

Cites & Insights

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The Front

Doing the Numbers

I usually do a piece on the year's readership numbers for *Cites & Insights*, although I'm increasingly uncertain what the numbers actually mean. That may be truer than ever at this point, since I'm specifically asking those who read *C&I* in HTML form to pay a little for the privilege. (How little? The numbers show 132,761 pageviews for HTML essays during 2012—that is, only the essays, not any of the other HTML pages. If 0.1% of those pageviews—one out of every thousand—turned into \$10 contributions it would cover the challenge.)

I am also bemused by the ongoing story of LIBRARY 2.0 AND "LIBRARY 2.0"—where I moved the PDFs to other locations and substituted a one-page blurb for the low-priced *Library 2.0: A Cites & Insights Reader*, but included on that page the URLs for the moved locations. During 2012, the stub version of issue 6.2 was downloaded 1,844 times—but only 36 of those 1,844 downloads resulted in a download of the moved issue, the one with actual content. Similarly, although perhaps less extreme, the two 2011 updates were viewed 652 and 592 times respectively (and the issues containing them were downloaded 426 and 337 times), but the *real* essays were viewed 105 and 99 times respectively. Oh, and the Reader? Two copies sold in 2012.

So it's possible that these numbers have little to do with reality—that some odd mélange of spiders and other software are frantically viewing and downloading, and only a few hundred (or fewer?) actual human beings actually read this stuff. I hope the truth is somewhere in between, but I'm far from certain.

Overall Numbers

[Cites & Insights](#) (all URLs in that domain) was visited by 26,784 IP addresses in 2012. I know there are quite a few spiders, but surely nowhere near 26,784! Those IP addresses came from 106 countries and other top

level domains. In all, there were 336,318 pageviews (which includes online PDF reading and support pages) in 137,609 sessions. All of those numbers are up slightly from 2011 (about 5% for sessions, 2% for pageviews and 20% for IP addresses).

PDF: Full issues

There were 68,877 PDF downloads in all, down about 11% from 2011. Of those, 3,317 (roughly 5%) were single-column 6x9 PDFs—but for the issues that *have* single-column versions, the percentages range from 12% to 42%, with most issues in the 30 to 33% range. Basically, roughly a third of whole-issue readers appear to prefer the single-column version.

The total since *C&I* moved to LISHost is 691,986 PDF downloads—just under 700,000.

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HTML essays

As already noted, HTML essays were viewed 132,761 times in 2012, making the new total (since HTML essays were introduced) 1,121,699. Is it actually the case that people have seen *C&I* in HTML form over a million times? Probably not. (I didn't separate out HTML essay totals last year, so can't offer a comparison.)

Most Popular Issues

For a change, I'll note both the most popular *during* 2012 and the most popular overall.

For 2012, including both one-column and traditional PDF forms, seven issues had more than 1,000 downloads and nine more had more than 700. Here's the list, in descending order:

civ6i2.pdf – the most puzzling, since that's only a stub issue

civ12i4.pdf – Public Library Closures 1989-2009, Futurism, Social Networks 3

civ12i7.pdf – The Google Books Settlement (Three Years Later)

civ12i3.pdf – Public Library Closures (recent), Social Networks 2

civ12i2.pdf – Social Networks 1 and other stuff

civ4i13.pdf – Really? A mix of short essays

civ9i4.pdf – The Google Books Settlement

civ10i11.pdf – Blogging Groups and Ethics, Legends of Horror

civ9i5.pdf – Thinking about Blogging, Writing about Reading, OA

civ12i5.pdf – Copyright: Fair Use Part 1, Forecasts

civ12i6.pdf – Copyright: Fair Use Part 2, Give Us a Dollar Case Study

civ12i1.pdf – Academic Libraries

civ12i12.pdf – Rapid Rout of RWA and the SUNY Potsdam/ACS story

civ6i12.pdf – Pioneer OA journals (and other stuff)

civ2ix.pdf – Index to volume 2 (Really?)

civ12i8.pdf – Thinking about Blogging, Public Library Closures (2010)

I'm pleased that nine of the twelve 2012 issues were among the most widely read (the other three aren't too far behind, with one at 662 downloads and two at roughly 590 each). I am admittedly mystified by civ2ix and civ4i13. Otherwise, these numbers seem to show that policy is a strong focus—including OA, copyright and Google Books.

Overall, since I've been retaining these numbers, the picture is of course somewhat different and the numbers considerably larger. While there are still only two issues with more than 10,000 downloads, two more are within 100 of that level (one 24 away). Five issues have 9,000 to 9,999 total downloads (up two from last year), four more are over 8,000 (same as last year but with two new issues replacing two that passed 9,000), 14 more over 7,000 (four more than in 2011). A total of 62 issues have at least 5,000 downloads—up ten from a year ago—but there are also more issues than last year with fewer than 1,000 total downloads: a dozen in all. That number's a little misleading, as it includes two indexes (no longer available as downloads) and the one-sheet "hiatus" issue in late 2010, when *C&I* was on the verge of disappearing. It also includes the first issue of 2013, which had only been out for two days by the end of 2012. All of the "real issues" with fewer than 1,000 total downloads, eight of them, are from 2012, and that's fairly typical: readership grows over time.

Most Popular Essays

There are three ways to look at this: 2012 HTML views only, all HTML views, or *all* views (adding HTML views and PDF downloads for the same issue).

Looking only at 2012 HTML views, there are nine essays with more than 1,000 pageviews each—and an odd lot they are:

v7i2c.htm	Perspective: Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List
v9i10c.htm	Perspective: Academic Library Blogging: A Limited Update
v6i10a.htm	Perspective: Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle
v12i9a.htm	Give Us a Dollar...
v11i7b.htm	Copyright Comments: Public Domain
v9i4a.htm	Perspective: The Google Books Search Settlement
v8i1c.htm	Perspective: Discovering Books: OCA & GBS Retrospective
v8i4c.htm	Old Media/New Media Perspective: Thinking About Kindle and Ebooks
v9i2a.htm	A was for AAC: A Discursive Glossary, Rethought and Expanded

Looking at total HTML views, there are a dozen essays with at least 7,000 HTML pageviews each (the four highest are over 15,000):

v6i2a.htm	Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0"
v6i10a.htm	Perspective: Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle
v7i2c.htm	Perspective: Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List
v5i10b.htm	Perspective: Investigating the Biblioblogosphere
v5i13a.htm	Perspective: Life Trumps Blogging
v7i1b.htm	Perspective: Book Searching: OCA/GBS Update
v5i5a.htm	Bibs & Blather
v6i12d.htm	Open Access Perspective, Part II: Pioneer OA Journals: Preliminary Additions from DOAJ
v6i4a.htm	Perspective: Folksonomy and Dichotomy
v7i9a.htm	Perspective: On the Literature
v8i4c.htm	Old Media/New Media Perspective: Thinking About Kindle and Ebooks
v6i6a.htm	Perspective: Discovering Books

Another 14 have more than 6,000 pageviews and another 23 have more than 5,000.

Finally, looking at grand totals of PDF downloads and HTML views, 92 essays show at least

10,000 total. Of those, 19 show at least 13,000 (the top four are over 20,000 each):

v6i2a.htm	Library 2.0 and “Library 2.0”
v6i10a.htm	Perspective: Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle
v5i10b.htm	Perspective: Investigating the Biblioblogosphere
v7i2c.htm	Perspective: Conference Speaking: I Have a Little List
v5i13a.htm	Perspective: Life Trumps Blogging
v7i1b.htm	Perspective: Book Searching: OCA/GBS Update
v5i5a.htm	Bibs & Blather
v5i10d.htm	©2 Perspective: Orphan Works
v6i12d.htm	Open Access Perspective, Part II: Pioneer OA Journals: Preliminary Additions from DOAJ
v6i4a.htm	Perspective: Folksonomy and Dichotomy
v6i12a.htm	Open Access Perspective Part I: Pioneer Journals: The Arc of Enthusiasm, Five Years Later
v6i4d.htm	PC Progress, October 2005-February 2006
v6i10b.htm	Bibs & Blather
v4i12a.htm	Perspective: Wikipedia and Worth
v6i4e.htm	Offtopic Perspective: 50-Movie All Stars Collection 1
v7i1d.htm	Finding a Balance: Patrons and the Library
v6i6a.htm	Perspective: Discovering Books
v7i9a.htm	Perspective: On the Literature
v6i12b.htm	Old Media/New Media: Books, Bookstores and Ebooks

I am wholly bemused by one of those, and I don’t think I need to mention which one.

The HTML Challenge

January 22, 2013 is the point at which I’ll decide whether contributions to *C&I* are proceeding at a pace adequate to keep doing HTML versions. Given my leisurely editing process (yes, I do review the issue in print form and make revisions before copyfitting), this commentary is written well before that date.

You’ll know the results if you read [Walt at Random](#)—or just look at the [C&I home page](#). If the challenge succeeded, the contents lines for this issue will be hyperlinks. If not, not—for this and for future issues.

Intersections

Catching Up on Open Access 2

If you haven’t read the first half of this roundup, it’s in the [January 2013 Cites & Insights](#). Without further ado, here’s the rest.

Upping the Anti

Sorry, but that’s the best I could do for this collection of anti-OA screeds and discussions *about* anti-OA nonsense. (Yes, nonsense. The next section, “Controversies,” deals with more interesting issues that really are issues, not red herrings.) Some of these are at least mildly surprising; others are just the same old crap dressed up in new bags.

The Chicago Way

Barbara Fister, [in this January 20, 2011 Peer to Peer Review](#) post at *Library Journal*, tells me something I didn’t know (although she’s [quoting Stuart Shieber](#)):

[T]he new edition of the venerable *Chicago Manual of Style* advises writers to avoid open access and delay as long as possible complying with mandates such as that of the National Institutes of Health and institutional faculty agreements similar to those passed by Harvard’s far-seeing faculty of arts and sciences. In solemn lawyerly tones, the manual advises authors that open access is bad for them, and bad for the licensing opportunities that support important scholarly publishers. It’s terrible advice in so many ways I hardly know where to start. Shieber does, though, so go read his post.

It’s true and it’s appalling—and, frankly, an area where a style manual should STFU, to use the polite abbreviation. Apparently one section of the manual claims that green OA is “likely to diminish licensing revenues” which “help support the publication of important scholarly work”—bet’cha didn’t know universities get lots of licensing revenues from subscription journals, did’ya? That’s because *it isn’t true*. There’s another section that’s also unfortunate.

As Shieber says, “The most surprising thing about the new Manual sections is that *a style manual is taking a stance on these intellectual property issues in the first place.*” [Emphasis in the original.] Bad enough that the advice has an “RIAA-like” tone (Shieber’s language); it *shouldn’t be there at all*.

Adding another link (I’m using Fister’s neat column as a home for several other sources you might want to read):

[Dorothea Salo finds this a shabby way](#) for a well-respected manual to treat its own publisher, which actually has [a pretty OA-friendly policy](#), encouraging authors to deposit copies of their work in institutional repositories. Why then invite a lawyer to insert into a style manual such crummy advice? And since when did publication manuals tell authors where they should stand on issues of publishing policy?

Another section of the column relates to the idea that university presses (perhaps as part of libraries) should *publish their own scholars' work* as their primary clientele. And do so in an OA-friendly way. That's a bad summary: go read the original.

Double talk

Kevin Smith [writes on April 21, 2011](#) at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke*, discussing a proposed common model author's clause that libraries can recommend that *institutions* use to assure that campus scholars retain self-archiving rights. He links to [a site](#) with the model language and background and notes a similar UK effort. And then links to [a statement](#) from IASTM (the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers).

IASTM is agin' it. Surprised? After all, Harvard has considerably more clout than any given Harvard scholar—and the UC system of libraries has more clout than any single author. So IASTM doesn't want to “conflate” author rights and institutional content licenses. This portion of a paragraph in the IASTM statement is risible enough to bear quotation:

The publishing community has a strong track record of responsiveness to authors with respect to scholarly use and re-use and journal publishing agreements generally address, and have addressed for many years, issues about scholarly use and re-use by authors of their own work, including questions about compliance with research funder policies such as the NIH.

And, says IASTM, everybody's happy—well, the language may not be *that* strong but it's basically “move along, there's no problem here.” Here's how Smith summarizes the points being made by IASTM:

“Conflating” authors rights with institutional content licenses would add complexity and uncertainty to the process.

Publishers are already doing well in terms of responsiveness to authors and in disseminating the results of research.

Scholars “value fora that provide comprehensive coverage of a discipline,” while institutions are pushing repositories in order to enhance their own reputations.

The impact of institutional repositories should be the subject of objective research and assessment.

It's fair to say Smith's not convinced—and says why in clear detail. I'll point back to Smith's post for those discussions, all of which strike me as convincing, and leave you with his closing paragraph:

All in all, this statement provides a model of partisan double speak, but it does little to forward the conversation. Licensing negotiations are one of the few places where institutions wield real power, the power of the purse, in their relationship with publishers. It is, therefore, a very appropriate venue to pursue the goals that are shared between faculty authors and their institutions. Such negotiations may be complex, but they always have been. What is new is that institutions are beginning to stand up for their own shared values.

PA response to Science and Technology Committee Inquiry – Commercialisation of Research

That's the URL title for [this five-page PDF](#) issued February 8, 2012, which is a response from the Publishers Association (think British equivalent to AAP) to a House of Commons inquiry. Here's the third point in the introduction:

Publishers are committed to the widest possible dissemination of and access to the scholarly publications in which we invest and we support any and all sustainable access models that ensure the integrity and permanence of the scholarly record. It is these sustainable access models that facilitate the commercialisation of research, as we make clear below. Making available the peer-reviewed archive-quality records of funded research to the widest possible audience is an essential element of onward exploitation of the public investment made in the original research.

“Sustainable” is the key word here, and if I believe they're talking about sustainability of their profits rather than sustainability of scholarly research, well, that's just my biased outlook, I suppose.

You can read the whole thing yourself. It is, to my eye, a classic set of claims that it's really commercial publishers that make the scholarly research world go 'round. And we can't endanger ~~those profits~~ that key role through ill-advised messing about, can we?

