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# PCI commits to the principles of open scholarly infrastructure (POSI)

POSI (<https://openscholarlyinfrastructure.org/>) offers a set of guidelines by which open scholarly infrastructure organisations and initiatives that support the research community can be run and sustained (Bilder G, Lin J, Neylon C (2020), The Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure, retrieved 11th April 2024, <https://doi.org/10.24343/C34W2H>).

Below, we comment on each of the POSI principles to explain the PCI organisation's position.

## Governance

*Coverage across the scholarly enterprise – research transcends disciplines, geography, institutions, and stakeholders. Organisations and the infrastructure they run need to reflect this.*

The PCI initiative is, by nature, multidisciplinary; thematic communities (“PCIs”) can be created in any research field. PCIs are continuously being created (<https://peercommunityin.org/current-pcis/>), and PCI Registered Reports (PCI RR) covers all disciplines.

The abstracts of the articles recommended by a PCI are translated in 8 different languages to overcome linguistic barriers to scientific communication.

The Peer Community Journal, published by the PCI organisation, is a multidisciplinary journal, which includes specific disciplinary sections, one per PCI.

The PCI organisation running the PCI initiative is an independent non-profit organisation supported by more than 150 research institutions (<https://peercommunityin.org/pci-network/>). PCI aims to have strong representation across research fields, geographic regions, genders, and other areas where some groups of people have been traditionally underrepresented in academia.

*Stakeholder Governed – a board-governed organisation drawn from the stakeholder community builds confidence that the organisation will make decisions driven by community consensus and a balance of interests.*

The PCI initiative is a non-profit organisation run by researchers only. This organisation comprises one representative per thematic PCI, the founders, and a support officer. They elect the organisation's executive board during the annual general assembly. Monthly meetings gather the organisation members to make decisions about the operation of the PCIs.

The PCI rules (<https://peercommunityin.org/statutes-and-reports/>) state that each PCI “is made up of a significant number -this number can vary from a few dozen to several hundred -of “recommenders” responsible for initiating and carrying out the analyses of scientific articles.”

Each PCI is run by a managing board of at least 4 people, established from the current recommenders. Each managing board is appointed for 3 years, paying particular attention to under-representation related to career stage, gender and geography.

The governance of the Peer Community Journal is also community-driven, with the editorial board including all members of the managing board of each PCI.

(<https://peercommunityjournal.org/page/people/#governance>)

***Non-discriminatory participation or membership – we see the best option as an “opt-in” approach with principles of non-discrimination and inclusivity where any stakeholder group may express an interest and should be welcome.***

***Representation in governance must reflect the character of the community or membership.***

The content of the PCI websites is freely accessible, and anyone can sign in, hold an account and post comments on a recommended preprint. Any researcher can have an article recommended by a PCI and publish it in Peer Community Journal for free. Any researcher can read an article recommended by a PCI for free, as well as its recommendation and reviews, and can readily access the associated data, script and code.

Any researcher working in an area of research covered by the existing PCIs can be invited to review an article and can apply to become a recommender. These applications are, of course, validated by the PCI managing board to check that scientists are competent to ensure this role.

The PCI rules state that for recommenders within a community “thematic and geographical diversity should be sought. Similarly, attention should be paid to the male/female ratio in order to aim, as far as possible, for parity.”

PCI has signed the Joint Statement of Principles of the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communication (C4DISC). PCI aims to encompass strong representation across research fields, geographic regions, genders, and other areas where some groups of people have been traditionally underrepresented in academia.

***Transparent governance – to achieve trust, the processes and policies for selecting representatives to governance groups should be transparent (within the constraints of privacy laws).***

PCI is a French non-profit organisation. The link to its status and rules can be found on the PCI website: <https://peercommunityin.org/statutes-and-reports/> or here: <https://osf.io/sz29a>. These statements include the processes and policies for selecting its members.

***Cannot lobby – infrastructure organisations should not lobby for regulatory change to cement their own positions or narrow self-interest. However, an infrastructure organisation’s role is to support its community, and this can include advocating for policy changes.***

PCI is non-profit and non-commercial and cannot, therefore, use economic pressure on people or institutions.

This initiative aims to offer research communities the opportunity to reappropriate the publication system and to improve the equity in access to scientific results for researchers worldwide. PCI aims at limiting publication costs for public institutions/universities and making the publication and evaluation system more transparent and reproducible. PCI is, therefore, campaigning for a change in practices and policies and, therefore, for the promotion of a system of diamond publications/journals.

Financial conflicts of interest are forbidden in PCI; a company cannot use a PCI-recommended article for lobbying.

***Living will – a powerful way to create trust is to publicly describe a plan addressing the conditions under which an organisation or service would be wound down. It should include how this would happen and how any assets could be archived and preserved when passed to a successor organisation or service. Any such organisation or service must adopt POSI and honour the POSI principles.***

Article 16 of the PCI by-law states that “In the event of dissolution decided by at least two-thirds of the members present at the General Meeting, one or more liquidators shall be appointed by the General Meeting and the assets, if any, shall be distributed in accordance with article 9 of the [FRENCH] law of 1er July 1901 and the decree of 16 August 1901.”

In addition, we have preserved the recommendation texts and reviews posted by PCI and the articles published by PCJ over the long term by archiving them in CLOCKSS.

