
Interview

Joint Interview

of Martin Mos, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Springer Nature, and Alexander Shustorovich,
President of Pleiades Publishing

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The editorial board of the journal presents the joint interview of Martin Mos, Chief Operating Officer (COO) Springer Nature, and Alexander Shustorovich, President of Pleiades Publishing, devoted to a new phase in their collaborative efforts to publish and advance Russian scientific journals within the Russian Library of Science program, which includes 40% of Russian articles in the English language.

Pleiades Publishing and Springer Nature have signed a new distribution contract. Can you provide further details?

Martin Mos: Pleiades and Springer Nature have signed a 5-year deal, from 2017 to 2021, whereby Springer Nature has the exclusive worldwide distribution rights for English language versions of the journals of the Russian Library of Science. This is an exciting development for both companies, because it builds on a long-lasting relationship aimed at securing worldwide attention to Russian science.

Pleiades and Springer Nature have been working together for some time, is that correct?

Martin Mos: We have been working together for over 11 years now. The relationship started between Springer Science+Business Media (SSBM) and Pleiades in 2005. Following the merger of SSBM with Macmillan Science and Education in 2015, Springer Nature was created. This new agreement between Springer Nature and Pleiades cements the relationship for a further 5 years. Pleiades is an important publishing partner for Springer Nature. The 181 journals (English-language titles compiled from 248 original-language titles) of the Russian Library of Science, published by Pleiades and distributed globally by Springer, constitute approximately 6% of Springer Nature's total number of journals.

How has the merger impacted the nature of the agreement with Pleiades?

Martin Mos: Springer and Nature are two of the world's most respected research publishing brands, each with a rich heritage stretching back almost 175 years. By joining forces as Springer Nature, they offer unrivaled reach and quality as the largest publisher of academic books and journal articles. They share a mission to deploy their combined editorial and technical expertise to communicate research effi-

ciently and effectively. The merger puts Springer Nature in a stronger position to improve the reach and impact of Russian science.

Over the extensive period you have been working together, what changes have you seen in the industry?

Martin Mos: Just like the industry as a whole, we've seen many changes over this period and have had to adapt the way we work as a result. Over the past ten years, we've made significant investments in enabling electronic access to our journals and were in fact early movers in this regard. Today, digital content far outstrips print content in the STM market. Like other publishers, we have also responded to the global increase in scientific research by enabling libraries and research institutions to purchase larger collections of electronic titles rather than multiple purchases of individual journal print subscriptions. This also enables groups of libraries and institutions to purchase academic journals as a group (consortium). This trend is reflected across the industry, and today individual journal prices/price lists are losing relevance, because research literature is accessed through license agreements that cover entire journal portfolios/databases or at least a significant part. Sales of individual journals based on list price are now a very small proportion of Springer Nature's total journal sales. We have also seen the growing relevance of additional factors that customers consider in determining value. These include usage statistics, the impact factors of the journals, the range of author services offered by publishers, and the availability of related products and services on publishers' platforms that support researchers. An example of this is Springer Nature's content sharing initiative "SharedIt," whereby links to view-only, full-text subscription research articles can be posted anywhere—including on social media platforms, author websites, and in institutional repositories—so researchers can share research with colleagues and general audiences.

This approach is welcomed by researchers, who desire broader access to information. Additionally, authors welcome the potential increase in readership made possible when other researchers can easily search across large collections of electronic journals. Springer Nature has over 3000 journals and publishes around 340000 articles annually. Most of these are made available via the SpringerLink platform, which is accessed by 90 million individual users based at 19000 institutions. Most of the world's leading institutions subscribe to content via SpringerLink, and there are 178 million downloads of articles annually via SpringerLink. This gives Springer Nature the unparalleled ability to advance scientific knowledge by increasing the reach and discoverability of authors' work. We are delighted to be able to use our unique position for the benefit of both the authors that publish in the journals of the Russian Library of Science and the researchers who wish to access Russian science.

The new agreement allows the Springer Nature–Pleiades relationship to better reflect this new reality by offering users of Pleiades content seamless, continued access to this unique journal library. It is a historic advance for Springer Nature, Pleiades, and the extraordinary journals which are the Russian Library of Science.