Xenophobic scientific publishers: open access aids foreign enemies

Here's a short and pointed one from Michael Eisen, [posted March 6, 2012](#) at *it is NOT junk*. He notes that AAP and “the anti-open access DC Principles group” (they're still around?) sent [letters](#) to the House opposing FRPAA. The letter is full of the usual nonsense, but this paragraph is different:

[FRPAA] would also compel American taxpayers to subsidize the acquisition of important research information by foreign governments and corporations that

compete in global markets with the public and private scientific enterprises conducted in the United States.

I like Eisen's response. It strikes me as measured and entirely appropriate, so I'm quoting most of the post.

Huh? Think about what they're saying: The US government should not make the results of taxpayer funded research available to all US citizens because it would also be made available to foreigners, which would give them a leg up over American companies in the competitive global marketplace. And how are the publishers going to protect us from this looming threat? By denying these nefarious foreign entities access to the information they are going to use to trounce us? No! The publishers want Congress to insist that these foreigners pay them a small fee to facilitate their fleecing of America.

COME ON! This one sentence exposes the publishers who wrote and signed the letter either as racist idiots who have no clue about how science works and what its goals are, or as craven liars willing to trot out xenophobic claptrap to promote their agenda.

We are not talking about classified information here—we're talking about information that authors are willingly making freely available. And these foreigners the publishers are deriding are not enemies. They are our collaborators in science—whose ability to build on work generated in the US benefits us all. This is how science works, you morons!

Earlier in the letter, these signers of the letter claim that they are "devoted to ensuring wide dissemination of the results of all peer-reviewed research". That they would then have the gall to put forward the argument that US interests are served by impeding to free flow of scientific information to scientists in other countries makes it clear that this is a complete and utter lie. This is one of the most repulsive things I have seen from the forces that oppose public access – anyone who signed this letter should be ashamed, and is deserving of our contempt.

As pointed out in the comments, it's not just the anti-FRPAA stance; supporters of RWA used similar nonsense.

Confessions of an Open Access Agnostic

This one's astonishing in at least two ways. It's by Tom Webb and appeared [on May 25, 2012](#) at *Mola Mola*. He *seems* to be saying that he's nervous about OA because he doesn't like "shouty people" and being told what to do—but he trots out some stale anti-OA arguments, albeit with new twists.

First there's that title. Apparently, Tom Webb holds the view that the existence of open access is unknowable. Either that, or he doesn't know what "agnostic" means—and in the comments he scolds

somebody else for not looking up words they don't understand, so that can't be it. So: all those OA journals and institutional repositories *may be figments of people's imaginations*—it's not possible to know whether OA exists.

The second thing I find remarkable: He implies that it's wrong for anyone to boycott journals because it could mean that articles submitted to those journals won't get the quality of peer review that they deserve. (He refers to "misguided boycotts," which also tells us he's not as undecided as he claims: He already knows that the Elsevier boycott is *misguided*.) There it is: Not only won't Webb boycott Elsevier, it's *wrong for anyone else to do so*. This is agnosticism with a vengeance!

He doesn't want to hear *anything* from "non-scientists in the media" (linking to a *Guardian* editorial). Here's his response to enormous profiteering:

I'm not comfortable with the big publishers making huge profits from the outputs of science, but I also recognise that good publishers (and their employees) have done, and continue to do a terrific job to ensure the effective communication of science.

Webb claims to be in favor of "the broader Open Science agenda"—but he doesn't think access to articles is "such a big issue that it should be pushed above all else," especially since if you're part of the in crowd and already know about an article, you can probably get a copy. Note the slant here: Any effort for OA is *pushing it above all other issues*.

The next paragraph begins "My beef is not at all with OA, but..." and it's one of those classic "but" clauses, especially when he seems to be saying that the enormous costs of subscriptions are really "funding infrastructure"—that is libraries—as opposed to paying for author-side fees. He repeats that it's not difficult to access papers "and in any case, the readership for the vast majority of papers is tiny." Sound familiar?

His conclusion is that he's not signing the boycott. That's his decision. Rolling out a neat little subset of anti-OA arguments with the twist that efforts toward OA—most of which have been low-key, most of which have been going on for a very long time—are somehow shouting and taking energy away from other issues.

The truth: The boycott happened because of RWA, which was an *escalation* of tactics by Elsevier and its friends. So what Webb is really saying is that *responding to an escalation* is wrong. I don't buy it.

Thirty-five comments. We're told that OA proponents are arrogant and unpleasant (which is cer-

tainly true for some). We *of course* get the constant implication that OA is 100% author-pays, period, end of discussion. Webb steps right into it in asserting that those author fees will mean the elimination of negative results—since the *Journal of Negative Results—Ecology & Evolutionary Biology* is Gold OA with no author-side fees. Oh, that's right: It's OA, so its existence can't be proved. I gave up on the long, long stream (in hard-to-read color combo) as it began to devolve into a multisided fistfight.

A success, and a long road ahead

This [June 4, 2012 piece](#) by Kevin Smith at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke* is not, of course, itself anti-OA. Instead, he's commenting on such tactics: in this case, a [report](#) released by the [UK] Publishers Association “purporting to show that public access to research articles after a six-month embargo...would result in large-scale subscription cancellations.” This relates back to the RCUK proposal to require that.

Public access advocates have been asserting for a while that the harm predicted by publishers if taxpayers could read the results of research they funded was overblown. So now the Publishers Association has offered us evidence of a sort. But there are a couple of problems with the report that should prevent policy makers and the public from accepting its assertions too readily. And even after acknowledging that the report probably claims to prove too much, we might still ask, “so what.”

The problems? It's based on *just one question* sent to 950 librarians (with 210 responses):

“If the (majority of) content of research journals was freely available within 6 months of publication, would you continue to subscribe?”

As Smith says, that's too broad a question with too little context. Oh, and by the way, very few said they would cancel *everything*. It's clear some respondents didn't like the crudity of the survey—and that answers were combined to paint the worst possible picture.

Smith expands “So what?” in a way that deserves direct reading. In essence: the current business model is unsustainable—and it's not up to libraries or policymakers to support the current model. Failure of some, or even all, subscription-based journals would not doom scholarship.

Some statements from scientists and researchers noting that Open Access isn't needed by the general public

Joseph Krause (Joe) put together [this compilation of comments](#)—with links—on August 24, 2012 at

Nothing But Net. His introduction to the quartet may be all the comment that's needed:

Statements such as the following really chap my hide and get my goat. Some scientists and researches seem to think that the general public is too stupid to be able to use scientific articles and information. GAAAHHHH!

One of the four is from a source so tainted as to be unmentionable; another is from somebody who seems to be pro-OA while regularly tearing it down. The general tone of all four may be captured in one from *Chemistry World*: “How much would the general public actually gain from access to complex, technically written and jargon-heavy articles?”

There are three answers to that:

1. There is no such thing as “the general public” with one level of understanding and literacy. There are millions of non-researchers who could both understand and learn from many research articles.
2. There are independent researchers and scholars at smaller institutions who might as well be part of the “general public” since they don't have access to all the articles they could use.
3. There are essentially no institutions left that can afford all the scholarly resources their scholars should have. Once Harvard admitted that it's unable to keep up, that game was over.

There's also the sheer arrogance of supposing that The Great Unwashed couldn't understand this stuff anyway, but let's not go there.

50 Shades of Grey in Scientific Publication: How Digital Publishing Is Harming Science

Here we have Dr. Douglas Fields [on November 19, 2012](#) at *Huffington Post*, and it's a remarkable piece of nonsense. The last sentence in the first paragraph sets the tone:

There is no science without scholarly publication, and scholarly publication as we have known it is dying.

Fields caters to *HuffPost's* questionable air of anti-capitalism in the next paragraph but, as in the first, conflates two entirely different phenomena. Here's the final sentence—and watch what's happening:

Scientific publication is undergoing a drastic transformation as it passes deeper into government and capitalistic control, while weakened from struggling simultaneously to cope with unprecedented transformations brought about by electronic publication.

Capitalistic control, as in the rise of the mega-publishers? Perhaps a good point—but “government...control”? Aha...

We get a description of the peer review process, perhaps a slightly more positive one than it deserves...and another key final sentence:

Recent government-mandated changes in scientific publishing are undermining this critical process of validation in scientific publication.

Governmental mandates are undermining peer review. There, that's a simpler version. What on earth could Fields mean? He spells it out more clearly:

The federal government has mandated that scientific research that is funded in part by federal grants be made freely available to anyone over the Internet. As most scientific research receives some public funding, this mandate affects most biomedical science conducted in the United State and, through international collaborations, much of the science conducted in Europe and Asia. The well-intentioned reasoning of the mandate is that if the research is supported by public funds, then the public should have the right to obtain the published results free of charge. The idea sounds great, but nothing is free.

First off, that's flat-out wrong. So far, there's only a mandate from NIH; FRPAA is not yet law. Second off, “nothing is free” is simply irrelevant: NIH never said it was.

Then we get a description of the journal publishing process that emphasizes both its importance and its expense. Somehow, in Fields' world, none of the *print-related* costs go away as journals go online; instead, we have vast new digital costs. And we're informed that the government mandate “undercuts all the investment involved in validating and publishing the research studies it funds.”

Fields misstates the situation with gold OA—which, by the way, is *not* mandated by the NIH or any other U.S. government agency—both by assuming that all gold OA requires author-side charges and that all such charges are in the \$1,000 to \$3,000 or more range. Then it gets nastier:

The funding model fueling open-access publication is a modern rendition of the well-known “vanity” model of publication, in which the author pays to have his or her work printed. The same well-appreciated negative consequences result when applied to scientific publication. Because the income is derived from the authors rather than from readers, the incentive for the publisher is to publish as much as possible, rather than being motivated by a primary concern for quality and significance that would increase subscription by readers, libraries and institu-

tions and thus income. In the open-access, “author-pays” financial model, the more articles that are published, the more income the publishers collect.

Gold OA is vanity publishing. There follow a bunch of other partially-correct, partially-wrong statements about peer review processes and the nature of OA journals, and we're told that published material is “dumped into PubMed and PubMed Central biomedical indexes.” Wow: *Dumped*.

Somehow, in the next section, this all yields pornographic literature—and, a bit later, the essential assertion that OA journals will be full of garbage:

Scientists and the public are rightfully outraged and we all suffer when flawed scientific studies are published. Even with the most rigorous review at the best journals, flawed studies sometimes slip through, such as the “discovery” of cold fusion published in *Science*, but it is the rarity of this lapse that makes this so sensational when it happens. With the new open-access model of author-financed publication, the “outstanding” is drowned in a flood of trivial or unsound work. Open-access publishing threatens to become scientific publication's equivalent of blogging. (Nothing wrong with blogging, but it is not the same thing as scientific publication.)

There's more, but it's too depressing to go through. What I don't see: One *word* of criticism of Elsevier and its ilk. Somehow, the “corporate” situation here is the OA publishers. Who knew PLoS was the *real* villain? Fields mourns:

A corporate/government financial alliance is replacing scholarly publication once organized and run by scientists and academics.

Earth to Fields: The high-profile journals you treasure so much are, with exceptions, *not* run by scientists and academics. They are published, owned and controlled by Elsevier and its colleagues (not competitors, since each journal is a mini-monopoly). The lovely era of journals run by scholars because scholarship is important? Largely gone—and OA efforts are the best chance of seeing it return.

Turns out there's a personal aspect to this: Fields cofounded a specialized scientific journal in 2004 that was published by Cambridge University Press. It's shutting down. (Not CUP, although it's apparently going all-digital; just this one journal.) From this incident—journals fail, do so with some frequency, and always have—we get this dystopian essay that ends as follows:

One wonders how many new advances in science will never have an opportunity to take root now that scientific publication is an increasingly corporate and gov-

ernment business rather than the scholarly academic activity that it was for centuries. Science is advanced by scientific publication. These changes in publishing will affect the future of science profoundly.

Guess what? Fields spends *no* time attacking the huge corporate STM publishers; “corporate” just appears now and then to give extra zing to this attack on OA publishing in general and on government mandates in particular.

Great Expectations For Scientific Publication: How Digital Publishing Is Helping Science

This piece by Jalees Rehman, [appearing November 22, 2012](#) on *The Next Regeneration* blog, is a response to the article just discussed, which Rehman labels as a rant.

It was reminiscent of the rants that might have been uttered by calligraphers who were upset about the emergence of Gutenberg’s printing press or concerns of European aristocrats in the wake of the French Revolution about whether commoners could ever govern a country.

He pays attention only because Fields is “an outstanding neuroscientist and an excellent writer”:

It is very difficult to understand how someone who is such an eminent scientist and has an extensive experience with scientific publishing would make so many bizarre statements about open access publishing.

At first he thought the article might be satire, but later realized that Fields might actually *mean* what he said. So Rehman decided to respond. He highlights three key flaws; I’ll offer the flaws without Rehman’s commentary (which you should read):

Conflating digital publishing, open access publishing and self-publishing

Open access publishing and rigorous peer review

Open access publishing and corporate interests

That third is in some ways the oddest (the first is mostly just insulting). Unfortunately, in responding to it, Rehman falls into the “all Gold OA requires author-side payments” trap, although the rest of his discussion is appropriate. He provides the context: Why the concern of possible corporate profits from OA when traditional publishers make such enormous profit margins already?

The truth of the matter is that the current pay-for-access model is catering to corporate greed and is impairing the free sharing of scientific results. In addition to generating revenue from subscription fees, current pay-for-access publishers often also charge fees to the authors of the manuscripts.

He offers a specific example: *Blood*, a journal in his field. (I’m astonished to find that *Blood* actually charges a *submission fee*, which Rehman fails to mention.) He calculates that a typical eight-page article with four color images (in this field, color tends to be necessary) and a data supplement would cost the author(s) \$3,081—and that’s for a subscription journal. (The journal costs \$975 for an individual print subscription, \$1,220 for non-US subscribers and “a much higher fee for a site license granted to a university library.” Actually, *Blood*’s institutional rates aren’t terrible: From \$1,360 to \$1,770 for a single-site U.S. institution.)

