Publications have figured prominently on the EPS agenda from the time of the earliest discussions on forming a European society for physics.

The Publications of the EPS

Although concerned with the status and quality of the physics literature in Europe, the European Physical Society's founders also sought to establish a link between European physicists that would focus attention on the new Society and build up its identity. A working group for publications with a broad European representation was set up, under the chairmanship of Jan de Boer from Amsterdam, at the Steering Committee's first meeting (at CERN in September 1967). The first priority was the Society's own information medium, the final outcome, after much negotiation, being *European Journal of Physics*, the bulletin of EPS. Later committees were to wrestle with the problem of journal rationalisation without making a great deal of progress, while the EPS showed itself ready to consider new titles if there was a hope that the Society's finances would be helped thereby. So other publications followed: *Europhysics Conference Abstracts* (1975), *European Journal of Physics* (1980), and *Europhysics Letters* (1986).

- *Europhysics News*

  The working group went to work right away by considering a letter from Laurens Jansen setting out the aims for an information medium for the new Society. With certain changes, this was sent to a number of publishers who had expressed an interest. A key number was an expected society membership of 15000 to 25000. A modest bulletin of say 16 or 32 pages initially was envisaged, although the way was left open for other proposals for rapid dissemination of information. Alternative procedures, although considered, were ruled out by the widely different publishing practices amongst the national societies (many having no journals of their own) if they even existed, the need to promote the nascent Society, and the lack of investment capital.

  Proposals by North-Holland and The Institute of Physics and The Physical Society (IPPS) seemed the most advantageous, their estimates showing a cost per 384-page volume of 10-12 Swiss francs per reader (say SFR 35,- at today's prices). They foresaw an advertisement income that could account for perhaps half the total after a few years. Moreover, IPPS intimated it might cease publication of its own bulletin if it took charge of the European magazine, and North-Holland went so far as to propose setting up a joint publishing house.

  But where could even SFR 10,- per volume come from, bearing in mind that members of national societies would be asked to pay already an annual membership fee of SFR 18,-, and how would physicists from eastern Europe pay? Even more pertinent, how long would it take to obtain 15000 members? Realism won the day, and it was decided that whilst discussions should be pursued with North-Holland, even a modest monthly magazine was only for the future when the Society was well established. For the first two years, something small but distinctive, which the national societies could finance and distribute to their members, would give maximum exposure of the Society and offer little risk.

Getting Started

This still left open all the details and the launch of the Society was coming perilously close. To solve the problem, B.P. Gregory instructed the CERN Public Information Office under Edwin Shaw (formerly founding editor of *Nuclear Engineering*) to prepare a project. Brian Southworth, editor of the *CERN Courier*, was called in and they put together a proposal for an 8-page newsletter to be published in English bi-monthly. Georges Boixader, their illustrator, designed a masthead round the title *Europhysics News* and the package was submitted to the Steering Committee. Approval was given and with Brian Southworth as editor, the first issue appeared dated November 1968. Edgar Ascher of Battelle acted as coordinator for incoming information and an Editorial Advisory Panel was formed which included Georges Béné of Geneva University, Jansen and Shaw.

Publication settled into a routine with the contents mainly devoted to the activities of the Society, although notice of physics meetings compiled by Simon Newman, also of CERN, assumed an increasing importance. So much so that the first of the famous "yellow issues" listing meetings was produced in 1970.

A Permanent Publication

In the meantime, much effort had been devoted to considering the form of a permanent publication. A Bulletin Committee had been set up at the first Council meeting with Robert Nilsson from Uppsala in the chair. *Physics Today* published by the American Institute of Physics (AIP) was an alluring model, especially as reports suggested that its publication brought in an annual profit of nearly $US 100'000,-, the sort of income that would solve any financial problems that EPS might encounter. And so the Society was urged from all sides to launch a European version as soon as possible. Cautious voices, however, pointed out that Europe was not the USA. National structures differed greatly, there were language barriers, distribution costs were much higher, markets were fragment-

E.N. Shaw

*Geneva*

The first issue of *Europhysics News* was published as a special issue in November 1968. The first regular issue (issue No. 1) appeared the following January.


