Open Access Community Investment Program Investment Criteria

Algebraic Combinatorics (ALCO)

https://alco.centre-mersenne.org/

September 1, 2021

Elevator Pitch

Please provide no more than 300 words summarizing how much money you are seeking, for what period of time, the levels/tiers of potential investment, and why you are recommending that stakeholders invest in your journal, resource, or project.

Algebraic Combinatorics is a mathematics journal that published its first issue in January 2018. It is a specialty journal in the burgeoning field of algebraic combinatorics, spanning across and intricately linking several areas of mathematical research. It is owned by mathematicians, dedicated to free dissemination of research, and committed to Diamond Open Access publishing, with no fees for authors or readers.

The journal was founded in 2017 when the full editorial board of the SpringerNature-owned Journal of Algebraic Combinatorics resigned. The new journal has taken over as the top journal in the area. It has simultaneously created a new governance structure, leading to a rejuvenated and more diverse editorial team.

The journal’s costs are relatively low, including a copy-editing fee of 7 euros per page paid to its publishing service provider, Centre Mersenne. It currently does not pay its five Editors-in-Chief nor its Production Editor but would like them to be fairly compensated in the future.

Algebraic Combinatorics seeks funding of $25,000 per year for the next 5 years, suggesting various tiers of institutional commitments, from $500-$2,000 per year. These investments do not carry the promise of governance or publishing control by sponsors--the journal plans to maintain editorial control and independence in its government. However, comments and feedback from sponsors are welcome, and the journal will be responsive.

Resource Overview

1. Description and mission of resource. Mission information should also be provided society/publisher level.

   Indicate whether mission supports scholarly researchers and/or the public interest

   The journal Algebraic Combinatorics (ALCO) had its genesis in mid-2017 when the full editorial board of the SpringerNature-owned Journal of Algebraic Combinatorics (JACO) announced to the publisher their intention to resign on Dec. 31, 2017. The same board began the new mathematician-owned Algebraic Combinatorics, dedicated to a Diamond Open Access model, with no fees for authors or readers.

   The subject of algebraic combinatorics is a thriving subspecialty within modern mathematics, born essentially around the 1960-1970s. By 1992, the area had blossomed and matured to a stage where it was felt that it needed its own specialty journal, and the old journal JACO was founded. Up to 2017, it was essentially the only journal with this topical focus. However, its editorial board had grown tired of the lack of open access for its articles, and high pay-wall prices, along with the recognition that
SpringerNature had little incentive to think about the composition of its board. After being approached by the open-access organization MathOA (http://www.mathoa.org/) with both advisory and financial help, the JACO board decided to resign, to form ALCO. The journal’s service provider is the Centre Mersenne in Grenoble (https://www.centre-mersenne.org/), which is also dedicated to Diamond Open Access. Centre Mersenne provides technical support for the journal’s editorial platform (Open Journal System) and hosts the journal’s articles on their servers, in addition to providing other services, such as archival storage and DOIs.

The new journal ALCO has been highly successful. The name recognition of the JACO board members transferred the imprimatur of high quality to ALCO. At the same time, the move allowed for a new governance structure and constitution, including a Steering Committee to oversee the health of the journal. This now allows the Editors-in-Chief and editorial board more time and energy to focus on questions of content. In particular, the editorial board was vastly expanded, leaving it younger, more vigorous, and more diverse. For the first time, natural mechanisms were introduced to allow long-serving board members to retire. Recently it was recognized that the number of Editors-in-Chief should be enlarged from four to five, and a new Production Editor role filled by a mathematician was introduced.

ALCO has been enjoying very strong support from the algebraic combinatorics community. Meanwhile, SpringerNature has continued publishing JACO, with a new (single) Editor-in-Chief, and new editorial board, both of lower stature and topically farther from algebraic combinatorics. Most workers in the field recognize the continuation of JACO as far inferior to the successor ALCO.