As Rehman points out, that’s pretty bad compared to the rates for the top OA journals—e.g. \$2,900 per published paper for *PLoS Medicine*, with waivers for authors in developing nations. And, of course, once that \$2,900 is paid, that’s the end of it: libraries and individual readers have free access.

Science was never meant to be conducted by the rich for the rich. The goal of scientists should be to communicate rigorous findings to as broad an audience as possible. Open access publishing is a step in the right direction, because it helps liberate the scientific enterprise from corporate interests of pay-for-access publishers that impair the broad dissemination of scientific knowledge to readers who cannot afford the high subscription fees.

The remainder of a fairly long post responds to specific text in the Fields article. I won’t comment on it.

Open access: why academic publishers still add value

We’ll end this section with Alexander Brown’s [November 22, 2012 piece](#) in *The Guardian*’s “higher education network.” Brown is at Springer—“manager of corporate communications,” which might or might not mean “PR head.” And he’s here to teach us why “all of these people around me” are so vitally necessary to “help move science forward.”

The ill-conceived notion frequently advanced by commercial publishing’s detractors is that all we do is polish a manuscript, put it online and then sit back and wait for the next sucker to submit an article. This is highly misleading and inaccurate. So what are the roles and costs that justify the fees we charge?

Oddly enough, I have *never* seen that notion put forward, not even by the most extreme opponents of commercial STM journals and journals in general. Not once. I must be reading the wrong items—or, just possibly, Brown is making it up.

He refers to all those *new* costs of publishing online, and that these costs “take the place of print-

ing and shipping.” Really? Brown’s claiming that the costs of digital dissemination *equal* the costs of printing and shipping? Pardon me if I’m skeptical.

Yes, as he says, there’s still a need for editors—and for peer review. (Although the actual effectiveness of editorial work on scholarly papers is open to some question, at least according to Mike Taylor in a comment.) At least Brown’s honest enough to admit that peer review is done for free, but wait:

Yes, editorial board members and reviewers are by and large unpaid. However there are still scores of people whose full time jobs are managing this process for a growing body of scientific literature. Finally, countless man hours go into helping customers learn how best to find what they need, along with rigorous efforts to acquire content and publicise the brilliance of our authors. Besides the absolute necessity of this work, effectively outsourcing these functions to publishers allows scientists to focus on discovery and innovation.

It takes *scores* of people (just within Springer) to manage peer review. Ah, but that next sentence is the key: the “countless man hours” to acquire content and publicize authors—and, an odd one, “helping customers learn how to best find what they need.” I’ll admit to being ignorant of that function. Oh, and “tens of millions of dollars” to develop systems and platforms for digital publishing.

We are informed that Springer has “embraced open access,” which is true enough, especially since Springer managed to buy BioMed Central. In which case, the next paragraph is disingenuous at best:

It does not take a huge intellectual leap to see how all of these activities benefit science and research. It is, however, hard to imagine how anyone with an internet connection could do this with the speed, efficiency and added value with which publishers operate, while still maintaining the integrity of the scientific record. In short, all of the activities outlined here cannot be done without the large investments in people and technology that we make via the fees that we charge.

So Gold OA initiatives are “anyone with an internet connection”? Isn’t that rather a broad sweep? Apparently the message is that *only traditional publishers* can actually handle the publishing process, thus justifying whatever fees they charge and profits they make. A case that, to put it bluntly, Brown simply does not make.

I noted Mike Taylor’s comment earlier; in fact, he does a pretty good job of fisting the article. The comment stream includes some interesting back-

and-forth, as one commenter claims that “most editors spend hours (dozens of them) on every single article that is published”—which is followed immediately by a comment from Adam Tut, with over 50 published journal articles (he’s also an editor for two journals), who says:

I have never, as an editor, helped an author to rewrite a paper; it is not my job.

I have never, as an author, had any comments from an editor to help me rewrite any of my papers. Nor would I expect them. The most I get is queries like “reference 14 is not cited in the text, is it ok to delete it”.

The next one says Tut writes for scientific journals and is a native English speaker—that the situation in the humanities and for non-English-speaking authors can be different. But, of course, *we’re mostly talking about scientific journals here*. The discussion goes back and forth among various people. There are other discussions, including a predictable attack on *PLoS ONE* by a pseudonymous source engaged in general OA-bashing.

Controversies

If the section above was about anti-OA stuff that mostly repeats the old myths, this section is mostly about possibly-legitimate OA controversies—and yes, such controversies do exist.

Open Access and Interventionism

Let’s stick with this short title for [a February 9, 2012 piece](#) by Steve Kolowich at *Inside Higher Ed*, rather than the longer web page title. It relates to comments on the government’s proper role in regulating the availability of federally funded research, with those comments [posted](#) on January 30, 2012. According to Kolowich, the comments revive “the debate over open access broadly and [stoke] controversy in one discipline in particular.” I haven’t read (and don’t intend to read) the 377 responses; I’ll take Kolowich’s summary and comments on faith. I’d be astonished if this quick summary was *not* true:

A casual survey of the letters suggests that the feedback largely breaks along familiar lines—librarians arguing for quicker and easier access to research, and publishers offering suggestions for better access while discouraging measures that might threaten their subscription revenues.

If that’s true, it’s sad: By now, it *shouldn’t* be entirely or primarily librarians; it should be scholars themselves.

Some quotes are all too predictable, such as this from Alice Meadows at Wiley-Blackwell about appropriate embargo terms (you already know what I

consider appropriate: no embargo): ““There are no ‘appropriate’ embargo periods. Any embargo period is a dramatic shortening of the period of copyright protection afforded all publishers.” Meadows also said “Peer-reviewed papers are not the result of the Federal Government’s investment,” one of those statements that may be literally factual but fundamentally nonsense.

So which field stands out? Anthropology—where the executive director of the AAA said “We know of no research that demonstrates a problem with the existing system for making the content of scholarly journals available to those who might benefit from it.” That’s it: No problem, nothing to see here, move along. But it gets worse. He also said:

“Mandating open access to such property without just compensation and lawful procedural limitations constitutes, in our view, an unconstitutional taking of private property—copyright material—an expropriation without fair market compensation.”

A number of anthropologists were appalled by this attitude in “the one discipline that truly works with people” (well...). There’s a whole bunch more from AAA and its members, none of it terribly encouraging.

Grasping at straws

That’s Kevin Smith, commenting on the above article in [a February 14, 2012 post](#) at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke*. Smith was appalled by Meadows’ comment—specifically the sentence beginning “Any embargo period...”:

This statement strikes me as deliberately misleading. Publishers are not afforded *any* period of copyright protection by the copyright law, anymore than plumbers or ophthalmologist are. This kind of misinformation is intended to create the illusion that publishers’ business models are somehow favored by federal law and thus inviolate, but that is not true. Only one group is afforded copyright protection and the term for which that protection lasts — authors (under section 201(a) of the copyright law, Title 17 of the U.S. code). If publishers hold any rights, they hold those rights only because they are transferred to them by the authors whose works they publish. And if those authors choose, they can transfer less than the full copyright, and for less than the full term of protection. [Emphasis in the original.]

Smith thinks the traditional bargain—scholars give away copyright in order to get distribution—now “seems like a very bad bargain indeed.”

Now there are many other options available to authors, many of which publishers are anxiously trying to undermine. It is very important to some publish-

ers that authors do not come to understand the power they have based on the fact that they hold all of the rights under copyright and can leverage those rights to do what is best for them.

Statements like the one from Wiley Blackwell reflect, I think, an increasing sense of panic in the publishing community. Disinformation is seen as one way to fight the growing realization that they may become as irrelevant in the Internet age as blacksmith and buggy whip makers became in the age of the automobile.

There’s more, such as Oxford University Press’s bizarre claim that essays in edited volumes are work made for hire and the newish contracts from Elsevier and ACS “that try to make authors’ retention of rights, or not, dependent on the kinds of internal policies that exist on the authors’ university campuses.”

In all of these cases, the publishers are looking for a legal lever they can push that will stave off irrelevance. But the law does not work that way in general, and copyright is written to benefit authors and give them control over their works, not to prop up a particular business model.

Companies that survive are those that adapt to technological change, not those that desperately try to use legal coercion to prevent the change. The movie industry learned this when their attempt to prevent home video recording failed; they were forced to adapt, and they found new ways to flourish.

PLoS ONE: from the Public Library of Sloppiness? Stephen Curry posted this [on April 1, 2012](#) at *Reciprocal Space*, and maybe the post date is significant. In fact, it’s *not* Curry’s opinion; he’s recounting an argument with a colleague:

I had an argument with my colleague in the tea-room the other day. Gratifyingly, I learned he had been reading my blogposts on the subject of open access, but it soon became clear he did not entirely share my enthusiasm for the topic. Specifically, he criticised open access journals such as *PLoS ONE* both for their lack of sub-editorial services and for creating a home for poor quality science.

This got my goat, not least because I had made my first submission to *PLoS ONE* just the day before. We spent some time arguing back and forth and my colleague was kind enough agree to let me lay out the dispute in a blog post. I want to do so because, despite the evident variety of opinion within the blogosphere, it can be easy for the like-minded to coalesce into groups where positions are not so rigorously tested. So please see what you think of my case (since amplified by further reading) and feel free to take issue.

In the first case, understanding that “sub-editorial” is what we’d call copyediting, the charge is partly

correct: *PLoS ONE* does not copyedit. Curry justifies that lack by saying “this is one of the factors that keeps the OA charge to \$1350”—but some of us think \$1,350 is *still* a lot of money, *especially* if there’s no copyediting. (Curry’s solution? Ask your colleagues to proofread—and I take it that Curry equates copyediting with proofreading, which I don’t, but I’m not a scientist.)

As to the second charge—well, *PLoS ONE* is different (or it was when it was founded), since its bar for publication is “technically sound” with no judgment of importance. Curry’s response here boils down to what I regard as a certain fact: Mediocre scholarship exists and OA journals aren’t the cause of it. Here’s a telling fact: *PLoS ONE* rejects about 30% of the submitted manuscripts—and half of those end up being *published elsewhere*, quite possibly in non-OA journals. I’ve always said, only half-cynically, that peer review does not determine *whether* something gets published, only *where*—and there are fourth-rate journals in pretty much every field that will publish pretty much anything. (That’s me, not Curry.)

There’s more, to be sure—and 68 comments. One notes that *PLoS* offers a list of scientific editing services for authors who *do* want copyediting; figure that a 17-page paper would cost \$340 to \$425 for copyediting. Another comment—from Curry—points up an interesting answer to the “junk science” label: Where 59% of all scientific papers are *not* cited at all within five years of publication, 83% of the papers published in *PLoS ONE* in 2010 had been cited within two years. A number of people who have published in *PLoS ONE* speak to the high quality of its peer review.

Persistent myths about open access scientific publishing

Mike Taylor posted this [on April 17, 2012](#) in *The Guardian*’s “Notes & Theories” blog. The subheading is a giveaway: “Academic publishers do not pay peer reviewers, and lack of funds is no bar to publication in an open access journal.” He’s responding to other items (linked to in the post)—but in at least one case, Taylor’s missed the careful wording of the claim. To wit, the chief executive of the Publishers Association says “publishers shoulder the administrative burden of filtering three million submissions to 20,000 journals.” Taylor responds that they do not—but he’s missing three key words: “the *administrative* burden.” Publishers don’t *do* the filtering, but they do *administer* it. Do I believe that the PA person is hoping readers will *think* that pub-

lishers pay for peer review? Yes, but technically that’s not what he said.

There’s more here, much of it valuable refutation of a number of myths. Why here, under controversy? Because of tricky wording such as that above—and because some expense issues (discussed in the article) still aren’t settled. All the sadder that the second comment is from the Guru of Green OA who informs us that “Elsevier is not the obstacle” since they’re so *good* about green OA. I note with some pleasure that after SH’s second long comment, Taylor takes him on to some extent—including this final paragraph:

Finally, Stevan, it really doesn’t help that you so consistently position Green OA as a competitor, rather than a complement, to Gold OA. Your “don’t do that, do this instead” rhetoric achieves nothing more than alienating you from your allies and “splitting the open access vote”. I think your Green OA campaigning would be much more effective if you took the line “while we’re waiting for Gold OA, here’s what we can usefully do now”. That is a message that other OA advocates could get on board with.

Could happen. Those pigs flying outside my window seem to be doing aerial acrobatics these days. SH follows up with a comment that claims he’s never argued against going for “Gold *too*”—so apparently I’m imagining the countless occasions on which he’s argued vociferously and with personal attacks at any energy being expended on gold OA.

Attacking publishers will not make open access any more sustainable

We’re back at *The Guardian*, this time with another Taylor: Graham Taylor, director of academic, educational and professional publishing at the Publishers Association, [writing on May 25, 2012](#). You’re going to see “sustainable” and “viable” a lot here; pardon me if I take that to mean “sustaining extremely high profits and a traditional publishing model.”

Remarkably, Taylor claims that the discussion over scientific publishing has been one-sided:

Much has been written about journal publishers over the past few months but unfortunately this has focused almost exclusively on one side of the debate: the desire for greater access to peer-reviewed research outputs, especially journal articles, which publishers are painted as somehow resisting and restricting.

That is *of course* followed by the claim that publishers “fully support expanding public access to publicly funded research.” As long as it’s “financially sustainable” on the publishers’ terms, that is. There’s stuff about walk-in access at libraries, with nothing

said about the cost to libraries of providing those resources. And, *of course*, we hear about how terribly expensive and complicated the publishing process is—oh, and that the UK makes serious money by selling overpriced subscriptions (*not* Taylor's wording) overseas.

We also “learn” that there's enormous levels of access thanks to Big Deals, which are great bargains that cost almost nothing—and “of course libraries can choose either to subscribe to these broad collections (against substantial discounts) or to purchase individual titles.” Taylor defends publisher profits against attack, saying they derive from efficiency, drive innovation and are taxed.

All of this surrounds a frontal attack on mandated green OA: “mandated deposit in repositories is not a publishing model, has no associated revenue stream and, worse, threatens to erode the revenues deriving from the subscriptions on which the model depends.” There it is—the gist of the article, despite all the diversions it raises. It's clear from the following paragraph that “revenue streams” are the most important aspect of scientific publishing. Or at least it reads that way to me.

