

The Electronic Journals Library EZB: a successful model of international collaboration

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Abstract

The Electronic Journals Library - in German called Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek abbreviated as EZB - is a cooperative library service for the effective use of electronic journals. With more than 40.000 titles it is the largest database for scholarly and academic full text journals in the world.

The EZB has been developed and managed by the University Library Regensburg in Germany. The University Library Regensburg provides the technical and organisational infrastructure of the EZB and is responsible for further developments of this service. Currently (February 2009), the EZB is used by nearly 500 libraries in Germany and several other European countries. All EZB member libraries are working together. They participate by collecting titles and maintaining bibliographic and other metadata which are needed for the access of the e-journals. They are working together to enlarge the title extent of the EZB by sharing the bibliographic records and are in common responsible for keeping them up-to-date. This international collaboration of the libraries that participate in the EZB is the main reason for its high quality and the necessary basis for its quality management.

A special trademark of the EZB is its presentation of access rights following traffic light symbols. By this system, access rights for electronic resources are displayed for all participating libraries. One of the important developments is the networking of the EZB with other digital library services, e.g. by the means of article linking. The EZB is very popular within the user community, as the usage statistics reveal. In 2008, the EZB recorded a total of more than 22 million clicks on journal titles. This high usage shows that the EZB is really a successful model of international collaboration.

Keywords

Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek, Electronic Journals Library EZB, electronic journals, internet service, access, usage statistics, international library cooperation, quality management

1. The Electronic Journals Library as user service

More than 10 years ago, the University Library Regensburg launched the Electronic Journals Library¹ and continuously developed its services from then on.

At the present time (February 2009), the EZB is used by nearly 500 libraries in Germany and several other European countries. Even the world's largest library, the Library of Congress, is one of the partners of the EZB community².

The EZB is a cooperative library service for the effective use of scholarly electronic journals.³ It offers free e-journals together with licensed ones under one standardized user interface. However, the EZB itself does not store any electronic journal content; instead, the participating institutions collect bibliographic data pertaining to the journals and record them in the central database in Regensburg.

EZB title content

The Electronic Journals Library only includes scholarly and academic e-journals which provide full-text articles on the Internet, covering all subjects and spanning all publishers and vendors. At present (February 2009), the EZB contains more than 40,000 titles. About 20,000 journals offer their full-text articles for free.

The EZB offers a single point for accessing e-journals. This means that all titles are presented in a single standardized user interface (in German and English).

¹ English homepage of the EZB: <http://ezb.uni-regensburg.de/index.phtml?&lang=en>

² See: Panzera, Don / Hutzler, Evelinde: E-Journal Access through International Cooperation: Library of Congress and the Electronic Journals Library EZB, In: Serials Review, 2004, Vol. 3, p. 176-182



³ See: Hutzler, Evelinde / Schupfner, Gerald: The Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek: A Successful Library Service for Electronic Journals in Germany. In: Serials Librarian, 2002, Vol. 3/4, p 255-270

Browsing Functions

The titles entered in the EZB can be displayed in alphabetical order or in subject lists. A list of all 41 subjects gives the primary information on all e-journals. This overview shows how many titles are available for each subject (see figure 1).

Electronic Journals Library

University Library of Regensburg

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Journals

- by subject
- by title
- Search

- quick Search

Fulltext Journals by Subject

Subject	Entries
Agriculture, Forestry etc.	1729
Archaeology	372
Architecture, Civil Engineering	913
Art History	535
Biology	2854
Chemistry and Pharmacology	1658
Classical studies	199
Computer Science	1299
Economics	9158
Education	1206
Electrical Engineering, Measurement and Control Technology	808
Energy, environment protection, Nuclear Power Engineering	832
English, American Studies	650
Ethnic Sciences	783
General, Interdisciplinary	1363
Geography	598
Geosciences	1181
German, Dutch and Scandinavian Studies	173
History	1911

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Figure 1: Part of the list of the available subjects

The respective subject lists show the journal titles in alphabetical order (see figure 2).

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Journals

- by subject
- by title
- Search

quick Search

Geography

Fulltext articles are ...

- freely available
- free for the staff and students of the University of Regensburg (from within the Campus network). For access restrictions see the Readme.
- only in part accessible as fulltext (from within the Regensburg Campus network). For access restrictions see the Readme.
- not accessible (in many cases you can see the TOCs and abstracts)

Information about the journal (e.g. access restrictions)

Please respect the publisher's terms of use.

