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transfer – Zeitschrift für Provenienzforschung und Sammlungsgeschichte / Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection

Marketing Open Access – Making Topics Matter

Recent debate within the scholar-led Open Access community, notably in the humanities and cultural sciences, is focusing on the common perception of an unforeseeable, potentially very difficult future for digital academic publishing. Reflecting on by now about 25 years of Open Access, its limitations and possibilities, practitioners and providers alike still address it as an “organizational and institutional challenge”, emphasize the multitude of “infrastructural requirements for [Diamond] Open Access Journals”, and ask “what Open Access promises – what Open Access costs – what can be expected of Open Access”, to cite just a few rather telling titles of workshops offered at the 2025 *Open Access Days*.¹ Facing the realities of limited, for most projects only temporary funding in times of shrinking budgets and the ensuing needs to economize, the question of how to achieve long-term sustainability for science-driven Open Access infrastructures figures prominently.

Besides issues of financing and funding, questions of governance, communication, quality assurance, and the impact of artificial intelligence are widely discussed. In reaction to these structural developments, calls for a decentralized pooling of resources via improved governance and better coordination are getting louder. However, to achieve sustainability while holding on to fair, free of charge publishing models, i.e. to provide Diamond Open Access, the establishment of “consortial Open Access solutions” seems to be the most promising strategy.² With Diamond Open Access meanwhile being generally accepted as the ‘true and only’ way – and thus often forming a basic requirement to raise public third-party funding – corresponding projects developing consortial strategies, offering expert advice, professional coordination and public promotion to achieve better visibility for the manifold local Open Access publishing

infrastructures and individual publication platforms while likewise determining the necessary funding guidelines seem to become of key importance.³ Consequently, said projects will probably exert a strong influence in further defining what precisely is to be understood by ‘Diamond Open Access’, and hence also in how far emerging concepts of *Libre Open Access*⁴ will be integrated in or rather separated from the former model.

This rather level-headed, methodical reaction towards the structural problem of sustainability may inspire confidence. It does not, however, offer much of an answer to what still seems to be one of the most striking problems of Open Access publishing, especially in the humanities: lacking reputation. As long as the printed book is still fervently celebrated as a superior object of cultural heritage, while PDF, HTML and EPUP, in this respect, are not even talked about, as long as reference libraries full of undigitized ‘*Rara*’ continue to be propagated as focal-points of academic exchange, and, more importantly, as long as publishing with old-established commercial print-publishers is seen as a major indicator of academic quality and respectability, taking up the cudgels for Open Access will remain challenging. Conversely, as long as investing a considerable amount of time and effort into the compilation, digitization and open electronic publication of *Research Data* – in doing so not only to provide a valuable basis for future research but also to underpin one’s own findings with much enhanced transparency – does not go along with an increase in academic reputation,⁵ the future of Open Access publishing might indeed be a difficult one.

Before this background, it seems obvious that a comprehensive re-alignment of Open Access with the established economy of scholarly reputation is still as necessary as before. To achieve this, closer coordi-

nation and communication between Open Access infrastructure providers, funding institutions, and leading scholars in the various research fields would certainly be beneficial (well-designed *Advisory Boards* could play a crucial role here). The same applies for strengthening *Interdisciplinarity*, especially in view of the many 'smaller subjects' in the humanities, a goal for which e-publishing already provides a solid basis.

There is, however, another, much more fundamental aspect here: Open Access is about ethics. When about 25 years ago, the Open Access movement, yet under very different conditions, initiated its agenda, the *Global Democratization of Academic Knowledge* (and research data) stood, and still stands, at its core. Hence, it should go without saying that research topics demanding particularly high ethical and moral standards, evoking public debate far beyond academia, reaching out into low-income countries and/or those suffering from insufficient academic infrastructure or even politically motivated censorship form excellent 'arenas' for Open Access to demonstrate its capabilities – and thus to achieve higher reputation within academia as a whole. To put it bluntly, there are certain research topics which are extremely well-suited to promote (Diamond) Open Access, and focusing on these might be of mutual benefit. Merging the great potential of Open Access with the very dynamic field of *Provenance Research* does offer welcome synergies, as will be shown below.