Quite a few comments. I didn't read them all; you may be more patient. The other Taylor does comment, and you get the tone right off the bat:

As we discuss the access crisis and Academic Spring, it's great that the Guardian is allowing a platform to representatives of the academic publishing industry. It gives them a chance to demonstrate how utterly bankrupt their position is, and it's kind of Graham Taylor to oblige. His article is a catalogue of distortions and misrepresentations from start to finish.

It's a fisking that takes three comments in all.

The Publishers Association is hallucinating

This [May 25, 2012 post](#) at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week* by Mike Taylor is, in essence, the fisking of Graham Taylor's article above, this time in a single long blog post rather than three comments (split because of commenting-system limits). It's a lot easier to read in this form, reason enough to give it a separate link.

No further comment. It's hard to comment on really good fisking!

How do you know?

This one's from Kevin Smith [on June 13, 2012](#) at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke*. An email list to which Smith does not subscribe had a discussion related to “A success, and a long road ahead” (discussed earlier in UPPING THE ANTI) and his assertion that

“public access is not the primary driver of cancellations, it is excessive price increases.” A “former publishing executive” asked how Smith knew this and accused him of making an unsupported assertion.

It is a fair question, and I am happy to report on how I know that public or open access is not the principal, or even a significant, driver of journal cancellations; doing so gives me the opportunity to link to a couple of valuable resources.

I know that public access is seldom, if ever, considered by librarians when dealing with subscription cancellations, first, because I have been a librarian for over twenty years and have been involved in or aware of a large number (larger than I would like) of cancellation processes. Never once have I heard a librarian say “we can cancel that one because all the contents are available on various websites.” First, that would almost never be true. Second, deciding on that basis would not be serving our patrons' needs, which is what we strive to do even when our budgets contract.

His second reason: he read [a report](#) by prepared by Elliot Maxwell for the Committee for Economic Development.

In that report, Maxwell takes a sustained and carefully documented look at many of the claims about the disasters that would befall for-profit publishing based on the National Institutes of Health public access mandate. His overall conclusions are, first, that there is no evidence that such policies have adversely impacted the STM publishers who complained so vociferously about them and have twice tried to push legislation to have them reversed. Maxwell makes two salient points. First, it is increasing prices, coupled with flat library budgets, that account for any rising rate of cancellations (which is the same point I made in my blog post). And second, that at the same time they were predicting disaster to policy makers, for-profit STM publishers were painting a more glowing picture of the future to financial analysts about the prospect of a return to 4-5% growth rates as we move past the economic downturn. As Maxwell says, “the last four years [he is referring to 2007—2011, a period which actually includes the worst of the downturn] have been marked by an increase in both the number and subscription prices of STM journals.” (p. 15) While this may not be good news for libraries, it certainly casts doubt on the gloom and doom being forecast if public access mandates grow. And it is further evidence that such mandates do not lead, contrary to the ALPSP report, directly to library cancellations.

As if that's not enough, there's [a survey](#) commissioned by *the publishing industry*—asking librarians about actual decisions rather than a hypothetical question.

When asked why they made a particular decision to cancel a specific journal, the thousands of librarians queried listed four principal reasons—budget cuts, low usage, faculty recommendations and the desire to end subscriptions to the same content in different formats (cancelling print to focus on electronic access). These four reasons were cited for over 60% of the cancellations, while free public access was mentioned less than 5% of the time.

Seems pretty convincing. But, as he notes (and why I didn't emphasize this when discussing the earlier post), it's a side-issue anyway or, if you will, a phony controversy.

As I said in the original post, even if public access reaches a scale in which it does imperil journal subscriptions, that does not mean we should not pursue it. The evidence for the value of open access is becoming overwhelming, and the claims that it will harm scientific research (as opposed to for-profit publishing) or prove unsustainable are increasingly easy to refute.

He offers three broad principles for future conversations about scholarly communication. They're excellent principles. [Go read them.](#)

On publishing in PLoS One, and what's the matter with ecology?

This post—by C. Titus Brown on August 13, 2012 at *Living in an Ivory Basement*—is a copy of email Brown sent to the Microbiology faculty mailing list at Michigan State University, and it's another round of “PLoS ONE isn't a serious journal”—really a phony controversy, but one that continues to emerge. Not that Brown feels that way; he's dealing with those who do.

Brown notes that the *actual* importance of papers can't always be determined in advance—and that some studies suggest that attempts to make papers more “important” may be leading to bad science. And, as he notes, PLoS ONE doesn't play that game, since it ignores importance.

Despite this, I've heard a number of misunderstandings about PLoS One circulating here at MSU, and talked to several faculty that had been told that PLoS One papers wouldn't “count”—even going so far as to claim that PLoS One papers aren't reviewed or rejected, which is objectively false (speaking as a reviewer who has rejected PLoS One papers :) -- the acceptance rate is high, but not 100%, and many papers go through multiple rounds of review. I would be happy to further discuss such concerns in private if people are interested.

Which made a paper he received from an ecologist particularly interesting—a [paper](#) looking at “the

increasing tendency of high profile journals to reject papers to maintain selectivity.” And here's the money quote:

“The result that stands out is that ecological papers published in PLoS ONE on average have a comparable or greater impact to those journals that have acceptance rates of 15–20%, despite rejecting only a minority of submissions. Indeed the only journals whose ecological papers consistently have a much greater impact than those in PLoS ONE are Science and Nature.”

Good stuff. Which makes the first comment truly sad: “Yeah, the head of an ecology department told me recently that papers from PLoS journals don't really count. Sad state of affairs.” (The next comment is from someone who's had “perfectly fine papers” rejected by PLoS ONE and calls the review process “capricious.”)

Up from Under the “Open Access” Bus

This one is a legitimate and ongoing controversy. Paul Royster [published this](#) in *JLSC*, the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, a fledgling Gold OA journal (as of this writing, there have been two issues) with no author-side fees. Royster is on the editorial board.

Royster runs an institutional repository housing more than 40,000 documents and articles; he believed he was “working to promote open access to academic scholarship and creative works.” Then he went to the March 2012 SPARC meeting and ran into this from Jan Velterop, which Royster seems to feel is the dominant stance of SPARC and others: ““It is about time to stop calling anything Open Access that is not covered by CC-BY, CC-zero, or equivalent.” Royster goes through the declarations that seem to have created the term OA and has to agree that they call for essentially this level of access—and responds:

Such re-use requirements exceed what is in my ability to deliver for our repository content; more importantly, they exceed anything that I would even recommend or desire to deliver.

If an unrestricted license to re-use, re-distribute, and create derivative works is to be the sine qua non of open access, then there is little hope that the institutional repository I manage can ever present itself as an outlet for open access

He expands on that—and while I fundamentally sympathize (I believe Velterop and others are indeed trying to narrow OA in an unhealthy manner) I have misgivings about Royster's discussion. He even includes a table of “People or organizations that I would not allow to re-use my copyrighted materi-

als”—a table that manages to place Microsoft on a level with Al Qaeda and the Ku Klux Klan.

I won't comment further. You might want to read the commentary itself; it's not all that long.

Clubs and cliques in STM publishing and the impact on Open Access

This one is particularly interesting, dealing with something I hadn't really thought about (but, of course, I'm not a scientist). It's by Joseph Kraus and [appeared October 11, 2012](#) on *Nuthng But Net*.

I know that one the major reasons Open Access has had a hard time getting a foothold into the publishing world is because of the clubishness of science and scientists. People often do not know about the social aspects of scientists and their work. This is one of the reasons that associations, societies [like clubs] and conferences play such an important part of a scientist's career.

Kraus notes that the desire to belong to some Group is fairly universal—and scientists are no different. Some clubs are more exclusive than others, e.g. the club of scientists educated at Ivy League schools. He offers a set of clubs—people who

Work at an ivy league school

Are a tenured professor at an ivy league school

Got 1600 (or 2400) on the SAT

Published multiple times in *Science/Nature/Cell/PRL/JACS*

Were award winners in a society like the ACS or the American Physical Society

Received a grant of \$1M plus from the NIH

Are members of the National Academy of Sciences

Carry a public library card

Are short, slightly pudgy middle-aged balding men with two dogs

Make beer at home

Some of these clubs are more prestigious than others. (Note, I am a member of two of the clubs noted above.) Scientists generally try to join the clubs that are the most exclusive. In other words, they want to be members of groups that exclude the most number of other people, so that they look good in comparison. (Side note: Some science fields don't like [whistleblowers](#), too. They may not be seen as playing well with others within those clubs.)

I think the implications for OA are reasonably clear—and Kraus spells them out. Some scientists like to appear in *exclusive* journals:

If you work for a rich institution that can afford a subscription to a journal like *Tetrahedron Letters* (\$16,773 list price for an annual subscription, or if

you or your institution can afford to buy articles as needed), then you must be at a place deemed good enough to read it. These scientists [may not even post green OA versions of their articles](#), even though the publisher allows it.

There's more, and Kraus is making a good point. A couple of anonymous commenters (or one person commenting twice, which seems more likely) take Kraus to task for denigrating scientists (which he didn't do) and says librarians are no less cliquish “with far fewer bona fides and credentials” but have “pretensions of gentility and professed egalitarianism.” That comment is actually sort of a masterpiece in its attack on both librarians and OA:

Their strident push for OA is manifestation of their ideological commitment to the most base notions of collectivism. They own nothing and produce little—which is why they don't mind giving the store away. Primarily plucked from the arts & humanities, these bleeding hearts seek—for the most part—a safe place to squat until retirement. It has been my experience that residing deep within their own “professional” associations and memberships is an abiding hatred, fear, envy, and ignorance of the pure maths and sciences and practitioners—which is reflected in their library programming, services, subject unit mergers, and collection development allotments and allocations.

Wow. Just wow.

One Size Fits All?: Social Science and Open Access

I have a *lot* of trouble with this [lengthy November 14, 2012 post](#) by David Mainwaring at *The Disorder of Things*—not because Mainwaring is a SAGE employee, but because, if librarianship is a social science, I don't much appreciate the apparent total ignorance Mainwaring shows for the history and current status of librarian work on and advocacy for OA. (Actually, Mainwaring explicitly includes arts and humanities, so librarianship *has* to fit there somewhere.)

To read Mainwaring, except for Peter Suber and Stevan Harnad, everybody who's anybody in OA—or *ever has been*—is in STEM. Oh, and they're all men. The fact that, as far as I can tell, the *very first* OA journals were (are) in the social sciences and humanities? No such thing, I guess. The dozens of librarian bloggers who deal with OA and have for years? Charles W. Bailey, Jr.? Dorothea Salo? Hell, Walt Crawford? *We don't exist*.

In the end, I find I can't comment on this article. Maybe you'll find it—mostly a defense of traditional subscription publishing for social science journals, saying they're different (maybe) and less

expensive (generally true), and bringing up the usual nonsense about how it's *appropriate* for libraries to subsidize non-publishing activities of scholarly societies—worthwhile. As one who's obviously never written or talked about OA, just like everybody else in librarianship or the social sciences, I'll remain silent. Seething, but silent.

Academic publishers need better defenders

That's the opinion of Zen Faulkes as expressed in [a November 22, 2012 post](#) at *NeuroDojo*. Faulkes starts from the Alexander Brown article discussed at the end of the UPPING THE ANTI section ("Open access: why academic publishers..."). According to Faulkes, "Brown does not help the publishers' cause."

How so? Faulkes quotes some of the services Brown asserts. Consider the claim that editors help "insure that research can be universally understood."

By that criteria, editors are failing miserably. I'm a working scientist, and I have problems reading many journal articles in my own field. I have never had a journal editor who has recommended, or made, substantial changes to the text of one of my articles for readability, and particularly not to the point where it could be understood by someone who was not a professional scientist. Any suggestions for improving my manuscripts have come from reviewers, not editors.

As a nitpicky copyeditor, I'd change the third word to "criterion," but that wouldn't affect understanding or readability *at all*. Faulkes doesn't see much value in creating new journals—"There is no shortage of venues to publish in"—or in branding a journal.

There's more; Faulkes undermines pretty much every claim—except maybe for metadata and typesetting. All in all, a pretty good quick takedown of Brown's assertions. The conclusion:

Publishers, if Brown's giving the best arguments in your favour... you're in worse trouble than you think.

Predators

Tempted as I was to head this section "Lions, Tigers and In-Tech, Oh My!" I didn't (just as well: as you'll see below, Kevin Smith had the same notion and he's a better writer). We're still in the area of controversies—but here there's not a lot of doubt that *some* OA publishers are not doing OA or science a whole lot of good. And one librarian seems to be making a career out of spotting "predatory" publishers—seemingly as the only aspect of OA worth writing about. I suspect there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of subscription journals that could be considered predatory, charging page charges and subscription fees and having dismal

peer review and standards for acceptance. Oddly enough, nobody seems to be talking about those.

"Predatory" Open-Access Scholarly Publishers

This [article](#) by Jeffrey Beall appeared in *The Charleston Advisor* for April 2010. The *Advisor* is a subscription-access journal; the link here is to a version of the article at *e-LiS*.

The seven-page comparative review looks at nine publishers: Academic Journals, Academic Journals, Inc., ANSINetwork, Dove Press, Insight Knowledge, Knowledge Review, Libertas Academia, Science Publications and Scientific Journals International. Beall published a review of Bentham Open in July 2009.

All nine publishers are Gold OA with processing charges—some fairly low as these things go (e.g., Academic Journals charges \$550 to \$750; Scientific Journals International charges \$100 to \$200 plus \$100 per additional author). Some of them also sell print subscriptions. They publish a *lot* of journals: a total of 481, if I'm counting right. They're probably *not* nine different companies; more likely nine brands of five or six companies.

Beall calls them all vanity presses and dumping grounds and says this of these publishers as a group:

These publishers are predatory because their mission is not to promote, preserve, and make available scholarship; instead, their mission is to exploit the author-pays, Open-Access model for their own profit. They work by spamming scholarly e-mail lists, with calls for papers and invitations to serve on nominal editorial boards. If you subscribe to any professional e-mail lists, you likely have received some of these solicitations. Also, these publishers typically provide little or no peer-review. In fact, in most cases, their peer review process is a façade. None of these publishers mentions digital preservation. Indeed, any of these publishers could disappear at a moment's notice, resulting in the loss of its content. While we were researching this review, one publisher, Academic Journals, was hacked and the site replaced with radical Islamic propaganda for about a week.

