ASAPBio: A Preprint Archive for Biology

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Post Url
https://www.enago.com/academy/one-preprint-archive-biology/

Preprint archives allow the submission of scholarly articles before they have been subject to peer review. These archives are open access repositories, i.e, submissions can obtain better visibility compared to if they were behind the paywall. They also allow the wider scientific community to build on the data in these submissions before they have been formally published. Preprint services provide the additional benefit of inviting community feedback, which can be used to refine the manuscript before official publication. Also, submitting a scholarly article to a preprint server can be used to establish the priority of a discovery. Increasingly, preprint submissions are being considered in support of grant applications and as part of assessing candidates' performance.

arXiv is one such preprint open access repository targeting physical sciences subjects such as mathematics and high-energy physics. It currently holds more than 1.2 million articles and more than 100,000 new articles are submitted to this open access repository every year. On the contrary, the trend observed in the life sciences field has been found to be different and the support for preprint servers is not as robust. It has been estimated that, although there has been significant growth in the life sciences field over the last two years, there are less than 25,000 life science articles being hosted on preprint servers. bioRxiv, the largest preprint server for life sciences articles, reported about 5,000 submissions last year.

In order to address this gap, ASAPBio strives to create a central open access preprint repository for life sciences. With the endorsement of eleven major funders (including the Wellcome Trust, the National Institutes of Health, the European Research Council, the Medical Research Council UK, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute), ASAPBio aims to change the preprint landscape in the life sciences. There has been some debate on social media as to whether or not another repository is required, since bioRxiv already exists; however, the proposal by ASAPBio makes a good case for the need of a central repository. Additionally, the Request for Applications does not exclude bioRxiv applying to host the central repository or being part of a consortium that does so.

There are several arguments for establishing a centralized preprint open access repository for the life sciences. One would be to aggregate content from multiple sources so that members of the life science community, including funding agencies, would have a single, trusted online location from which all relevant articles can be accessed. A central repository with long-term funding would also ensure that the community always has permanent and stable access to any data deposited on the preprint server. A centralized location would also allow for standard guidelines concerning data format, authorship, compliance with ethical standards, and licensing requirements (preferably with a Creative Commons CC-BY license). In conclusion, a centralized preprint open access repository for the life sciences would showcase the multitude of benefits that arXiv users experience, to the global community of biologists.

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