” is avoided.

## Expectations

When starting the Methods Open track, the aim was to provide a goal-oriented, stepwise, sustainable and fair approach for transforming a subscription-based into an open access journal [3] that should

- a) increase visibility and accessibility of the articles,
- b) maintain or improve the quality of the review and publishing processes,
- c) maintain or improve the journal’s reputation,
- d) limit financial risks for the publisher,
- e) guarantee long-term availability of publications, and
- f) provide appropriate copyright regulations and fair financing models.

## How did Methods Open develop during its first year?

Methods Open was well received by the journal’s authors. On average 22% of all submissions are sent to the Methods Open

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	Print issue# printed articles	Open Access Part # Methods Open articles
Issue 1/2017 (January)	9	4
Issue 2/2017 (March)	12	2
Issue 3/2017 (May)	9	2
Issue 4/2017 (August)	9	2
Issue 5/2017 (October)	8	3
Issue 6//2017 (December)	9	4
Total # of articles		73
Percentages	56 (76.7%)	17 (23.3%)

**Tab. 1**  
Number of printed articles vs. Methods Open articles

track. Submissions to the Methods Open track do not seem to depend on the author's country of origin. Whereas the first Methods Open submissions came predominantly from the United States and Germany, subsequently authors from different European, Asian-Pacific, South American and African countries submitted their manuscripts to the Methods Open track.

Acceptance rates of the submissions to both tracks resemble the submission ratio, with 23.3% of this year's publications appearing in Methods Open. ► Table 1 shows the numbers of printed articles for each print issue during 2017 compared to the numbers of articles published in the Methods Open track during the same time period.

The possible transformation of Methods from a subscription-based into an open access journal will be carefully followed and analysed by the Trans-O-MIM research project [3]. To provide transparency, Methods will continue to consist of six issues per year. However, we plan to reduce the number of print issues as of January 2018 from six to four print issues and to bundle Methods Open manuscripts into two open access issues.

## Focus Themes

Methods regularly issues open calls for Focus Themes that address topics in the intersection of biomedical informatics, biostatistics and epidemiology. Authors who submit their manuscripts to one of the Methods Focus Themes have of course also the option to submit to either track which results in parts of the Focus Theme publications being included in the printed issue and parts only published online but openly accessible. The Focus Theme published in this issue of Methods presents a good example. It consists of nine publications whereof three are published in Methods Open. The Focus Theme on the topic of "Single subject (n-of-1) Research Design, Data Processing and Personal Science" exemplifies the intersection of the journal's main topics (i.e. biomedical informatics, biostatistics and epidemiology) in an excellent way and also introduces "Personal Science Reports" as a new publication format that might gain increased interest in the light of precision medicine.

## Changes in the Core Editorial Team

After having served for Methods as an Associate Editor for six years, **Neil Sarkar** was appointed Editor-in-Chief of JAMIA Open,

the new Open Access journal and official publication of AMIA, the American Medical Informatics Association. We congratulate Neil to his new position, we congratulate AMIA for having recruited an excellent candidate and we look forward to collaborate between journals in future.

In the Methods Core Editorial Team we welcome **Fernando Martin-Sanchez** as new Associate Editor. Fernando is Research Professor at the National Institute of Health 'Carlos III' in Madrid, Spain and has been a member of the Methods Editorial Board since 2003. He also served as one of the guest editors for the Focus Theme that is published in this issue. We are very happy to have recruited an excellent colleague with long experience in biomedical informatics research.

## References

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