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Improvements for Readers and Authors – Further Enhancing Quality, International Circulation, and Academic Impact

Dear readers,

since our journal was established as the German language monthly *China aktuell* in 1972, China has undergone tremendous change and development. Subsequent editors have adjusted to the new trends, changes in the academic environment, and new scholarly demands in the field of modern China studies. Having started as one of the few available sources of academic analysis on China in the 1970s, by the 1980s the journal had become the showcase of the China watching capabilities of the research staff working in the Institute of Asian Affairs (now GIGA Institute of Asian Studies). As information from within China became more accessible during the reform era, the journal successfully deepened both scholarly discussion and international impact. Exactly the apparent over-abundance of information and data from China, the new challenges to research on current phenomena posed by the sheer volume and diversity of information and data, led during the first years of the new millennium the publisher to initiate the next phase of reform, transforming the originally German-language in-house publication *China aktuell* into the top-quality academic journal for international scholarship in modern China studies you are now holding in your hands under its new title, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*.

The scholarly expertise on China assembled in the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies, its adaptability to new developments and its excellent editorial standards maintained over more than 37 years have earned the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs – China aktuell* a reputation for continuously providing a wide international readership with the most relevant research findings and up-to-date analyses of relevant current phenomena within Greater China. Today we are proud to inform you about the latest achievements in our efforts to serve the international community of researchers and China watchers.

International Cooperation and Highest Academic Standards

First of all we are happy to announce that the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies and the White Rose East Asia Centre, a centre of excellence jointly operated by the universities of Leeds and Sheffield in the UK, recently signed a cooperation agreement and thus have institutionalized our close academic

collaboration. Within this framework we have decided to co-publish the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* beginning with this year. Hence we are happy to welcome Flemming Christiansen, Director of the National Institute of Chinese Studies (NICS), White Rose East Asia Centre, as a new member of the editorial team of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* and to join hands in our efforts to maintain the quality and further enhance the international impact of the journal.

Committed to highest international academic standards we initially introduced the peer review system for our “Studien” section in 2006. With the current issue 1/2009 this instrument for objectively evaluating and enhancing the quality of scholarly publications has been extended to all articles published in our journal, making the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* one of the few internationally renowned journals in the field of modern China studies that are truly fully peer reviewed. For our “Research Articles” (the former “Studien”) we are applying highest academic standards. At the same time we have introduced a new type of peer review for “Analyses”, i.e. brief policy oriented articles and items that are aimed at knowledge transfer beyond specialized academic readerships, with criteria that aim at ensuring topicality, policy relevance, as well as enhancing the potential professional and policy impact.

Two Pioneering Steps beyond – Open Access

One year ago the Faculty of Arts and sciences at Harvard University announced that it would require all scholars at the institution to make their research results available via Open Access on Harvard’s online repository as post-prints after having been published in scholarly journals. This regulation, representing the so-called “Green Road to Open Access”, caused a small sensation within the international research community, since the social sciences generally have been slow to adopt this kind of publication policy. The reasons for this reluctance within the social sciences community are usually associated with doubts regarding the quality and reputation of newly created online journals. However, the rising number of quality journals making their contents freely available via the Internet – although largely restricted to back issues – clearly rebuts this view.

Long before the announcement from Harvard, the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies had already taken the decision to transform the whole GIGA journal family – the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, the *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, the *Journal of Politics in Latin America* and *Africa Spectrum* – into Open Access publications. This forward-looking strategy has been generously supported by the German Research

Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) with special funds and has been realized in collaboration with Hamburg University Press, the online publisher of the State and University Library of Hamburg. Making accessible all GIGA journals focusing on different regions of the world via one common platform online will establish a unique forum for comparative area studies: <www.giga-hamburg.de/giga-journal-family>.

As part of this future-oriented project, the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* has become a pioneering publication that goes two steps beyond other social sciences journals in our Open Access strategy. Our journal is one of the very few well established quality publications that take efforts to consequently tear down the barriers to equal access to scholarly findings erected by the commercial logic of big international publishers. The interest of the international research community – readers and authors alike – is the widest possible circulation of research findings and scholarly discussions. As an Open Access journal we democratize access to the latest scholarly discussions and knowledge by including within our readership those members of the international scientific community who have been cut off the expert discussions due to the lack of funds in the poorer regions of this world. Hence we consequently decided to make all contents available online without costs, access restrictions or delay at the same time as the printed version is published. The print edition will be continued in its regular form and at very affordable subscription rates because we know that many readers still prefer scholarly articles printed on paper as a bound journal.

The quality of a journal is not determined by the ways of publication. This is achieved through the professional work of its editors, the competence and commitment of its editorial board, the expertise of its reviewers, and the willingness of scholars from around the globe to submit their most intelligent, innovative and thought-provoking manuscripts to it, which result in the reliable support by the broad international expert readership that the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* has been enjoying continuously for more than three decades. The established standards for the selection and peer review of contributions remain unchanged. Through maintaining these high academic standards we are convinced that the transition of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* to Open Access publishing will contribute to overcoming reservations regarding Open Access in the social sciences. First of all, however, this will create added value for both authors and readers:

Authors will profit from increased visibility, impact and citation facilitated by integrating all individual articles into international tracing services, archives and portals and hence enlarged audiences, a fact that is widely supported by a number of international empirical studies on the impact of Open Access publications. In return readers continue to benefit

from the further increasing wealth of highest quality contributions on a wide range of relevant topics by international experts who already have been eager to patronize our journal in large numbers.

The *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* can be accessed online in full text via

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and authors are invited to submit their manuscripts to the journal directly through the new web interface on

<www.CurrentChineseAffairs.org/submission>

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<submission@CurrentChineseAffairs.org>.

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