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Press release

ZB MED - Informationszentrum Lebenswissenschaften
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Science policy, Scientific Publications
Biology, Information technology, Medicine, Nutrition / healthcare / nursing
transregional, national

Infrastructure made in Europe: Securing information provision in biomedicine and the life sciences

Strengthening the resilience and independence of the life sciences research infrastructure in Europe is necessary regarding the risks posed by dependencies on US-based information services. ZB MED - Information Centre for Life Sciences will therefore develop an open, reliable and sustainable alternative to the PubMed database. This alternative database will provide the currently available PubMed content as well as a technical and administrative framework for the continuous expansion with new publications. A key milestone has already been reached: the current contents of PubMed have been secured and are accessible via the ZB MED search portal LIVIVO.

Preparing for an emergency – PubMed restrictions

The new ZB MED database is intended to offer a replacement as seamless as possible in the event that the availability of PubMed is restricted. The familiar PubMed search interface will also be modelled as closely as possible.

The multiple backup of the data must be clarified, as must the legal framework, the workflows for data processing and compatibility with existing PubMed data formats. Automatic processes, e.g. from the controlled MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) vocabulary, are used to enrich metadata. The software components are developed as an open source solution.

Recognising that PubMed is more than just a 'simple' database, further development steps are to be prepared in the course of the project for the worst-case scenario of PubMed being shut down. This includes the development and provision of an application programming interface (API), the integration of additional sources and the maintenance and expansion of the MeSH. The German Research Foundation (DFG) offers funding opportunities for this. ZB MED is currently writing the application for an initial project.

'We must act!'

Prof. Dr Dietrich Rebholz-Schuhmann, Scientific Director of ZB MED, emphasises: "The open provision of information for health research is a very valuable asset. Until the beginning of this year, we would never have dreamed that this asset could be jeopardised. This threat now exists and we must act. We are facing a major new challenge here, but we also see a strong community that we know well and can build on. With this project, we are taking the initiative to maintain the ability to act in national and European medical and life science research infrastructures. We will ensure the exchange of information at a high level and thus strengthen biomedical research in Germany, Europe and worldwide."

Involvement of the scientific community

The exchange with the specialised scientific communities is to become a component of the project. Workshops are planned on site, but also digitally, both at national and European level. This bundles both expertise and resources and avoids duplication of work. An initial online meeting will take place during the application phase on 14 May 2025 at 3.30 pm in order to involve the community at an early stage, provide information and discuss needs. All interested parties from research, infrastructure and politics are cordially invited to attend.

Anyone wishing to support the project proposal entitled "OLSPub - Open Life Science Publications Database: Building a Resilient European Biomedical and Life Science Infrastructure" can do so with a letter of support.

URL for press release:
http://www.zbmed.de/en/about/press/latest-news/article/information-life-science-research-infrastructure
Information and registration for the meeting

URL for press release: https://www.zbmed.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Pressemitteilungen/2025/2025-05-05_LoS_PubMed_Alternative_ZB_MED.pdf Information about the letter of support

URL for press release: http://www.livivo.de LIVIVO

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