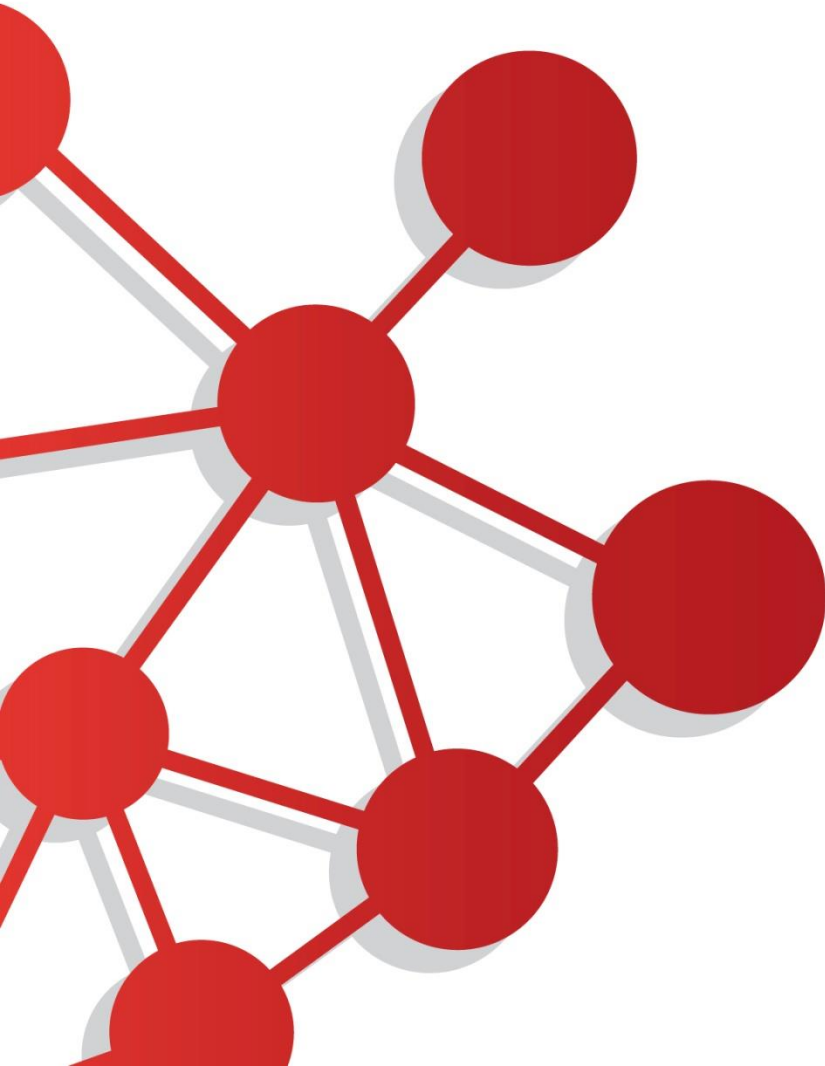


How to get published in Nature (and its sister journals)



Ed Gerstner / 印格致
Executive Editor
Nature Communications

March 2014

My background

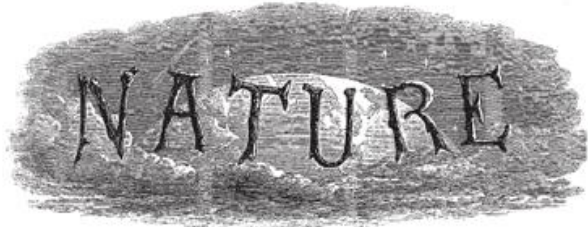
- Joined *Nature* in April 2002.
- Moved to Shanghai in November 2012 as the Executive Editor of *Nature Communications*.
- Previously an associate editor at *Nature* and *Nature Materials*, and helped launch *Nature Physics* as its senior editor.
- PhD in Physics from the University of Sydney.
- 5 years postdoctoral experience at the Universities of Cambridge, Sydney and Surrey, and at Philips Research Labs, Redhill.



What makes a *Nature* journal?

- Highly selective — only a fraction of submissions are published.
- High impact.
- Each journal is run by team of full-time, professional editors.
- Each journal is independent from each other journal — rejection from one doesn't prejudice consideration by another.