From the left, L.A. Arstimovich from Moscow and a Member of the EPS Steering Committee, G. Szigeti, and Alex Crawford, the Editor of Europhysics News from March 1972 until December 1973, at the March 1972 meeting of Council in Oslo.


The 20th anniversary of EPS in Pisa in June 1988. Seated in the front row, from left to right, are E.N. Shaw, W. Buckel and G. Szigeti. J. Muller is seated in the second row on the right.

defended the retention of at least a printed publication with a coloured masthead, and their views were accepted. However, a full-time editor could not be supported and in the restructur­ing of the Society, Crawford had to leave. At the end of 1973, Lorette Etienne-Amberg, the Executive-Secretary since the beginning, took over the editorship part-time. Subsequent criticisms that Europhysics News was run by an isolated coterie in Geneva were answered by forming a full Advisory Committee in April 1975 with Shaw in the chair; day-to-day affairs were oversee­ed by an Editorial Board. At this time, Mme. Etienne left the Society and CERN again came to the rescue. Luka Sekolec, a Visiting Fellow, agreed to act as spare-time editor of the green issues, while Newman again took over the yellow issues which he continued to compile until his retirement in 1975.


The 20th anniversary of EPS in Pisa in June 1988. Seated in the front row, from left to right, are E.N. Shaw, W. Buckel and G. Szigeti. J. Muller is seated in the second row on the right.
limited to encouraging the Executive Secretary to make a few more pages available without risk to the budget. Correspondents were tried over and over, but in the end, initiatives always came from Geneva.

A Fresh Look
So it went on until the Spring of 1988 when the new Secretary of EPS, Maurice Jacob, urged another look and a new approach to the publishers. Not without misgivings, it must be admitted, the Secretariat and Editorial Board took up the cudgels once more. They found no change in the essential parameters and the maximum they could recommend was a modest increase in the number of pages, a bigger accent on European news and the appointment of a full-time editor who could spend more effort on promotion, using special features as a vehicle for attracting advertising.

EPS was fortunate in finding Peter Boswell, a materials physicist from Battelle who had worked in both industry and academia and was looking for a shift in his career. He was already in Belgium when he received the phone call from the EPS Secretary in January 1990. Under the new editor, colour has become a regular feature, we have a new masthead in line with that of Europhysics Letters, an illustrated cover page, more pages, sponsored issues, more news of science and of European administrations, and more income!

- Europhysics Conference Abstracts
Whereas conference organizers were fond of looking to the EPS for subsidies or financial guarantees, Council members looked to them as a potential source of income. Marcel Guenin from Geneva, at that time the EPS Secretary, had chaired the task force that tackled the financial crisis within the budget. He was a materials physicist from Battelle who had worked in both industry and academia and was looking for a shift in his career. He was already in Belgium when he received the phone call from the EPS Secretary in January 1990. Under the new editor, colour has become a regular feature, we have a new masthead in line with that of Europhysics Letters, an illustrated cover page, more pages, sponsored issues, more news of science and of European administrations, and more income!

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The first issue of the European Journal of Physics.

The second issue of Europhysics Education News.
European Journal of Physics Education, the first Board decided to drop the word “education”. The justification was that it would be a precise counterpart to the American Journal of Physics, the offending word could be added later if necessary should other journals materialise, but education was a “dirty word” in publication terms. For the supporters of an EPS series, the proposed title would preempt any follow up, and the summaries of contents began to sound like the précis for a Nuclear Physics journal in competition with Physics News, though on a grander scale. So far indeed from the original objectives had the journal seemed to drift, under the influence it must be noted of a Board with its full complement of EPS nominees, that the EPS President, Antonino Zichichi was loth to sign the final agreement, and this despite a sub-title that process had been foreseen, but that education and a description of the scope which at least started with the educational topics. However, sign it he did and in June 1980 the first issue appeared.