Researching Provenance – Rethinking Open Access

As a highly specialized subfield of art and cultural history, provenance research has become increasingly important over the last two decades. Investigating the history of ownership of an artwork or other cultural property, it is primarily conducted by scholars from the fields of art history, archaeology, ethnology, history, archival science, and library science working at universities, museums, libraries, archives, and other public institutions.⁶ Moreover, there is a growing number of provenance researchers working in the art trade. Provenance research primarily occupies itself with unlawfully acquired art and cultural assets in their respective historical contexts, the focus hitherto lying on lootings and confiscations during the time of Na-

tional Socialism,⁷ in formerly colonized countries,⁸ in the GDR and Soviet Occupation Zone,⁹ as well as on the illicit trade in archaeological artifacts.¹⁰ Placed in a global and cross-epoch perspective and closely related to other highly specialized subfields, for example collection history,¹¹ art market studies,¹² legal history,¹³ and cultural sociology,¹⁴ it is progressively anchored in academia, politics and society.¹⁵ Reflecting the fervent restitution debate, notably about Nazi-looted art and cultural objects stemming from colonial contexts of acquisition, this dynamic development has recently been labelled the "Provenancial Turn".¹⁶ In this regard, provenance research indeed aims at contributing to the transfer of art and cultural property in connection with issues relating to restitution and return. It is therefore closely associated with moral and ethical issues, and in particular with a *Culture of Remembrance* as an expression of collective memory as well as various aspects of reconciliation and reparation.¹⁷

Spanning a multitude of academic subjects, fields of research and historical epochs, and being viable only in often far-reaching international cooperation, the publication of provenance research thus demands a very high level of transparency, accessibility, quality assurance, and openness towards digital methods of investigation.¹⁸ The requirements for a corresponding publication platform likewise result from the, to say the least, 'heterogeneous' conditions under which provenance research is conducted. On the one hand, the creation of dedicated positions for provenance researchers at public museums and the ongoing establishment of the field itself at universities promises consistent research. On the other hand, this research is still often carried out at collecting institutions which only dispose of temporary, project-related third-party funding, primarily granted by the *German Lost Art Foundation*,¹⁹ yet rarely for longer than three years. There is a dynamically growing research community, prominently represented by the *Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung e. V.* (with currently more than 600 members),²⁰ intensely engaged in complex, long-term research questions. However, in many cases, there is simply no continuity in research. This problem particularly arises for smaller museums, as they often

lack the human resources, time and expertise to pursue unresolved questions after the project funding has ended.

As a consequence, many of the results are preliminary, remain hidden in the archives of the respective institutions, and are neither accessible nor searchable or otherwise usable for the community. In view of research transparency and the value of the results generated, it is therefore imperative to promote research dissemination via a quality-assured Open Access online platform that enables scholars all over the world to publish articles of flexible length reflecting the current state of research. Especially said smaller museums outside metropolitan areas not only face the problem of their research lacking visibility and accessibility, but also suffer from difficult access to research themselves, as many of the existing museum periodicals are neither published online nor in Open Access. Adding to this challenge, their own budget for literature acquisition is rarely sufficient to subscribe to expensive journals. For institutions and scholars in the Global South, forming an important part of the research community not only with respect to colonial contexts of acquisition, this problem is even more pronounced. Above all, Open Access to provenance research is of fundamental importance for the victims, including their descendants and families, of unlawful confiscations, forced sales, loot and plunder, be it due to Nazi-persecution, colonial power-imbalance, Communist dictatorship, or other forms of historical injustice.

Devising an E-Journal – Dismantling Barriers

Encouraged by calls from within the research community for a dedicated publication platform and after a systematic survey of already existing periodicals, Ulrike Saß (until 2022 Junior Professor for Art Historical Provenance Research) and Christoph Zuschlag (Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Chair for Modern and Contemporary Art History with a Focus on Provenance Research and the History of Collecting) both at the University of Bonn took on the task and developed a concept for an e-journal which would meet the above stated needs in that this journal would ...