A WEEKLY ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL OF SCIENCE

"To the solid ground
Of Nature trusts the mind which builds for aye."—WORDSWORTH

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1869

NATURE: APHORISMS BY GOETHE

NATURE! We are surrounded and embraced by her: powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her.

Without asking, or warning, she snatches us up into her circling dance, and whirls us on until we are tired, and drop from her arms.

She is ever shaping new forms: what is, has never yet been; what has been, comes not again. Everything is new, and yet nought but the old.

We live in her midst and know her not. She is incessantly speaking to us, but betrays not her secret. We constantly act upon her, and yet have no power over her.

The one thing she seems to aim at is Individuality; yet she cares nothing for individuals. She is always building up and destroying; but her workshop is inaccessible.

Her life is in her children; but where is the mother? She is the only artist; working-up the most uniform material into utter opposites; arriving, without a trace of effort, at perfection, at the most exact precision, though always veiled under a certain softness.

Each of her works has an essence of its own; each of her phenomena a special characterisation: and yet their diversity is in unity.

She performs a play; we know not whether she sees it herself, and yet she acts for us, the lookers-on.

Incessant life, development, and movement are in her, but she advances not. She changes for ever and ever, and rests not a moment. Quietude is inconceivable to her, and she has laid her curse upon rest. She is firm. Her steps are measured, her exceptions rare, her laws unchangeable.

She has always thought and always thinks; though not as a man, but as Nature. She broods over an

all-comprehending idea, which no searching can find out.

Mankind dwell in her and she in them. With all men she plays a game for love, and rejoices the more they win. With many, her moves are so hidden, that the game is over before they know it.

That which is most unnatural is still Nature; the stupidest philistinism has a touch of her genius. Whoso cannot see her everywhere, sees her nowhere rightly.

She loves herself, and her innumerable eyes and affections are fixed upon herself. She has divided herself that she may be her own delight. She causes an endless succession of new capacities for enjoyment to spring up, that her insatiable sympathy may be assuaged.

She rejoices in illusion. Whoso destroys it in himself and others, him she punishes with the sternest tyranny. Whoso follows her in faith, him she takes as a child to her bosom.

Her children are numberless. To none is she altogether misery; but she has her favourites, on whom she squanders much, and for whom she makes great sacrifices. Over greatness she spreads her shield.

She tosses her creatures out of nothingness, and tells them not whence they came, nor whither they go. It is their business to run, she knows the road.

Her mechanism has few springs—but they never wear out, are always active and manifold.

The spectacle of Nature is always new, for she is always renewing the spectators. Life is her most exquisite invention; and death is her expert contrivance to get plenty of life.

She wraps man in darkness, and makes him for ever long for light. She creates him dependent upon the earth, dull and heavy; and yet is always shaking him until he attempts to soar above it.

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Launch Issue
1869

- Founded in 1869
- The world's leading, global, scientific journal
- Across the full range of scientific disciplines
- *Nature's* mission:

To communicate the world's best and most important science to scientists across the world and to the wider community interested in science

Nature's hits...

- Discovery of the neutron (Chadwick, 1932)
- Structure of DNA (Watson and Crick, 1953)
- Demonstration of the laser (Maiman, 1960)
- Magnetic resonance imaging (Lauterbur, 1973)
- Polymer LEDs (Burroughes *et al.* 1990)

... and misses!

- Krebs cycle — rejected without review
- Beta decay — rejected without review
- Pavlov's obituary — published while he was still alive
- Memory of water
- Schön
- ... and surely many more.

What makes a *Nature* paper?



- Reports the most significant advances that have the widest implications.
- Significance should be readily appreciated by non-specialists.
- Which means, the significance of physics papers should be readily apparent to biologists.
- And, the significance of biology papers should be readily apparent to physicists.

Which raises an issue...

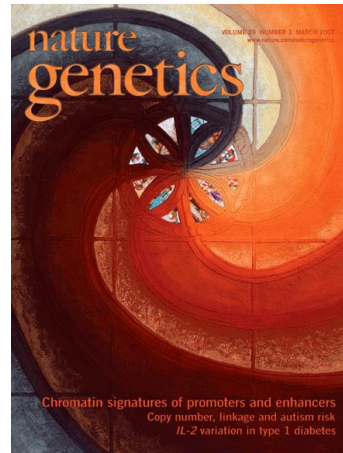
- Nature's mission statement is to publish the most important advances in research.
- But what about important advances in physics whose principal appeal is to other physicists, but not biologists?
- What about advances in genetics whose principal appeal is to geneticists?
- Or materials science, immunology, chemistry, neuroscience, ... ?



