

Zeitschrift für Physik: A Historical Reminiscence

The German Physical Society has its roots in the *Physikalische Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, founded in 1845. From the beginning, the Berlin-based Society published *Fortschritte der Physik* and *Verhandlungen*. The latter became known in 1899 as *Verhandlungen der Deutschen Physikalischen Gesellschaft*. This was where Planck presented his most famous paper in 1900, thus laying the foundation for quantum physics. In 1901 Scheel became editor of *Verhandlungen* and the journal entered two glorious decades during which Planck, Einstein, Franck, Hertz, v. Laue, Born and other notable physicists published their groundbreaking work in quantum theory and relativity. The journal was becoming too large for a publication medium intended originally as Notes for the Society's members. Therefore, in December 1919, a publishing committee consisting of Einstein, Goldstein, Haber, Jahnke, Scheel and Westphal reformulated the Society's publishing policy. They agreed that the *Verhandlungen* would concentrate on reports to the members, and a new journal would be founded for original research articles. In the committee's announcements, we find the sentence: "... wird die Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft vom 1. Januar 1920 ab Ergänzungshefte zu den *Verhandlungen* unter dem Titel *Zeitschrift für Physik* herausgeben. ..."

In this manner, the *Zeitschrift für Physik* emerged as a new journal, yet – as supplement to the *Verhandlungen* (until 1925) – retained a glorious past, too. Scheel became its first editor and served the journal until his death in 1936. Under his guidance, the journal established itself as the home of the new atomic physics of the schools of Bohr, Sommerfeld and Born and, in addition, became the first truly international physics journal published in Germany. Notable contributions came from Bohr and Rutherford, but also from Soviet physicists like Frenkel and Landau, or by Friedmann, who published here his famous cosmological solutions to Einstein's theory of gravitation. In the early twenties, as quantum theory began to take shape, we find the leading papers of Stern, Gerlach, Bothe, Geiger, Born and others appearing in *Zeitschrift für Physik*. In the mid-twenties, a new generation of theoretical physicists entered the stage: Heisenberg, Jordan, Pauli, Wigner, among many others; these authors were to develop, in a series of remarkable papers, matrix mechanics, transformation theory and the first ideas on quantum field theory.

While its golden years are closely linked to the early golden years for quantum physics, the *Zeitschrift* has always been open to all sectors of research in physics. It grew rapidly: 1928 saw the fiftieth volume and the hundredth appeared in 1936. In 1944 its second editor Geiger died and, due to the Second World War and its aftermath, it was not before 1948 that it began to publish again – under the editorship of v. Laue and Pohl.

In 1975 it was merged with *Physics of Condensed Matter*, and, because of its size, it was split into Part A *Atoms and Nuclei* and Part B *Condensed Matter and Quanta*. In 1979 a new Part C *Particles and Fields* was added and in 1986 Part D *Atoms, Molecules and Clusters*. Until 1997 this four-part journal was published by Springer-Verlag *unter Mitwirkung der Deutschen Physikalischen Gesellschaft*.

In the late 1990s Springer-Verlag and Les Editions de Physique, the publisher of the French Physical Society, decided to merge *Zeitschrift für Physik* and *Journal de Physique*. Soon *Il Nuovo Cimento* became the third partner and so in 1998 The European Physical Journal was founded. For the first time, a truly European physical journal appeared, jointly published by the French Physical Society, the Italian Physical Society and Springer-Verlag.

Based on those journals' leadership in the history of 20th-century physics, one can confidently state that *The European Physical Journal* 'stands on the shoulders of giants'.

W. Beiglböck

The European Physical Journal

A: Hadrons and Nuclei
B: Condensed Matter and Complex Systems
C: Particles and Fields
D: Atomic, Molecular, Optical
and Plasma Physics
E: Soft Matter and Biological Physics
AP: Applied Physics
ST: Special Topics
H: Historical Perspectives
on Contemporary Physics
EPJ – Web of Conferences

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"The European Physical Journal"
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Società Italiana
di Fisica



Zeitschrift für Physik Historic Scheme

