Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

Volume 19, Number 4: August 2019 ISSN 1534-0937

Intersections

Open Access Issues

This roundup deals with a range of OA issues not much dealt with recently—excluding big deals (and UC's standing up to the Big E), the colors and licenses of OA, and "predatory," the nonsense that just won't die. Oh, and Plan S, which I'm still not covering.

The roundup started with 49 items in seven groups, cut down from 60+ that had been tagged as *oa-issues* or *oa-general*. How many will survive the rereading/discussion process?

Well, right off the bat, the first group disappeared entirely...

Models for OA

There are fundamentally two OA models: gold OA, where all refereed articles in a journal are free (and free to download and copy without registration) on publication date, and green OA (where articles are freely available in repositories before and, for *good* green OA, upon and after formal publication). But there's more than one way to *support* gold OA…

How universities can support open-access journal publishing

This essay by Stuart Shieber appeared June 4, 2014 at *The Occasional Pamphlet*. It's addressed to university administrators and librarians. It's also CC BY, and of course it's five years old—and Shieber may well have changed his opinion since then.

I'm going to quote the whole thing, with my comments *not* indented—and it's fair to say that, while I probably agreed with most of what Shieber's saying in 2014, I don't in 2019.

> As a university administrator or librarian, you may see the future in open-access journal publishing and may be motivated to help bring that future about.[1] I would urge you to establish or maintain an open-access fund to underwrite publication fees for open-access journals, but to do so in a way that follows the principles that underlie the Compact for Open-Access Publishing Equity (COPE). Those principles are two:

> Principle 1: Our goal should be to *establish an environment in which publishers are enabled*[2] *to change their business model* from the unsustainable closed access model based on reader-side fees to a sustainable open access model based on author-side fees.
>
> If publishers could and did switch to the open-access business model, in the long term the moneys saved in reader-side fees would more than cover the author-side fees, with open access added to boot.

Unfortunately, that assumes good faith on behalf of the publishers—that they wouldn't keep raising fees to maintain or increase their profitability. I believe it's no longer reasonable to assume such good faith. Nor is the case made that there's any good reason that yesterday's publishers *should* be the publishers of tomorrow.

> But until a large proportion of the funded research comes with appropriately structured funds usable to pay author-side fees, publishers will find themselves in an environment that *disincentivizes* the move to the preferred business model. Only when the bulk of research comes with funds to pay author-side fees underwriting dissemination will publishers feel comfortable moving to that model. Principle 1 argues for a system where author-side fees for open-access journals should be largely underwritten on behalf of authors, just as the research libraries of the world currently underwrite reader-side fees on behalf of readers.[3] But who should be on the hook to pay the author-side fees on behalf of the authors? That brings us to Principle 2.
>
> > Principle 2: Dissemination is an intrinsic part of the research process. Those that fund the research should be responsible for funding its dissemination.
>
> Research funding agencies, not universities, should be funding author-side fees for research funded by their grants. There's no reason for universities to take on that burden on their behalf.[4] But universities should fund open-access publication fees for research that they fund themselves.
>
> We don't usually think of universities as research funders, but they are. They hire faculty to engage in certain core activities – teaching, service, *and research* – and their job performance and career advancement typically depends on all three. Sometimes researchers obtain outside funding for the research aspect of their professional lives, but where research is not funded from outside, it is still a central part of faculty members' responsibilities. In those cases, where research is not funded by extramural funds, it is therefore being implicitly funded by the university itself. In some fields, the sciences in particular, outside funding is the norm; in others, the humanities and most social sciences, it is the exception. Regardless of the field, faculty research that is not funded from outside is university-funded research, and the university ought to be responsible for funding its dissemination as well.

> The university can and should place conditions on funding that dissemination. In particular, it ought to require that if it is funding the dissemination, then that dissemination be *open* – free for others to read and build on – and that it be published in a venue that provides openness *sustainably* – a fully open-access journal rather than a hybrid subscription journal.

Better yet: why shouldn't the university be establishing no-fee OA journals and joining with other universities to fund such journals?

> Organizing a university open-access fund consistent with these principles means that the university will, at present, fund few articles, for reasons detailed elsewhere. Don't confuse slow uptake with low impact. The import of the fund is not to be measured by how many articles it makes open, but by how it contributes to the establishment of the enabling environment for the open-access business model. The enabling environment will have to grow substantially before enablement becomes transformation. It is no less important in the interim.

Again: this suggests that *the* open access business model is author-side fees. That's never been true for the majority of gold OA journals; I fail to see why it's more desirable, except of course for publishers desirous of strong revenue streams.

> What about the opportunity cost of open-access funds? Couldn't those funds be better used in our efforts to move to a more open scholarly communication system? Alternative uses of the funds are sometimes proposed, such as university libraries establishing and operating new open-access journals or paying membership fees to open-access publishers to reduce the author-side fees for their journals. But establishing new journals does nothing to reduce the need to subscribe to the old journals. It adds costs with no anticipation, even in the long term, of corresponding savings elsewhere. And paying membership fees to certain open-access publishers puts a finger on the scale so as to preemptively favor certain such publishers over others and to let funding agencies off the hook for *their* funding responsibilities. Such efforts should at best be funded *after* open-access funds are established to make good on universities' responsibility to underwrite the dissemination of the research they've funded.

And here we get to the gist of it: the two sentences beginning "But." The first is almost certainly false (at least when OA journals are founded by the editorial boards of subscription journals); the second should be as well. Effectively, Shieber's thrown in the towel ahead of time.

---

1. It should go without saying that efforts to foster open-access journal publishing are completely consistent with, in fact aided by, fostering open access through self-deposit in open repositories (so-

called "green open access"). I am a long and ardent supporter of such efforts myself, and urge you as university administrators and librarians to promote green open access as well. [Since it should go without saying, comments recapitulating that point will be deemed tangential and attended to accordingly.]↩

2. I am indebted to Bernard Schutz of Max Planck Gesellschaft for his elegant phrasing of the issue in terms of the "enabling environment".↩
3. Furthermore, as I've argued elsewhere, disenfranchising readers through subscription fees is a more fundamental problem than disenfranchising authors through publication fees.↩
4. In fact, by being willing to fund author-side fees for grant-funded articles, universities merely delay the day that funding agencies do their part by reducing the pressure from their fundees.↩

I think Shieber's essay still makes sense given the assumption that old journals will and should survive into the future with ever-growing revenues—but I now regard that assumption as self-defeating.

A few comments are interesting, including Shieber's response to a question on his "preferred model moving forward":

> If by "what model" you mean what business model open-access publishers should use, I'm all for experimentation. Some, like JMLR, work entirely on in-kind donations of time; others use subventions from scholarly societies, universities, or other institutions; others charge author-side publication fees; a few (too few) charge submission fees. Several lists of business models for OA journals have been compiled. I'm all for letting a thousand flowers bloom, and for universities and funding agencies to underwrite reasonable costs associated with those business models.

I find myself mostly agreeing with that paragraph—and now believe it's a much better use of university funds than what's proposed in the essay itself. It helps if it's coupled with faculty mandates and cancellation of big deals…

Expecting more out of Publishers

Jean-Sébastien Caux posted this on May 3, 2018 at their eponymous blog; it's also CC BY, and good and short enough that I'll once again quote the whole thing with my annotations interspersed.

> In this day and age of efforts towards the reform of the business of scientific publishing, it is easy to lose track of where things are going. In a previous post, I shared my classification scheme for types of publishers, according to what they offer and what their business model is. But when talking about *where we want to end up*, it is perhaps useful to formulate some general principles to follow. A valuable proposal comes

from the Fair Open Access Alliance, which has formulated the so-called Fair Open Access Principles as:

- The journal has a transparent ownership structure, and is controlled by and responsive to the scholarly community.
- Authors of articles in the journal retain copyright.
- All articles are published open access and an explicit open access licence is used.
- Submission and publication is not conditional in any way on the payment of a fee from the author or its employing institution, or on membership of an institution or society.
- Any fees paid on behalf of the journal to publishers are low, transparent, and in proportion to the work carried out.

These are excellent base principles to follow when implementing the needed reform in scientific publishing. In particular, it is clear that many new initiatives, including SciPost, easily fulfil all these expectations.

Must admit, that set of principles sounds pretty good to me as well.

On the other hand, one cannot help feeling that these principles are still too much of a compromise, perhaps with the pragmatic intention of making it easier for existing players to "deform" their operations into more acceptable ones.

In an ideal world, it is however clear that one could be even stricter with what can be expected of publishers. Recent developments highlight just how profitable the publishing business has been, and is sadly expected to remain in the future, even with the Open Access transition and the best efforts of the good-willed people involved in making it happen. This makes point 5 of the FOA principles above too loosely formulated, and insufficiently constraining. There is thus a clear motivation for sharpening up the criteria, to avoid a future in which wolves will simply have changed their clothing. After all, as a scientist, you have to continuously meet exceedingly high expectations. Why should publishers have it any easier?

Genuine Open Access Principles

[CO]	**Community Ownership**	The Journal has a transparent community-anchored ownership structure, and is controlled by and responsive to the scholarly community.
[OI]	**Open Infrastructure**	The infrastructure for operating the Journal belongs to, and is open sourced to the community. The entire technological stack and all operating protocols are documented and made easily transferable between community owners.

[CA]	**Copyright to authors**	Authors of articles in the Journal retain copyright. The Journal assists authors in protecting their rights in case of infringement.
[OA]	**Open Access**	All articles are published open access and an explicit open access licence is used which is preferably Approved for Free Cultural Works.
[OC]	**Open Citations**	The Journal makes its citation metadata openly accessibly by actively participating in the Initiative for Open Citations.
[FF]	**Fee Free**	Submission, peer evaluation and publication are not conditional in any way on the payment of a fee from authors or their employing institution, or on membership of an institution or society.
[NP]	**Non Profit**	The Journal publisher's operations are entirely non profit.
[OF]	**Open Finances**	The Journal's finances are openly published and available for public scrutiny.
[AE]	**Academic Editing**	The editorial processes of the Journal are run by the community, and all editorial decisions are taken by active professional scientists, using exclusively academic scholarship-based criteria.

Notes

The first thing to specify is what is meant by the *community*. The answer is the obvious: active professional academics or associations thereof, academic institutions such as universities and their libraries, research institutes, funding agencies international research organizations and the like; this explicitly excludes organizations/corporations whose interests are not purely academic in nature.

Principles CO, CA, OA and FF are derived from the first 4 Fair OA principles, slightly sharpened.