Contact

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Suggest a journal

A **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G** **H** **I** **J** **K** **L** **M** **N** **O** **P** **Q** **R** **S** **T** **U** **V** **W** **X** **Y** **Z**

- [Acclimations](#)
- [ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies](#)
- [Acta Climatologica et Chorologica](#)
- [Acta Geographica Slovenica \(formerly: Geografski Zbornik / Acta Geographica\)](#)
- [Advances in Environmental Monitoring and Modelling](#)
- [Advances in Water Resources](#) Readme
- [Agricultural and Forest Meteorology](#) Readme
- [Agricultural Meteorology](#) Readme
- [Allgemeines Archiv für die Länder- und Völkerkunde](#)
- [Ambiente e Água : An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Science](#)
- [Annalen der Geographie und Statistik](#)
- [Annales de Géographie \(1892-2005\)](#)
- [Annales de Géographie \(2003-\)](#)

Figure 2: Part of the subject list Geography

Geography contains about 600 titles. A click on the journal title leads directly to the journal homepage, and if it is on subscription, or if it is for free, you can access the full-text articles.

Access information

It is very important for the users to have information whether the full-text is available or not. Therefore we created a traffic light symbol which shows the accessibility of each title.

A green light marks free e-journals. Thus the full-texts of these journals are freely available.

A yellow light denotes titles which are licensed at the library; full-texts can be accessed by its institutional users. A red light stands for journals without a subscription by the EZB member library. In these cases, full-text access is not possible by its institutional users. Usually, table of contents and sometimes even abstracts are freely available. A yellow/red light means that the EZB member library has no continuous subscription on the journal but only some of the published volumes are accessible as full-texts for the users of this library.

Search Functions

In addition to the browsing possibilities, you can as well search for particular journal titles. The EZB offers search possibilities for title keywords, publisher and ISSN. Furthermore the user may create a combined alphabetical list of journals belonging to various selected subjects. The search can be

restricted to free and/or licensed titles only and the user can search for new entries by means of a date search.

Detailed title information

A click on the information symbol beneath each journal title leads to the detailed information about a journal, for example information about the publisher, the type of journal or the access rights (see figure 3). The licensed titles have an additional readme link. A click on this link provides further information regarding access and use. This readme information is provided by each EZB member library and stored on its web server.

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University Library of Regensburg

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Journals

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- [by title](#)
- [Search](#)

- quick Search

1 Hits
[Suche verfeinern](#)

European Journal of Medicinal Chemistry

Licensed for the period: [Nationallizenz: Vol. 22 \(1987\) - Vol. 37 \(2002\)](#)

Not licensed for the remaining period : [Journal homepage](#)

print version available too: Title: European journal of medicinal chemistry

(Quelle: [ZDB](#)) Stock: 16.1981 -

available: 16.1981 -

Location: Regensburg UB // 86/ Standortsignatur: 86/VA 4073

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General information on the online edition:

Publisher: Elsevier

Subject(s): Chemistry and Pharmacology; Medicine

Keyword(s): Pharmakologie, Pharmazie

E-ISSN(s): 0223-5234

P-ISSN(s): 0223-5234

ZDB-Number: [2005170-0](#)

Fulltext online since: Vol. 22, Iss. 1 (1987)

Homepage(s): <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/02235234>
<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ejmech>

Type of appearance: Fulltext, online and print

Pricetype: subject to fee

Annotations: Persönliche Registrierung für ChemWeb (frei) erforderlich. Volltextzugang über ScienceDirect oder ChemWeb.

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- Systematic download of articles or search results is prohibited.
- You are not allowed to pass articles (electronically or printed) to a third party.

Figure 3: Detailed title information

Information on print journals of the library

Some months ago, a new feature was installed in the EZB database. The user not only receives access information on the electronic version of the journal but also on print versions available in her or his institution (see figure 3). This new function could be developed based on a cooperation of EZB with the German database for serial and journals titles, called Zeitschriftendatenbank, abbreviated as ZDB. The ZDB⁴ contains more than 1 million bibliographic records of serials and journals (electronic and print) and at the same time shows their availability in German libraries. The EZB searches for holdings data in the ZDB and displays the retrieved holding information of the print version of an e-journal in the

⁴ ZDB-OPAC: <http://dispatch.opac.d-nb.de/DB=1.1/LNG=DU/SID=92f46aa0-c/LNG=EN/>

EZB. Thus, if an electronic journal is also available in print, the user receives this information listed with exact holdings and call numbers.

