



REI CRETARIAE ROMANAE FAVTORES

Dear Fautores members,

At the last Assembly meeting held in Lisbon, in September 2016, a question about the future of the *Acta* was raised, and the decision was made to involve all of the members in this discussion. Therefore, following this rather long letter there will be a short questionnaire we would like you to answer, for the Council to be able to make a final decision about the *Acta*.

Please take your time to read the letter, as we would like everyone to be informed about the advantages and concerns for each proposal.

The Fautores *Acta* are the most visible results of our activities, representing the congresses held and the diverse topics presented. In recent years, the attendance at the congresses has been increasing, along with number of papers published. The volumes of the *Acta* are becoming pretty big – the last had 81 papers published and more than 750 pages – and the membership fee goes almost completely toward financing the *Acta*. The *Acta* are becoming prohibitively expensive to produce and distribute (editing and layout is around 15,000 € for a volume such as the *Acta* 44, and the costs of printing and shipping were around 11,000 – 12,000 €). Costs of printing and shipping raised the membership fee from 60 to 90€ biannually. However, we are concerned that the current membership fee is probably not going to be enough to finance future volumes, in 2018 and later.

Additionally, a part of our activities is financed by sales, but even if we have a policy of restricted access and try to raise money by selling volumes of the *Acta*, one can find PDFs of papers published in the *Acta* on various websites.

We would like you to consider several proposals that the Council envisions for the future of the *Acta* and to select your preferred scenario in the questionnaire.

The FIRST PROPOSAL (A) is **to continue producing printed volumes such as we have now**, as a reflection of the congresses and not reducing the volume.

The concerns are that the current membership fee will probably not going to be enough to finance future volumes and that the higher fees would discourage membership. There is a near certainty that the membership fee would increase, in order to be able to meet all the costs. The membership fee would stay different for institutional and individual members.

The SECOND PROPOSAL (B) is **to continue producing the *Acta* as a reflection of the congresses but both in printed and in electronic/digital form, with different membership fees for those versions**.

In this case, a basic subscription, which offers on-line access would be introduced, sustainable enough to cover the costs of editing and layout. For affiliated members and those individual members who want a printed copy, a higher membership fee would be set up.

The THIRD PROPOSAL (C) is to **continue producing the Acta as a reflection of the congresses but only in electronic/digital form with open-access standards (available to anyone)**. Open access could be handled via our redesigned website.

There are several concerns regarding this model, most of them connected with the current benefits of membership: If all information and publications are publicly available, what are the benefits of membership? Moreover, until now, in order to obtain the volume of the *Acta*, non-members participating in the congress have had to become members. If the *Acta* are accessible online, why would anyone become a member or continue to pay the membership fee? There is a real danger that we would not be able to meet the costs of editing and layout that are covered by the membership fee. To compensate for this, there could be the possibility to raise the congress fee, in order to cover the preparation of *Acta* (this could be done not just for this but for the first two proposals as well).

The FOURTH PROPOSAL (D) is to **continue producing the Acta as a reflection of the congresses but only in electronic/digital form with restricted access (available via a particular publisher)**. This restricted access could be for a shorter period (an 'embargo' period for the latest edition(s), where volumes would become freely available after 2 to 5 years, when they will no longer affect sales) or completely restricted (for commercial use).

This proposal could mean working with a publisher. There are two possible models.

FOURTH PROPOSAL, Model 1:

- Keeping total control of the journal up to the production of PDFs (to a style/standard agreed with the publisher) and then handing over the rest of the process to the publisher.
- The publisher would maintain the website where the digital copies are held and from which individual articles may be bought.
- The publisher would set (with our agreement) a price at which they would sell to purchasers.