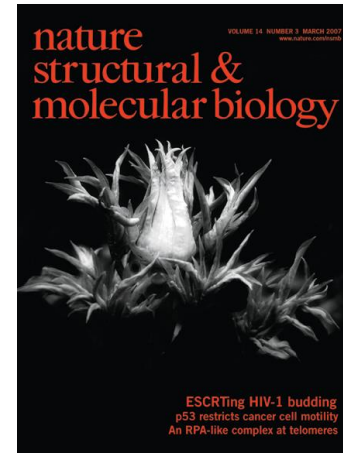
Nature life science journals



1983



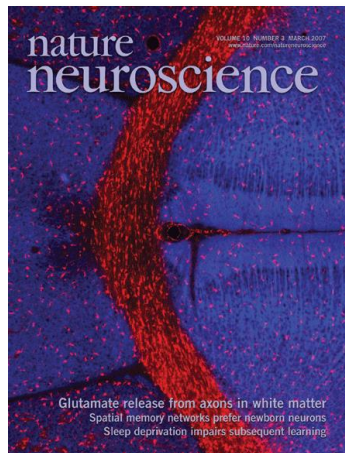
1992



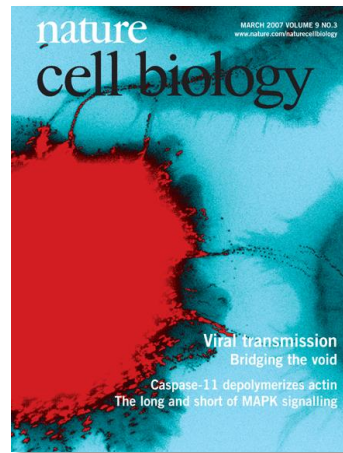
1994



1995



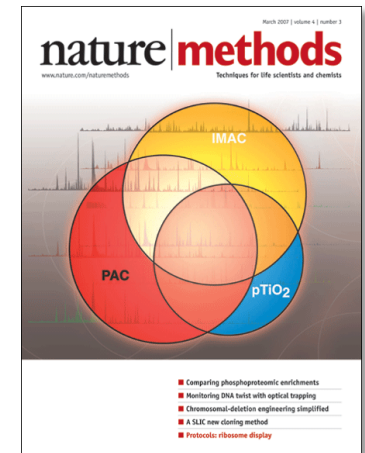
1998



1999



2000

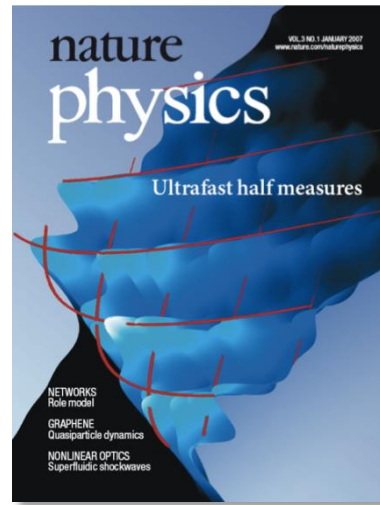


2004