2. The EZB as tool for collaborating libraries

The EZB is not only a user service, but also an efficient tool for the participating libraries.

As mentioned before, the EZB is a cooperatively organized service. Nearly 500 libraries are taking part in the EZB and offer the EZB as their own user service by integrating their local settings.⁵

To enable a collaborative e-journal management, the University Library Regensburg built up a technical system that allows all EZB member libraries to work together and to adapt the EZB to their local requirements. Although the meta-data of the journals are saved centrally in a database in Regensburg, they are entered and updated in decentralized form by all participating libraries with the help of easy-to-use Web forms.

As all EZB member libraries jointly contribute to the EZB, they save time by not having to enter and maintain all journals themselves. At the same time, they can enter their own access rights to all electronic journals and provide this information to their customers. Each participating library can mark the journal entries with yellow or red lights according to the library's licenses. If an EZB member library has signed license contracts, it can allocate the respective yellow lights in its EZB interface and thus show to its users that they can retrieve the full-texts of these journals. In addition, they can show their own specific access conditions and give further user instructions in the readme pages. If applicable they also may link to a special URL offering full-text access for the respective institution in case if it differs from the official journal homepage.

With this possibility of adapting the EZB to local conditions, participating institutions can use the EZB as local digital library and offer it to their users as their own service.

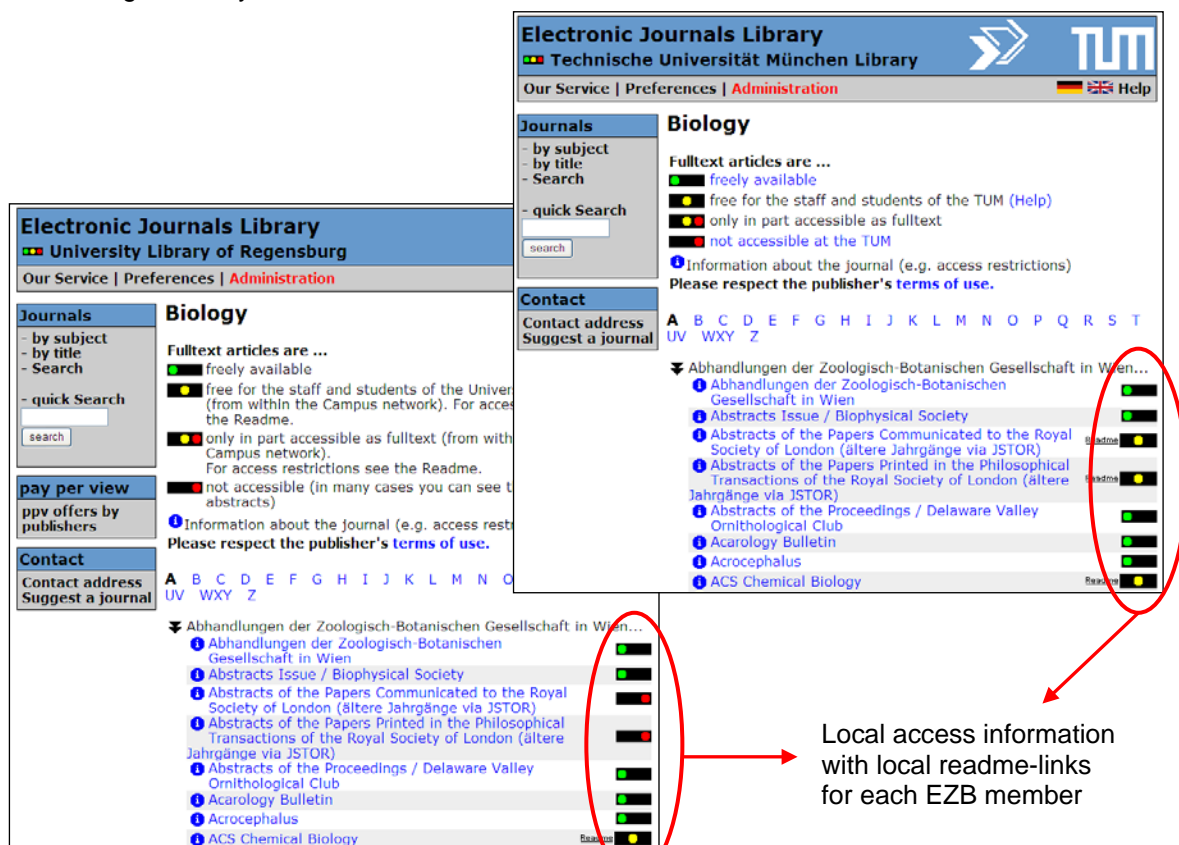


Figure 4: The EZB generates local user interfaces for each EZB member library

Figure 4 shows the EZB user interface of the University Library Regensburg in comparison with the EZB user interface of the Library of the Technical University of Munich. The number and order of the