The OI principle means that the Journal's long-term existence can be ensured by the community itself, since none of the technology behind it is proprietary or hidden behind closed doors. The codebase should be open sourced, and preferably given a non-commercial license to make corporate takeovers impossible.

For the OA and CA principles, licenses which fit the *Approved for Free Cultural Works* label include CC0, CC BY and CC BY-SA. With such generous terms, infringements are not expected to occur often; it is however important for the authors to know their rights and how to verify their proper application.

> One can argue that OC is implied by OA, but it feels appropriate to give it a separate entry to highlight its importance for the future of academic metrics.
>
> The FF principle is essentially the 4th Fair OA principle, with greater emphasis on absence of fees for *all* the workflow leading from preprint to (maintained) published material. Contrary to ill-informed interventions, this does **not** imply that this workflow does not entail costs. It just means that costs are covered from other sources, for example universities, libraries, voluntary author contributions etc. As explained in the notes of Point 4 of the Fair OA principles, the FF principle is incompatible with compulsory Article Processing Charges (APCs) and "Big Deals" with publishers.
>
> The 5th Fair OA principle has here been sharpened to NP and OF. Compromise on this point, in view of recent history, is demonstrably ill-advised. Of course one could conceive of a nicely working for-profit scientific publishing market, but Genuine Open Access is clearly the preferable option.
>
> The AE principle explicitly excludes workflows in which insufficiently-qualified personnel can take publication decisions based on for example "sales potential" or other non-academic criteria. Science must remain the business of scientists, and that includes publishing.

As a non-academic independent scholar, I could take issue with a couple of these points, and I find it unfortunate that the author essentially ignores the humanities—but those are quibbles. (In the case of the humanities, a *big* quibble.)

Still, this seems like a generally preferable model…

Why we need a public infrastructure for data on open access. Michael Laakso posted this on January 16, 2019 at Zenodo. It's not about OA directly; it's about metadata and the lack thereof.

> During the last decade I have been conducting research on scholarly communication, primarily focusing on how open access in various forms has been introduced into an environment traditionally supported by subscription-based distribution models. Establishing the historical development and current status of journals and articles publishing open access still requires a lot of manual data collection. Insights on open access, and the development of scholarly publishing in general, is not only something of merely bibliometric research interest. In 2019, readily-available data on the state of open access is still limited, even though open access publishing has become a crucial goal promoted by funders and policy-makers worldwide. The scientific enterprise at large would benefit from more informed science policy, and by having access

> to better data and metrics about the journal publishing landscape; metrics that would be standardized and could be followed-up.

That's the start of a relatively brief opinion piece calling for an improved information environment (preferably an open one) for journal tracking.

He mentions my work in a section called "Current gold standards and why improvement is needed":

> Indicative of the lack of information on journals is the fact that the most comprehensive mapping of the longitudinal development of open access journals has been put together manually by visiting over 10 000 journal websites and counting the number of articles published (Crawford 2018). Though an important contribution to the knowledge available, even this massive undertaking can only provide answers to the "simple" questions that pertain to existing and active open access journals, for example how many journals and articles are published open access annually per discipline, and what their pricing levels for article processing charges are

As you might expect, "Crawford 2018" is *Gold Open Access Journals 2012-2017*. I have no quibbles about what's said here: the *GOA* series is quite limited in the questions it can answer—and ideally it would be redundant.

Laakso itemizes some of the questions that *should* be possible to research with a really good metadata system, and it's clear that a workable system must involve all journals, not just gold OA, and would also require deep historic metadata.

I won't quote more (partly because it's really hard to copy-and-paste, even by PDF standards: the quote on my own work came through as one paragraph *per word*, for example), but it's worth reading and thinking about. Full success would mean the end of the *GOA* series except possibly as analysis, and that would be appropriate.

Journal flipping or a public open access infrastructure? What kind of open access do we want?

This piece by Tony Ross-Hellaner and Benedikt Fecher, posted October 26, 2017 on the *LSE Impact Blog*, is interesting not only for the two models it discusses but for the Google Docs version, which includes comments and annotations from several people. It's CC BY, but I'll quote selectively. The prelude:

> The movement for open access (OA) seems to have entered a new phase, where debates centre more on "how" than "why". The arguments about the social, economic, and academic benefits of OA seem to have largely been won, at least at the policy level of governments, policymakers, institutions, and funders. As mandates and policies proliferate, the build-up of political pressure presents OA as an inevitability, although it is worth remembering that researchers, despite seeming

to agree that OA is a good idea, have proven much less likely to adopt it for their own publications, where the prestige of appearing in brand-name journals remains the main motivation.

OA's success at the political level, yet only incremental progress at the level of practices, brings an urgent moment of choice. Policymakers want OA quickly – the European Commission's competitiveness council infamously called for full, immediate OA to all scientific publications by 2020. Although that target is almost certainly unrealistic, as a statement of intent it is powerful. Such sudden urgency sets the scene for pragmatic solutions. And the most pragmatic of solutions currently on the table is that proposed by the OA2020 initiative, which "aims to accelerate the transition to open access by transforming the existing corpus of scientific journals from their current subscription system to open access". This "big flip" of the current journal ecology would have the advantages of not requiring researchers to change their practices too much and building upon tried and tested infrastructure – the journal-based publishing system.

In two previous posts, we made the argument in favour of a public open access infrastructure and against the "big flip" of subscription journals (here and here). Here, we'd like to explore in more detail the possible consequences for scholarly communication if either of these two scenarios came to pass. We present these scenarios for discussion, in the hope that sketching these possible futures will help achieve consensus on the best way forward.

The "big flip" you already know about; that's what the Shieber piece earlier is advocating. The authors list these disadvantages for the big flip:

1. Large-scale offsetting agreements exclude researchers from institutions and countries that cannot afford to buy in; this will be to the detriment and competitive disadvantage of researchers from poorer institutions. **Journal flipping will likely widen the gap between the rich and the poor in the global academic landscape.**
2. Given that many peer-reviewed articles remain uncited and do not even have a disciplinary impact, researchers would contribute more by publishing alternative scientific products, such as open data and code. Yet, the journal-flipping would cement the role of the article and make it difficult for new, more digital-savvy products to emerge. **Journal flipping would cement an analogue academic value creation.**
3. Moreover, journal flipping reproduces the dependence on a small number of commercial publishers that will likely continue to wield oligopolistic market power. **Without necessity, journal flipping reproduces the inefficiencies from the analogue to the digital world**.

4. Finally, the hurried push to flip journals within costs widely believed to be bloated could mean that **average levels of article processing charges will become inflated**, reflecting current publisher profit-margins rather than the true cost of academic publishing.

I don't find much to quibble with there.

Scenario 2 is a public OA infrastructure, and includes discussion of current initiatives such as the Open Library of the Humanities, ending with this summary and set of advantages:

> We believe the way ahead here lies in linking up all such efforts in order to coordinate them into an interoperable public infrastructure, sustainably funded directly by public institutions like research libraries or funders, that is able to offer a researcher-centric, low-cost, innovative platform for the dissemination of research. A possible model for coordination of such activities is SCOSS, the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services, a community-led effort to help maintain, and ultimately secure, vital infrastructure. David Lewis' recent proposal that research libraries set aside 2.5% of their total budget to support the common infrastructure needed to create the open scholarly commons, if it were to be realised, would ensure money was in place on a sustainable basis to fund these activities.
>
> A future in which coordinated public OA infrastructures play a much stronger role would bring the following advantages:
>
> 1. **First and foremost, investing in a public infrastructure for open access could mean overcoming the dependence on a few commercial publishers.** Instead of subsidising the big players in the business (e.g. Reed-Elsevier, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell, Taylor & Francis, and SAGE) with licensing deals – and thereby perpetuating the same, oligopolistic publishing system – a bold step towards public infrastructures could mean that new players and services emerge.
> 2. With overlay models built upon a network of public repositories, the classic publishing model with an editorial board and a peer-review system would remain intact. Though this model itself can be criticised – in light of the replication crisis, for example – it would not confront risk-averse authors with a completely new system. **It could be a starting point to push the necessary change required in academic publishing in small doses (e.g. with regards to a data and code policy).**
> 3. **A public infrastructure could widen the scope of activities of research libraries, redefining their role in an increasingly digital world.** Instead of managing subscriptions for journals, they could provide the technical infrastructure for publishing and offer related services.

4. **A truly public OA infrastructure would be open to researchers from everywhere.** Whereas big deals (as in scenario 1) mainly benefit researchers affiliated with (relatively well-resourced) institutions that are included in the negotiations, public infrastructures would be better able to offer services regardless of ability to pay, thus not excluding researchers from the Global South.

I would note that parts of the global south seem to be doing a pretty good job of building a nonprofit, usually no-fee infrastructure in the form of SciELO and Redalyc. There are (some) disadvantages:

> The disadvantages of such a system would likely include the difficulty in creating a broad, inclusive governance structure which ensures the system is responsive to user needs, that many public infrastructures are often accused of too heavily privileging functionality over usability, and that a centralised system could stifle innovation.

I find myself sympathetic to the notion that a centralized system would tend to stifle innovation, and frankly wonder whether such a system is either necessary or advisable. But then there's this:

> These two scenarios, although we present them as a dichotomy, are not mutually exclusive. The OA future that we eventually inherit will probably include a mix of flipped journals and public infrastructures. But the decisions we make now will determine the degree to which either is favoured. We hope to have shown that the chance to create a coordinated public OA infrastructure is at hand. But above all, we'd like to know what you think!

The comments are in the Google Docs version, and worth reading.

Reliable novelty: New should not trump true

This article by Björn Brembs appeared February 12, 2019 in *PLOS Biology* and is, of course, CC BY. The abstract:

> Although a case can be made for rewarding scientists for risky, novel science rather than for incremental, reliable science, novelty without reliability ceases to be science. The currently available evidence suggests that the most prestigious journals are no better at detecting unreliable science than other journals. In fact, some of the most convincing studies show a negative correlation, with the most prestigious journals publishing the least reliable science. With the credibility of science increasingly under siege, how much longer can we afford to reward novelty at the expense of reliability? Here, I argue for replacing the legacy journals with a modern information infrastructure that is governed by scholars. This infrastructure would allow renewed focus on scientific reliability, with improved sort, filter, and discovery functionalities, at

> massive cost savings. If these savings were invested in additional infrastructure for research data and scientific code and/or software, scientific reliability would receive additional support, and funding woes—for, e.g., biological databases—would be a concern of the past.

