



Reliance on US databases puts access to medical information at risk

Politicians are calling for digital sovereignty – but the structural conditions to enable it are lacking.

The problem: In March 2025, the biomedical literature database PubMed experienced a global outage. This incident highlighted just how dependent German science is on foreign data infrastructure. Although the German government has acknowledged the risks and announced emergency funding to protect at-risk research data, the development of independent European alternatives has so far made little progress.

Whilst government agencies point to existing safeguards such as ZB MED's mirroring services or offerings such as Europe PMC and LIVIVO, ZB MED views the situation as far more critical. With key US science institutions facing massive budget cuts, content being removed and restrictions being placed on data access, there are profound concerns as to the long-term reliability of this infrastructure. Moreover, the replacement systems cited above offer no genuine data security, as they remain dependent on data supplied by PubMed.

At the same time, ZB MED's project proposals to build the Open Life Science Publication Database (OLSPub) – an independent, open European alternative – have been rejected on multiple occasions.

This implies a fundamental contradiction: There is political backing for digital sovereignty, but the structural conditions to enable it are lacking. As long as public funding pathways remain closed, the necessary independence can only be secured outside existing funding frameworks – through targeted fundraising as a direct investment in research security and future resilience.

The need for action: Without an independent system for indexing current medical publications, Germany risks losing its ability to conduct research in crisis situations.

This is why fundraising for OLSPub is not an optional addition, but a necessary prerequisite for long-term research security.

The information supply in the life sciences is secure.

Why fundraising for OLSPub is so important

When access to knowledge is lost ... OLSPub fills the gap!

ZB MED will develop an open, reliable and sustainable alternative to the PubMed database. This alternative database will not only provide access to current PubMed content, but will also offer a technical and administrative framework for continuous expansion with new publications.

That's because research depends on reliability. Doctors and scientists need round-the-clock access to knowledge, regardless of political decisions, economic interests or technical outages.

The importance of the OLSPub project is underscored by numerous letters of support from organisations including the Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany, the University of Cologne, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Cochrane, the EMBL-EBI European Bioinformatics Institute, and the German Association of Medical Faculties (MFT).

Nonetheless, the acquisition of funding for the project remains completely unresolved.

Phase 1: Core Services

Period: Months 1-6

Budget: €600,000

Key Deliverables: Legal framework, submission site, data integration, automated quality control, 10 publishers integrated

Phase 2: Infrastructure

Period: Months 7-12

Budget: €800,000

Key Deliverables: Submission system in routine operation, MeSH tagging and metadata, external access to indexed data

Phase 3: Final Application

Period: Months 13-18

Budget: €600,000

Key Deliverables: Final application, user API, scaling and load balancing, live operations

We need your help!

To develop **OLSPub** as a prototype and permanently secure its long-term development, we need support for:

- technical infrastructure
- quality assurance and editorial work
- establishing a long-term (European) financial structure

Support
OLSPub –
donate now!

Help make knowledge accessible to everyone.

olspub-funding.zbmed.de

Be part of the success story. Help keep research open and accessible.

Made in Europe, **OLSPub** will enable open access to knowledge in a way that is transparent, independent and sustainable.

There is no guaranteed public funding for this critical infrastructure. That's why ZB MED is turning to fundraising – working together with you to achieve our shared goals of independence and future resilience.



Share this appeal with your colleagues, family and friends – with everyone who understands that medical research is a matter of life and death.



Your OLSPub contacts

If you have any questions, please get in touch – we'll be happy to help.



Dr. Miriam Albers, Project Lead,

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Acting Head of Library

Main areas of focus:

- Strategic library management
- Change management
- Key figures and usage analysis



Prof. Dr. Konrad Förstner, Project Lead, Foerstner@zbmed.de

Head of Data Science and Services. Main areas of focus:

- W2 Professor for Data and Information Literacy at TH Köln – University of Applied Sciences
- Bioinformatics and systems biology integration of omics data
- Text mining of biomedical literature
- Provision of the LIVIVO discovery service and ZB MED Knowledge Environment

Find out more:

www.zbmed.de/en/research/current-projects/olspub

Legal & contact info:

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