Five years had been envisaged as the time that might be necessary for the journal to reach the break-even point and the loss limit was set at SFR 100 000.- for each partner. Circulation rose only slowly despite the vigorous publicity campaign pursued by the IoP and Europhysics News, and annual losses of SFR 40 000.- were registered in the early years. Initially, the commitment of the EPS was largely covered by guarantees from the Novo Foundation in Denmark and the Belgian Ministry of Education, but by the third year the EPS was once more in financial difficulties and could pay only half its dues. At this point the IoP stepped in and agreed to pay the losses itself until the corner was turned and the surplus could be used to amortise the accumulated deficit. This proved to be a much longer process than had been foreseen, but finally in 1991 the EPS could enjoy a real income from the publication and the journal could be said to be firmly established. Series had continued to act as Editor-in-Chief, urging support in his own enthusiastic style until 1985 when Jan Pisut from Bratislava took over. He introduced new features, but the essential character of the journal remained true to the original aims, namely a journal that teachers of physics at university level would read in search of new teaching ideas and new enlightenments on physics problems.

Sir Brian Pippard of Cambridge replaced Pisut in 1990 and over the years the Editorial Board has quietly mutated although the EPS has not always been as assiduous as it should have been in presenting new names as members.

- Europhysics Letters

If the launch of the European Journal of Physics had been the result of argument and discussion it was as nothing compared to the next publishing project of the EPS. For years, envious eyes had been cast at the AIP’s Physical Review Letters and inside, physicists in Europe felt they would prefer a communication of their own to be published there. However, mixed with the envy there was the criticism that refereeing and speed of publishing were uneven, and it was therefore highly desirable that Europe should have a comparable publication, particularly for condensed matter.

In the early 1980’s, four mainstream physics letters journals were published in Europe apart from the “short communications” published in the IoP’s Journal of Physics. North-Holland’s Physics Letters A contained mostly letters on atomic physics of variable standard, whilst Physics Letters B was a leader in nuclear physics. Les Editions de Physique were initially supported mainly by French physicists, and Il Nuovo Cimento letters journal attracting international authors whose works were not well known. A citation analysis prepared by Jan Vlachy, head of a physics bibliometry department in Prague, gave the comparative rates as 7.5:12:5:3 set against 34 for Phys. Rev. Lett. Taylor and Francis had started a letters journal mainly for condensed matter physics that was called Communications in Physics, and in May 1978 had asked the EPS to intervene in the light of diminishing contributions. Circulation was not a problem, the Editorial Board was international and of high level yet the journal was dying for want of author support. Unfortunately, the EPS is not a body that can take decisions rapidly and the journal was allowed to fold.

Reopening the Question

Discouraging though this was, in March 1980 the Publications Committee reopened the question of a European general physics letters journal when examining its “label” policy for recognized journals. This, plus the reaction to the launch of Eur. J. Phys. stimulated the French Physical Society (SFP) to announce to the President of the EPS that it would be proposing a joint operation for a European letters journal to replace J. de Phys. Lett. on the lines of the agreement with the IoP. There were also stirrings in Italy and in January 1981, Zichichi offered to launch from Italy an EPS letters journal, fully financed, and to suppress Nuovo Cim. Lett.

The IoP let it be known the following month that it would be willing to be involved in any European letters journal and would offer SFR 100 000.- over three years towards its eventual realization.

The SFP produced a draft agreement which was not even discussed by the Executive Committee and by Council as a number of propositions were on the table. Instead Council rallied to the Publications Committee’s recommendation that a broadly based joint operation be considered, including the replacement of both the French and Italian letters journals. It was reasonably unanimous in concluding that there was now room for a high-quality general letters journal, but a minority view, vigorously expressed by Jozef Devreese from Antwerp, chairman of the Condensed Matter Division, held that a new start should be made or the venture would be compromised. Gert Ellenberger from Jülich, the new Chairman of the Publications Committee was charged with trying to sort it all out.

The first step was to form a sub-committee under Ellenberger’s chair (Secretary of the Publications Committee from March 1980 to 1991) and representatives of the directly interested parties together with Devreese, Henrik de Waard of Groningen and Ferenc Mezei of Budapest, who had intimated that the Editios Lorand Physical Society could offer low publication costs.