This is a truly radical proposal: get rid of all journals, period. Does a single "information infrastructure" make sense? I won't get into it, and I won't go through the article in detail. It's another model.

Here's the *tl;dr* version (yes, the heading is "'Too long, didn't read'"), which differs a bit from the abstract:

> There is a growing body of evidence against our subjective notion of more prestigious journals publishing "better" science. In fact, the most prestigious journals may be publishing the least reliable science. Therefore, it may not be pure coincidence that, in the fields in which the hierarchy of journals is playing an outsize role in rewarding scholars, the replication of scientific findings, or the lack thereof, is receiving more and more attention. Abandoning the expensive anachronism of journals may not only allow us to regain control over the important scholarly communications infrastructure and refocus it towards reliability, but it will also free sufficient funds to implement current technologies that will service our research data and scientific code and/or software such that, e.g., biological databases would never face money-related closures again. Funders may play an important role in the transition from the legacy to the modern system in that they could require the institutions of grant applicants to join the modern system before any applications are reviewed (i.e., a "Plan I", for infrastructure).

Personally, I would rate the chances of all scholarly journals *disappearing*, on a scale of 1 to 10, at -1, but what do I know?

The value of a journal is the community it creates, not the papers it publishes

This essay by Lucy Montgomery and Cameron Neylon appeared March 29, 2019 on the *LSE Impact Blog*. It has a CC BY license. And, frankly, reading it twice leads me to believe that I'm less literate than I thought I was, since somehow I'm just not getting what they're trying to say. But that may just be me. Here's the intro:

> *When we think about the value of journal publishing, we have a tendency to think in terms of costs per article and the potential for new technologies to reduce these costs. In this post,* ***Lucy Montgomery*** *and* ***Cameron Neylon*** *argue that we should instead focus on the social life of journals and the knowledge communities they sustain. Taking this as a starting point they explore how changes to the business model of journal publishing have pushed existing forms of academic social organization to their limits.*

Social life of journals? Hmm… A little further:

> The problem of this perspective [putting the publishing process at the center] is that it focuses solely on the costs incurred and not on the value created. In these models, value is determined by what various markets are willing to pay. We should be asking instead, what it is that people value in publishing that they are willing to pay for? What is being created? Who benefits from it? How are these goods being valued differently? On this basis we propose that the value of a well-run journal does not lie simply in providing publication technologies, but in the user community itself. Journals should be seen as a technology of social production and not as a communication technology.
>
> To this end, a different way of understanding journals is through the economics of clubs. Club economic models describe how a community can come together to produce goods that they couldn't create individually, but from which all community members can benefit. Significantly they predict a number of characteristics for successful clubs. Most importantly, they are size-dependent. Too small, they lack the resources necessary to create the desired good. Too large, there is friction in access to the good (congestion). The classic example being a sports club providing a swimming pool, too few members and you can't afford to build and maintain the pool, too many and the pool is overcrowded.
>
> Clubs also produce a particular kind of good: "club goods." These are *non-rivalrous*, meaning they can be widely shared (up to that point of congestion), but *excludable*, meaning it is easy to restrict access to members only. On the surface this is a good model of a community subscription journal. Membership is made up of those who read the journal, write for it, and contribute as editors and referees. This overlaps strongly with the group that contributes financially to the costs of producing the journal. Too few authors and readers, and the journal is not viable. Too many, and there is congestion for authors to access editorial time, reviewers and space in the journal. Even with a move to digital online technologies, the costs of production are important in determining when congestion arises.

But with OA, readers *don't* contribute financially—and I certainly don't consider myself a member of a given OA journal's "community" because I choose to read an article!

> Furthermore, the good being produced is the knowledge-making community itself. From a social knowledge production perspective this means that the value being created is collective community knowledge. Knowledge production is most efficient when this community, or "knowledge club", strongly overlaps with the club which makes up the journal.

The more I read this, the more it seems like an argument *against* OA, as it seems to suggest that readers should be part of a "community" that also involves the authors, editors and referees—and one aspect of a community

is that it has a reasonably defined population. I'm not a cancer researcher; why should I be considered part of a medical journal's community?

I've now read the whole essay a third time and…I just don't get it. Maybe you'll do better. I suppose it stands as a polar opposite to Brembs' "get rid of the journals" approach…

AmeliCA, Open Knowledge for Latin America and the Global South

This fairly extensive interview with Arianna Becerril-Garcia, interviewed by Paula Clemente Vega, was posted May 15, 2019 on *Open Insights*. It's well worth reading, but I'm afraid of saying much about it for fear of misinterpreting it.

It's been clear to me ever since I started looking for facts about Gold OA that the global south—and in particular Latin America—is far more active in gold OA than it's usually given credit for, and that gold OA in Latin America is *usually* no-fee (86% of articles and around 90% of journals), with SciELO and Redalyc playing important roles. I've never quite understood the relationship between SciELO and Redalyc—and, perhaps because that's not the primary focus of this interview, I still don't. (As a quantitative researcher, I *love* SciELO because they make it so easy to count articles by year—but that's me.)

Quoting from the introduction:

> AmeliCA is a sustainable and community-driven structure for open knowledge in Latin America and the Global South launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), the Network of Scientific Journals of Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal (REDALYC), the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (UAEM), the University of Antioquia (UdeA) and the National University of La Plata (UNLP).

Becerril-Gates makes it clear that Latin America has always favored no-fee Oa with public financing, mostly associated with universities. She regards APC-based OA as unsustainable, and seems to take a swipe at SciELO here:

> In the Latin American region, different approaches to address OA are identified. One of them promotes the implementation of Author Processing Charges (APCs); it also prioritizes the publication in English over local languages and legitimizes the evaluation of science based on the Impact Factor. Such is the case of SciELO, which with the agreement it made with Clarivate Analytics, gave to this commercial company information from hundreds of scholarly journals published by Latin American institutions, information that was collected and processed using public economical resources from the region with the aim of improving the international visibility through the creation of SciELO

> Citation Index. With this action, it supports a science evaluation paradigm where the regional scholarly output has no significant representation and where the SSH do not either.

I may be missing something. SciELO seems to be *very* strong in the social sciences and humanities, and my recollection is that very few SciELO journals have fees. (Checking only those with "scielo" or "www.scielo" at the start of their URLs, 78% of them are no-fee—which, admittedly, is a higher fee percentage than for Latin America as a whole.) But, as I say, I may well be missing something.

In any case, it's a worthwhile read, especially given my belief that Latin America is getting it right.

The OA interviews: Arianna Becerril-García, Chair of AmeliCA

Here's another interview with Dr. Becerril-Garcia, this time by Richard Poynder on May 21, 2019 at *Open and Shut?* It's also well worth reading, and seemed somewhat clearer to me—especially when Becerril-Garcia pushes back on some of RP's questions.

Again, I won't quote at length. It seems clear that AmeliCA is opposed to fees for OA (for the right reasons), that it and Redalyc (she's the Executive Director) have worked with SciELO and will in the future, and that she feels that some SciELO decisions and actions may be in the wrong direction. But, again, the interview's not about SciELO.

I *love* these comments:

> We know that before the Second World War the participation of commercial publishers was limited, and journals depended mostly on professional associations. In the late decades of the last century, however, and even in this one, we have seen an excessive concentration of scholarly publishing in a few publishing houses – the oligopoly.
>
> Beyond the damage these publishers cause to the system of scholarly communication by their monopolistic activities (which is no small thing) we now face a situation where we are having to rely on a legitimation system based on metrics provided by two databases (Web of Science and Scopus) that belong to private enterprises and whose entire focus is on making a commercial return. These companies' interests lie in making governments and institutions believe (through their various "advisory groups") that only research that is indexed by them is of sufficient quality to be worthy of being supported with resources. This is the system of evaluation used today for researchers, for projects and for journals.
>
> And this is a system from which Latin American scientific publications are largely excluded, especially those from the Social Sciences and Humanities. Consequently, researchers are forced to publish in journals owned by commercial publishers who are mainly based outside the region, and in order to make their work open access they now have to pay an APC.

> The goal of AmeliCA is to support and consolidate a native model that has operated in Latin America for more than 30 years, a model in which the publishing process is financed in a structured and rooted manner with public resources provided via local universities. This is the starting point and our aim is to demonstrate that different models of scholarly publishing have developed than one controlled by commercial publishers.

A bit later:

> If the focus of any new initiative is on replacing the model of paying-to-read with one based on paying-to-publish, it will inevitably create an unsustainable and non-inclusive system.
>
> What is clear is that at this point in time the control of scholarly publishing is in the hands of commercial publishers, and so any planned change must necessarily include them. However, in the process of change control needs to be transferred to academia – to academic institutions, to universities, to academic associations, and to other stakeholders whose focus is on the development of science rather than promoting private commercial interests. And if this is done in a collective manner and in a distributed and fair way the value and power of scholarly communication can be maintained and enhanced.
>
> This means building infrastructure, taking advantage of the great benefits that communication and information technologies now offer, professionalising institutions so that they can create a publishing tradition, and anything else that can further the task of taking back control of scholarly communication which is currently dominated by private interests.

If SciELO has strayed from those aims, that's a shame, and should be corrected. Perhaps GOALL (discussed in the interview), which brings together six platforms including AmeliCA and SciELO, will help?

Anyway, read the interview.

Revisiting 'the 1990s debutante': scholar-led publishing and the prehistory of the open access movement

I'm going to point to this preprint by Samuel Moore, deposited in May 2019 at *Humanities Commons*, and quote the abstract…and that's about it, possibly because I feel a bit of personal animus about the notion that the very early scholar-led OA journals were neglected by students of OA. (My own publications on early OA and these journals are, as I would expect, not cited. Not even the one in *Learned Publishing*.)

> The movement for open access publishing is often said to have its roots in the scientific disciplines, having been popularised by scientific publishers and formalised through a range of top-down policy interventions. But there is an often-neglected pre-history of open access that can be found in the early DIY publishers of the late '80s and early '90s.

> Managed entirely by working academics, these journals published research in the humanities and social sciences and stand out for their unique set of motivations and practices. This article explores this separate lineage in the history of the open access movement through a critical-theoretical analysis of the motivations and practices of the early scholar-led publishers. Alongside showing the involvement of the humanities and social sciences in the formation of open access, the analysis reveals the importance that these journals placed on experimental practices, critique of commercial publishing and the desire to reach new audiences. Understood in today's context, this research is significant for adding complexity to the history of open access, which policymakers, advocates and publishing scholars should keep in mind as open access goes mainstream.