It should be noted that, although the subject of Algebraic Combinatorics is represented at most of the top universities around the world, it is particularly strong in North America and Europe.

2. Publishing history
In its debut year 2018, ALCO published 5 issues per year for a total of 722 pages. Since 2019, it has been 6 issues per year, with the volume roughly doubling to 1327 pages. In 2020, it appears to be on track to publish roughly 1500 pages.

3. Peer review process
Submitted papers are triaged by the team of five Editors-in-Chief, who all weigh in, and then decide which papers will be refereed. A paper is generally reviewed by two referees, single-blind (the referee knows the authors’ identities, but not vice-versa). Editorial board members are called upon frequently for quick opinions, and to help adjudicate conflicting reviews, but do not handle papers themselves.

4. Snapshot of resource and society/publisher finances and governance. Information provided both at journal and society/publisher level. Indicate any non-profit status.
The journal is committed to a Diamond Open Access model, that is, no fees charged to readers, nor to authors. It is owned by its editorial board, with constitution posted on the journal site: https://alco.centre-mersenne.org/media/uploads/2020/04/07/alco_constitution_final_jan27_2020.pdf.

Because the journal’s main service provider, Centre Mersenne, required a contract with an entity having legal status, MathOA agreed to act as publisher for the first few years. The ALCO board voted recently
to change the official publisher to the newly formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, The Combinatorics Consortium (TCC). The goal of TCC is to consolidate the role of publisher for several open access combinatorics journals, currently including the new journal Combinatorial Theory, and potentially others later, such as the long-running Electronic Journal of Combinatorics. The hope is for ALCO to eventually gain funding from private donors and consortia of mathematics departments and library systems, with the funds housed in a designated account held by the publisher TCC.

ALCO’s funds currently come from MathOA and the French national library system (RNBM). Both have committed to defraying its costs in the first few years of the journal but have agreed to transfer this role to TCC.

5. **Current business model of resource. If subscription, indicate distribution/sales volume.**

SpringerNature compensated each of the four JACO Editors-in-Chief in the amount of $2000 per year; other editorial board members received no compensation. SpringerNature also managed the editorial platform for submissions, provided copy-editing, and secretarial support.

The new journal’s main expense is in copy-editing and post-processing that Centre Mersenne performs to fix typesetting issues and conformance to style files in the authors’ final submission source code. Mersenne charges 7 euros per page for this service. This service does not include checking mathematical issues in galley proofs, which has been the burden of the Editors-in-Chief. Recently the journal created a new mathematician Production Editor role, alleviating the burden of the Editors-in-Chief.

Because of their high workload, we would like to compensate each of the five ALCO Editors-in-Chief and the Production Editor at a rate of $1500 per year.

6. **Summary of pilot funding request. Include total dollar value sought per year, term for which sought, and minimum investment accepted.**

As explained in item 5, we estimate these yearly costs, based on roughly 500 pages expected in 2020:

- Copy-editing charges to Centre Mersenne: 7 euros x 1500 pages = $12,600
- Compensation to five Editors-in-Chief, one Production Editor: 6 x $1500 = $9000
- This gives a total funding request of $21,600 per year.

Note that currently MathOA and RNBM are paying only the costs to Centre Mersenne. The Editors-in-Chief and Production Editor currently receive no compensation.

At a minimum, we would require a $500 per year commitment from any group to have them mentioned as a supporter on the journal’s website.

7. **Reasons for seeking funding for transition to OA or continued support for OA publication**

Explained in Item 5.

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**Impact**
8. **Disciplinary impact.** Point, if possible, to an annual report with stats showing impact; data from other institutions who have adopted it.

This is a bit difficult to estimate because *Algebraic Combinatorics* is so young. It is currently indexed by the two most important math citation entities: Zentralblatt MATH ([https://zbmath.org/](https://zbmath.org/)) and MathSciNet ([https://mathscinet.ams.org/mathscinet](https://mathscinet.ams.org/mathscinet)). It is also listed as a member of the Free Journal Network ([https://freejournals.org/](https://freejournals.org/)). Indexing by Web of Science, Scopus, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) are in process, but unfortunately proceed slowly, and could only be initiated after two years of publication.