Beall quotes Stevan Harnad, and as usual Harnad has little good to say about Gold OA, saying a high proportion of Gold OA journals are "lesser journals" and "not the journals that contain the research that everybody wants and needs the most."

Beall states as one of the negative impacts of predatory OA publishers "the avalanche of journal articles they are creating." Given that *subscription* publishers manage to publish something like 1.5 million articles a year, I don't think it's fair to blame a handful of scammers, if that's what they are, for the avalanche.

You might consider this review and Beall's earlier Bentham review as Baseline Beall. He was just getting started...

In-tech and Lazinica at it again

Also an old item, this one from Dorothea Salo [on December 1, 2010](#) at *Book of Trogoool*. It's relatively short and to the point. It's what needs to be said about every true predatory publisher, whether OA or subscription:

This is by way of a public-service warning.

DO NOT PUBLISH WITH IN-TECH, OR ANY OTHER SO-CALLED PUBLISHER RUN BY [ALEKSANDAR LAZINICA](#). Do not send these outfits any money. Do not. Ever.

Lazinica has the dubious distinction of being the only (as far as I know, anyway) publisher to be told by [OASPA](#) to take their logo off his site. Looking through the current In-tech offerings, one is bombarded with nonexistent copyediting and appalling typesetting. I can only guess acquisitions and review standards are equally low or lower, especially the way the outfit goes around trawling for authors.

This is not an outfit that will do your academic career any good. Stay away. Can I interest you in a nice [PLOS](#) or [BMC](#) instead?

Last I checked, In-tech's journals were still listed in the [DOAJ](#). If I were DOAJ, I'd rectify that problem, but I'm not. And other than OASPA telling Lazinica he can't use their logo, they've been silent on the subject.

So I do what I can to spread the word. Somebody should.

One or two commenters with mixed English skills disagree with Salo—e.g., “The reasons you presented earlier are illogical, and I can't just listen to anyone who say anything about something I can evaluate by myself.”

I Got the Wrong Request from the Wrong Journal to Review the Wrong Piece. The Wrong kind of Open Access Apparently, Something Wrong with this Inherently...

That long and perhaps self-explanatory title is on [an August 27, 2008 post](#) at *Laika's MedLibLog* by a Jacqueline who writes as Laika Spoetnik.

Yesterday I screened my spam-folder. Between all male enhancement and lottery winner announcements, and phishing mails for my bank account, there was an invitation to peer review a paper in “SCIENCE JOURNAL OF PATHOLOGY”.

Such an invitation doesn't belong in the spam folder, doesn't it? Thus I had a closer look and quickly screened the letter.

The letter appears, a little hard to read (but you can click through to [a larger version](#)) but certainly appalling enough. Some of what tipped her off:

I don't know what alarmed me first. The odd hard returns, the journal using a Gmail address, an invitation for a topic (autism) I knew nothing about, an abstract that didn't make sense and has nothing to do with Pathology, the odd style of the letter: the informal, but impersonal introduction (*How are you? I am sure you are busy with many activities right now*) combined with a turgid style (*the paper addresses issues of value to our broad-based audience, and that it cuts through the thick layers of theory and verbosity for them and makes sense of it all in a clean, cohesive manner*) and some misspellings. And then I never had an invitation from an editor, starting with the impersonal “Colleagues”...

But still it was odd. Why would someone take the trouble of writing such an invitation letter? For what purpose? And apparently the person did know that I was a scientist, who does—or is able to—peer review medical scientific papers. Since the mail was sent to my Laika Gmail account, the most likely source for my contact info must have been my pseudonymous blog. I seldom use this mail account for scientific purposes.

She wonders whether this is related to the “vaccination causes autism” quackery, but recognizes it might be coincidental. Still, asking a *pseudonymous blogger* to peer review?

So she looked into the journal—which isn't in PubMed but is on the internet. With an editor but no editorial board or other staff. And she looked further, apparently revealing a scam journal, one of 45 from Medical Science Journals. There's more to the story and the suggestion of various forms of phishing, not simply predatory OA.

The Strange Case of InTech, SciYo, In-Tech, in the...

This one is a set of articles by Richard Poynder (and others) at *Open and Shut?* You can enter via an [October 26, 2011 post](#) “Interview with Nicola Rylett: InTech's response”—but that's largely a *response* to [an October 25, 2011 post](#) “The OA Interviews: InTech's Nicola Rylett”—which in turn links to [a February 12, 2010 post](#), “The OA Interviews: Sciyo's Aleksandar Lazinica.” Since typical Poynder posts are moderate-length posts linking to much longer PDFs, there's a fair amount of text involved—and I admit to not having read all the way through all three. (The middle piece is a 27-page PDF)

InTech (or SciYo or In-Tech...) is peculiar: It not only publishes Gold OA journals with a processing charge that's on the low side for STM—it publishes books consisting of chapters from various

scholars, each with its own processing charge. And it does, or at least it used to, send out lots and lots of email asking people to submit those chapters.

If you're interested, I suggest reading the October 25, 2011 PDF in full, and maybe trying a few of the links. That will get you to one of the most garbled Scribd documents I've ever seen, missing lots of letters from words. It will lead you to a series of contradictions between apparently-clear statements from one company official and "what he meant was..." from another. You can even go to [the publisher's website](#), InTechOpen, and see what it currently says about itself—with, supposedly, 2,013 books, eight journals, 70,000 authors, and a "number of downloaded files" that's over 17 million but either isn't the dynamic counter it looks like or reflects a lack of current interest in InTech's wares.

InTech/Sciyo (the latter name still appears on a website but notes that its 273 books are now read on InTechOpen) holds one distinction: It is, apparently, the only publisher that was told by OASPA to remove the OASPA logo from its site—which it did.

Is it a predatory publisher? Dorothea Salo clearly thinks so. I find it hard to disagree.

Beall's List of Predatory, Open-Access Publishers

This [December 1, 2011 post](#) at *Metadata* is Beall's 2012 list—and the post itself, along with the many, many comments (I admit to not reading them all), increasingly make me wonder whether Beall is deliberately expanding his list to include publishers that aren't predatory—and, for that matter, I wonder why there's a comma after Predatory.

The list is much longer. It still includes publishers who appear to have reasonably good reputations and are in OASPA. His "watchlist" is more difficult—especially since it leads off with Hindawi, a publisher whose credentials have been fairly well established over time. Here's his paragraph on Hindawi:

Based in Cairo, Egypt, this publisher is now on its own after its collaboration with the publisher Sage ended in 2011. This publisher has way too many journals than can be properly handled by one publisher, I think, yet supporters like ITHAKA boast that the prevailing low wages in Egypt, as well as the country's large college-educated, underemployed workforce, allow the company to hire sufficient staff to get the job done. Still, this publisher continues to release new fleet startups of journals, each group having titles with phrases in common: *Advances in ...* (31 titles) and *Case Reports in ...* (32 titles). It appears that Hindawi wants to strategically dominate the open-access market by having the largest open-access journal portfolio.

Setting aside "way too many...than," *how does this phrase not describe Elsevier with its 2,000+ journals and very high author-side charges?* Oh, that's right, because Elsevier is a hugely profitable commercial publisher and thus, clearly, above reproach.

Or the next one, MedKnow Publications, which apparently has a problem with translation on its website. The first portion of the description:

This publisher was on the main list last year. It is the publisher for many well-respected Indian professional societies and is disseminating abundant, high-quality research. However, its business model is vague and unproven: it provides free HTML versions of articles but charges for the PDF version.

So lack of a proven business model is now evidence of being predatory? Really? For a publisher "disseminating abundant, high-quality research"? I can't see anything in any definition of OA that requires that *all* versions of articles be free; if MedKnow wants to charge for prettier versions, that should be its privilege, just as charging for print versions is legitimate.

At about this point, Beall started a new blog, *Scholarly Open Access*—but as I look at the blog, it seems to be almost entirely about those publishers Beall labels as predatory or questionable. Surely there must be more to OA than predatory publishers?

Assessing the scamminess of a purported open-access publisher

This useful post is by the Library Loon, [posted April 11, 2012](#) at *Gavia Libraria*. She notes that, unfortunately, OASPA has not become a clear mark of quality for OA publishers—and that there are *lots* of "verminous scumsucking scammers" around. She's also not convinced that Jeffrey Beall has The Answer. So she has her own set of heuristics. The Loon uses a CC-BY license, and this is a *great* article, so I'm quoting the whole thing:

Communications practices

Is their website competently designed and functional? If not, assume a scammer. (Caveat: Many Open Journal Systems sites are remarkably ugly, but still belong to reputable efforts.)

Are they sending out mass emails asking for editors and submissions? Often a sign of a scammer (though, it must be said, a couple of legitimate OA publishers have done this; they shouldn't, and Hindawi at least has ceased the practice). Is the subject matter of the journal(s) advertised in the email appropriate to the recipient? If not, assume a scammer.

Are they sending out mass emails asking for links to their journal website? Scammer, just like any other linkbaiter.

Are they in the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#)? Nota bene, if they are, it doesn't automatically mean they're legitimate; the DOAJ doesn't check closely. But if they're not, it's worrisome.

Does the publisher offer usage statistics or any other sort of metric, alternative or otherwise? (Don't bother checking for impact factor; they won't have one. Not having one isn't a sign of anything but newness, anyway; it doesn't tell you anything useful.)

The publisher's stable

Is the journal stable in a coherent discipline or set of disciplines? If not—if the stable ranges all over the map, and this is a young/unknown publisher—assume a scammer. PLoS, BMC, Hindawi—the legit tend to start disciplinarily small and expand (if they expand) outward. (The likes of *PLoS ONE* are an exception, of course, but the Loon has yet to see a scammy publisher try a *PLoS ONE* clone.)

Anything set your alarm bells ringing? The Loon has seen comically misspelled journal titles once or twice, as well as ludicrous journal mission statements. (Hey, “Scientific & Academic Publishing”? It's [Geographic Information Systems](#), just so you know.)

Check journal-launch dates. Did the publisher launch a flock of journals at once? This is logistically near-impossible to do well (or indeed at all), no matter what the underlying business model; assume a scammer.

Likewise, are many of the journals empty shells, with no or very few published articles? Classic scammy sign; the publisher is throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks.

How many of the journals publish regularly? The lower the number (that is, the more irregular the journal schedules), the likelier this publisher is to be a scammer.

A particularly dangerous warning sign: the publisher issues a lot of “edited volumes” rather than actual journals. This is really only a somewhat more advanced case of rot than the irregularly-published journal. The scammer has given up on collecting enough victims to publish something that looks even vaguely like a journal.

Often, the above criteria combine into a fairly strong hunch about the publisher's scamminess. Those still unsure about a particular publisher may wish to proceed to:

Production values

Download a journal article or two. Assess the writing quality. Assess the copyediting. Assess the typesetting quality. If any of these is markedly lacking, spot-check a few more articles, varying the journals you look at. This isn't an infallible sign, because goodness knows plenty of publishers on all sides of the business-model

question let howling typographic and content horrors pass (the Loon is looking at you, Haworth), and a few scammers are smart enough to have fixed their typography and layout (the Loon is looking at you, InTech), but a pronounced lack is still indicative.

If you have the disciplinary background, skim some tables of contents to check articles for currency, interest, worth. The Loon confesses that this is quite often beyond her; she typically asks a liaison-librarian colleague with appropriate expertise for his or her opinion. When she looks at scammy journals within her expertise domains, though, she typically sees work that's years behind the state of the art, even considering the slow pace of normal scholarly publishing.

Does this publisher have anything on its site about its digital-preservation practices? Are they a LOCKSS, CLOCKSS, or Portico member? Do they participate in the DOAJ's OA-journal preservation program? Are they partnering with a library for preservation? This is a basic scholarly responsibility; a publisher that hasn't considered it is either a scammer or a bunch of irresponsible heads-in-the-sand ostriches.

People

Are editorial boards listed? If not, assume a scammer. If so, have you heard of any of these people? Again, the Loon often has to defer to others' disciplinary knowledge here.

This is a tricky and often misleading one, but: do editorial and author slates consist mostly or entirely of scholars from developing nations? [Richard Poynder explains astutely](#) why this is a scamminess indicator: the developing educational/research infrastructure in these countries often privileges the appearance of scholarly publishing over the actual quality thereof, leaving a huge market for scammy pay-to-play “publishing” outfits. Do not use this criterion by itself! Not a few developing nations are building wholly legitimate open-access journal stables, in part because developed-world scholarly publishers often can't be arsed to publish knowledge local to developing nations or work with non-native speakers of English on their prose—and more shame to them for it.

Business model

Has the publisher ever had any financial support at all other than author fees? Grants (including grants that have run their course; several reputable OA publishers have gotten their seed money via startup grants), an existing reputable publisher applying capital, a membership program, an institutional or library or grant-funder backstop? If not, that's a worrisome sign.

If there's advertising, is it reputable, relevant to the journals, not immediately skeevey?

Does the publisher run conferences? Are they exclusively in exotic junky locations? Are the conference fees exorbitant, compared to other conferences in the field? Do they publish proceedings, and if they do, are those proceedings any good? Just as there are scammy journals, there are scammy conferences that are pure excuses for expensive vacations and profitmongering.

That's what the Loon looks at. Any scamminess criteria she's missed?

I'm not sure what I could add here. As the Loon notes, a couple of these aren't sure-fire hits—but if a journal or publisher shows a fair number of these, chances are it's scammy.

A handful of comments include one new sign (although it's harder to research): Reputable scholars showing up on editorial boards—where quick email to the scholar reveals that she's never *heard* of the journal. That's a one-shot red flag: Unless the scholar's over the hill, the journal's scum.