Metrics

A few items that seem directly related to metrics, and (as with some other items) sometimes spill over into PlanS.

Over-Optimization of Academic Publishing Metrics: Observing Goodhart's Law in Action

This article by Michael Fire and Carlos Guestrin was posted to arXiv on September 20, 2018. The abstract:

> The academic publishing world is changing significantly, with ever-growing numbers of publications each year and shifting publishing patterns. However, the metrics used to measure academic success, such as the number of publications, citation number, and impact factor, have not changed for decades. Moreover, recent studies indicate that these metrics have become targets and follow Goodhart's Law, according to which "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." In this study, we analyzed over 120 million papers to examine how the academic publishing world has evolved over the last century. Our study shows that the validity of citation-based measures is being compromised and their usefulness is lessening. In particular, the number of publications has ceased to be a good metric as a result of longer author lists, shorter papers, and surging publication numbers. Citation-based metrics, such citation number and h-index, are likewise affected by the flood of papers, self-citations, and lengthy reference lists. Measures such as a journal's impact factor have also ceased to be good metrics due to the soaring numbers of papers that are published in top journals, particularly from the same pool of authors. Moreover, by analyzing properties of over 2600 research fields, we observed that citation-based metrics are not beneficial for comparing researchers in different fields, or even in the same department. Academic publishing has changed considerably; now we need to reconsider how we measure success.

What a dynamite abstract, and what forthright statements!

The PDF is 47 pages (18 pages plus references and supplemental graphs), and I'm neither qualified to discuss it intelligently nor inclined to do so. I'm appalled to see yet another insanely high figure for scholarly publication: *seven million* papers in 2014! (I'm not saying it can't be right, but it seems ridiculously high.)

The last few paragraphs:

> Our study's extensive analysis of academic publications reveals why using citation-based metrics as measures of impact are wrong from the core: First, not all citations are equal; there is a big difference between a study that cites a paper that greatly influenced it and a study that cites multiple papers with only minor connections. Many of the impact measures used today do not take into consideration distinctions among the various types of citations. Second, it is not logical to measure a paper's impact based on the citation numbers of other papers that are published in the same journal. In the academic world, there are over 20,000 journals that publish hundreds or even thousands of papers each year, with papers written by hundreds or even thousands of authors. It is even less logical to measure a researcher's impact based on a paper coauthored with many other researchers according to the journal in which it is published. Third, as we demonstrated in Section 4.4, it is wrong to compare studies from different fields, and even to compare papers and researchers within the same parent field of study, due to the many differences in the median and average number of citations in each field (see Table 1).
>
> As we have revealed in this study, to measure impact with citation-based measures—that have now become targets—clearly has many undesirable effects. The number of papers with limited impact has increased sharply (see Figure 10), papers may contain hundreds of self-citations (see Figure 8), and some top journals have become "old boys' clubs" that mainly publish papers from the same researchers (see Figures 18 and 19). Moreover, using citation-based measures to compare researchers in different fields may have the dangerous effect of allocating more resources to high-citation domains, shortchanging other domains that are equally important.
>
> We believe the solution to the above issues is to utilize data-science tools and release new and open datasets in order to develop new measures that will more accurately determine a paper's impact in a specific research field. Certain metrics have been proposed, but the key is to wisely and carefully evaluate new measures to ensure that they will not follow Goodhart's Law and end up merely as targets. Researchers do valuable work. Communicating the work to others is vital, and correctly assessing the impact of that work is essential.

Interesting stuff.

The democratization of scientific publishing
This "mini review" by Clare Fiala and Eleftherios P. Diamandis appeared January 18, 2019 in *BMC Medicine*. The abstract:

> Where should I submit my paper? This is a question that young scientists and trainees frequently ask. In this Commentary, we advise on how to make such a decision whilst balancing the risks and benefits. We argue that trying to publish in top tier journals may not always be the best option and that publishing in indexed, open access journals may expose research to the same or larger audiences. The value of research should not be judged according to the publishing journal's name, but rather from other measures of impact such as successful commercialization of new technologies, number of citations, and downloads. We also highlight the role of mentors, who have the responsibility to protect the long-term interests of their trainees by balancing the consequences of acceptances and rejections.

It's a relatively brief and highly readable article, worth reading on its own. I'll quote one paragraph because it indirectly supports an argument I used to make: that *Nature* and *Science* could survive quite nicely (albeit with lower income) if all scholarly articles were fully OA, but there was a reasonable subscription charge for other editorial matter (which *should* be compatible with Gold OA, as long as *all* refereed articles are OA):

> Numerous investigators maintain personal subscriptions to *Nature* and *Science* magazines. In our view, the value of these journals is mostly related to their high-quality editorial content, with very few papers published in these multidisciplinary journals being directly related to our work (the discovery and validation of novel cancer biomarkers). Indeed, for our research purposes, we retrieve most papers by either searching PubMed, or through alerts, based on keywords. We assume that most scientists, young and old, follow similar strategies.

That may be enough to quote. It's an interesting piece.

No Free Lunch — What Price Plan S for Scientific Publishing?
I said I was staying away from PlanS (or Plan S), and I meant it, but this article (it reads like an editorial, but it's labeled an article) by Charlotte J. Haug, appearing March 21, 2019 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, strikes me as so wrong that I needed to mention it.

Here's the first paragraph:

> What would you do if you thought that something — say, a specific business model — stood in the way of scientific progress, and you had created an alternative model that you believed would be both less expensive and more beneficial for the advancement of science and society? You would probably test your new model to see if it worked. Open access publishing was such a new, aspirational idea in 2001.

Of course, OA publishing predates 2001 by more than a decade, but it's true that the term became established that year. After a couple more paragraphs, we get this—and it's where the wheels go off:

> But the open access movement developed not only because of the new opportunities provided by the Internet for dissemination of science, but also because of frustration over rising subscription costs — and profit margins — of traditional journals and publishing houses. Librarians felt caught in a bind because researchers who had published in journals, peer reviewed for them, and maybe even served on their editorial boards naturally wanted access to those journals in their institutional libraries. When subscription costs became too high, the blame was placed on the traditional business model of scientific publishing, which was seen as restricting access to science. New business models in which authors or funders paid for publication instead of readers or institutions paying subscription fees, and in which there was an open approach to copyright so that both reading and unrestricted reuse of the content were free, were necessary for the advancement of science. This model — now called "Gold Open Access" — would also drive costs down: "The significantly lower overall cost of dissemination is a reason to be confident that the goal is attainable and not merely preferable or utopian."[1]

It is simply not true that Gold Open Access means that authors or funders pay for publication (unless by "funders" you include agencies that underwrite journals rather than articles), and in 2019 I regard it as either uninformed or directly anti-OA to make such an equation.

Then Haug argues that the hypothesis has failed because the total cost of publishing (that is, the total *revenues* of publishers) continues to rise; once again equates gold OA with author-pays; and makes some questionable assertions as to why commercial journals *should* cost so much.

There is, as you'd expect, a wholehearted defense of journal impact factors—and a strong suggestion that only the highest-ranked journals are "interesting, relevant, and trustworthy." And this:

> A subscription-based model may also be the only model that can finance highly selective journals with comprehensive editorial processes and quality control. Given that such journals pay editors and statisticians who objectively assess the importance of a research question and the veracity of researchers' claims and employ essential production staff who ensure the accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of the information, author fees in such journals would be prohibitive for most researchers. The economics may change over time, of course, but that is the current reality.

And, a bit later, this:

> Free-to-the-reader means that somebody somewhere is paying — usually to exert an influence on the content and its presentation.

Wowser. Haug comes within an inch of saying that no-fee gold OA journals are inherently corrupt: that "somebody somewhere" is influencing the content. You know, like all those evil Latin American universities…

I'll stop there.

Ethics

Ethical Aspects of Open Access: A Windy Road

This workshop report from ALLEA (ALL European Academies) was published in December 2018. It's a 48-page PDF, and other than pointing at it I have a few notes.

The keynote by László Fésüs has problems. For example:

> Nevertheless, the growth of open access publishing has not exactly proceeded as anticipated or predicted. According to a 2017 analysis, only around 15% of journals publish all accepted articles as open access (Else, 2018) - financed by charging per-article fees to authors – and just less than half have adopted a 'hybrid' model of publishing, whereby they make papers immediately free to read for a fee.

The 15% claim would mean that there were nearly 69,000 refereed journals in 2017 *even if DOAJ included all OA journals*, or more than 200,000 if ROAD's figure is accurate. Worse, however, is the flat statement that gold OA journals are "financed by charging per-article fees to authors." We see the same false assumption stated later.

Consider these two paragraphs:

> In certain areas, we run the danger of linking the value of scientific results to the amount of APCs charged for open access publication. APCs cannot and should not be regarded as a quality measure for scientific work, as it creates false and artificial criteria for the assessment of scientific excellence.

> The emergence of bogus or predatory journals is a regrettable development to take advantage of the lack of clear guidelines in open access publishing, and it is yet another symptom of the pressure many researchers face concerning the 'publish-or-perish' mentality often applied to career advancement. According to research done by Shen & Björk in 2015, 8,000 predatory journals published around 400,000 articles.

I can state with some certainty that no legitimate OA advocate I'm aware of would equate the value of an article with the size of the fee—although I can imagine that some of the big commercial publishers might encourage such a nonsensical equivalence.

The second paragraph fails both because it assumes that OA publishing somehow lacks the same guidelines for refereeing and quality control that subscription journals have, and because it repeats uncritically the Shen/Björk numbers that are demonstrably wrong and have caused so

much damage (but since the authors have steadfastly refused to admit the possibility of error, what can I say?). The discussion of "predatory" journals goes on for several pages, and seems designed to raise alarms.

A much better consideration of questionable and unethical publishing appears later in the proceedings, beginning on page 26: "Questionable and Unethical Publishers: How to Spot Them and Enable Researchers to Avoid Being Trapped" by Lars Bjørnshauge, *Directory of Open Access Journals.*

LB, of course, knows the realities of gold OA cold:

> Gold open access is providing immediate access to the final published version in fully open access journals, be it with or without article publishing charges (APC), most articles are published with APCs, but the majority of open access Journals are operated without APCs.