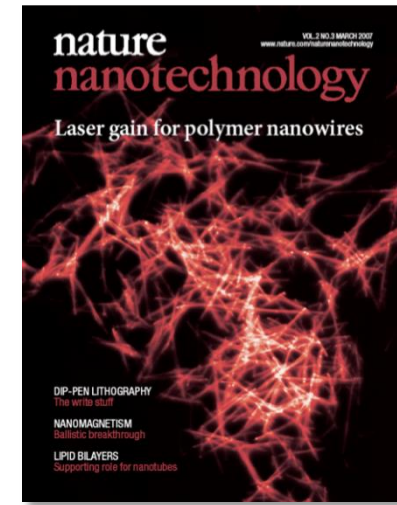
Nature physical science journals



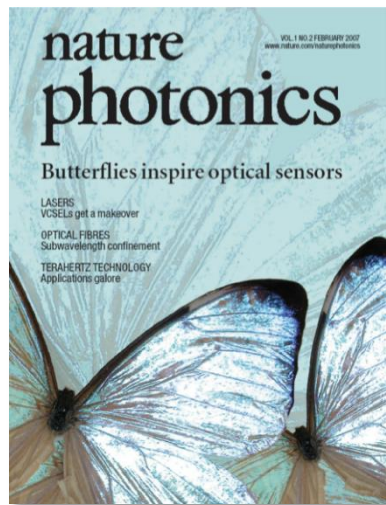
2002



2005



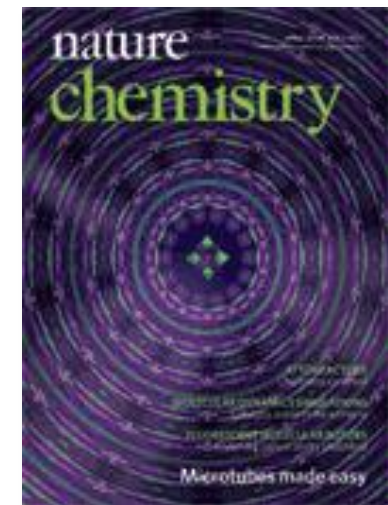
2006



2007

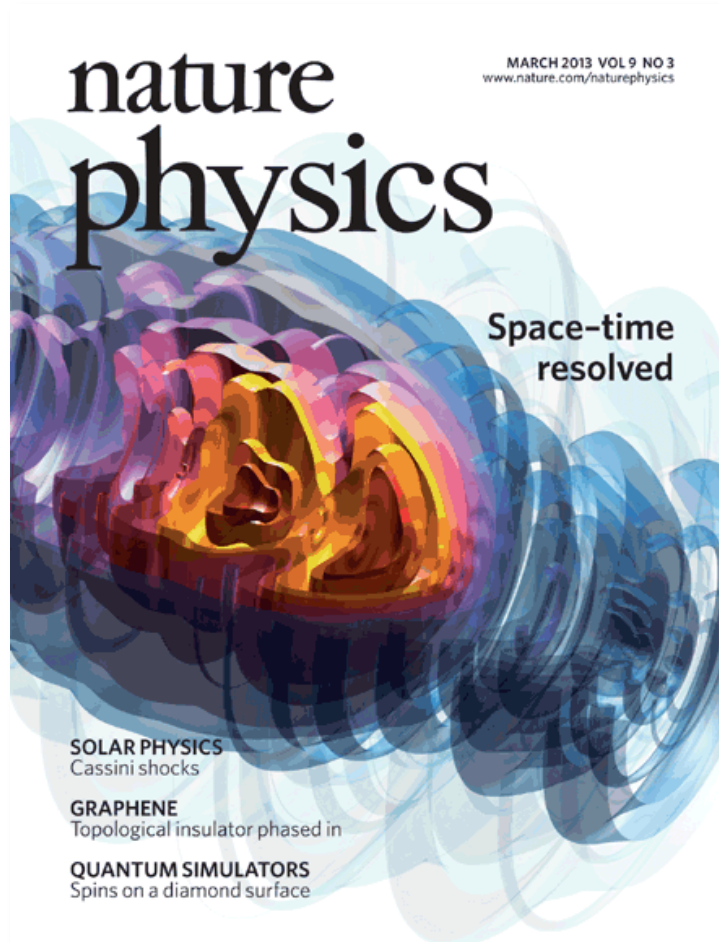


2008



2009

What makes a *Nature Research* Journal paper?