***Formal incentives to fulfil mission & wind-down – infrastructures exist for a specific purpose, and that purpose can be radically simplified or even rendered unnecessary by technological or social change. Organisations and services should regularly review community support and the need for their activities. If it is possible, the organisation or service (and staff) should have direct incentives to deliver on the mission and wind down.***

The number of articles submitted to a PCI is an indicator of the need for the PCI service in a particular research field. If the number of submitted articles is too low, the PCI organisation can decide to close the PCI.

The number of supporting organisations also indicates the need for a free public and transparent alternative to the traditional publication system. However, the number of submissions and sponsorships is steadily increasing, which suggests that, at least in the short and medium term, there is no risk that technological or social developments will compromise the relevance of the PCI organisation and its missions.

## Sustainability

***Time-limited funds are used only for time-limited activities – operations are supported by sustainable revenue sources – whereas time-limited funds are used only for time-limited activities. Depending on grants to fund ongoing and/or long-term infrastructure operations fully makes them fragile and distracts from building core infrastructure.***

The economic model of PCI is based on small monetary contributions by many research institutions and libraries; PCI does not generate any financial income. We focus on securing consistent, modest funding from various institutions and universities for financing PCI's operations. This approach is favoured over seeking significant, one-time contributions from a limited number of supporters. PCI's operations are ongoing and require regular and stable financial support. PCI receives

some time-limited funds, which are devoted to specific needs or to develop particular features (<https://peercommunityin.org/2024/01/18/2023-finances-article-costs/>).

***Goal to generate surplus – organisations (or services) that define sustainability based merely on recovering costs are brittle and stagnant. It is not enough to merely survive; organisations and services have to be able to adapt and change. To weather economic, social and technological volatility, they need financial resources beyond immediate operating costs.***

PCI's business model is to multiply its financial support without seeking to limit its financial requests to cover operating costs only. Since the inception of this initiative, we have gone from a handful of institutional sponsors to more than 150, and more than a third of these institutions have gone from symbolic support only to financial support as the initiative has grown. Every year, this financial support enables us to both cover our operating costs and improve our services. It also allows us to build up our financial reserves that ensure the temporal stability of the service (see our response to the next point).

***Goal to create financial reserves – a high priority should be having ring-fenced financial reserves, separate from operating funds, that can support implementing living will plans, including a complete, orderly wind down or transition to a successor organisation, or major unexpected events.***

Open science relies on shifting political priorities, making it vulnerable to variable resources. National policies in France and Europe currently foster open science, but funding landscapes are volatile, possibly deviating from present goals. This instability demands prudence. PCI anticipates potential challenges for open science and has thus embraced a savings-oriented policy. Hence, we have created reserves to maintain operations for a decade or more, even if funding abruptly stops, though such an outcome is unlikely. We also prioritise protecting these financial reserves over high-risk income generation, opting for the secure “Livret A” savings account in France. This account, capped and risk-free, aligns with our conservative savings strategy.

***Mission-consistent revenue generation – revenue sources should be evaluated against the infrastructure's mission and not run counter to the aims of the organisation or service.***

PCI's funding sources are almost exclusively public. Our mission responds to a strong demand for institutional public support. Hence, there is an alignment of interests and no conflict between sources of revenue and PCI's mission. It should be noted that the funders have no voting rights at the general assembly meeting and have no say in the decisions made. There is no quid pro quo other than the public display of support.

*Revenue based on services, not data – data related to the running of the scholarly infrastructure should be community property. Appropriate revenue sources might include value-added services, consulting, API Service Level*

*Agreements or membership fees.*

PCI does not generate revenue from data (and our scientific data are CC-BY). Our revenue (sponsoring) is motivated by the services we provide to the community and by the positive balance between our costs and the value of our services.

## Insurance

*Open source – all software and assets required to run the infrastructure should be available under an open-source licence. This does not include other software*

*that may be involved with running the organisation.*

The PCIs' websites—which include front and back offices—were developed using web2py and are written in Python version 3. The code is freely available on the PCI GitHub repository <https://github.com/pci-dev>

*Open data (within constraints of privacy laws) – For an infrastructure to be forked (reproduced), it will be necessary to replicate all relevant data. The [CC0 waiver](#) is the best practice in making data openly and legally available. Privacy and data protection laws will limit the extent to which this is possible.*

The textual content of the front and back office of PCI webpages (help text, about, etc.) and automatic Email templates are CC-BY and freely available in the PCI GitHub repository.

User personal data are not available for legal reasons.

All public reviews and recommendations on the PCI websites and all the articles in Peer Community Journal are published under a CC BY license. However, to avoid authors having a negative flag on their preprint (which would decrease the attractiveness of PCI), only reviews and comments leading to the attribution of a public recommendation are published. When a paper is rejected, the reviews and comments are sent to the authors but are not published. Private reviews (including private recommendations of stage 1 Registered Reports) are not public and not shared, according to the rules of PCI.

*Available data (within constraints of privacy laws) – it is not enough that the data be “open” if there is no practical way to obtain it. Underlying data should be made easily available via periodic open data dumps.*

Website texts and automatic Email templates are available in the public PCI Github repository. Public peer reviews, recommendations, and associated metadata are stored in CLOCKSS. They are not easily obtainable; i.e., the websites need to be extracted from the PCI websites.

***Patent non-assertion – the organisation should commit to a patent non-assertion policy or covenant. The organisation may obtain patents to protect its own operations but not use them to prevent the community from replicating the infrastructure.***

PCI has not committed to a patent non-assertion policy or covenant, but it has never registered a patent. Filing a patent on an invention may be useful for PCI when there is a risk that a third party will file a patent that prohibits PCI from using the invention.