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ZB MED publishes results of market and target group analysis

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Results form basis for developing new strategy and new services

In order to gain a more detailed understanding of its markets and target groups, ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences recently carried out a major market study in collaboration with the business consulting firm Heinold, Spiller & Partner. The aim of the study was to obtain a reliable set of facts that could form the basis for setting ZB MED's strategic and operating goals for the years ahead. The results of the market study – which are now freely available online – provided the basis for creating a new overall strategy and route map for the Information Centre.

The main findings of the published study include key information on ZB MED's target groups. This data suggests ZB MED should be placing a key focus on researchers and students in the subject areas of medicine, health, nutritional, environmental and agricultural sciences, as well as on key disseminators and multipliers. This latter group primarily comprises libraries and other information institutions. "Our job now is to ensure that our products genuinely cater to these validated target groups," says Ulrich Korwitz, Director of ZB MED.

The results of the study also yielded four activities which are of key strategic importance in the library's portfolio of services, namely "Search & find", "Process & prepare", "Publish & disseminate" and "Research & development".

These priority activities are reflected in a number of new products announced by ZB MED. One of its first tasks will be to combine the MEDPILOT and GREENPILOT search portals into an interdisciplinary search portal for life sciences known as LIVIVO (key theme: "Search & find"). This new portal is due to be up and running sometime this spring. ZB MED will also be expanding its "Publish & disseminate" services. For example, it has already set up a comprehensive publishing advice service focused on the "open access" scheme which promotes free public access to research results. ZB MED will also be expanding its publishing platform with innovative projects such as "Living Handbooks". The goal of this project is to provide access to up-to-date scientific information by drawing on the worldwide cooperation of experts in each specific life sciences discipline. The contributions to the platform, which can be submitted and updated by the authors themselves, are subjected to a peer review process to maintain a high level of quality. They are also provided with a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), a persistent identifier which ensures items remain permanently citable and traceable.

The detailed market study was prompted by an evaluation conducted by the Leibniz Association in 2011. This affirmed that ZB MED performs an "essential function" in the services it provides and called for the creation of an overarching strategy for the future. In

order to provide the solid foundations required to develop this strategy, ZB MED decided to carry out a market study, which was jointly funded by the German federal government and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The overall strategy itself has now also been completed and is due to be published soon. "We have carried out a detailed strategic planning process to prepare ourselves for the future, and we hope this will be reflected in the next evaluation by the Leibniz Association which is scheduled for June 2015," says Korwitz, summing up the library's progress so far.

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A summary of the market study (in German) is available at:

<http://www.egms.de/static/de/journals/mbi/2014-14/mbi000321.shtml>

You can also access the detailed results (in German) at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4126/zbmed2014001>

Background information on the methods used for the market and target group study

Based on the initial identification of potential target groups, numerous interviews were conducted to obtain a better understanding of potential users' working environments. The study team drew on these initial findings to develop an online questionnaire which was used to survey specific target groups to discover how they work and what support they need. A total of 2,387 questionnaires were analysed. A gap analysis was then performed to discover the extent to which ZB MED's offerings match the needs of current and potential users. Since then, the library has been conducting focus group interviews to discover how well the product strategies derived from the study match the target groups' current needs and requirements.

Background information: ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences

ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences is Germany's central service centre for specialist information and research support in the field of life sciences. It is the world's largest library in its subject combination of medicine, health, and nutritional, environmental and agricultural science. ZB MED's primary goal is to support researchers, students and key disseminators and multipliers working in these disciplines. To achieve that goal, ZB MED offers literature and specialist information in both digital and print formats, both on-site and through the semantic-based search portals MEDPILOT and GREENPILOT. It is constantly striving to enhance and expand the services it offers. ZB MED has its own open access portal – German Medical Science (GMS). It also offers a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) registration service, providing articles and research data with a persistent identifier which ensures they are kept permanently available online. ZB MED has two sites, one in Cologne and one in Bonn. As a member of the Leibniz Association, the ZB MED helps provide the information infrastructure required for scientific research and plays a major part in maintaining Germany's status as a key player in the world of science and research.

You can find out more at the following website: www.zbmed.de.