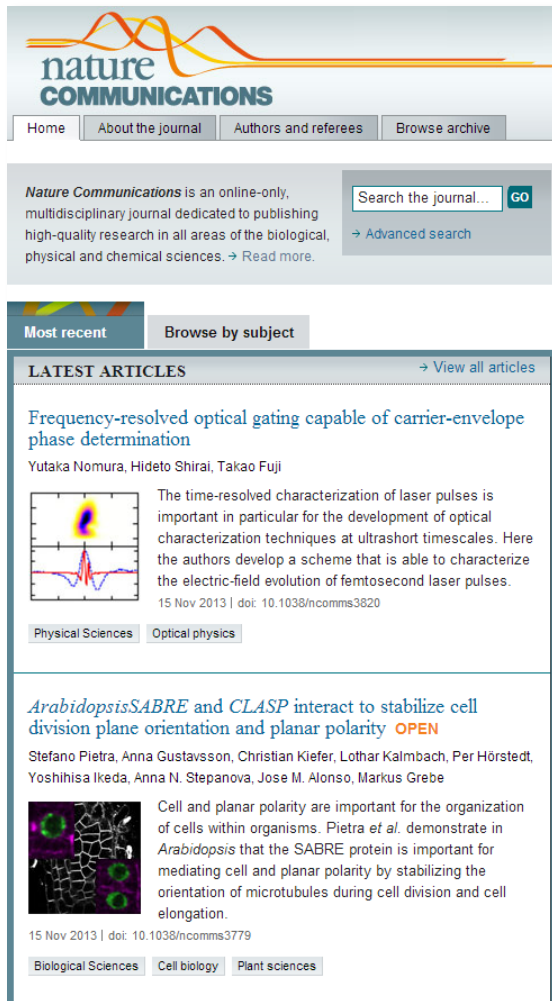
- Reports the most significant advances within the discipline it covers.
- Significance should be readily appreciated by non-specialists.
- The significance of papers in one specialty should be apparent to researchers in another.

But ...

- Only limited space in *Nature* and the *Nature Research* journals.
- Only the MOST important research with the WIDEST implications can be published.
- What about important advances in specialists areas of research whose principal appeal is to other specialists?
- The solution...



Nature Communications



The screenshot shows the homepage of Nature Communications. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About the journal, Authors and referees, and Browse archive. Below this is a search bar with the text "Search the journal..." and a "GO" button. A descriptive paragraph states: "Nature Communications is an online-only, multidisciplinary journal dedicated to publishing high-quality research in all areas of the biological, physical and chemical sciences." Below the search bar, there are two tabs: "Most recent" and "Browse by subject". The main content area is titled "LATEST ARTICLES" and features two article previews. The first article is titled "Frequency-resolved optical gating capable of carrier-envelope phase determination" by Yutaka Nomura, Hideto Shirai, and Takao Fuji. It includes a small figure showing a 2D color plot and a 1D line plot. The second article is titled "Arabidopsis SABRE and CLASP interact to stabilize cell division plane orientation and planar polarity" by Stefano Pietra, Anna Gustavsson, Christian Kiefer, Lothar Kalmbach, Per Hörstedt, Yoshihisa Ikeda, Anna N. Stepanova, Jose M. Alonso, and Markus Grebe. It includes a small figure showing a cell with green and red fluorescent markers. Both articles include their publication date (15 Nov 2013) and DOI.

- First paper published 12th April 2010.
- Online-only means no space constraints.
- In 2013 we published >1600 articles.
- In 2014 we expect to publish more than **all** *Nature* journals combined
- Impact factor = 10.015.
- Choice of subscription access or Open Access!

What makes a *Nature Communications* paper?

- Reports significant advances that have to potential to **influence thinking in a field**.
- New ideas, new insights and new technologies.
- Broad appeal **isn't** a prerequisite for publication!
- Great science **is!**



Getting published in a Nature journal

Publishing starts with new experimental or theoretical results that significantly advance our understanding or technological capability.

What are we looking for?

Our goal is that every paper should have the potential to provoke our readers to think:

"WOW! I didn't expect THAT!"

"WOW! That's clever (and useful!)"



Writing the paper

- Explain, don't hype. Show, don't tell.
- Results should speak for themselves.
- CONTEXT — Not every reader will understand the details but every reader should appreciate your work's significance.
- Descriptive not superlative
 - 'femtosecond spectroscopy' not 'ultrafast-spectroscopy'.
- Format isn't critical. RevTeX is fine.
- Titles in references are extremely helpful.

RULE ONE

Think of your reader.



RULE TWO

Think of your reader.