9. **Diversity, equity, and inclusion impact**

Inclusion of diverse voices; promotion of publishing opportunities for underrepresented scholars, societies, or groups

As mentioned earlier, the move to mathematician-ownership allowed the journal to think about its governance structure. This included writing a constitution that explicitly discusses the goal of a board composition “representative of subfields published in the Journal and balanced with regard to regional distribution of research in algebraic combinatorics, as well as balanced with regard to gender.” The ALCO board has already achieved much greater diversity than that of JACO, and there is a commitment to make it more so. The editorial board of *Algebraic Combinatorics* has members from 16 countries. Before the move away from SpringerNature, the old *Journal of Algebraic Combinatorics* had only two women on its board, while currently ALCO has 11.

10. **Indicators of faculty impact or student success. Include usage statistics.**

An indication of ALCO’s success is the volume of citations to its papers. The indexing service MathSciNet run by the American Mathematical Society shows that, as of this writing, ALCO’s papers from 2018 and 2019 have been cited 107 and 88 times, respectively, while the corresponding numbers for the continuation of its commercially owned predecessor JACO are only 99 and 58. We expect this difference to become even more dramatic in future years.

11. **Indication of improved access to unique content or services not otherwise available**

By freeing the top journal in algebraic combinatorics from its commercial paywall, *Algebraic Combinatorics*, has increased access to research in this active area. The journal has also envisaged implementation of a unique new feature for its articles: links to videos on talks related to its published articles, when available.

**Organization & Governance**

12. **Whether investment carries governance input. Statement on editorial independence or whether investors have a say in governance or article selection/journal direction.**

The journal is editorially independent and does not promise any control of governance or publishing content to investors. Nevertheless, comments and feedback from sponsors and the community are welcome, and we will try to be responsive.
13. **Commitment to advancing social justice and diversity**
Include if applicable: Resource respects cultural heritage through advocacy of data sovereignty or use of TK Labels; resource has commitment to diversity in mission statement; commitment to diversity in the board or development of journal, etc.

In addition to having a diverse editorial board, our journal welcomes articles written by authors from underrepresented groups in mathematics. We understand the important role that publishing plays in the education, promotion, and tenure processes in academia. We strive to ensure a fair and supportive venue for publication.

14. **Author rights retention & licensing**
ALCO authors retain copyright. Articles are published under a Creative Commons CC-BY license.

15. **Compliance with relevant technical standards**
Include if relevant: LOCKSS preservation or some other form of industry-standard preservation, FAIR data, meets interoperability standards (discovery layer, OAI-PMH), meets user experience standards (ADA accessibility), reference to metadata and discovery standards

Centre Mersenne preserves the content of the journal through CLOCKSS and provides DOIs for all papers published in the journal.

16. **Commitment to innovation and research & development**
*Algebraic Combinatorics* is committed to working with other diamond open access combinatorics journals, such as the longstanding *Electronic Journal of Combinatorics*, and the recently formed *Combinatorial Theory*, to find new funding models and educate the mathematical community on how it can support mathematician-run publishing. Given the recent proliferation of online seminars and conferences, we hope authors will submit video links to talks related to their papers for further dissemination and access of published results.

17. **Demonstration of operational and financial stability, or a plan for such.**
As mentioned earlier, currently the basic publishing costs for ALCO are sponsored by MathOA and the French national library system (RNBM). Both intend to hand over the publisher and funder role to the recently formed non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, The Combinatorics Consortium, which is also publishing the other open access combinatorics journals mentioned above, *Combinatorial Theory*. The hope is to make supporting these journals more attractive for individuals, math departments with large combinatorics groups, and library consortia.