He has this to say about "predatory" journals:

> Yet, the term predatory may itself not be entirely applicable, or at least not only to the journals that are commonly chastised with the term. If we assume that predation in the publishing industry is based on the interest to make a profit, then exploiting the divide between libraries (that typically pay for subscriptions) and scholars (who typically expect and demand access to those subscriptions) in order to make extraordinarily high profits could be considered predatory conduct. In the same way, continuing to raise prices at several times the rate of inflation, even as those increases cause direct injury to libraries by robbing them of budget flexibility or even make it impossible for them to continue providing resources, is very much driven by an interest to make a bigger profit. However, both of these practices are commonplace, even for publishing houses which are not generally considered predatorial. Though, blame should not fall on the publishing industry. Instead, academia should re-assess their thinking to outsource the dissemination of their intellectual production without service level agreements to a third-party, the publishers.
>
> As such, the term 'predatory publishers' should not be used…

And as to numbers:

> Indubitably, questionable publishers are a problem. The question remains, however, just how big of a problem they really are. Shen & Björk (2015) estimated that at the time of their investigation, around 8.000 questionable journals containing about 420,000 papers existed. A similar study conducted by Crawford (2017) came to the conclusion that many of those journals are actually empty. He came to the conclusion that there are 3275 (active) journals, with about 121,000 articles published in them.

LB covers a fair amount in the presentation and does it well—including a note about the apparent bias of traditional publishers against the Global South. It's a good presentation.

I won't comment on the rest. Worth a look, despite the seriously flawed keynote.

Data and Open Access Parasites: NEJM is at it again

This piece, by Lenny Teytelman on March 22, 2019 at *protocols.io*, is a rather nice fisking of "No Free Lunch…" discussed earlier. It may not be a thorough fisking: Teytelman gave himself a one-hour limit to "address as many of the misleading points as I can."

Teytelman is one of those who believes that fee-based gold OA *does* reduce overall costs; I no longer find that likely, but he makes a point.

I'll quote part of one fisking:

> Editorial: "The journals where articles get the most citations on average and the journals that get the most citations in absolute numbers are currently overwhelmingly subscription journals, not open access journals."
>
> Yes, that is true, but how does this say anything about open access, the citation advantage, and the impact of open access on accelerating science?
>
> Traditional journals like *NEJM* have famous brands and to protect their profits have refused to switch to open access. Of course the articles they publish continue to have higher citations. The real question is: if *PNAS* where to flip to full open access, would its articles be cited more or less? All the evidence we have says unambiguously that the open access articles would be cited more.
>
> Also, citations are just one and not the right way of asking whether subscriptions slow down science. From my recent blog post specifically on this issue, discussing the many ways in which open access accelerates science:

I refer you back to the article for his eleven "many ways"; I think he's wrong to minimize the problems of fee-based OA, but on the whole it's a good list. As is the piece as a whole: not flawless, but good.

Springer Nature are not a friend to Open Access

This post, by Jon Tennant on May 10, 2019 at *Green Tea and Velociraptors*, springs from a *Times Higher Education* piece about wonderful new things SpringerNature was going to do for OA; I haven't tagged that article because paywall/registration wall, but the piece discussed here links to a copy of it. Tennant's commentary is brief, to the point and (of course) CC BY, so here's the whole thing:

> Times Higher Education just published an article about how Springer Nature, one of the largest scholarly publishers, are helping the transition to Open Access. For those who do not want to login to read, here's a version without that. I am quoted again in this piece challenging the assertions they make, as I believe that Springer Nature are one of the

> worst scholarly publishers out there, second only to Elsevier. I have recently seen members of their senior staff publicly mocking OA advocates, which did not exactly endear them to me.
>
> In particular, I chose to comment on this piece as spokespeople from Springer Nature, have a history of making erroneous statements about the company in public*. In an era of fake news, this is not something I approve on, and this sort of disrespectful messaging has to be dealt with. Here are my full quotes that I sent to the journalist, Rachael Pells, below.
>
> "So, if we look at history, Springer Nature (SN) are the definition of bandwagon jumpers. Things like arXiv (1991), SciELO (1997) and PLOS (2000) were leaders on OA from around. SN acquired BMC (2008) and Frontiers (2013, via merger with Nature Publishing Group) to essentially neutralise them as a competitive threat. And also make it look like they cared about OA. That does not mean they lead the way. This is like Microsoft saying they lead the way on Open Source because they purchased GitHub. It is propaganda.
>
> In reality, Springer Nature have been dragged kicking and screaming into the OA space. They are part of a multi-billion dollar empire that has thrived based on a business model of preventing access to knowledge. OA was obviously a threat to that, so historically they fought hard against it until they could find a way to subvert it into a new revenue stream. Hence, their love of hybrid and high-APC OA. Even now, SN are launching new Nature-branded journals that are subscription only! That is not leadership. It is showing that they are using their brand strength to continue to pervert the scholarly communication process. Nature Communications costs $5000 (+VAT) for authors to publish their own work. No other industry operates this backwards. I refuse to believe that for an efficient, quality publishing system it costs more to publish a paper than it does to live in Bali for a year. (And I know how much this costs). It is daylight robbery, pure and simple, and the taxpayers and researchers are the ones who suffer. And again, statistically, if you look at the proportional figures, if SN are a "leader" in OA publishing, using the exact same numbers they are also still one of the largest barrier-based publishers out there."
>
> *Here, all of the statements that are made are demonstrably false based on how SN conduct their business in public (one example here).

Very little additional comment. SpringerNature (or Holtzbrinck, its parent and also owner of Frontiers) is definitely an OA leader in one respect: the average fee for articles in the company's OA publications is higher than for any other large OA publisher (more than twice as high as Elsevier)—and Holtzbrinck published more OA articles than the other five "$2K Club" (average of more than $2,000 fee per article) *combined*. (Elsevier, by the way, is *not* a member of the $2K Club; its average fee per article in 2018

was $958, largely because half of its gold OA articles are in no-fee journals. See *Gold Open Access 2013-2018: Subject and Publisher Profiles* for more info, or better yet buy the $7.50 paperback.)

Springer Open: ceased, now hybrid, OA identification challenges

We close this section with another piece on SpringerNature (or Springer Nature; I normally use the close form), this one by Heather Morrison on July 22, 2019 at *Sustaining the Knowledge Commons*. The abstract:

> SpringerNature, owner of Nature Publishing Group, Springer Open, and BioMedCentral, is the world's largest fully open access journal publisher as measured by number of journals. The purpose of this post is to underscore what appears to be a significant open access attrition rate at SpringerOpen (16% OA attrition in the past few years) and raise questions about challenges to finding and identifying these journals as open access. Ceased journals that were always open access are listed on the SpringerLink (mostly subscriptions) site, not the SpringerOpen website. Subscriptions articles are clearly marked as such; the OA status of an article is not stated on the journal home page. Information provided by a library about License Terms may not mention or resemble a CC license.
>
> Update July 23: the following analysis missed two ceased journals, Asia Pacific Journal on Computational Engineering and China Journal of Economic Research. Unlike the other titles, China Journal of Economic Research is not listed on SpringerLink, although a journal home page can be found through a Google Search. No content is available online and the journal's default license while publishing is not clear. Adding this title makes a small difference to the numbers and percentages. These titles are not included in the working dataset but will be included in the main file.

SpringerNature (including Frontiers) is the world's largest gold OA publisher by *any* measure I can think of, including article count and (especially) potential fee revenue: but, sure, also be journal count—at least if the count is limited to journals with articles. (Two entities have or had even more "journals," but with the total article count for *all* "journals" combined countable on one hand, I don't believe those entities should be considered publishers. See the November 2017 *Cites & Insights* for more details.)

Not much to say here; it's a relatively brief article.

Peer Review

Not necessarily directly related to OA, except that strength of peer review is sometimes cited as a reason that subscription journals are better and that the cost of peer review is one reason journals are so expensive.'

Let's stop pretending peer review works

A strong title for this essay by Julia Belluz and Steven Hoffman, which appeared December 7, 2015 at *Vox*. The first few paragraphs:

> In the early 1980s, there was growing concern about the quality of peer review at scientific journals. So two researchers at Cornell and the University of North Dakota decided to run a little experiment to test the process.
>
> The idea behind peer review is simple: It's supposed to weed out bad science. Peer reviewers read over promising studies that have been submitted to a journal to help gauge whether they should be published or need changes. Ideally, reviewers are experts in fields related to the studies in question. They add helpful comments, point out problems and holes, or simply reject flawed papers that shouldn't see the light of day.
>
> The two researchers, Douglas Peters and Stephen Ceci, wanted to test how reliable and unbiased this process actually is. To do this, they selected 12 papers that had been published about two to three years earlier in extremely selective American psychology journals.
>
> The researchers then altered the names and university affiliations on the journal manuscripts and resubmitted the papers to the same journal. In theory, these papers should have been high quality — they'd already made it into these prestigious publications. If the process worked well, the studies that were published the first time would be approved for publication again the second time around.
>
> What Peters and Ceci found was surprising. Nearly 90 percent of the peer reviewers who looked at the resubmitted articles recommended *against* publication this time. In many cases, they said the articles had "serious methodological flaws."
>
> This raised a number of disquieting possibilities. Were these, in fact, seriously flawed papers that got accepted and published? Can bad papers squeak through depending on who reviews them? Did some papers get in because of the prestige of their authors or affiliations? At the very least, the experiment suggested the peer review process was unnervingly inconsistent.
>
> The finding, though published more than 30 years ago, is still relevant. Since then, other researchers have been uncovering more and more problems with the peer review process, raising the question of why scientists bother with it in the first place.

The essay goes on to suggest that peer review frequently misses big problems with statistics (I can sympathize with that claim!), that reviewers may be rushed and unqualified (and, of course, work for free), and that editors of some major journals doubt the efficacy of peer review:

> Richard Smith, the former editor of the *BMJ*, summed up: "We have little or no evidence that peer review 'works,' but we have lots of evidence of its downside." Another former editor of the *Lancet*, Robbie Fox, used to joke that his journal "had a system of throwing a pile of papers down the stairs and publishing those that reached the bottom." Not exactly reassuring comments from the editors of the world's leading medical journals.

They quote a *NEJM* editor saying that he doesn't rely on peer review all that much (in this case because "highly qualified editors" go over the articles—but there are also known cases of editors publishing articles *in spite of* negative peer reviews). They don't much care for post-publication peer review as a replacement, but the argument boils down to "not proven to be better."