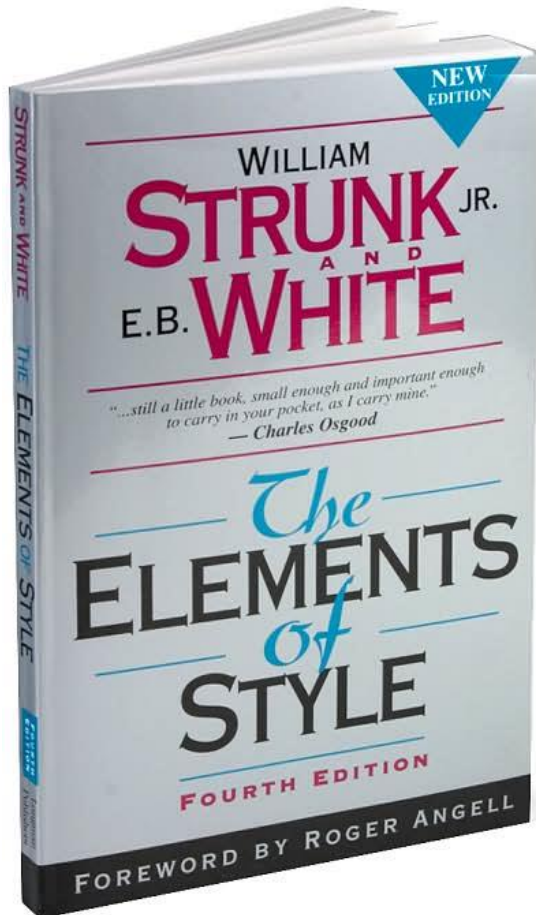


RULE THREE

Think of your reader!



Resources for better writing



- *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr and E. B. White (Longman, August 1999).



- Whitesides, G. M. Writing a Paper. *Advanced Materials* **16**, 1375–1377 (2004).



- Editorial: Elements of style. *Nature Physics* **3**, 581 (2007).



- Editorial: How to be popular. *Nature Physics* **7**, 827 (2011).



Submission process

- Cover letters useful but not mandatory.
- SHORT cover letters are best — if significance can be summarized **uniquely** in a single concise paragraph, it might be for us! If you need two pages, it probably isn't!
- Referee suggestions
 - Can be helpful.
 - Please don't suggest former supervisor, former students, friends, parents.
- We try to honour referee exclusion requests, as long as they are reasonable (3-4 individuals MAX).
- Identify all related papers submitted elsewhere.

Editorial process

- Initial assessment within a week (as far as possible).
- We look for impact not impact factors.
- MOST papers are declined without review.
- At least one editor will read the paper thoroughly, and often several editors
- 2-4 referees per paper and aim for total turnover time of 4-6 weeks for a first decision after review.



How our decisions are made

- Editors make decision based on the substance our referees' comments
 - ADVICE not VOTES.
- The decision is for the editors — not the referees — to make.
- Most papers require two rounds of review before publication
 - In my 11 years as an editor, I accepted the first draft of a paper without revision only **THREE** times.



Decision letters and what they mean

- **YES: ‘Accept in Principle’**
 - Minor revisions — we will publish your paper.
- **NO: ‘Closed door’**
 - Rejection — the paper is not for us.
- **MAYBE: ‘Pending+Quotes’ or ‘Open door’**
 - We may publish your paper... or we still might not.
 - Important revisions needed.
 - No decision until reviewers concerns are addressed.
 - Your paper will go back to referees!

Responding to referees

RULES ONE–THREE

Think of the referees!



Responding to referees

- Persuasion and diplomacy are key.
- Put yourself in the referee's shoes.
- Criticism is an opportunity not an insult!
- If an expert hasn't understood the merits of your work, that's a serious problem — publication or not!
- If invited to resubmit, only do so after you have comprehensively addressed ALL comments.
- If further experiments are requested, revisions to text alone are UNLIKELY to be enough.
- Stay professional — the referees are your peers and colleagues — and make their job as easy as you can.

Appeals

- We take appeals seriously but original submissions take priority
- Only a minority of appeals are successful
- Editorial: Leave to appeal. *Nature Physics* **6**, 395 (2010).



What helps?

- New data that addresses the major criticisms
- Referee or editor has made factual errors.

What doesn't help?

- “Do you know who I AM!?!”
- “Referees don’t like my work, therefore they are biased!”
- “I know who the referee is. He’s a moron!”
- Celebrity endorsements
- Cosmetic revisions

OPEN ACCESS

- We now have two multi-disciplinary journals that offer Open Access publishing options
 - *Nature Communications*
 - *Scientific Reports*
- Open access means your paper will be freely accessible to anyone (and forever).
- Increases exposure and impact.
- **Ensures your colleagues are able to see your work!**
- **More easily they see it, more likely they will cite it.**

Why publish Open Access?