... publish valuable research quickly and straightforwardly while maintaining academic standards and offering authors high visibility.

... provide the international, interdisciplinary, mostly academic readership with easy and free of charge, i.e. *Open Access* to this research.

... abstain from article processing or other charges to preclude barriers for authors, notably from low-income economies or in precarious employment.

... pursue a low-threshold approach towards early career-researchers, including Masters- and PhD-students, yet also museum staff, curators, archivists, librarians, collectors, art dealers etc., i.e. individuals conducting provenance research, yet often quite inexperienced in academic publishing.

... offer Pre- and Post-Docs a high-reputation platform to facilitate their academic careers by publishing peer-reviewed articles.

... guarantee good e-publishing practice, i.e. long-term preservation of content and metadata, findability in WebOPACs, full-text searchability, machine-readability, and thus interoperability with (future) digital research techniques.

... feature and clearly indicate a high degree of 'openness' to enable maximum reusability while granting authors full rights to re-publish their articles.

... be proficiently guided and supervised along scholarly, transparent, and clearly specified governance rules.

From the very beginning, it was clear that the realization of such an ambitious project would need strong partners, as well as sufficient funding, at least for the set-up and establishment phase. Grasping the project's high potential, these partners were quickly found and convinced. Firstly, Heidelberg University Library, as a major and highly experienced provider of Open Access infrastructure especially in the arts, agreed to conduct the webhosting, to lend technical

and librarian support and to provide a customizable e-publishing software (OJS 3) via *arthistoricum.net*.²¹ Secondly, an international and multi-disciplinary *Advisory Board* was formed, for which seven senior researchers and two major associations in the field could be obtained,²² lending their expert advice to the editors and supporting them in further developing the project and supervising its governance. Thirdly, a funding grant application to the German Research Foundation (DFG) was drafted and submitted within the funding program *Scientific Library Services and Information Systems* (LIS),²³ which was eventually approved. Thanks to the generous third-party funding, a position for the journal management (since then held by Florian Schönfuß) as well as the necessary funds for professional graphics design, for the acquisition of image copyrights, for technical equipment and for travel expenses could be secured for the first three years.

Starting in 2021, *transfer – Zeitschrift für Provenienzforschung und Sammlungsgeschichte / Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection* bears one important aspect of its conception already in its bilingual title, as it publishes articles in English and German. To permit the submission of articles written in German may, for an explicitly *international* journal, at first glance seem counterproductive. The decision to do so, however, primarily reflects the fact that Germany, Austria and (to a growing degree) also Switzerland constitute major players in and promoters of provenance research. Moreover, being able to write in their native language considerably lowers the threshold for many of the addressed author groups while German constitutes a major source language and is still widespread also in Eastern European academia. Not only in view of the journal's interdisciplinary character, but also aiming at a high level of flexibility for interested authors, a variety of clearly defined text categories was chosen, representing generally established as well as field-specific formats.²⁴

This flexible approach was likewise chosen with respect to the forms of quality assurance. While the considerably larger and more comprehensive *Research Articles* and *Research Reports* are subject to a double-blind peer-review process (two reviews), the

Case-Studies, *Miscellanea*, *Interviews*, and *Book Reviews* receive an editorial review, which lowers the threshold for submission and enables quicker decision-making by the editorial board. In identifying and recruiting qualified reviewers, the *Advisory Board*, with its scholarly expertise in various fields and the interconnectedness of its members within different research communities, plays a key role. Experience of the first four annual issues has clearly shown that attracting qualified peer-reviewers, all over the globe and from many different academic subjects, is challenging. However, according to many of our reviewers' feedback, *transfer* is greatly helped by the fact that it publishes all its content in *Diamond Open Access*. More and more reviewers no longer seem to be willing to provide their unpaid expertise for the evaluation and improvement of publications which then end up behind a paywall.