The best these authors can say is that peer review "seems to work at least a little better than chance"—and about all they seem ready to suggest is this:

> We need to adjust our expectations about what peer review does. Right now, many people think peer review means, "This paper is great and trustworthy!" In reality, it should mean something like, "A few scientists have looked at this paper and didn't find anything wrong with it, but that doesn't mean you should take it as gospel. Only time will tell."
>
> Insiders like journal editors have long known that the system is flawed. It's time the public embraced that, too, and supported ways to make it better.

In the end, there's not much here.

[The next tagged piece could be interesting, but after past experience I'm no longer willing to trust or discuss the author's methodology and scholarship.]

Pranking the Academy

This "Library Babel Fish" column by Barbara Fister in the September 22, 2017 *Inside Higher Ed* is about one particular situation (discussed, and with appropriate links, in the first paragraph—briefly, a controversial article was apparently rejected by peer reviewers and the editorial board but accepted and published by the editor, leading much of the editorial board to resign) but really about broader issues—and, as always with Fister, well worth reading even a couple of years later.

> What is peer review, anyway? It's a vetting system that's far from perfect. The first article I ever submitted to a scholarly journal was rejected after a long delay and in rather uncharitable language. As a lesson in how peer review works, I tell students how I reread it, decided it might have merit after all, submitted it elsewhere, and it ended up on a list of the twenty best of the year (in an admittedly small subfield - but still it was

> sweet). I also share examples of reviews that made me wince and go back to the drawing board that in the end improved my work immeasurably. I also tell them about a couple of pieces I wrote that I decided not to revise or resubmit after reviewers gave me good and honest feedback. Sometimes we take a look at Retraction Watch or discuss how influential a discredited study can be. We talk about times the value of peer review has been challenged, as with a small study Peters and Ceci published in 1982 in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* along with dozens of responses, or the famous Sokal hoax.
>
> All that to complicate the misimpression that students often get that "peer review" means is some kind of guarantee of quality, because so often they hear "make sure your sources come from peer-reviewed journals" and don't hear "oh, by the way, peer-reviewed journals publish lots of rubbish, so be careful out there." Sorting out the rubbish is not something you can do by checking a box in a database. It's something that takes careful reading and lots of background knowledge, which is why I wonder whether asking undergraduates taking lower division courses should be asked to find and use peer reviewed research in training-wheels "research papers" makes any sense at all.

Again, there's more (and Fister isn't actually proposing dropping peer review). Worth a read.

When to trust (and not to trust) peer reviewed science

I found this essay, by Merlin Crossley on July 12, 2018 at *The Conversation*, a bit troubling. For example:

> To know what science you should *really* trust you need to weigh the subtle indicators that scientists consider…
>
> The standing of the journal in which a paper is published is the first thing.
>
> For every scientific field, broad journals (like Nature, Science and Proceedings of the National Academy of Science) and many more specialist journals (like the Journal of Biological Chemistry) are available. But it is important to recognise that hierarchies exist.
>
> Some journals are considered more prestigious, or frankly, better than others. The "impact factor" (which reflects how many citations papers in the journal attract) is one simple, if controversial measure, of the importance of a journal.
>
> In practice every researcher carries a mental list of the top relevant journals in her or his head. When choosing where to publish, each scientist makes their own judgement on how interesting and how reliable their new results are.

> If authors aim too high with their target journal, then the editor will probably reject the paper at once on the basis of "interest" (before even considering scientific quality).
>
> If an author aims too low, then they could be selling themselves short – this could represent a missed opportunity for a trophy paper in a top journal that everyone would recognise as significant (if only because of where it was published).

I get that the Big Journals may have papers that are more *interesting*; not sure that's the same thing as "reliable" or "better," but the author certainly seems to equate prestige with quality.

And this:

> Neither editors nor authors like to get things wrong. They are weighing up the pressure to break a story with a big headline against the fear of making a mistake. A mistake in this context means publishing a result that becomes quickly embroiled in controversy.
>
> To safeguard against that, three or four peer reviewers (experienced experts in the field) are appointed by the editor to help.

So journals *normally* assign three or four expert peer reviewers for each paper? If so, I've been misinformed. And, once again, the author essentially says that "top" journals do better peer review, while reviewers for lesser journals (and yes, the JIF is the basis for top and lesser) may be more forgiving.

The rest of the essay is generally better, but I found the opening section, which essentially seems to say that the current hierarchy is The Way Things Should Be, unconvincing at best.

The State of The Art in Peer Review

This fairly lengthy article (21 pages plus a five-page reference list) by Jonathan Tennant was posted to SocArXiv on May 28, 2018 and last edited on August 26, 2018 at this writing.

Here's the abstract:

> Scholarly communication is in a perpetual state of disruption. Within this, peer review of research articles remains an essential part of the formal publication process, distinguishing it from virtually all other modes of communication. In the last several years, there has been an explosive wave of innovation in peer review research, platforms, discussions, tools, and services. This is largely coupled with the ongoing and parallel evolution of scholarly communication as it adapts to rapidly changing environments, within what is widely considered as the 'open research' or 'open science' movement. Here, we summarise the current ebb and flow around changes to peer review and consider its role in a modern digital research and communications infrastructure and discuss why uptake of new models of peer review appears to have been so low compared to what is often viewed as the 'traditional'

> method of peer review. Finally, we offer some insight into the potential futures of scholarly peer review and consider what impacts this might have on the broader scholarly research ecosystem.

I'm afraid I lack the energy to comment on the whole thing. Almost certainly worth reading.

Myths and Media

A few items that may not be very well related to each other.

Open Access at the Movies

This reportage, by Lindsay McKenzie on September 10, 2018 at *Inside Higher Ed*, is about the movie *Paywall: The Business of Scholarship*—and I found the report damaged by a bit too much TwoSidesism, starting with the tease:

> A new documentary film taking aim at for-profit publishers is about to be screened at universities around the world, but will it further the goals of the open-access movement?

Oddly enough, nothing in the article deals with that issue.

> Discussion of these questions in the film is undoubtedly one-sided. Of around 70 people featured in the film, just a handful work for publishers with subscription journals such as Springer-Nature or the American Association for the Advancement of Science -- and they don't get much screen time. There is also no representative from Elsevier, despite the publisher being the focus of much criticism in the film. This was not for lack of trying, said Schmitt. "I offered Elsevier a five-minute section of the film that they could have full creative control over," he said. "They turned me down."

Other than quotes from the film itself, McKenzie quotes three people—and the quotes are telling. The first:

> Nonacademics watching the film might walk away from it believing that open access is a straightforward solution to knowledge being locked behind paywalls. But it isn't, says John Warren, director of George Washington University's publishing master's program, who was at the premiere.
>
> "Open access is a good goal, I think we can all agree on that," he said. But open-access publishing doesn't happen for free and shifts costs from the reader to the author -- a point that Warren feels was not adequately addressed in the film. Open-access articles are free to read because someone (either the author, their institution or a research funder) has paid for it to be free. Funding to publish in open-access journals is

> often limited. Researchers looking to gain tenure may also be incentivized to publish in high-impact subscription journals, and not lower-impact open-access ones.

That may not be a classic "I LOVE open access, but…" comment, but it comes close, including the classic "gold OA means author-side fees" falsehood.

John Wilbanks is also quoted as saying the film's not neutral, but that's a good thing. And then there's "a spokesperson for the society of Association of American Publishers" saying:

> "In addition to financing and managing the peer-review process, publishers make significant investments in technology, distribution platforms, data analytics and other cutting-edge innovations that enable doctors, scientists, researchers and educators to get the greatest possible value from research," the spokesperson said. The spokesperson added that academics have "many choices on how to make their research publicly available," and for many of them "publishers are a critical partner."

It's not a terrible article, but it could be a lot better. (The link for the movie's title does lead you to the movie.) I'm a bit surprised that there are only two comments—and pleased that the first of the two points out problems in the article.

Open access — the movie

This article by Richard Poynder appeared September 4, 2018 in *Nature*. The tease is almost neutral:

> Richard Poynder views a documentary on the tug of war over paywalls in scholarly publishing.

But consider the first two paragraphs:

> Billed as a documentary, *Paywall* would be more accurately described as an advocacy film. Its intention seems to be to persuade viewers that the paywalls that restrict access to journal content online are an unnecessary hangover from the print era, and now serve only to perpetuate the excessive profits that legacy publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley and Springer Nature make from the public purse.
>
> The film makes a convincing case that the paywall system creates problems — and that universal open access (OA) to scholarly articles would be better for society. But it fails to adequately explore the thorny challenges that arise with OA publishing. These include the fact that the publishers castigated by the film would continue to dominate scholarly communication in an OA world; the increasingly expensive 'pay-to-publish' model, which substitutes inequities in access for inequities in affording publication; and the rise of predatory publishing. And although *Paywall* acknowledges that current reward systems have slowed

> the progress of OA publishing, it does not address the puzzling question of why academics have proved so reluctant to make copies of their published papers freely available in their institutional repositories.

Consider the sentence beginning "These include." I refuse to accept that Poynder is not aware that most gold OA journals are not "pay to publish," and "the fact that" is, of course, an assertion; there's *nothing* that requires that Elsevier and SpringerNature and friends will always dominate scholarly publishing.

There's a whole paragraph later on that also wholly ignores the existence of no-fee gold OA, and a claim that many OA papers don't have a license that is justified by an article that chose to expand the OA universe by making up new colors and calling them OA.

Sad.

Ten myths around open scholarly publishing

This article, by Jonathan P. Tennant, Harry Crane, Tom Crick, Jacinto Davila, Asura Enkhbayar, Johanna Havemann, Bianca Kramer, Ryan Martin, Paola Masuzzo, Andy Nobes, Curt Rice, Bárbara S. Rivera-López, Tony Ross-Hellauer, Susanne Sattler, Paul Thacker and Marc Vanholsbeeck, appeared as a *PeerJ Preprint* on March 11, 2019—and as far as I can tell (without doing a full parallel reading), it is "version zero" of the article discussed below. I'm including this in case you want to read it, but I really only discuss the published version. Note that this is not *at all* the same as a *Bookseller* list of ten "myths" about OA; I'll get to that later, even though it appeared earlier.

Ten Hot Topics around Scholarly Publishing

This article—by the authors listed under "Ten myths," I believe—appeared May 13, 2019 in *publications* (a gold OA journal from MDPI). The abstract:

> The changing world of scholarly communication and the emerging new wave of 'Open Science' or 'Open Research' has brought to light a number of controversial and hotly debated topics. Evidence-based rational debate is regularly drowned out by misinformed or exaggerated rhetoric, which does not benefit the evolving system of scholarly communication. This article aims to provide a baseline evidence framework for ten of the most contested topics, in order to help frame and move forward discussions, practices, and policies. We address issues around preprints and scooping, the practice of copyright transfer, the function of peer review, predatory publishers, and the legitimacy of 'global' databases. These arguments and data will be a powerful tool against misinformation across wider academic research, policy and practice, and will inform changes within the rapidly evolving scholarly publishing system.

