

CERN Courier blog/website

A new community portal for high-energy physics
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Published since 1959, CERN Courier has built a strong reputation for authoritative editorial coverage of high-energy physics. This includes activities at other labs and developments in related fields such as nuclear physics, cosmology, astrophysics and astroparticle physics.

However, the website of the Courier (cerncourier.com) is static, only updated ten times per year with the publication of each new issue. Visually, the site is severely outdated and offers limited functionality.

A revamped CERN Courier website would allow the Courier to be more dynamic and timely while giving it a brand new digital presence. As such, it represents an opportunity to launch a unique communications platform for CERN and high-energy physicists worldwide, while addressing the long-term transition from print to online.

Editorial model

It is envisaged that the central feature of the new Courier website will be a regularly updated 'news feed' or 'blog' with a broad editorial remit. This would include:

- Scientific developments;
- Policy & funding issues;
- People (prizes, appointments, obituaries);
- Training & career development;
- Conferences & events;
- Broader related topics (e.g. technology & innovation).

Format of texts would be flexible – a mixture of news, features and opinion – in line with print edition. Articles would be archived under content headings on a sidebar along with previous Courier content. Much online content will also appear in the print issue, while some will be web-only -- a model followed by most print titles.

It is assumed the new Courier site will have the same editorial stance as the magazine, which permits views to be separated from those of CERN management.

Timing & positioning

A revamped Courier site would provide an important channel through which to shape dialogue at a pivotal time for CERN and high-energy physics. The LHC physics program and upcoming European strategy for particle physics will set the course of the field for the next decades. This would be a strong editorial theme of the new site, along with HL-LHC, non-LHC experiments and projects such as FCC. Enabling comments is seen as an important element of the site.

It is hoped that the site will expand the Courier's readership to the media and public, allowing CERN and the community to be more outspoken about its curiosity-based research. In an era where trust in the value of truth and expertise is being eroded,

and as set out in the five-year communications strategy, it is vital that CERN conveys clearly to its member states and international partners its mission and achievements scientifically, technologically and sociologically.

Related sites: *interactions.org* pulls together PR materials from HEP labs, media, blogs and other resources, but does not generate any original material; *Symmetry* magazine produces original content aimed at the broader public and funding agencies; targeted web-only channels exist, e.g. LC NewsLine & Accelerating News.

Relationship to home.cern

It is foreseen that the site will absorb the current “Scientists” tab on home.cern and provide CERN’s main channel of communication with the scientific community. For example, in addition to the news feed, the site will include existing elements such as ‘what’s on’ and recent publications. It would feature an image of the cover of the current issue linking to the digital pdf and allowing access to pdfs of past issues.

Commercially, the new website would be hosted and maintained by the publisher of the Courier, as is currently the case with *cerncourier.com*. Display and recruitment advertising brings significant revenue to offset the costs of production, printing and distribution. Given the ongoing decline in print advertising, the website would be an additional source of this revenue.

Resources

Since the Courier editor needs to keep abreast of all developments in the field, and publish materials in a timely fashion, it is natural for the editor to manage the new site and use it to help feed into the existing Courier editorial cycle.

An additional ~0.5 FTE would be needed to make this possible and to ensure that the site is regularly populated. However, the the new site should also free-up existing resources within the communication group: first by absorbing the Scientists channel, and second by reporting on scientific developments as they happen, providing stories that can be repackaged for more general CERN updates. To reach the site’s full potential, there would be sufficient work for 1.0FTE in addition to the editor.

The new site will require additional production resources, e.g to upload content on demand, but it is envisaged that costs will be kept flat with the publisher.

Broader considerations

- Current publishing contract with IOP Publishing ends in April, and the new website is a key element of the tendering process;
- Site should be considered within broader 5-year communication strategy;
- Redundancy/competition with Bulletin and CERN Community channels;
- Conflict with traditional views of comms by CERN physicists / management;
- Inform editorial content by undertaking a Courier reader survey;
- Sample sites with broadly similar editorial models, for information:
<https://thebiologist.rsb.org.uk/biologist>; <https://www.chemistryworld.com>;
<https://www.theengineer.co.uk>.