Given the long term nature of the relationship and the changing market dynamics, what processes have you put in place to monitor the performance of the journals?

Martin Mos: Springer Nature will provide regular reporting to Pleiades on information such as direct article pay-per-view sales, customers who have access to the journals, and usage information where this is not subject to confidentiality restrictions. This will enable the editorial boards of the journals to quickly adjust their portfolios, taking into account market requirements and the preferences of the scientific community.

What issues do you think will be important over the term of your continued relationship and how are these being addressed for the benefit of customers and institutions?

Martin Mos: One of the issues that remains important is increasing the number of titles represented by the agreement while also preserving the quality of articles. During the term of our prior agreement together, the volume of journals available in the Russian Library of Science program increased. In 2007–2015, Pleiades and Springer together brought more than 32 new journals to the STM market. The new program includes not only the journals of the Russian Academy of Sciences, but also university journals, and thus represents science from Russia more completely, which is important for libraries.

Other important issues relate to increasing both the quality and the reach of the publications. We hope to address this in several ways:

(i) Broader involvement of foreign members on the editorial boards, as well as foreign authors. This trend is already seen in the journals, but should be strengthened.

(ii) Development of Open Access, in which Springer Nature already has great experience. Springer Nature was an early mover in open access and remains the world's largest open access publisher, today significantly outpacing the industry average. Open access is an increasing global trend where access is openly available without subscription, but where authors pay a fee for publication, which is commonly funded via grants.

(iii) Supporting authors by working together with Pleiades to ensure that publication ethics is maintained. Springer Nature is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics and works in accordance with its Code of Conduct.

Where should the authors obtain resources for paying Open Access fees?

Alexander Shustorovich: Authors worldwide commonly use money from grants rather than their individual savings. In Russia, lots of grants are received, but most of them imply publications in foreign journals. These now constitute more than 50% of all English-language articles of the Russian Federation. Perhaps it is time for Russian scientists to think of submitting articles to journals based in their home country?

What advantages do you see in the new agreement between the two publishers—Pleiades and Springer—for Russian authors and journals?

Alexander Shustorovich: The advantages of the new agreement are pretty clear. First, the preservation of the whole package of Russian Library of Science journals is important. This is a unique collection of journals that we have been assembling over the last 20 years. For the sake of comparison, 10 other foreign publishers have only 40 journals.

Springer Nature's new reporting system includes quarterly analysis of bibliometric data for every article. This is a good starting point to manage the teams of authors and main topics of the journals. In turn, we will use these data in determining financial relationships with the journals and assume that this will stimulate both authors and editorial boards to increase the quality of published content.

Why is the package approach so important for our journals?

Alexander Shustorovich: Because their average impact factor is lower than that of similar Western journals (journals of the Russian Academy of Sciences

have an average impact factor of 0.603), and their number of article downloads is significantly lower. Although these indicators are increasing as a result of our cooperation with the journals and their editors, it is not easy to catch up. Outside the package, the chances of survival for Russian journals in the English language dramatically decrease. Many journals would simply disappear, despite the fact that there are real authors, editorial boards, and scientific schools behind them. The international market keeps changing. Distributing our content as a package together with stronger journals on the same platform is an important step forward in their development.

Will the journal package of the Russian Library of Science increase?

Alexander Shustorovich: The journal package is intended to increase by 2% every year, which is approximately 3500 pages a year, but we also hope that there will be qualitative growth as well—due to improvement in the scientific level of articles. We are also working on extending the articles by adding sup-

plementary materials: tables, videos, and other illustrations. In the Russian-language versions of the journals, there are restrictions that do not allow the broad use of supplementary materials. This will make our journals more attractive to the authors, especially because we negotiate the addition of Russian-language supplementary materials. We also negotiate adding journal archives to the platform, which will increase journal usage overall.

Last question, what message do you have for authors who publish in the journals of the Russian Library of Science?

Martin Mos: That we are looking forward to working with Pleiades to support authors by increasing both the reach and impact of their work, both for the benefit of the authors and for Russian Science as a whole.

Alexander Shustorovich: I would like to wish that authors who write good articles get published and that the journals abound in good authors.