

# ST-OPEN: Innovation based on ancient traditions

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I am excited to be involved with the launch of ST-OPEN, which is a repository overlay journal based at the University of Split [1]. Some of you may be wondering whether we really need another journal, and what exactly an overlay journal is. I will try to explain.

The proliferation of material on the internet has increased readers' needs for systems to identify items that are relevant to them. An overlay journal is one that presents material from another source, usually some kind of archive, such as a preprint server. The idea is to select the best and most interesting material for readers, to save them the effort of trawling huge databases.

We believe ST-OPEN is unique in presenting material from a university repository of students' unpublished dissertations and theses. It is also innovative because it will use peer review by independent experts to select and improve the articles that it publishes. In contrast, most overlay journals simply use an in-house team to highlight relevant items and they republish the articles in the original form, without any modifications. Another innovative feature of ST-OPEN is that it covers all academic disciplines.

The innovative characteristics of ST-OPEN bring a number of important benefits. First, the translation and presentation of research done for masters and doctoral degrees will make this work accessible to people who cannot read Croatian. Research serves little purpose if it is not communicated and, to be effective, it needs to be reported accurately and clearly. Yet much work performed for masters' degrees is never published in traditional

journals so it remains largely inaccessible, especially if the report is available only in a language such as Croatian which is not widely understood. ST-OPEN will make findings and methods accessible to a wider audience by publishing readable articles in English.

"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas."

-George Bernard Shaw

The inter-disciplinary nature of ST-OPEN should bring relevant work to a wider audience which may encourage collaboration both within the university, as people discover what research is going on in other departments, and with researchers elsewhere. This should allow sharing of techniques which may apply to several disciplines. The journal will also function as a showcase for the University of Split and provide recognition to the students and supervisors who were involved with the research.

For me, the most important benefit of the ST-OPEN model is the opportunities that the journal will provide to junior researchers to experience and learn about peer review, and

#### Box 1. ST-OPEN combines:

- The power of the internet
- Global exchange of information
- Excellence in peer review
- Traditions of educating authors and reviewers
- With the functions of the oldest journal in the world

#### Box 2. Benefits of ST-OPEN:

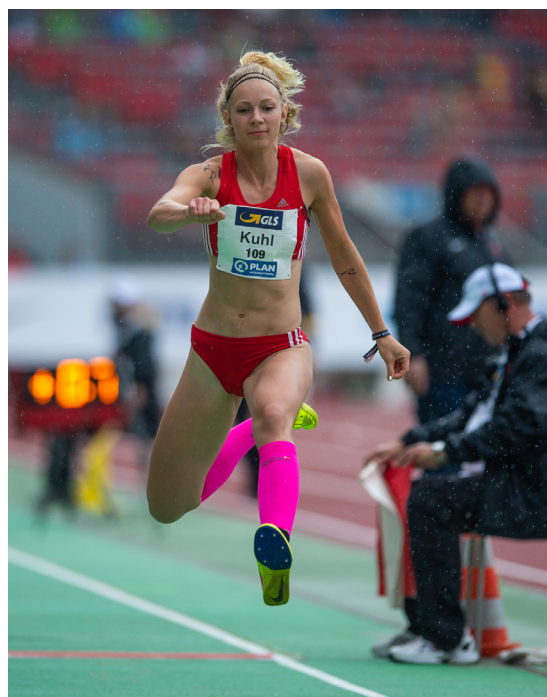
- Making University of Split research accessible
- Providing a showcase for University of Split research
- Linking disciplines (inside and outside University of Split)

thus hone their skills in research publication. Submitting work to a journal and responding to peer reviewers can be a daunting prospect and rejection by journals can be a disheartening experience for young researchers. The editors of ST-OPEN will work with authors to help them develop their work into an article suitable for publication. In doing this, the journal will help

authors at the start of their careers develop important skills which they will need for any future research projects. ST-OPEN will implement rigorous but constructive peer review and will ensure that articles meet international standards in research reporting and follow the relevant guidelines. When young researchers publish future work in other journals, after experiencing the ST-OPEN peer review, they should 'hit the ground running', with a strong understanding of the processes involved which have been developed in a collegial and constructive, rather than a competitive, environment.

Academic journals have existed since the late 17th century when Henry Oldenburg published the first proceedings (then called Philosophical Transactions) of the Royal Society in London.

Technology has enabled several advances, especially in dissemination, which can now be truly global. However, the functions of an academic journal remain broadly the



**Photo:** University of Split students will 'hit the ground running'! (Photo credit: Stefan Brending; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018\\_DM\\_Leichtathletik\\_-\\_Dreisprung\\_Frauen\\_-\\_Stefanie\\_Kuhl\\_-\\_by\\_2eight\\_-\\_DSC6623.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018_DM_Leichtathletik_-_Dreisprung_Frauen_-_Stefanie_Kuhl_-_by_2eight_-_DSC6623.jpg); CC BY SA 3.0)

**Box 3. Benefits of ST-OPEN for young researchers**

- Providing experience of peer review
- Junior researchers will receive CONSTRUCTIVE peer review
- They will learn about peer review before they submit to another journal
- Students will learn how to become good peer reviewers (via the student board)

same as those set out in 1665 by Oldenburg and Robert Hooke, who noted that they serve (1) to register authors' claim to the work and provide recognition for it, (2) to certify that the research is trustworthy, through systems of peer review, (3) to disseminate the work and (4) to create a permanent archive [2].



**Photo:** Henry Oldenburg, founding editor of the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (London) in 1665 (Photo credit: Attributed to Jan van Cleve [Public domain]; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan\\_van\\_Cleve\\_\(III\)\\_-\\_Portrait\\_of\\_Henry\\_Oldenburg.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_van_Cleve_(III)_-_Portrait_of_Henry_Oldenburg.jpg))



**Photo:** The best modern innovations have ancient foundations... (Cathedral of St. Blasius in Split; Photo credit: Elizabeth Wager, personal collection)

So, while ST-OPEN is new and innovative, like the best inventions (and like the city of Split, itself) it is based on strong and ancient foundations.

**The functions of an academic journal (as described by Henry Oldenburg in the 17th century)**

- Register authors' claim to the work and provide recognition for it
- Certify that the research is trustworthy, through systems of peer review
- Disseminate the work
- Create a permanent archive

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