Hence, *transfer's* openness already 'pays off', at least in terms of academic sustainability. This is equally true with respect to the articles' re-usability after their initial publication. Aiming for maximum research transparency and the widest possible spreading of the publications, *transfer* wants its audience not only to be able to freely read and download articles, but also to copy, distribute, print, search, and link to the full texts, to use them for teaching, in presentations, in public workshops etc. Adding to this, authors retain their full rights for a possible re-publication of their articles in other periodicals (as long as they obey the rules of good academic practice and give reference to the first publication in *transfer*). Being fully non-commercial, *transfer* in those cases is not in a position of competition; to the contrary, as it for its part profits from the additional promotion of the articles by the re-publishing platform. Admittedly, *transfer* itself is bound to a policy of only accepting first publications, i.e. texts which have not been previously published or are, at the time of submission, under consideration elsewhere – this being a precondition for receiving DFG funding.

It was therefore clear from the outset that to precisely indicate this liberal policy of granting full rights of reuse, only a *Creative Commons License*, and in this case nothing less than a *CC-BY 4.0* for the whole journal content would serve.²⁵ This entails that

reuse for commercial purposes is also permitted – which does, however, in fact imply nothing else than rendering third parties a further option to disseminate research which at the same time is freely available in Diamond Open Access via *transfer* itself. In conjunction with this approach, *transfer* deliberately decided against providing a print-version of its articles, fully aware of the countless web-based print-on-demand services, being able to make full use of *transfer*'s professionally designed article PDFs. Beyond that, *transfer*'s explicit endorsement of *Libre Open Access* also addresses its clearly indicated self-archiving policy, which allows for the accepted manuscript version to be deposited in an institutional or other repository as long as the initial CC-BY 4.0 license is further applied and the article is made openly available without any embargo period. To index that its publications are not only free of charge for readers and authors alike, but also enable wider use through *Open Licenses* – and in this way to distinguish it from less open variants of 'Open Access' – *transfer* has recently applied for membership in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).²⁶

Making (the) *transfer* – Mobilizing Research

Since its start as a project, *transfer* is well-received by the research community. The number of submissions went far beyond what the editors had anticipated – and what could realistically be published, even when subtracting article submissions which either did not fit into the journal's scope, did not make it through peer-review and/or internal evaluation, or had been verified as already published elsewhere and therefore had to be rejected. Editorial author support had to be intense, though, as the journal's transdisciplinary concept as well as technical and legal aspects of e-publishing often had to be outlined in detail while a close guidance and mentoring for early career researchers proved inevitable. Bringing together international authors from many different academic subjects frequently necessitated to compromise and to explain content, methods and approaches in more detail to enable mutual understanding, which again required close coordination by the editorial team.

By now in its second phase of (meanwhile augmented) DFG funding, *transfer* since its launch in

2022 has published four annual issues with altogether 84 articles by 107 authors for which it obtained the – gratuitous but invaluable – support of 104 external peer-reviewers.²⁷ Starting in 2026, the journal will consequently increase its frequency of publication to a semi-annual cycle, and likewise be offering topic-specific *Special Issues* in cooperation with guest-editors, who are welcome to apply to the editorial board with their own concepts and collections of articles. In line with *transfer*'s overall strategy for fostering research transparency and facilitating re-usability of published research, it now also offers the implementation of *Open Research Datasets* for individual articles, including the retrospective addition of datasets to articles already published in earlier issues. In practice, this aims at the publication of processed, i.e. 'secondary', research data, like sales catalogue entries, museum inventory lists, transcriptions of archival sources, photographs, geodata – to name just a few possible formats. First dataset submissions have already reached the editorial office and are, after having been subject to peer- and/or editorial review, to be considered for publication via the Open Research Data platform *heiData*,²⁸ together with corresponding metadata and explanatory notes, linked to the article proper and under a separate DOI.