Lions and tiger and bears, OA, or, scaring the children, part 1

That's Kevin Smith on June 28, 2012 at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke*—and it provides a refreshingly different take on predatory publishing. Smith begins with an incident at Duke: A scholar applied for funding for processing charges from Duke's COPE fund, but didn't meet the criteria—which are that the journal must be in [DOAJ](#) and the publisher must be a member of [OASPA](#). “These criteria may be imperfect surrogates for quality, but they have served us well in striving to be sure that we support high-quality, sustainable OA publishing efforts.” In this case, the journal met *neither* of the criteria, which is fairly suspicious.

Smith forwarded to the researcher a link to a discussion of whether or not the publisher was a predatory publisher—an inconclusive discussion. The scholar replied by thanking him for his concern, but also indicated that she planned to proceed with the venue.

Her response got me thinking about the whole notion of predatory open access publishing. How, I wondered, should libraries especially, when they administer OA funds, think about the predatory problem?

First, I think libraries are right to raise the issue. We have always had a role in helping students and even faculty evaluate the quality of various publications, and doing so is an obligation when we are making purchase or other funding decisions, since we are obligated to spend carefully the funds our institutions entrust to us. I really like the warning, couched in a modest and restrained tone, found in [this blog post the University of](#)

[Buffalo Libraries](#). We should not be condemning all open access publishing, or otherwise shouting about the predators all around us, but we do need to answer inquiries honestly and spend our monies wisely.

Ah, but then there's the other side:

“Predatory” publishing is not exclusively an open access problem, and the problems included in that over-used phrase actually run the gamut from genuine attempts to defraud people to simple mismanagement. Before there were OA journals there were journals published in traditional fashion that were merely shells for certain industries or which otherwise had unacknowledged selection criteria that conflicted with scholarly quality. The victims of these types of journals were unwary libraries, who purchased subscriptions that ultimately ill-served their patrons and wasted scarce resources.

Publish over 2,000 journals on a staggering variety of topics? Charge very high Gold OA fees when that choice is available? *Known* to have published phony industry-sponsored journals? Nah, *that* couldn't be predatory: that's just good business. And not, I think, what Smith is referring to.

In an online age, criteria that are well-established in libraries for avoiding these predatory toll-access journals now must be shared more widely because researchers may unwittingly spend research funds on equally low-quality OA journals. But to call this an open access problem is to blind ourselves to its full scope and is, I fear, often motivated more by the desire to bring OA itself into disrepute, to “scare the children,” as I like to call it, than it is by a desire to protect the entire system of scholarly communications. We should not allow FUD (fear, uncertainty & doubt), which is often spread by institutions that are trying to preserve the problem to which they see themselves as the solution (to paraphrase Clay Shirky), to narrow our vision of a sustainable system of scholarly publishing. The problem we should be addressing is predatory publications, OA and subscription-based, and publishing ethics across the board.

There follows a discussion of Beall's lists and overbroad labeling and his fears of a panic over predatory OA publishers, as though they were the only predators. He ends with this paragraph, which is also worth thinking about:

Finally, I think that there is a role here for deference to researchers, who are likely to know best what form of publishing suits their needs. It is perfectly possible that the advantages of open access publishing or any other particular publishing venue will, in the minds of individual researchers, simply outweigh some of the concerns we might express about a publisher, especially when those concerns are subjective or in dispute. The

speed of research dissemination and the impact advantage that authors get from open access may make it a lot easier to overlook purely administrative problems, which probably plague any publishing enterprise in its first few years. The authors themselves, who know their disciplines best, of course, and also have the responsibility to manage their own careers, should ultimately decide where they want to publish, as the researcher I conversed with this week did. We need objective criteria and frank communication about real problems and concerns when we are expending the limit funds of our institutions. But that is very different from telling researchers that they cannot publish somewhere, which we should never do, in my opinion. It is also quite different from a panic or a witch-hunt or a FUD-fest, which will not serve anyone well.

The Beallfest

The remaining three items, from July, August and September 2012, appeared [in Richard Poynder's *Open and Shut?*](#), [The Scientist](#), and [Nature News & Comment](#). They're all about or by Jeffrey Beall—and this Beallfest seems to include him painting a broader and broader swath of Concern about gold OA. He essentially attacks gold OA in general with this statement:

We must 'maintain the integrity of the academic record', and I am doubtful that gold open-access is the best long-term way to accomplish that.

I guess it's official: Beall isn't only in the business of finding more and more publishers he can label as predators (111 of them in July 2012! More than 200 in his 2013 list!), and gaining wider and wider recognition as The Person Who Understands, he's concluded that the whole enterprise of Gold OA is suspect. Given Poynder's increasingly Harnadian views, this makes Beall a sympathetic subject.

Also an ignorant one, as in this quote:

By definition, gold open-access publishers levy an article processing charge (APC).

That is absolutely, positively, *provably* not true, and undermines Beall's authority to be considered an OA expert. There is *no possible way* Beall could have become broadly knowledgeable about gold OA without being aware that the majority of gold OA publishers *do not* levy APCs—including several gold OA publishers in librarianship.

Oh, and Beall's also clear: By his definitions, *there is no such thing as a predatory subscription-based publisher*. If you charge the readers, *you must be OK*.

You won't be surprised to see that Beall's article in *The Scientist* throws in some of the long-discredited anti-OA myths, such as this one:

Authors become the publishers' customers, an arrangement that creates a conflict of interest: the more papers a publisher accepts, the more revenue it earns.

Since subscription journals *regularly* increase subscription prices based on an increase in the number of papers published, this is a myth in the sense that it applies *equally well* to subscription journals. The next paragraph is simply an unproven attack:

Not surprisingly, acceptance rates at gold open-access journals are skyrocketing, and article peer review is decreasing. Scholarly communication is now flooded with hundreds of thousands of new, second-rate articles each year, burdening conscientious researchers who have to sort through them all, filtering out the unworthy ones.

A bit later, Beall refers to "the few worthy open-access publishers," a turn of phrase that pretty directly implies that *most* OA publishers are unworthy. Oh, and librarians are accused of "cyberbullying" traditional publishers. Worse yet, "some even insist on open-access mandates," which Beall then proceeds to misdefine (since nearly all such mandates allow for green as well as gold OA).

At this point, it seems increasingly clear that Beall—whatever his original intentions—has become an anti-OA writer and defender of traditional journals. Sort of a shame, really.

The *Nature* piece is a bit less broad in its attacks on gold OA in general, but Beall once more suggests that even *speeding up* the review process "weakens peer review," which sure reads to me as an attack on *PLoS ONE*. And he ends with a paragraph that, well...you can read it yourself:

Conventional scholarly publishers have had an important role in validating research, yet too often advocates of open access seem to overlook the importance of validation in online publishing. They promote access at the expense of quality: a shortcoming that tacitly condones the publication of unworthy scientific research.

A pretty broad brush. I'm disappointed.

Economics

This section began with the most items (although some disappeared along the way) and may be one of the more confused. Such is life.

The economic case for open access in academic publishing

This article by Adam Stevenson [appeared November 29, 2010](#) at *ars technica*. It's a good exposition on the economics of academic publishing—which is a \$12 billion worldwide industry but, Stevenson says, repre-

sents more than \$100 billion when you account for researchers' time preparing and reading articles. (Including the time spent *reading* articles is a classic method of inflating the value of an industry—you can make public libraries worth almost any amount using that technique—but adding the time spent *for free* preparing and refereeing articles is more plausible.)

Stevenson recognizes that there are first-copy costs even for ejournals and notes that it's nearly impossible to get accurate *cost* figures from publishers. He says "several recent studies put the first copy costs, before considering printing costs, at \$2,000-\$15,000 per article." I flat-out don't believe the second figure—and, reading the rest of the paragraph, it appears that we're back to equating *revenue* with costs.

Discussing OA, he says publishers are extremely worried about its rise—and this:

To offset revenue losses from open access articles, journals generally charge 2 to 10 times more if authors want or are required to use open access. For authors who are not legally required to use the open access option, adoption is negligibly small—a fact that the publishing industry uses to prove that open access is not important to researchers.

From my own experience in research labs, this line of reasoning is profoundly ignorant of the cost pressures and budget constraints of modern labs. Researchers always want their work available to the widest possible audience, but the choice between \$600 in author charges to place an article behind a paywall and \$5,000 for open access is a no-brainer, especially when authors know that the vast majority of researchers have adequate access through the current subscription systems.

Stevenson quotes studies on potential savings from complete switches to OA—and the publishing industry's response:

The publishing industry has criticized the economic model used in the JISC report, stating that it underestimates the costs of overhauling the academic publishing system, underestimates the efficiencies of the current system, and that many of the cost savings would lead to job cuts for librarians and publishers. Many of these criticisms, however, appear to be well off the mark and show a profound misunderstanding of the models in the JISC report. Further, the economic model used in the JISC report is available online and the publishing industry is free to adjust the assumptions and show what they consider to be a more realistic simulation. It seems rather telling that no such analysis has been reported.

He anticipates a slow shift toward OA "but the transition will be ugly."

Looking at comments, it seems that Stevenson regards *managing* peer review as a very expensive process. And he casts doubt on the long-term viability of OA.

The Cash Cow Has Left the Room

Barbara Fister [on January 13, 2011](#) in "Peer to Peer Review" at *Library Journal*. She notes the significant growth in OA in 2010 and the attitude of publishers that there's nothing wrong, that nothing needs to be fixed—especially not through FRPAA, the Federal Research Public Access Act.

I figured that was just a shameless performance for Congress, whose members don't know better. I guess I was wrong; they really think there is no problem.

She points to an interview with Derek Haank, who used to head up Elsevier Science and now heads up Springer. Haank says the serials crisis ended years ago, solved by the Big Deal.

I'm not making this up. According to Haank, the Big Deal enabled libraries to "get back all the journals they had had to cancel, and they gained access to even more journals in the process." And because electronic publishing saves the publisher money, that means the Big Deal is affordable. Who knew?

Haank's also sure publishers now offer "value for the money" and he's not concerned about OA.

With the acquisition of BioMed Central in 2008, Springer claimed a major stake in author-pays OA, but from this executive's perspective, it's a revenue stream, not a movement, and it's more of a trickle than the wave of the future. "OA is just a business model," he says, a new but small revenue stream funded by the odd eccentric who has leapt on the bandwagon. His company is moving (as many publishers are) to offering authors the chance to buy their research's freedom for a few thousand dollars per article, costs that will probably be passed on to the taxpayer. But he doubts many scientists will bother. "The reality is that (outside the biomedical field) most people just don't see a sufficient problem for OA to become a big movement," he says.

Reality? Most people have never heard of OA. But that's beside the point.

I'm pretty sure he's not including librarians in this depiction of "reality"—we're just the intermediary, and our opinion isn't relevant. Growth is inevitable. There will always be an increasing amount of scientific research to publish, more research that scientists will have to consult, and libraries will simply have to magically come up with the funds to make it happen. "Our first priority" he says "is to continue as we are."

At the time, Haank wasn't troubled by green OA because most people can't be bothered to deposit their articles and the articles are hard to find. Mandates, however, are dangerous: they could destroy "the equilibrium that we have achieved over OA." That equilibrium? *Whatever does not in any way disrupt publisher profits.*

That won't work in the long run, and librarians have a major role to play in speeding up that long run. Fister concludes (as always, she writes so well that you should read the whole thing):

None of us can be complacent and assume that someone else will figure out how to make this open access thing work. We can't continue to pinch pennies and hope that somehow we'll be able to meet the research needs of our students and faculty through nips and tucks and a wish that things will get better. All of us need to play a role in creating a sustainable future for knowledge, no matter how small or underfunded we are.

Because however invisible it is to publishers, the system is broken—and the only way we will fix it is to make sure the open access movement is a force to be reckoned with.

OA: Just Another Business Model

This could be considered the second half of the previous piece—again by Barbara Fister, this time [on January 16, 2011](#) at *ACRL*Log, this time with [a link](#) to the Haank interview so you can see whether Fister was quoting out of context.

This post includes a few choice quotes, e.g.:

"The Big Deal is the best invention since sliced bread. I agree that there was once a serial pricing problem; I have never denied there was a problem. But it was the Big Deal that solved it . . . it corrected everything that went wrong in the serials crisis in one go: people were able to get back all the journals that they had had to cancel, and they gained access to even more journals in the process." (All the journals that we don't need that you can shake a stick at! Too bad it hasn't worked out for anything the library used to buy that isn't in the Deal.)

"I am absolutely convinced that the traditional subscription model delivered through the intermediary services of the library or information department will remain the dominant model. You might be forgiven for thinking that the OA movement is a lot bigger than it is. That is because those people who want to change something are always more vocal than those who are happy with the way things are." (Happy ... like us? Oh, that's right, our opinion doesn't matter. We are but handmaidens.)

The parenthetical comments are, as you might expect, Fister's opinions. With which I concur.

In fact, "just another business model" is one interesting way to diminish the role of OA, to make it nothing more than another way to keep publishers fat. Fister isn't saying that; some publishers have been. Which leads directly into...

The Demise of the Big Deal?

Maybe this one—by Richard Poynder [on March 14, 2011](#) at *Open and Shut?*—belongs under Elsevier (coming soon!), but it's more general. It's an email interview with Claudio Aspesi, an analyst at Sanford Bernstein, and it looks as though Aspesi really *does* regard OA as nothing more than a different business model, a change that—if handled adroitly—could funnel the same enormous amounts of money into the same pockets, just from different sources.

Aspesi expects to see more and more research libraries dropping out of Big Deals because they can't afford the continual price increases and because big chunks of Big Deals are stuff the specific libraries really have no use for. But here's where it gets tricky, or stupid if you prefer: A prediction that the fall in revenue would mean researchers "will be able to publish fewer papers in the future." Which only makes sense if you accept that current publishing prices represent wholly efficient uses of money, that there aren't cheaper ways to disseminate papers. (See below: That's Poynder's selective quote. Poynder also takes the opportunity to throw in a link to his attack on PLoS and suggest that OA "could also lead to a decline in the quality of published research.")

He's a financial analyst with, as far as I can tell, no real understanding of academic libraries, but give Aspesi credit for this:

Revenues for STM publishers have been rising faster than library budgets for many years, and librarians have had to cope with this discrepancy by cutting back their spending in other areas.

We can all speculate whether this could have continued indefinitely or not, but it does not really matter: the financial crisis has led to widespread cuts in library budgets, forcing research libraries to take a harder look at what they spend on serials.