“We found strong evidence that, even in a journal that is widely available in research libraries, OA articles are more immediately recognized and cited by peers than non-OA articles published in the same journal.”



SOURCE: Eysenbach, G. Citation Advantage of Open Access Articles. *PLoS Biology* 4, e157 (2006).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.0040157>

Scientific Reports

- Editorial criteria: **scientifically sound**
- Editorial Advisory Panel and Editorial Board
- Fully **Open Access**
- Rapid publication
- Greater scope to publish:
 - Detailed follow-up work
 - Negative results
 - Speculative ideas





Article metrics for:



The biological impacts of the Fukushima nuclear accident on the pale grass blue butterfly

Atsuki Hiyama, Chiyo Nohara, Seira Kinjo, Wataru Taira, Shinichi Gima, Akira Tanahara & Joji M. Otaki

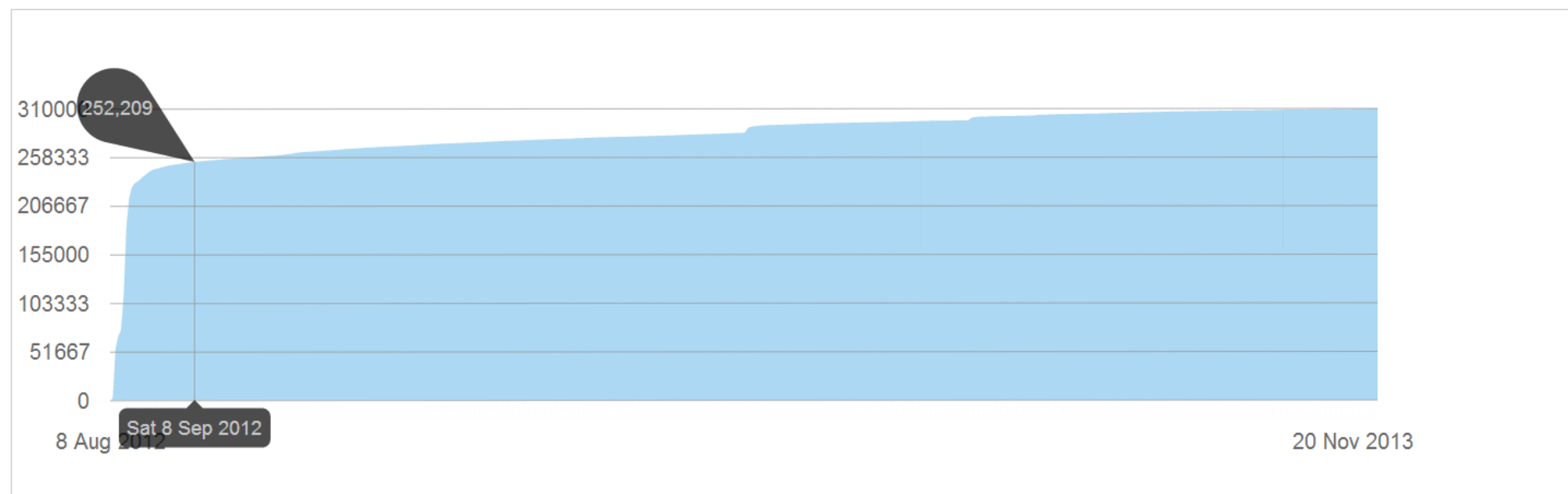
Scientific Reports 2, Article number: 570 (2012) | doi:10.1038/srep00570

Last updated: 22 November 2013 3:37:24 EST



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All the information others need to **reuse the data**; no interpretative analysis or hypothesis testing



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Promoting Community Data Repositories

Data stored in community **data repositories**



A **cloud based** research data management system where you can:



Manage your research outputs privately and securely



Make your research outputs citable, sharable, discoverable



Frontiers is trying to develop new approaches to scientific peer review, scientific collaboration and publication.

- Launched in Switzerland in 2007.
- Forged partnership with NPG in 2013.
- Interactive online peer review that encourages collaborative dialogue between authors and referees.
- Referee names included on published paper.
- Developing online tools for research.

Thank you! 谢谢!

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e.gerstner@nature.com