Which audience *transfer* addresses has already been specified above. However, which and how many readers it actually has is hard to assess. OJS download statistics, showing yearly, monthly and total numbers as well as the countries from which the download was conducted, at best provide an approximation (as these statistics do, of course, not depict the PDF's potential circulation via e-mail, upload to and download from other websites/repositories, re-publication, printouts etc., all explicitly permitted by the *Open License*). What they nevertheless do show, is that: a) the number of downloads varies quite considerably between individual articles; b) articles written in English do not (as one might expect) achieve higher average download numbers than German ones; c) the countries from which the download is conducted distinctly reflect the articles' subject and authors' location; and d) many of the earlier articles, i.e. in the first two annual issues of 2022 and 2023, indeed achieved markedly higher annual download numbers for 2024

and 2025 – a fact which suggests reading synergies between issues/articles and probably indicates that the journal itself is becoming increasingly well-known.

Despite all the fascination with download statistics, which remain somewhat blurred anyway, the editorial board is grateful for individual readers' (and authors') critical feedback. Hitherto, this feedback ranged from much praise for the articles being downloadable free of charge, for the 'nice and appealing' layout and graphics design, for the implicit permission for repository use and re-publication to noticeable regret regarding a much desired print-version, a lacking option to publish whole books or, actually quite often, for not being allowed to submit articles already published elsewhere. Readers' e-mails to the editors hitherto include also quite a few voices from beyond academia, most notably those of descendants and family members of victims of Nazi-persecution and -confiscation, asking the editors to establish contact with the authors whose article's these persons probably would never have read nor taken notice of, were they not published in Diamond Open Access by *transfer*.

In June 2025, we had the honor to welcome a new editorial board member in Dr. Felicity Bodenstein (Maîtresse de conférence en Histoire de l'art contemporain et patrimoine at the Paris Sorbonne University and Primary Investigator of *Digital Benin*).²⁹ Her expert expertise, notably in the fields of colonial contexts of acquisition and African art, together with her extensive interconnectedness in francophone academia already serve to greatly extend the effective outreach of *transfer*. This enables and at the same time obliges us to think about opening the journal also for French as a third publication language, while probing what technical adaptations this step would entail for an OJS 3 based platform. Our explicit goal to further advance *transfer's* internationalization is already reflected in the recent composition of the Advisory Board, for which we albeit hope to find additional members on a global level. Last but certainly not least, we of course have to address the need to secure future funding, as the current DFG funding will expire in 2028 (and cannot be prolonged for a second time). As the experience of the last four years has clearly shown, putting *transfer* behind a paywall, be it

by author fees of any kind and/or subscription charges for readers, would immediately dry out the international flow of submissions, discourage peer-reviewers, disappoint readers and thus vastly impede the journal's successful transdisciplinary concept. However, it is precisely there, on the international and cross-institutional level, where we think the projects' greatest potential lies and, consequently, where chances for the acquisition of vital long-term funding are the most promising.

Endnotes

1. See the full conference program under: <https://www.conftool.org/oat2025/sessions.php> (10.02.2026).
2. Exemplarily shown by the project KOALA, which itself is funded by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space, <https://projects.tib.eu/koala/en/> (10.02.2026).
3. Most prominently by *DeFDOA*, based at Forschungszentrum Jülich, <https://user.fz-juelich.de/record/1048478/files/Konzept%20DeFDOA.pdf> (10.02.2026); and, notably, by the DFG-funded *Servicestelle Diamond Open Access* (SeDOA), <https://diamond-open-access.de/en/sedoa/> (10.02.2026).
4. For a more detailed explanation of *Libre Open Access*, see: <https://open-access.network/en/information/open-access-primers/open-access-and-reuse> (01.12.2025); the principal concept was developed by Peter Suber, *Gratis and Libre Open Access*, in: SPARC Open Access Newsletter, 02.08.2008, <https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/08-02-08.htm#gratis-libre> (06.12.2025).
5. Cf. the ideas for further development of digital art historical research data by Deutscher Verband für Kunstgeschichte e.V./Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg/Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, *Forschungsdaten in der Kunstgeschichte: 10 Thesen – Münchner Memorandum 2024*, Heidelberg (arthistoricum.net) 2024, p. 2, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00009194>.
6. For a comprehensive introduction into the field, see Christoph Zuschlag, *Einführung in die Provenienzforschung. Wie die Herkunft von Kulturgut entschlüsselt wird*, Munich 2022.
7. For an overview, see Johannes Gramlich, *NS-Raubkunst und die Herausforderung der Restitution. Ein Überblick*, in: Markus Brechtgen (ed.), *Aufarbeitung des Nationalsozialismus. Ein Kompendium*, Göttingen 2021, pp. 584–613;