Overlay to the funding crisis the realisation that Big Deals forced librarians to take journals that nobody (or almost nobody) really accessed and you set up a perfect storm.

He says it's "terrific" for publishers to gain revenues from "journals which were not really read" (and suggests that two-thirds of journals in Big Deals fall

into that category). He also denigrates librarians, who “did not consider that the Big Deals were depriving libraries of the funding needed for other activities.” There’s also this gem—remembering that Alesi is a stock analyst:

I can observe, however, that there is something unhealthy about an industry which has managed to alienate its customers to the point their membership associations increasingly focus time and attention on how to overturn the industry structure. It is not a good thing to have your customers spend their time trying to put you out of business.

Ya’ think?

Ah, but wait: Poynder’s claim (which I repeated) up above seems to be selective quoting. In fact, here’s what Aspesi actually says:

If the Big Deal goes away altogether, fewer journals will be sustainable, which means that less research will be published. This headline sounds threatening for the research community, until you ask yourself how much of the research which is being published today is actually read. My guess is that if fewer subscription journals are published, something else will take their place, probably a combination of Open Access journals and self-archiving repositories. [Emphasis added.]

Whoops.

The first comment takes issue with Aspesi’s claim that librarians “did not consider that the Big Deals were depriving libraries of the funding needed for other libraries.” The anonymous comment goes on:

We have always been painfully aware of that fact. We simply had no choice, though, since the “bundle” of journals was the only way to subscribe to the major journals the publisher carried. Bundling has always been a problematic issue for librarians.

Later, Michael Lines expands on this:

Libraries have always had a choice, but have never been organized enough to demand better from publishers. The fact that we’ve been aware of the downsides is of little importance.

And Aspesi chimed in, with a comment that he asked Poynder to post in the comments:

“Of course many librarians have been frustrated with the pricing of the Big Deal contracts for many years. Very few, however, were willing—until recently—to translate their frustration into concrete actions.”

The rest of Aspesi’s comment has to do with stock prices. That is, after all, his job.

Who’s calling whose bluff?

The Library Loon asked that question [on September 20, 2011](#) at *Gavia Libraria*. The Loon takes on the Big Deal and libraries that signed up for them right off the bat—and includes an early warning sign:

Academic libraries could have avoided the serials crisis altogether, if they’d coldly eyed the Big Deal for what it was, and told publishers where to shove it. That obviously didn’t happen; libraries fixated on “the library that dies with the most stuff wins” happily bought in, with predictable ([and predicted](#)) results.

When budgets started getting tight, a very few libraries started talking smack about the Big Deal. It was largely bluff. Big-pig publishers knew that and called the bluff. Libraries folded.

That link at “[and predicted](#)” is to a Kenneth Frazier article in *D-Lib Magazine* (which, although free to both authors and readers, isn’t Gold OA because it’s not peer reviewed), and it’s a doozy. Frazier, Director of Libraries at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, says flatly:

Academic library directors should not sign on to the Big Deal or any comprehensive licensing agreements with commercial publishers.

You read that right. Don’t buy the Big Deal. The University of Wisconsin Libraries and dozens of other research libraries also are holding out, convinced that the Big Deal serves only the Big Publishers. Many other university and college libraries are also investigating their options, recognizing—as we all do—that the push to build an all-electronic collection can’t be undertaken at the risk of: (1) weakening that collection with journals we neither need nor want, and (2) increasing our dependence on publishers who have already shown their determination to monopolize the information marketplace.

It’s quite an article, going into more details on the bad effects of Big Deals and what libraries should have been (and should be) doing instead.

Meanwhile, back to the Loon, she notes that early green OA efforts were *also* largely bluff, thanks to misunderstood and starved institutional repositories—and that this bluff was also called. Now, things are heating up—and, of course, publishers believe it’s a bluff once again.

The Loon thinks they’re wrong. I hope the Loon is right.

A study of Open Access Journals Using Article Processing Charges

This [green OA preprint](#) is the accepted version of an article by David J. Solomon and Bo-Christer Björk appearing in 2012 in *The Journal of the American*

Society for Information Science and Technology (which is *most definitely* toll access). It's 36 double-spaced pages.

The two authors looked at 1,370 journals listed in the DOAJ as charging APCs. Those journals published 100,697 articles in 2010. The average charge was \$996 based on journals, \$904 based on articles—in both cases, considerably lower than the numbers that get tossed around, even omitting that fact that most Gold OA journals don't charge APCs at all. (The price range was from \$8 to \$3,900.)

It's probably not surprising that journals in biomed—most of the sample—had the highest APCs, and that what the authors call “professionally published journals” had higher APCs than society, university or scholar-published journals.

The abstract, from which I've extracted this shorter version, may be all you need to know: Even setting aside the majority of Gold OA journals without APCs, the *actual* cost of APCs is much lower than you might think.

The paper goes into much more detail. One unfortunate aspect of the study is that an OA publisher generally regarded as questionable represents 200 journals (thus significantly influencing the journal average) and charges a flat \$800—but the journals publish so few articles that this publisher doesn't much affect the *article* figures. Most *very* low APCs (below \$200) are from publishers in developing countries catering to local authors.

I like this paragraph:

It is interesting to note that a little over 100,000 articles could be published and made available to the global scientific community at an estimated cost of 91 million USD. This can be contrasted to the revenue estimate of 8 billion USD for STM journal publishing constituting the bulk of an estimated 1.5 million over-all article volume (Ware and Mabe 2009).

Breaking that down, Gold OA *for those journals with APCs* cost about one-sixth as much per article as subscription journals, at least in STM.

Getting down to the figures shows that the *median* APCs—a more meaningful figure than the average—were \$800 for journals, \$740 for articles. In other words, half of the articles published in APC-charging Gold OA journals in 2010 involved fees of \$740 or less, not even considering waivers.

An efficient journal

This one's beyond a little strange—by Stuart Shieber [on March 6, 2012](#) at *The Occasional Pamphlet*. He tells us about the *Journal of Machine Learning Re-*

search (JMLR), a Gold OA journal in Shieber's own field (AI). The strange part is *why* he wrote the post, and it emphasizes why I have ignored *Scholarly Kitchen* in this roundup (and elsewhere): because it, and particularly one author, have gotten to the point where calling it the *Drudge Report* or Fox News of OA discussion would be an insult to Fox News and the *Drudge Report*.

A computer science professor commented that “The best publications in my field are not only open access, but completely free to the readers *and* to the authors.” JMLR was one of the examples. Kent Anderson went ballistic—I won't quote him, but Shieber's article does. Anderson, in *complete ignorance of how the journal works*, simply fired off a bunch of suppositions.

Shieber knows better—and knows how JMLR came about. It's one of the “protest journals,” created when the editorial board of a toll-access journal gets fed up and leaves to establish an OA alternative. The journal's been around since October 2000. Since it came along in the (relatively) early days of OA and was likely to have a serious stream of articles, the editorial board—consisting of computer scientists, after all—created their own processing system.

The journal did well. The first year it was included in ISI rankings, it had the highest impact factor of any journal in its category—and it's currently ranked eighth out of 108, fourth by Eigenfactor and Article Influence. (The toll-access journal the board deserted is down to 33rd). Shieber explains in some detail how it all works, essentially without *any* real income (the journal has had a total of \$3,500 in donations over 12 years; it could have much more but hasn't felt the need).

What about copy-editing and typesetting? Shieber says the publisher of the former journal (Kluwer at the time) “did no copy-editing of articles.” JMLR relies on peer reviewers for light copyediting and advises authors who need lots of language help to find copyediting help at their own expense—but “such cases are extremely rare.” Since most computer scientists use [LaTeX](#) while writing, no typesetting is involved: the journal provides a suitable style file to the authors.

There's more; it's a fairly long and very specific discussion. There's a print version (at a price); it was formerly provided by the MIT Press (at no cost to the journal but with no revenue to the journal) at around 30 cents a page—but for seven years, it's been done by Microtome Publishing, again on a zero-zero basis. One difference: Microtome Publishing has dropped

the per-page rate to eight cents a page. And, of course, that's only for the printed version: the online version is free. (Shieber is Microtome Publishing.)

Does *JMLR*'s success and efficiency mean that all journals could run this way? Of course not. First, computer science journals are in a particularly good situation for being operated at low cost. Computer scientists possess all of the technological expertise required to efficiently manage and operate an online journal. Journal publishing is an information industry and computer scientists are specialists in information processing. Second, the level of volunteerism that *JMLR* relies on is atypical for the entire spectrum of journals. Paid editorial positions for computer science journals are exceptionally rare; we're used to the volunteerism of running a journal. As authors, computer scientists are accustomed to performing their own typesetting and we prefer to do it ourselves. *JMLR* reviewers are relied on for whatever copy-editing is done. Paying professional copy-editors if that was desired would add more to the cost per page (though apparently not even Machine Learning's commercial publisher was doing so when the board left). Third, some of the costs of operating a journal are the overhead costs that are being absorbed by various institutions. An independent publisher would have to pay for office space for staff, for instance, whereas the primary editors use their homes or offices, hiding that cost.

Nonetheless, the success of *JMLR* does provide a clue that the cost of running a premier journal might be far less than publishers imply, if they were to rethink the process substantially—maybe not \$10 per article, but surely far less than [the \\$5,000 average revenue per article](#) that scholarly publishers currently receive. This expectation is borne out by the several non-profit and commercial open-access journal publishers that are able to operate in the black with publication fees a fraction of that average.

You'll also want to read the comments, which show the rhetorical styles of the people involved. It's not a pretty picture (unlike *JMLR*).

I could point out that there are quite literally thousands of similar stories, gold OA journals that don't have APCs, although perhaps not quite so many as successful as *JMLR*. In the real world, it's quite clearly a workable business model—for some journals in some fields under some circumstances. Heck, it's workable enough that at least four ALA divisions (and at least one section) now publish gold OA journals without APCs.

"No, we can't"

The first of two commentaries on a [fairly stunning announcement](#) from Harvard Library—that it *can't*

afford the serials subscriptions it wants. This one's from the Library Loon, [posted April 23, 2012](#) at *Gavia Libraria*. The Loon thinks this may be the first announcement of its kind.

California's refusal to lie down for Nature Publishing Group's price increase is similar, granted, but as best the Loon can recall, California never actually said "we can't afford this." Purdue let a negotiation go to the wire last year, but they, too, avoided the claim that a price tag was simply too much.

The Loon offers some ideas as to why it's taken so long for announcements like this to happen. Part of it is that libraries *liked* the Big Deal, at least initially—especially when purchased through consortia. Part of it is self-preservation: "Faculty view academic libraries mostly as wallets, exchanging money for materials."

One last reason not to say "no, we can't" that seems overwhelmingly obvious to the Loon is that it forecloses on the possibility of asking for more money. If the Loon had a fish for every time she's seen someone (faculty or librarian) say "giving the library more money will solve the serials problem!" she'd never go hungry again.

So Harvard's "no, we can't" carries a significant subtext: *no amount of money, even from one of the richest universities in the world, can satisfy the rapacity of the current system*. To the Loon, this has been obvious for years: whatever amount of money a library has, the big-pigs invariably find a way to vacuum it up, so increasing money flow to the library merely increases the big-pigs' profits without buying much if any additional benefit to libraries or library patrons.

There's more to the post, and a handful of comments—including Barbara Fister's note that, in a small liberal arts college they say "no, we can't afford it" all the time. But, of course, Harvard matters more—to the publishers as well as to public opinion.

Harvard's library can't afford journal subscriptions

This post by Mike Taylor came on the same day, [April 23, 2013](#), at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week*. The topic is, obviously, the same. Taylor notes that Harvard is probably "the single richest school on the planet," with an endowment over 60% larger than the next highest, and certainly one of the two or three best universities in the world.

Yes, you read it right. The world's richest university can't afford journal subscriptions. If anyone ever doubted that subscription prices had run wild, that the academic publishers who control access to the research we generate are out of control, this should dispel any remaining illusions that all is well with the current model.

Taylor also notes actions for scholars recommended by the advisory council that made that announcement:

Archive all their own papers as Green Open Access.

Submit to open-access journals; “move prestige to open access”.

Resign from editorial boards of non-OA journals if they won't convert.

Ask professional societies to take control of publishing in their fields.

Recruit colleagues to join them in these measures.

Taylor says this makes it clear that OA is no longer a fringe issue—not only a moral imperative but also an economic imperative.

How much does publishing really cost? The Long Answer

This article-length post by Christopher Kelty [on June 11, 2012](#) at *Savage Minds* doesn't answer the question—for one thing, there is no single answer—but it sure is an interesting set of thought experiments and explorations, all from the perspective of an anthropologist who questions AAA's journal pricing.

Kelty read an article reporting that the editor-in-chief of *Science* said OA was inevitable—but also that the cost of publishing in *Nature* or *Science* is in excess of \$10,000. Per article. Kelty finds that hard to believe. So do I (although I'll grant that *Science's* revenue stream per article is probably in excess of \$10,000, especially if you ignore all the content in *Science* as a print magazine that isn't refereed articles).

Kelty publishes a “scholarly magazine,” [Limn](#), that's free online and available for, so far, \$10 or \$11 in print form. (The print version is handled by CreateSpace.) So far, the publication's cost about \$250 per article—most of that going to pay a developer and designer.

There is a huge difference between \$250 and \$10,000. And really the comparison between our little experiment and *Nature* is not fair to either side. However, I do think it's fair to make a comparison with the AAA because the AAA is insisting that publishing is so expensive that switching from subscription to open access will ruin them. But from what I can tell, publishing in a AAA journal is significantly cheaper than \$10,000, so it should be within reach of an alternative model.

Much of the rest of the long post involves going through some AAA numbers and asking questions. It's pretty clear that AAA significantly subsidizes other activities through journal prices; at worst case, according to an AAA official, switching to full Gold OA (with no new APC fees) would mean increasing

the average membership dues from \$82 to \$175. That doesn't strike me as an enormously high price for a professional society, but what do I know?

Kelty uses AAA's numbers to conclude that the total cost of the publishing program works out to \$1,600 per article (if you ignore reviews—\$890 per article if reviews are included). And that's without any new economies.