The problems facing the sub-committee were far from trivial. Neither the SFP nor the Italian Physical Society (IPS) had any intention of sharing the production side: their proposals had been for a partnership with the EPS only; the IoP had strong views on the way referees were chosen to avoid the accusations of favouritism that were rife; nobody wanted to be too open...
about circulation figures; North-Holland supported by the Dutch was hovering on the sidelines and making murmurs about \textit{Phys. Lett. A}, and there was, of course, the independent wing. But Council's wishes were clear that a bilateral venture was unacceptable and it was rapidly concluded that the existing circulations of the two letters journal were an essential base, for any new publication.

**A Concrete Proposal**

Nevertheless, little progress was made towards arriving at a structure. Louis Michel the chief editor of \textit{J. de Phys.} had understood the need for multiple participation, but he was fighting a rearguard action at home and the group still clinging to the idea of a bilateral open to success. Discussions with close to stalemates until in the summer of 1982 Roy Pike, Chairman of the IoP Publications Committee produced a draft agreement formulated around a three-way partnership between the EPS, IPS/SFP and IoP with editorial control by the EPS. Practically every phrase was contested, but it gave a start and was accompanied by market and cost estimates that looked real. Discussions followed, and by the Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1983, a fourth draft — with modifications — seemed to go a long way towards a solution. In particular, the IoP had agreed to provide capital equivalent to the national investment of the other societies and was less adamant in its opposition to the Editorial Board choosing referees. The SFP and IPS were close to agreeing on the need for a division of work, both requiring time to convince the people at home. The IoP had accepted this, although it was insisting on international tendering for comparison.

There were however still qualms about the perception. A bilateral would have been highly desirable to bring in the German Physical Society (DPG) at least. The fifth draft was circulated to national societies with an invitation to contribute. This elicited an unhelpful response from Germany to the effect that Physik Verlag, a publishing arm of the German society, would take the whole thing over. Council had agreed that the EPS Publications Committee would take the lead, and despite all Michel's valedictory efforts, once again matters were nevertheless effectively at a standstill.

**Breaking the Deadlock**

Nevertheless, the undercurrent of determination was there. It was agreed with Philippe Nozières of Grenoble now contributing a keen analytical approach and Andrea Taroni of Bologna a long time veteran of scientific aspects. Discussions convened at the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi during the EPS Inaugural Conference in Florence in April 1969. Kurti was the Editor-in-Chief of \textit{Europhysics Letters} until 1989.

**Handling the Flood**

Encouraged by the Co-editors and physicists throughout the EPS, contributions began to stream in and within a very short time the problem was not a lack of high-quality letters, but the cerebral flood. Budgets had been prepared on the basis of a relatively slow build-up and a more optimistic circulation. The decision was, however, to increase the volume size, but honour the price, and this in turn led to a higher initial deficit than foreseen. In the partnership agreement that had finally been concluded provision had been made for Associate Partners who deposited sums in case further capital was needed. This allowed the journal to be launched under the auspices of not just three national societies (plus the EPS) but of 11, counting the Scandinavian societies as a single unit. Eventually it became necessary to call in this capital, at which point a new management agreement became necessary. Instead of being a simple enlargement this turned out to be polemical as the IoP delegate introduced the concept of marking up the share value of the original partners. Such a procedure was hotly contested, not least by J.M. Araújo, Chairman of the Publications Committee, and in time the move was seen to be unfair and a new agreement was signed which gave a balanced consideration to all the contributing parties.

**Werner Buckel** from Karlsruhe undertook as his first priority the promotion of \textit{Europhysics Letters} on becoming the EPS President in 1986. Not only did he honour this as President by encouraging contributions from all over Europe and by smoothing the path when difficulties arose, but he also returned to take over as Editor-in-Chief when Kurti retired in March 1989. When he in turn handed over to Roger Balian from Saclay in April 1992, \textit{Europhysics Letters} had become a journal of world repute with a solid circulation that provided the partners with a healthy surplus at the end of the year.

But the publishing world is never static and although keeping its present publications vigorous is not easy, the EPS, on past experience, should perhaps now be considering whether new publications are on the agenda.