This introductory paragraph is also worth quoting in full (I'm *not* going to quote the whole article, which I could, of course, do since it's CC BY: it's a bit over 14,000 words, or more than this entire roundup to this point):

> Here, we address ten key topics which are vigorously debated, but pervasive misunderstandings often derail, undercut, or distort discussions[1]. We aim to develop a base level of common understanding concerning core issues. This can be leveraged to advance discussions on the current state and best practices for academic publishing. We summarize the most up-to-date empirical research, and provide critical commentary, while acknowledging cases where further discussion is still needed. Numerous "hot topics" were identified through a discussion on Twitter[2] and then distilled into ten by the authors of this article and presented in no particular order of importance. These issues overlap, and some are closely related (e.g., those on peer review). The discussion has been constructed in this way to emphasize and focus on precise issues that need addressing. We, the authors, come from a range of backgrounds, as an international group with a variety of experiences in scholarly communication (e.g., publishing, policy, journalism, multiple research disciplines, editorial and peer review, technology, advocacy). Finally, we are writing in our personal capacities.

Here are the hot topics, each followed with a discussion:

> Topic 1: Will preprints get your research 'scooped'?
>
> Topic 2: Do the Journal Impact Factor and journal brand measure the quality of authors and their research?
>
> Topic 3: Does approval by peer review prove that you can trust a research paper, its data and the reported conclusions?
>
> Topic 4: Will the quality of the scientific literature suffer without journal-imposed peer review?
>
> Topic 5: Is Open Access responsible for creating predatory publishers?
>
> Topic 6: Is copyright transfer required to publish and protect authors?
>
> Topic 7: Does gold Open Access have to cost a lot of money for authors, and is it synonymous with the APC business model?
>
> Topic 8: Are embargo periods on 'green' OA needed to sustain publishers?
>
> Topic 9: Are Web of Science and Scopus global platforms of knowledge?
>
> Topic 10: Do publishers add value to the scholarly communication process?

There's so much here, in this heavily-footnoted (60 notes, 160 references) article, that I'm loath to quote much of anything—and, of course, if I did, I'd focus on topics 5 and 7. (Incidentally, the discussion of Topic 10 is *not* a simplistic "No.")

I could quibble with pieces of this (and I continue to dislike the proliferation of colors and extending the term "open access" to include "the publisher's letting you read, but probably not download, this *now*, but

maybe not tomorrow"). But never mind: a big effort and well worth downloading and reading.

Myths of Open Access

This piece by Stephen Lotinga appeared March 12, 2019 in *The Bookseller*—and maybe the first "myth" is enough to give you the tone of the piece:

> **01 Publishers are anti-Open Access.** Publishers are all pro-Open Access. And UK academic publishers have been at the forefront of the global movement to open up access to research.

As they might say in the UK, "pull the other one." Oh, and this:

> **05 The UK has so far failed in its approach to Open Access.** It has done better than any other country on earth. We should be looking closely at what has worked, as well as the cause of any frustrations.

Whether this is true depends on your definition of "better." Yes, the UK had *more* OA articles in 2018 (in *DOAJ*-listed journals) than any other country. It also had the highest average fee per article of *any* country and the second lowest percentage of no-fee articles of any country publishing at least 1,000 gold OA articles (6%; Switzerland was lowest, with 5%; the next lowest no-fee percentage was the US at 19%, while many other large OA countries had more than 50% no-fee articles). So it's true that the UK was most successful at getting large sums of money for its OA efforts!

The article (or blog post?) isn't all bad, but…

Peter Suber: The largest obstacles to open access are unfamiliarity and misunderstanding of open access itself

This interview of Peter Suber by Santosh C. Hulagabali appeared June 29, 2019 at *Open Interview*, and it's a good way to close this section. As you might expect, Suber knows his stuff and says it well. A few passages:

> I've long argued that the largest obstacles to OA are unfamiliarity and misunderstanding, and I still believe it. The number of misunderstandings is large, and I can't list them all here. But here are a few of the most harmful and widespread: that all or most OA is gold OA; that all or most OA journals charge APCs; that all or most APCs are paid by authors out of pocket; that all or most OA journals are low in quality, if not predatory; that green OA must be embargoed; that green OA cannot use open licenses like CC-BY; and that permission for green OA must come from publishers rather than authors and institutions under rights-retention policies.
>
> Most authors don't understand the range of their OA options. If a well-known option, like publishing in a fee-based OA journal, won't work for them, too many conclude prematurely that they can't make their work OA at all. Similarly, most publishers don't understand the range

of their OA options. If a well-known option, like flipping to fee-based OA, won't work for them, too many conclude prematurely that they can't make a successful flip to OA at all.

Regarding "predatory" publishing:

Scam OA journals and publishers do exist, and they give OA a bad name. The discussion of them is necessary and justified, but it's out of proportion to their actual numbers, which also tends to give OA a bad name. It's as if the widespread discussion of doping in sports tended to inflate most estimates of how many athletes are guilty.

I want to warn authors and readers against scam journals. For this purpose, it helps to have a good blacklist of the dishonest journals or a whitelist of the honest ones. There's some debate about which approach is best. But for present purposes, it's less important to choose between them than to make a start in helping scholars steer clear. It's also less important to have lists of any kind, which are subject to rigidity and artificial line-drawing, than criteria that researchers can apply for themselves. In this spirit, the acid test is for a would-be author to read a handful of actual articles in a particular journal.

Suppose you're considering a certain OA journal in your field. You've never heard of it and wonder about its quality. But you're an expert in the topic or field. What do *you* make of the articles the journal has actually published? Would you be proud or embarrassed to be associated with them? Scam journals fail this test quickly. You needn't fear that the test would waste your time. If the articles fall embarrassingly below your own standard, you'll know that right away. If they don't, you'll learn a bit more about your topic or field from your test reading.

I agree with the many who've argued that open peer review is a promising approach. The problem is not that traditional, closed peer review is weak or dishonest, and makes a journal predatory. On the contrary, it's one of the solid ways to make a journal non-predatory. The problem is that it's hard to tell from the outside whether a journal is performing closed peer review at all, or at what level of quality and rigour. Journals with open peer review don't have that problem. They show exactly how they perform peer review. They can't claim to perform peer review without actually doing it. Hence, even apart from the other reasons to consider open review, it's a good tactic for new journals that worry that they might be put under the cloud of suspicion.

Similarly, preprints are immune to this problem. They're not peer-reviewed. There's no uncertainty on that point, and no false pretense. If you circulate your new work as a preprint, you can make a final journal decision later. Meantime, you can elicit feedback to make your work stronger, and interest a cadre of colleagues who care more for the work itself than the journal in which it might appear.

> Finally, no-fee OA journals are also immune to the problem. The only motive for launching a scam journal is to collect publication fees – or subscription fees in the case of scam subscription journals. Not all fee-based OA journals are predatory, and not by a long shot. Most are entirely honest. But all predatory OA journals are fee-based.
>
> As I just mentioned, not all scam journals are OA. Some are subscription-based. We shouldn't forget Elsevier's nine scam journals funded by pharmaceutical companies to puff their products. Elsevier didn't stop or apologize until it was caught, and we can never know about examples we haven't yet detected.

There is, of course, much more, all of it worth reading.

Miscellany

Items that didn't fit neatly elsewhere.

Discipline-specific open access publishing practices and barriers to change: an evidence-based review

This article, by Anna Severin, Matthias Egger, Martin Paul Eve and Daniel Hürlimann, first appeared at *F1000Research* on December 11, 2018. The abstract:

> **Background:** Many of the discussions surrounding Open Access (OA) revolve around how it affects publishing practices across different academic disciplines. It was a long-held view that it would be only a matter of time for all disciplines to fully and relatively homogeneously implement OA. Recent large-scale bibliometric studies show however that the uptake of OA differs substantially across disciplines. This study investigates the underlying mechanisms that cause disciplines to vary in their OA publishing practices. We aimed to answer two questions: First, how do different disciplines adopt and shape OA publishing practices? Second, what discipline-specific barriers to and potentials for OA can be identified?
>
> **Methods:** In a first step, we identified and synthesized relevant bibliometric studies that assessed OA prevalence and publishing patterns across disciplines. In a second step, and adopting a social shaping of technology perspective, we studied evidence on the socio-technical forces that shape OA publishing practices. We examined a variety of data sources, including, but not limited to, publisher policies and guidelines, OA mandates and policies and author surveys.
>
> **Results:** Over the last three decades, scholarly publishing has experienced a shift from "closed" access to OA as the proportion of scholarly literature that is openly accessible has increased continuously. The shift towards OA is however uneven across disciplines in two respects: first,

> the growth of OA has been uneven across disciplines, which manifests itself in varying OA prevalence levels. Second, disciplines use different OA publishing channels to make research outputs OA.
>
> **Conclusions:** We conclude that historically grown publishing practices differ in terms of their compatibility with OA, which is the reason why OA can be assumed to be a natural continuation of publishing cultures in some disciplines, whereas in other disciplines, the implementation of OA faces major barriers and would require a change of research culture.

A bit tangential to a discussion of the article, but I *love* the way *F1000Research* handles reviews, and chose to read the reviews first. (Thanks, Michael Laakso, for pointing out the omission of *GOAJ3* and your kind words, which follow:)

> If "top-down" studies, focusing on only one type of OA mechanism, were excluded this study was perhaps not included on such grounds but I think it is doing the study a disservice – there is no better source that describes the disciplinary differences longitudinally across disciplines, including information about article processing charges, than that e-book and associated dataset. If not integrated into the meta-analysis it should at least be used in the other parts of the manuscript to frame the study and its results.

Note that this is an excerpt from reviewer2, Laakso, not from the article, which at this writing continues to ignore any of my work. Laakso also points out other sources that might usefully have been included.

This is another 14,000-word article (including 96 references), and I won't attempt to go through it in any detail. I think it's an interesting source, but could probably pick lots of nits. For example:

> The foundation for OA was laid in high-energy physics when Paul Ginsparg established the arXiv open repository for preprints.