FOURTH PROPOSAL, Model 2:

- Keeping control of the content and peer reviewing and overseeing and approving of the production process (Fautores editor). The publisher would cover the costs of copy-editing and production, and would be in charge of production and sales.
- The publisher would provide the software platform for sending out/returning proofs and for obtaining copyright consents from authors.
- The publisher would maintain the website where the digital copies would be held and from which individual articles may be bought.
- The publisher would set (with our agreement) a price at which they will sell to purchasers.
- The publisher would sell to the Fautores the copies for members and sends them out.
- There is the possibility that the publisher can undertake, when taking on the journal, to digitize all back-numbers and then to sell back-numbers (print-on-demand) as required.
- It would take the financial risk from the Fautores and nevertheless will guarantee one copy per volume at a reduced price to each Individual and Affiliated Member.

For both models under the fourth proposal, we would need for the authors to agree to ban at least the papers of the latest edition of the *Acta* within the vesting period on freely accessible scientific sites such as academia.edu.

One of the concerns, for both models, is an open-access policy that many universities and applications for funding promote, asserting that only papers with an open-access component will be counted as scientific output. In this case, there is the possibility to have the status of a 'green' journal: the author's accepted manuscript (after peer-review and editing but not in the publisher's final layout) may be placed in any freely accessible repository. Copyright in the published version (or Version of Record) is, however, held by publisher, and while this version may be seen by subscribers or downloaded for payment, it may NEVER be made fully free of access. However, if an author comes along with an appropriate prepayment (APC: article processing charge, usually provided by the employing institution), then the Version of Record of that paper may be made freely available.

All four proposals/models in the future should have a **more rigorous peer-review component to meet standards so that the papers are recognized as scientific output**. Now, in some countries, the *Acta* as congress proceedings are excluded when assessing a scholars' scientific output. In others, they are considered to be a Class A publication, and we should be careful to maintain that status where apparently our international character apparently counts in our favour.

There are other possibilities for the future of the *Acta* that **include changing the character of the publication** – they are no longer the reflection of the congresses:

5. **Producing a considerably smaller printed volume of the *Acta***: publishing in the *Acta* would not be available any more to all lectures and posters presented at the congress. This proposal means the introduction of particular standards and regulations for competition, not just peer-review.

6. **Producing a considerably smaller printed volume of the *Acta* together with a new on-line journal**. The on-line journal could appear annually with various articles (also by non-members?). The new online journal would be integrated into our website.

7. **Transform the *Acta* into a smaller and regular peer-reviewed journal of Roman pottery studies, with each volume containing about 200 to 250 pages** (implying changing the name and becoming an annual publication with levels of competition). Continue to disseminate print copies, while making it available on-line to members at the same time within the protected area of the website.

8. **Ceasing the publication altogether** / Abandoning the *Acta* completely.

If you are in favour for any of these additional proposals, please state that in the questionnaire under other options (E).

We would like briefly to address the benefits of membership as well. The principal membership benefit has been the printed volume of the *Acta*, while other benefits used to include: notification of congresses, receipt of the *Communicationes*, receipt of the annual bibliography, and lately, when the number of participants in congresses has been restricted, priority in application. However, it is not necessary to be a member of the Fautores to participate in a congress. Moreover, information is now available on our website (and others), none of which is accessible exclusively to members. It is

therefore not necessary to become a member in order either to learn about the congresses or to make use of the bibliography, which is as well posted publicly on other sites.

We would like to propose, for the future, **to redesign our website and to create a protected area accessible only to members**. With a redesigned website that is capable of taking payments and of offering a protected area, membership should provide a newsletter and bibliography (sent by email and posted on the protected area of the website); access to other digital documents in the protected area of the website; access to on-line copies of the journal; access to congresses (i.e. participants would have to join: this would be a significant policy change, but with a modest subscription for newcomers just for that year).

The question about the future of the website is in the questionnaire as well. It is important for us to know your opinion: if the majority of members are in favour of creating a protected area accessible only to members, we have to establish it and meet the costs for the creation, hosting and maintenance of a suitable website.

We hope that in a month's time, which is the deadline for the response to our questionnaire, we will have the majority of members involved in this discussion.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tatjana Cvjetičanin,
President of the RCRF