⁵ See the list of all EZB members: <http://ezb.uni-regensburg.de/about.phtml?lang=en>

titles of all participating libraries are similar, but the red and yellow lights are distributed in a different way; depending on the fact if the journal has been subscribed to or not.

The EZB generates database driven special user interfaces with their own local information for each EZB member library on the fly.

3. Usage of EZB

In order to record the EZB utilisation, the University Library Regensburg counts the journal title accesses via the EZB. The access figures show clearly that the EZB is an intensely used service. The utilisation has been rising for years (see figure 5).

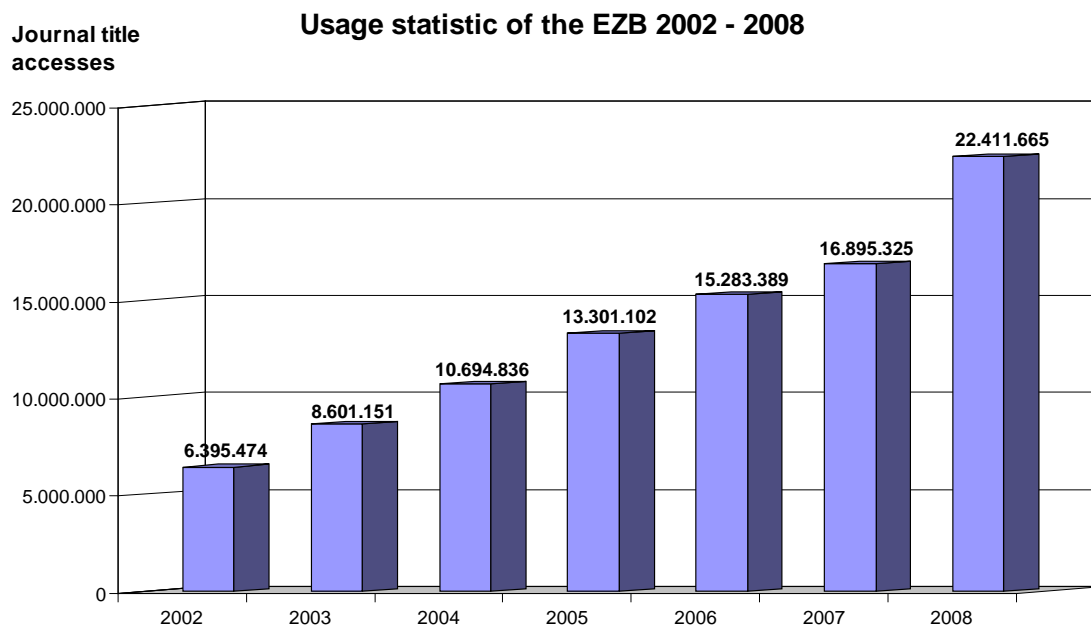


Figure 5: Growth of the EZB utilisation from 2002 to 2008

In the year 2008 we could register all in all more than 22 million title clicks, i.e. approx. 60.200 journal title accesses per day. These access figures show that the users are satisfied with the EZB.

4. Quality management by international cooperation

The intensive use of the EZB speaks for the high quality of this service. There are three main reasons for the EZB's great popularity among users:

- The EZB is the world-wide largest database for academic and scholarly e-journals.
- The journal data and access information are kept very up-to-date.
- The utilisation of the EZB is easy and users can see at a glance if they can access the full text articles of the requested journal.

As the scope and the up-to-dateness of the EZB data are essential reasons for its success, one has to study how this data quality could be achieved and how it can be permanently ensured.

A basic idea for the EZB quality management is to bundle the expertise of the member libraries and to share the work most efficiently. All EZB member libraries collect and enter the journal titles in co-operation. We have set out rules in writing for that. However, we have no editorial staff verifying the quality of the title entries. Quality control rather takes place by the mutual exchange of the EZB member libraries. All member libraries have the occasion to enter new titles in the EZB or to change the common data of title entries. This procedure is a big advantage for the update of the frequently changing internet addresses of the journals. If a member library adjusts journal URL that has changed, this adjustment is automatically valid for the other EZB member libraries. By this direct co-operation of all member libraries the journal URLs are kept up-to-date so that access to the e-journals is constantly guaranteed for our users. An automatic link check of the EZB revising the URLs periodically is supporting the up-to-dateness of the journal URLs.

