

dialectica

international journal for philosophy and official organ of the ESAP

Biel/Bienne, 18/03/25

Report on the flipping of *Dialectica*, for the General Assembly on the 19th of March 2025

A bit of history

For many years (from 1977 to 2001), *Dialectica* was edited by Henri Lauener, of the University of Berne, printed by a small Bernese printing house, and administered by Lauener's assistant Stephan Hottinger, employed for this task by the University of Berne.

After Lauener's retirement in 1999, Hottinger lost his job, Lauener fell gravely ill and the journal ceased publication, the about 680 university libraries cancelling their subscriptions. Philipp Blum, then student assistant in Berne, took over and, with the help of a new editor, Gianfranco Soldati appointed 2001 to the University of Fribourg, managed to conclude a publication contract with Blackwell in 2005. The large deficit of 2003-04 was covered by an extraordinary subsidy of the ASSH. Under Pascal Engel's (2005-2011) and Marcel Weber's (2011-) editorships, submission numbers steadily increased

Our partnership with Blackwell was at first very profitable for the journal: it became much more visible, its reputation increased and Blum's work was partially paid by a "profit share" agreement with Blackwell. The journal was able to sponsor *Dialectica* lectures at the ESAP conferences and became electronically available.

Over time, and especially after it was bought by Wiley, the relationship with Blackwell (now Blackwell-Wiley) deteriorated. Despite our protestations, they continued to increase the prices (from 85 CHF in 2004 to 218 GBP in 2008, to 483 GBP in 2019)

The decision to go OA

The Editorial Board had been talking about going open access during the entire decade from 2010 on. It was clear to everyone that this would not just be better for the journal, but for readers and authors as well, and that it could greatly improve the journal's reputation. At the same time, there was increasing pressure from the ASSH to make the journal freely available. What was missing was the funding. Philipp Blum wrote a lot of applications, to different potential funders, without success. In 2019, he finally managed to secure some funding, through the new "Spark" format of the SNSF which finances high-risk/high-gain projects that try out new ideas, mostly in connection with the transition of prototype projects from an academic to a private-enterprise environment. Consequently, the Editorial Board decided at a meeting in autumn 2019 to go open access and not to extend the publishing contract with Wiley.

The flipping plan

At a [meeting in Ligerz January 29 to February 2, 2020](#), we decided to pursue two complementary strategies:

- A conservative strategy, where we just change the journal's business model and take over the copy-editing work hitherto done by Wiley (ie its subcontractors).
- A revolutionary strategy, where we try to do better, in terms of (i) refereeing, (ii) workflow, (iii) copy-editing, (iv) bibliography, (v) correction of proofs by authors.

To implement the conservative strategy, we entered into negotiations with Copernicus, Ubiquity, Michigan Publishing, and Nova Techset. For the self-publishing options, we reviewed different tools. After much discussion and evaluation (documented in the OA toolkit), we decided on self-publishing and markdown as copy-editing language.

Problems encountered

And then the pandemic hit, people got scattered and we lost our sense of direction. We started publishing the first issues of 2020, but then realised that there still were technical problems to solve, which would change the layout and - particularly - the page numbers of the first issues as well. This holistic nature of the workflow meant that until we had solved all problems, we had solved none.

Present state

As our chief copy-editor Marco Schori will confirm, the work on the backlog is done. All authors have been contacted and have been sent proofs that are from our point of view final. Once we get everyone's ok, we will put everything on the OJS, thus completing the conservative strategy. The revolutionary one too is implemented: at <https://www.philosophie.ch/dialectica>, the articles and issues are available, in pdf and html.

Submissions

During this whole time, the EC continued its work and the number of submissions held up:

acceptance rate*

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
acceptance	10	11	12	14	13	14	13	22	19	15	18	18	26	21	15	20	25	30	26	17	31	39	14	7
revise and resubmit	15	27	31	43	63	83	51	75	95	122	73	61	85	89	73	69	88	63	46	50	32	17	18	8
rejection	21	30	40	63	79	137	131	87	116	156	165	159	183	143	195	156	130	130	113	106	112	197	121	116
withdrawn					1	2	1	3	1	1	3	0	5	3	1	3	1	4	1	3	3	9	7	9
special issues				14	17	19	7	3	15	8	23	1		7	8									
total submissions	46	68	83	134	173	255	203	190	246	302	282	239	299	263	292	248	244	252	186	176	178	262	162	159
acceptance rate	21.74	16.18	14.46	10.45	7.51	5.49	6.40	11.58	7.72	4.97	6.38	7.53	8.70	7.98	5.14	8.06	10.25	11.90	13.98	9.66	17.42	14.89	8.64	4.40

Only recently did we notice a recognisable drop in quality, hence the lower acceptance rates for 2023 and 2024. Presently, we still have space for a few papers for the 2024 issues. This is a good thing as we will be flooded by submissions once we go public with Dialectica as an OA journal.