- for the museum perspective, see recently Jacques Schuhmacher, *Nazi-Era Provenance of Museum Collections. A Research Guide*, London 2024, and Open Access online: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10190231/1/The-Nazi-Era-Provenance-of-Museum-Collections.pdf> (25.11.2025).
8. See inter alia Bénédicte Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst. Geschichte einer postkolonialen Niederlage*, Munich 2021.
 9. Mathias Deinert, Uwe Hartmann, Gilbert Lupfer (eds.), *Enteignet, entzogen, verkauft. Zur Aufarbeitung der Kulturgutverluste in SBZ und DDR* (Provenire. Schriftenreihe des Deutschen Zentrums Kulturgutverluste 3), Berlin/Boston 2022; Jan Scheunemann, *Bodenreform und Museum. Sicherstellung, Bergung und Verwertung von enteignetem Kunst- und Kulturgut in der SBZ und DDR*, in: *KUR – Kunst und Recht*, 21 (6), 2019, pp. 165–169.
 10. Günther Wessel, *Das schmutzige Geschäft mit der Antike. Der globale Handel mit illegalen Kulturgütern*, Berlin 2015; Elisabeth Jakobi, *Der Raub von Kulturgütern der Antike in kriminalpolizeilicher Sicht*, in: Matthias Weller, Nicolai Kemle, Thomas Dreier (eds.), *Raub – Beute – Diebstahl. Tagungsband der Sechsten Heidelberger Kunstrechtstage am 28. und 29. September 2012* (Schriften zum Kunst- und Kulturrecht 17), Baden-Baden 2013, pp. 35–43.
 11. See inter alia Maia Wellington Gahtan, Eva-Maria Troelenberg (eds.), *Collecting and Empires. An Historical and Global Perspective*, London/Turnhout 2019.
 12. See inter alia Uwe Fleckner, Thomas W. Gaethgens, Christian Huemer (eds.), *Markt und Macht. Der Kunsthandel im „Dritten Reich“* (Schriften der Forschungsstelle „Entartete Kunst“ 12), Berlin/Boston 2017.
 13. E.g. Hannes Hartung, *Kunstraub in Krieg und Verfolgung. Die Restitution der Beute- und Raubkunst im Kollisions- und Völkerrecht*, Berlin 2005.
 14. Gail Feigenbaum, Inge Reist (eds.), *Provenance: An Alternate History of Art*, Los Angeles 2012.
 15. In an interdisciplinary perspective, see Ulrike Saß, Matthias Weller, Christoph Zuschlag (eds.), *Provenienz und Kulturgutschutz. Juristische und kunsthistorische Perspektiven* (Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Provenienzforschung, Kunst- und Kulturgutschutzrecht 1), Berlin/Boston 2022.
 16. See Christoph Zuschlag, *Vom Iconic Turn zum Provenancial Turn? Ein Beitrag zur Methodendiskussion in der Kunstwissenschaft*, in: Maria Effinger, Stephan Hoppe, Harald Klinke, Bernd Krysmanski (eds.), *Von analogen und digitalen Zugängen zur Kunst. Festschrift für Hubertus Kohle zum 60. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2019, pp. 409–417, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.493.c6573>; and more recently, in a global and museum perspective, Felicity Bodenstein, Damiana Oțoiu, Eva-Maria Troelenberg (eds.), *Contested Holdings. Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return* (Museums and Collections 14), Oxford 2022, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3167/9781800734234>.
 17. See Ulrike Saß, *Provenienzforschung als Instrument der Erinnerungspolitik*, in: Esther Gardei, Hans-Georg Soeffner, Benno Zabel (eds.), *Vergangenheitskonstruktionen. Erinnerungspolitik im Zeichen von Ambiguitätstoleranz*, Göttingen 2023, pp. 209–221; Andrea Bambi, *Kunstraub, Restitutionsfragen und Provenienzforschung. Historische Perspektiven einer verzögerten Aufarbeitung*, in: Brechtgen 2021, *Aufarbeitung*, pp. 614–646; Larissa Förster, *Der Umgang mit der Kolonialzeit. Provenienz und Rückgabe*, in: Iris Edenheiser, Larissa Förster (eds.), *Museumsethologie. Eine Einführung. Theorien – Debatten – Praktiken*, Berlin 2019, pp. 78–103.
 18. Meike Hopp, *Provenienzforschung und digitale Forschungsinfrastrukturen in Deutschland. Tendenzen, Desiderate, Bedürfnisse*, in: Eva Blimlinger, Heinz Schödl (eds.), ... *(k)ein Ende in Sicht. 20 Jahre Kunstrückgabegesetz in Österreich* (Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Provenienzforschung 8), Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2018, pp. 37–61.
 19. <https://kulturgutverluste.de/> (26.11.2025).
 20. <https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/> (26.11.2025).
 21. <https://www.arthistoricum.net/en> (27.11.2026).
 22. For an overview of the recent Advisory Board members, see <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/transfer/about/editorialTeam> (09.12.2025).
 23. <https://www.dfg.de/en/research-funding/funding-opportunities/programmes/infrastructure/lis> (27.11.2025).
 24. These include *Research Articles*, *Research Reports*, *Case-Studies*, *Interviews*, and *Miscellanea*. Also see: <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/transfer/sections> (28.11.2025).
 25. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de> (06.12.2025).
 26. <https://doaj.org/> (06.12.2025).
 27. As an estimated mean, just under 40% of submissions (including re-submissions after major revision) get rejected