The EZB member libraries also co-operate in collecting open access journals and in marking them as freely accessible. Because of the international collaboration of the participating libraries, the EZB can offer a very large collection of scholarly e-journals with a huge quantity of freely available titles. And, the more libraries that participate in the maintenance of this information, the better we can verify the access information especially of free titles in the long term.

It goes without saying that we offer to our users the possibility to draw our attention to missing e-journals or to incorrect details in the EZB (e.g. the accessibility of full text articles). This user feedback adds to an ongoing quality improvement of our service.

In summary we can say that the equal co-operation of the EZB member libraries is the central and successful basis for the EZB quality management.

5. Further development of the EZB by networking


One of the important developments is the networking of the EZB with other digital library services, especially by the means of article linking.


Based upon the open URL technology, the University Library Regensburg has developed an EZB linking service offering to the user within the respective context, e.g. a scholarly internet portal or a bibliographic database, direct access to the full text being published in a scholarly e-journal.

The following example GEO-LEO⁶ shows the functionality of the EZB linking service. GEO-LEO stands for GEO-Library Experts Online. It is an internet portal for scholarly information in geosciences, mining, geography and thematic maps.

If a user searches in GEO-LEO she or he gets results, where the user finds EZB links, illustrated by small traffic lights that indicate articles from electronic journals. If the user pursues the EZB link, he will come to a web page in the EZB created specifically for this link. This EZB web page informs the user about the accessibility of the full-text. It shows with the help of the traffic light symbol if the full-text of the article is accessible without charge, or if it may be used under the license of an EZB member library. Finally, the EZB leads the user to the full-text from a supplier to which access rights are locally available. In order to facilitate the user's access to the full-text, the EZB provides a direct link to the desired articles whenever possible. (See figure 6)

⁶ GEO-LEO: <http://www.geo-leo.de/>

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

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» Saved Results [0]


My GEO-LEO




Username:
Password:


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» *e-doc* Submission



Record view "Online Contents – SSG Geowissenschaften" Hit 1 of 1

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Media Type:	 article
Essays:	Multimode surface wave sensitivity kernels in radially anisotropic earth media all issues all articles
Editor:	Zhou, Ying
Publication Year:	2009
In:	Geophysical journal international; Vol. 176 (2009), No. 3, p. 865–888, total 24
ISBN/ISSN:	0956–540X (search this title in other databases) search series in: BVB, HBZ–NRW, KOBV
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Legend:


 [OPAC](#) check availability
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From a result in GEO-LEO via EZB link to the EZB and from there to the full-text

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Volume 176 , Issue 3, p. 865

direct link to the article full-text

Figure 6: EZB linking within GEO-LEO

In this example the traffic light is yellow, indicating that the user’s institution – in this case the University Library Regensburg – holds a license for this electronic journal. This is why a “view full-text”-button can be inserted. A click on the “view full-text” button gives the user direct access to the desired full-text.

The EZB can link directly to articles appearing in about 18.000 e-journals published by more than 40 publishers/suppliers. If a link to the article is not possible, the EZB points to the next highest level: table of contents of the issue, annual summary of the volume, or the journal home page. In these latter cases, the user is given specific directions to call up the full-text.

The EZB linking via OpenURL technology can be used within internet portals, digital libraries or bibliographic databases. The EZB linking service has been integrated into several digital services. This special service has been used 22 million times in the year 2008. Offering the direct article linking, the EZB could create an additional access to full texts of e-journals for the users of other digital information services and therefore enhance the utilisation of e-journals as a whole.

6. Conclusion

In summary, one can say that the high usage of the Electronic Journals Library shows that the EZB is a successful model for international cooperation.

The cooperation has been working for many years now and has constantly been enhanced. Therefore, not only the number of member libraries has constantly risen but also the process of networking has proceeded. The large number of EZB member libraries is a good basis to keep up the quality of the EZB. The University Library Regensburg will continue to promote the international cooperation and to improve together with other partner institutions the services in order to hopefully keep step with the coming demands of our users.

The Electronic Journals Library EZB (with German and English interface) can be accessed on the internet for free at:

<http://ezb.uni-regensburg.de/>