The first open access journals appeared at least a year before arXiv was founded, so that sentence is only right if it means "the foundation for OA in high-energy physics." But never mind…

This is another paper that includes "you can maybe read the article now, but probably not download it, and the publisher's largesse may disappear at any time" as another color of open access, which is a great way to inflate OA counts but, I believe, a mistake. (The color is "bronze," for what it's worth.)

If I'm doubtful as to some numbers, I suppose I shouldn't cherry-pick one finding I believe is true and important:

> Hybrid OA generally is of little importance for scholarly publishing, with 1% or less of all scholarly outputs being published as articles free under an open license in subscription journals.

On the other hand, I *really* question this finding:

> In the humanities and law, scholars make research outputs openly accessible predominantly through publication of articles in Hybrid OA journals, followed by Green OA, Bronze OA and Gold OA.

I count at least 62,000 gold OA articles in 2018 in the humanities and law (88,000 if you include education); I find it *extremely* improbable that there were more than 62,000 "hybrid OA" articles.

Of course, since this is largely a metaanalysis, arguing with the numbers means arguing with the studies on which it is based, which I suspect I would cheerfully do. So I'd say this may be worth reading, but skeptically—which is a reasonable way to approach most OA studies (including my own).

Large Scale Publisher Survey reveals Global Trends in Open Access Publishing

This post by Dom Mitchell appeared January 9, 2019 in the *DOAJ Blog*. It's based on a summer 2018 survey distributed by DOAJ to 6,000+ account holders, yielding 1,065 responses. Since it's short and, I believe, really interesting, I'm quoting the entire body:

> **Type of publishing organisation:** *Out of survey respondents, the top 5 most common types of publishing organisation in DOAJ are: University Department or Press, Non-commercial Publisher, Library publisher, Research centre and Society publisher.* (It should be noted however that in terms of pure output, the top ten organisations in DOAJ account for just over a third of the 3.6 million articles indexed. Eight of the top ten organisations are commercial publishers.)
>
> **Geographical spread:** *The geographical spread between 2013 and 2018 remains relatively unchanged apart from two notable exceptions.* Open access in Indonesia has become de rigueur. In 2013, DOAJ received 9 survey responses from Indonesia; in 2018 that jumped to 155, the most responses from any one country in the 2018 Survey. Conversely, responses from India fell from 101 in 2013 to just 11 in 2018. (The number of Indian journals in DOAJ has fallen from 643 in 2013 to 254 in 2018.) The Top 5 countries providing responses in 2018 were Indonesia, Brazil, Spain, Romania and USA; in 2013 it was Brazil, Spain, India, Romania and Italy.
>
> **DOIs for articles:** While the DOI is an internationally recognised publishing technology, for some the financial and technical barrier to use of DOIs is a problem. In 2013, only 35% of respondents used DOIs; in 2018 this has jumped to 73%*. However, when publishers were asked why they did not use DOIs the 5 most common words given in responses are: implementing, cost, funding, financial, paying. * see note

Article metadata: More publishers are supplying metadata to DOAJ than ever before; even more would if the process was easier and yet, for many article metadata is still a mystery. The number of respondents providing article metadata to DOAJ has increased from 55% in 2013 to 84% in 2018. When asked which format of metadata publishers would like to supply to DOAJ, 46% said they preferred CrossRef, while 8% said JATS. However, 42% of all 2018 respondents said that they didn't understand what a metadata format was so there is much work to do here!

Benefits of being indexed in DOAJ: Our respondents said that the top 3 benefits of being indexed in DOAJ in 2018 are:

1. Certification that our journal(s) are quality publications
2. Increased readership
3. Increased scientific impact

In 2013, it was:

1. Increased visibility of content
2. Certification of the journals
3. Prestige

74% of respondents said that submissions had definitely or maybe increased since being indexed in DOAJ while over 70% thought that traffic had increased to their sites.

Predatory publishing: *Predatory publishing really isn't considered to be a big deal for DOAJ publishing community*. 62% of respondents said that they didn't have to deal with competition from predatory publishers or journals. There was no equivalent question in 2013.

Research Assessment: "*It's where you publish that counts*." 86% of respondents said that in their countries researchers are evaluated on where they publish rather than what they publish. There was no equivalent question in 2013.

Building on these findings the DOAJ team will continue to adapt and develop its systems, in accordance with its strategy, to ensure that the DOAJ platform meets user needs, particularly those needs of the global publishing community. After all the platform consists entirely of journal and article metadata, all of which (bar one exception) is provided by the publishers themselves.

The comments are useful. I find this sad but not at all surprising: "86% of respondents said that in their countries researchers are evaluated on where they publish rather than what they publish."

Editorial Mutiny at Elsevier Journal

This story by Lindsay McKenzie appeared January 14, 2019 in *Inside Higher Ed*. It's another case of the editorial board of an Elsevier journal

resigning and starting up a competitive OA journal. The Elsevier journal: *Journal of Informetrics*. The new journal: *Quantitative Science Studies*.

The story calls this a case of "flipping" journals; I thought "flipping" meant changing *the journal* to OA (or the reverse, unfortunately), but what do I know? I do know this: the new journal isn't no-fee:

> *QSS* is being launched with some financial support from the MIT Libraries. In order to make all articles open access, the journal will charge an article-processing charge of $600 for ISSI members and $800 for nonmembers -- significantly less than the $1,800 Elsevier charged. For researchers without the ability to pay to have their articles be open access, their fees will be covered for three years by the German National Library of Science and Technology (TIB).

Five Reasons Why Publishing Science for Profit Will Endure

I'm certainly not recommending this Simba Information white paper, which is copyright 2018 and which I tagged on February 1, 2019; it's a celebration of the presumed unsinkability of Elsevier and Friends, and if you know Simba Information it's not at all surprising.

I mean, in the first two paragraphs it says that books and films are "mere shadows of what they once were," and then offers this brief "history" of OA:

> Open access first took the form of repositories that archived the non-published drafts of research papers in a given field or at a university. That was followed by the emergence of open access journals that would collect a fee and make the article available online free to all.

That's at least mostly wrong, especially since the earliest OA journals were consistently no-fee. (I suspect the earliest OA journals also predate most if not all repositories, but I could be wrong about that.)

But that's just an introduction to the real cheerleading. The section headings:

> Big Deals Are Actually a Good Deal
>
> Prestige Matters
>
> Boycotts Are Largely Symbolic
>
> Preprint Archiving is Not Universal
>
> Publishing Quality Science is Difficult and Expensive

Read at your own risk. Simba has a white paper on OA journal publishing; I'm not likely to spend $2,500 to read it.

Open Access in Palæontology

I'm pointing to this paper, by Jonathan P. Tennant and Dean R. Lomax and published May 2, 2019 at *Palaeontologia Electronuca*, as an interesting example of a detailed analysis of the state of OA in one specific field.

The abstract:

> Open Access (OA) describes the free, unrestricted access to and re-use of published research articles. Recently, the announcement of 'Plan S' has catalysed a new wave of interest, debate, and practice surrounding OA. Here, we provide a simple overview of the 'OA status' of palaeontology journals within this rapidly shifting landscape. In particular, we focus on aspects such as whether or not there are author-facing charges for Open Access, what embargo periods or restrictions on 'self-archiving' policies are in place, and whether or not the sharing of preprints is permitted. The majority of journals have self-archiving policies that allow authors to share their peer reviewed work via 'green OA' without charge. There is a clear relationship between 'journal impact' and higher charges levied for OA. The most expensive journals are typically published by the large, commercial, publishing houses, rather than the palaeontology community themselves. However, there are a number of article processing charge (APC)-free (diamond) OA journals that can also be considered to be of moderate impact. Until the palaeontology community makes the decision to move away from journal-based evaluation criteria (e.g., the impact factor), it is likely that such high costs will continue to impose financial inequities upon the research community. However, until such culture change occurs, palaeontologists could more widely embrace legal self-archiving as an equitable and sustainable way to progress communication of their research.

It seems to be a carefully-done study and useful as an example. No direct comments.

How badly do authors want open access? What priorities do authors really have? Bringing data to the discussion

I'm closing with this piece by Brian McGill, appearing July 17, 2019 at *Dynamic Ecology*. But not because it's a magnificent close to an odd assortment—it's not.

The "data" in question is an Ithaka SR poll of about 11,000 faculty members at U.S. four-year colleges and universities. More specifically, it's based on one figure within the report on that poll: responses to the question "When it comes to influencing your decisions about journals in which to publish an article of yours, how important to you is each of the following characteristics of an academic journal?"

The lead in McGill's post is this:

> If you believe the press, scientists are desperate to publish open access. Is this really true?

I'm astonished to read this, as my belief is that most scholars are basically indifferent to OA: otherwise, it would be far more widespread. And, of course, the relevant answer isn't one of the highest-ranking results.

Then I hit these paragraphs:

> But what do we make of the fact that free to publish came in 4th with ~70% while free to read (open access) came in 8th with about 35%. First it seems likely that there is some magical thinking going on. At least some fraction of respondents (70%+35%>100%) want their papers to be free to publish AND free to read. Well who wouldn't! The problem is that this is entirely unrealistic. Every time I hear somebody talk about "platinum OA" (where some 3rd party pays the OA publishing charges) I wonder who exactly this magical 3rd party is and where they get their money from.
>
> But this data also provides a pretty direct answer to how badly authors want OA. Twice as many authors consider free to publish as a top priority as do those who consider free to read as a top priority. There may be an overlapping group who is engaging in magical thinking. But likely the majority of both those groups are probably principled rational people who would like to see their model prevail. But there is a clear preponderance who value free to publish over free to read.

In other words, we're dealing with willful ignorance here: "I don't believe no-fee gold OA exists, and if you do you're engaging in magical thinking."

At which point, frankly, I lost interest in doing a thoughtful critique of the article. Or of the long set of comments. I do notice commenters saying OA doesn't matter because non-scientists don't read scientific papers anyway, such as this one:

> Anyone have any links to data on how many people who aren't academics or undergrad/grad students read the median open access paper, as compared to otherwise-similar non-open-access papers? I bet the difference is approximately zero, even in fields that many non-academics care a lot about, like research on cancer or diabetes.

And, to be sure, there are responses to the contrary.

Closing Note

So 32 of the original 49 or 60+ survived. That's not bad.

Masthead

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large, Volume 19, Number 4, Whole # 222, ISSN 1534-0937, a periodical of libraries, policy, technology and media, is written and produced by Walt Crawford.

Comments should be sent to waltcrawford@gmail.com.

URL: citesandinsights.info/civ19i4.pdf