by the editors, meaning that the actual number of submissions is significantly higher.

28. <https://heidata.uni-heidelberg.de/> (07.12.2025).
 29. <https://digitalbenin.org/> (07.12.2025).

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Abstract

The 1998 Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art, the Gurlitt case of 2012, the 2017 speech of President Emmanuel Macron at the University of Ouagadougou fueling a fervent restitution debate about art and cultural objects stemming from colonial contexts – these are just a few well-known milestones of a development recently labelled the “Provenancial Turn”, which at present is clearly reflected in a downright booming of provenance research and collection history. Spanning a multitude of academic subjects, fields of research and historical epochs, and being viable only in often far-reaching international contexts, the publication of provenance research puts high requirements on transparency, accessibility, quality assurance, interdisciplinarity and connectivity towards digital methods of investigation. Since its launch in 2021, *transfer – Zeitschrift für Provenienzforschung und Sammlungsgeschichte / Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection*, edited by Felicity Bodenstern, Ulrike Saß and Christoph Zuschlag, therefore serves to meet the rapidly growing community’s demand for a Diamond Open Access publication platform. Funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and webhosted by Heidelberg University Library via *arthistoricum.net*, the e-journal successfully practices a double-blind peer-review policy closely supported by its multinational Advisory Board. How-

ever, it also provides close guidance and mentoring support for young, early career researchers like graduate students gaining their first experiences in academic publishing. By now in its second funding phase and based on a constantly high number of submissions, *transfer* is increasing its frequency of publication, offering the publication of topic-specific Special Issues in cooperation with guest editors as well the implementation of open research datasets for individual articles. The various challenges going along with this, the experiences made so far in providing a Diamond Open Access e-publishing platform to a widespread and morally very sensitive international research community and, last but not least, the overall concept of the journal are addressed by the report at hand.

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