

# POPULAR PREPRINT SITES FACE CLOSURE BECAUSE OF MONEY TROUBLES

Repositories such as INA-Rxiv boost regional science, but paying for them is proving difficult.

By Smriti Mallapaty

**T**he rise of preprint repositories has helped scientists worldwide to share results and get feedback quickly. But several platforms that serve researchers in emerging economies are struggling to raise money to stay afloat. One, which hosts research from Indonesia, has decided to close because of this funding shortfall.

INA-Rxiv, which was set up in 2017, was one of the first repositories to host studies from a particular region. Previous platforms served specific disciplines, such as arXiv for physical-sciences research. Other region-specific repositories followed, including ArabiXiv, AfricArxiv and IndiaRxiv. These repositories increase exposure for research from the regions, and facilitate collaborations, say their managers.

The servers are run by local volunteers but hosted online by the non-profit Center for Open Science (COS) in Charlottesville, Virginia. The centre's platform hosts 26 repositories, including some that are discipline-specific. In 2018, the COS told repository managers that it would be charging them maintenance fees from 2020. The charges start at about US\$1,000 a year, and increase as repositories' annual submissions grow.

The costs can be significant, particularly for repositories in emerging economies. Dasapta Erwin Irawan, a hydrogeologist at the Bandung Institute of Technology who helped to set up INA-Rxiv, says the repository received more than 6,000 submissions between July 2018 and June 2019, so the fees will come to about \$25,000 per year, which he cannot afford. After unsuccessfully trying to raise money

from the Indonesian government, he has decided to wind down the service and close it, although he has not yet set an end date.

Juneman Abraham, a social psychologist at Bina Nusantara University in Jakarta, says he will lose an important source of information on the latest Indonesian research when the repository closes.

## Long-term survival

The COS decided to introduce fees so that it could sustain its hosting service in the long term; running it will cost about \$230,000 in 2020, says Brian Nosek, the centre's executive director. It used to rely on grants from private foundations, but they are no longer enough. Now the operating costs will be covered by a mix of grants and user contributions, he says.

About half of the repositories have committed to paying the fees so far; some are managed by organizations that have access to grants, whereas others have partnered with libraries for funding, says Nosek. The centre is committed to helping repositories, including INA-Rxiv, find funding, he says.

But Nosek acknowledges that repositories run in emerging economies are most likely to struggle to raise funds. The centre will be flexible about when groups pay this year's fees, but if no money is received, it will freeze services so that they can't accept submissions, he says.



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