Then we get to the tough part: Does \$1,600 represent the legitimate cost of publishing an article? Here, Kelty offers all sorts of good and bad reasons for costs. It's a long enough and interesting enough discussion that I'm not inclined to excerpt or comment on the rest. No, Kelty doesn't *really* answer the question—but he sure does provide a lot of food for thought, especially for AAA members.

Now we see through a glass, darkly

In a way, this Kevin Smith piece [appearing July 25, 2012](#) at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke* is related to the article just discussed. It's about the need for more transparency regarding the *actual and legitimate* costs of publishing peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Which are not, and must not be calculated as, the *current revenues* from scholarly journals.

Smith links to a *U.S. News and World Reports* [article from July 25, 2012](#) about scholarly publishing and OA, an article that keys off the Harvard announcement. (I wish I could praise that article, but I can't.) He also discusses the Finch report on UK funding and some responses to it.

[Admission: for a variety of reasons, including not wanting this roundup to be even more absurdly long, I'm generally *not* dealing with the Finch/RCUK situation. It's complex, it's partly UK-specific, and it deserves more knowledge and space than I can give it. I will be including a few pieces that deal with the RCUK situation—but only to the extent that they touch on other aspects of OA as well.]

The key paragraph that got Smith's piece mentioned here:

In this debate we see why some of the issues raised in the *U.S. News* article are so important. The largest message I got from reading that article was that we need a lot more transparency about the costs of publishing a single academic journal article. At one point the Executive Director of the American Physiological Society is quoted as saying that the per-article cost at his journal is between \$2,500 and \$3,000, a figure he uses to ridicule the idea that upfront money from academics could replace subscription income. But why does it cost that much?

As Smith notes, APC fees are often much lower. The Duke average is around \$1,200 and the average in the study noted above was under \$1,000 (and, a reminder, *most gold OA journals*—apparently publishing roughly half of the articles published in such journals—*don't charge APC fees at all*).

Smith notes what I've noted: When you *do* get “solid numbers” on the costs and profits of academic publishing, the numbers rarely add up very well.

An industry financial analyst for Deutsche Bank [pointed out some time ago](#) that if publishing academic articles costs as much as legacy publishers say that it does, the 30–40% profit margins they enjoy would not be possible (see the quote associated with footnote 19 in the linked article). And in the Georgia State lawsuit, where the judge was able to compel the plaintiff publishers to produce some real numbers, she rejected entirely the claim that profit margins were so slim that permissions income was a make-or-break proposition for academic publishing.

Good, sensible stuff.

An Open Access thought experiment

This post by John Dupuis on August 28, 2012 at *Confessions of a Science Librarian* is interesting both for the question Dupuis poses and some of the answers he gets. Here's the question:

Imagine a scenario where suddenly overnight all toll access publishing suddenly converts to Open Access. You go to bed and your average academic library spends millions of dollars on serials. You wake up, and the subscription bill is zero.

[Followed by a whole set of caveats...]

What I'm interested in is asking, “What you would spend all that money on?”

How much would you reinvest in other library personnel, collections, spaces or services? What kinds of library personnel, collections, spaces or services would you invest in?

How much would you return to the central institutional budget? And what would you do with that money?

A variety of responses follows, frequently with Dupuis' comment on the response. Some are cynical and one, from Daniel Lemire, reminded me why I have trouble with Lemire and some other “friends of libraries”: He'd fire all the local librarians since, after all, local libraries are pointless. Sigh...

Anyway, worth reading.

Time to go it alone on Open Access

In some ways, I shouldn't be including this post by Peter Coles (a theoretical astrophysicist at Cardiff University) [on September 20, 2012](#) at *In the Dark*,

since it's very much an attack on the Finch report, which I'm not covering—but it's also a bold statement about current journal publishing and the economics of Gold OA. Let's set aside the probably-false statement that Gold OA is “the model of open access in which most authors will have to pay publishers a whopping fee up front in order to disseminate their work,” which ignores the fact that most Gold OA journals don't have APC fees—and that most APC fees are not all that whopping (under \$1,000, not the £2000—call it around \$3,200 as of 12/16/2012—stated in the post).

Still, the next paragraph strikes me as sound, and it applies to most attempts by traditional publishers to define Gold OA in a manner that would suit them:

I put “article processing fee” in quotes there because a fee of that size bears no relation to the actual cost to the publishers of processing an article: articles in most physics journals are typeset by the author, and refereed for free by other academics suggested by the editor (another academic). What it really represents is the amount of money researchers will have to pay to maintain the humongous profit margins currently enjoyed by the academic publishing industry. Currently they rake in the cash through subscription charges after papers have been published in their journals. In future they will get the dosh in advance, which will probably make their business even more lucrative. And who will pay for maintaining their profitability? Researchers, of course. It's clear who is going to benefit from the provisions of the Finch Report, and it's not us.

Coles discusses attempts by publishers to justify their charges, specifically within the physics community, and belittles those attempts with some justification. This paragraph is interesting but does seem to ignore the reality of growth in research article production:

Don't you think it's very strange that in a time of shrinking library budgets the number of journals seems to be growing all the time? Do we really need new ones? Do we even need the old ones? I think not.

And here's an intriguing paragraph:

Having looked carefully into the costs of on-line digital publishing I have come to the conclusion that a properly-run, not-for-profit journal, created for and run by researchers purely for the open dissemination of the fruits of their research can be made sustainable with an article processing charge of less than £50 per paper, probably a lot less.

Call that \$80 per article. Feasible? I suspect so. Sustainable? I also suspect so, but probably without six-

digit salaries for the publishers *as* publishers. Apparently, Coles intends to act on his beliefs—going it alone, so to speak.

I was explicitly unhappy with this post when it first appeared because of Coles' scare-quoting around "Gold OA" and his misstatement of what it is, and said so in a [Friendfeed discussion of the post](#). It becomes clear later on that Coles is opposed to journals *in general* and thinks Green OA with "community-based peer evaluation" is the only way to go. So count me as liking much of what's said here...but not necessarily agreeing with the author as to the best *general* approach to disseminating scholarship. Still worth reading, as are the comments.

Want to Change Academic Publishing? Just Say No This commentary, by Hugh Gusterson [on September 23, 2012](#) at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, takes a somewhat different look at the economics of scholarly journal publishing. Technically, this one isn't about OA at all: He never mentions it (and may nor may not be aware of it), and draws an oversimple distinction between commercial publishers and nonprofits, some of which gain *enormous* revenues through overpriced subscriptions. (The American Chemical Society, for example, is a nonprofit.)

But it's a good discussion of the perverse economics of scholarship, starting with an interesting anecdote. A woman asks whether she could come and talk to him about her interests in the area of scholarship *he* specializes in and get his advice on applying to graduate school.

We spoke for about 45 minutes in my office, at the end of which she asked, "How much do I owe you?"

This woman was a therapist who billed by the hour, and she assumed that when you got the benefit of someone's professional expertise for 45 minutes, you paid for it. Although I would expect to pay a lawyer or a therapist for a professional consultation, the idea of paying for a conversation with me seemed bizarre. I explained that professors, especially in the humanities and social sciences, get paid an annual salary and, in return, see it as part of our job to share our knowledge and to mentor others. We had a vocation, not a trade. The life of the mind is not billable.

Gusterson continues: "Today I have less confidence in that answer." He notes that he gets paid for book reviews for newspapers—but not for refereeing journal articles. He gets royalties for publishing a book and can get a couple hundred or a few thousand dollars for a newspaper or magazine piece—

But I get paid nothing directly for the most difficult, time-consuming writing I do: peer-reviewed academic

articles. In fact a journal that owned the copyright to one of my articles made me pay \$400 for permission to reprint my own writing in a book of my essays.

He discusses some of the economics of the big journal publishers and the charges for access to individual articles (e.g., \$32 to get one-day access to a nine-page article he wrote for the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, which as he notes is more than it costs to buy either of his most recent books—and he gets none of that \$32).

Here's his modest proposal:

So why not try this: If academic work is to be commodified and turned into a source of profit for shareholders and for the 1 percent of the publishing world, then we should give up our archaic notions of unpaid craft labor and insist on professional compensation for our expertise, just as doctors, lawyers, and accountants do.

He suggests making an exception for nonprofit presses—but I'd narrow that exception. He also suggests that scholars demand a "modest fee" for articles, and that professional associations recommend standard fees for refereeing and for articles. It's a striking suggestion.

Lots of comments—this is *CHE*, after all: 126 to date. Worth reading.

What does it cost to publish a Gold Open Access article?

While [this December 10, 2012 post](#) by Mike Taylor at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week* is certainly directly related to the Finch/RCUK report, it's worth citing if only because Taylor does a pretty good job of demolishing an "average APC" that's likely to be used a *lot* as both argument against Gold OA and argument by traditional publishers to retain their profit margins.

As Taylor says, "This is long and (frankly) a bit boring. But I think it's important and needs saying." I'm not sure about the boring, and given the length of *this* roundup "long" isn't for me to say. Important and needs saying? Absolutely. I'll give the section headings and, as appropriate, very brief notes—but Taylor goes into the kind of depth that's needed here.

1. How much does the Finch Report suggest items cost?

People have been quoting £2,000—but that's not what the report says. The report says APCs "average between £1.5k and £2k" and that the average APC paid by the Wellcome Trust in 2010 was just under £1.5K. But that's still a lot of money: about \$2,440 at this writing.

But that number is “misleading and unnecessarily alarming” for several reasons.

2. Why the Finch estimate is misleading.

2.1 It ignores free-to-the-author journals.

As Taylor says, the Finch report “brushes over” the Solomon/Björk study (already discussed, “A study of...”) and its finding that only 10% of authors publishing in Gold OA journals paid fees exceeding 1,000 Euros (\$1,324 as I write this—or not much more than *half* as much as Finch’s stated average). Oh, and half of them paid nothing at all: The 74% of Gold OA journals in *DOAJ* that don’t charge APCs *do* publish about half of the articles.

2.2 It ignores the low average price found in the S/B analysis.

As noted earlier, that price was \$904 or \$906, depending on how you did the calculation. The third point is particularly interesting, as is the commentary:

2.3 It focuses on authors who are spending Other People’s Money.

I’ll leave the commentary to Taylor.

2.4 It ignores the world’s leading open-access journal.

Ever hear of *PLoS ONE*? While I think you could argue that its fee is high, it’s nonetheless \$1,350, which is a whole lot less than \$2,440. The humanities equivalent—*SAGE Open*—is running an introductory discount price of \$195 (but will move to \$695).

2.5 It ignores waivers.

PLoS grants a waiver to anybody who asks for one. Simple enough.

2.6 It doesn’t recognize how the publishing landscape is changing.

Which, as Taylor says, you can’t entirely blame the Finch report for, as changes are coming so fast. See *peerJ*. See *eLife*, not covered in this roundup but with a waiver of all APCs for the first few years.

2.7 I suspect it concentrates on hybrid-OA journals.

And, as Taylor, notes, “there are all sorts of reasons to mistrust hybrid journals.”

3. What is the true average cost?

Taylor makes a case for it being about \$453 or £283—“less than one sixth of what Finch suggests.”

4. What are we comparing with?

A better comparison is the aggregate subscription cost for articles in traditional journals—around \$5,333. Except, of course, that most people *still* can’t get at those articles.

Taylor’s final section is “directing our anger properly”—basically, don’t get mad at Finch and RCUK, get mad at publishers.

Why we need open access—\$192.95

This brief post by Joseph Kraus on [December 13, 2012](#) at *Nothing But Net* uses a *real* example to make the essential other case for OA economics: What it saves people outside the golden circle, quite apart from time.

His 7th grade kid was doing some research for science class. Once he had the general assignment and a specific case, he started looking for resources. Of the first 12 in Google Scholar that focused on the species he wanted to write about, half were freely available—half weren’t, at least not to someone who’s not affiliated with a university. The cost of those six articles? In aggregate, \$192.95. I don’t know about you, but I sure didn’t have \$192.95 handy in the 7th grade to support a research paper.

Closing the section

At the start of this section, I noted that it had the most source documents of any section—although I worded it differently and edited it once more as things progressed. That was a true statement: It had 22 source documents, compared with 15 and 14 for the second and third largest sections. Two more (those just above) showed up *while* I was writing the roundup.

At least one or two of you will note that there are *not* 24 source documents cited and discussed in this section. Not even close. I believe there are more than in any other section but, if so, just barely.

That’s because several source documents turned out to be almost entirely about the Finch/RCUK situation, and in at least one case I just lost patience plowing through a long document that struck me as offering bad history along with questionable recommendations. It was too long to fisk and too bad to recommend. So I dropped it.

Now, on from one “e” to a bigger “E”...

Elsevier

Not that Elsevier hasn’t been mentioned elsewhere, not that Elsevier isn’t at the heart of a number of other things—including, apparently, the whole RWA scandal, given the speed with which the bill was dropped once Elsevier (a non-US corporation) removed its support. Not that there aren’t other European publishers (and American publishers) that peddle small or large sets of journals at high prices and with predatory practices to protect profits. But

Elsevier is, well, *special*. It's the biggest and in some ways it appears to be the most arrogant. Thus some of these pieces...noting that the December 2012 [RAPID ROUT OF RWA](#) might be more significant for Elsevier (since it includes the Cost of Knowledge boycott) than anything in this section.

Why isn't anyone publishing open-access articles in Elsevier journals?

Mike Taylor asks that question in [a February 11, 2012 post](#) at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week* (a blog at which I've yet to see a picture of Sauropod vertebrae, but there's a reason for that), and given Elsevier's increasing bragging about *how much it loves and is doing with OA*, it's a reasonable question.

It follows up on [a February 8, 2012 post](#) in which Elsevier itself says that 691 articles were "sponsored" (that is, made Gold OA through a \$3,000 APC) in 2010—across some 600 journals, so it's about 1.15 articles per journal. Or, as Taylor points out, about *one quarter* of an OA article per journal across Elsevier's whole range.

Meanwhile, *PLoS ONE* published 6,750 Gold OA articles in 2010 (and is growing rapidly)—about ten times as many as all of Elsevier's journals combined. Indeed, in December 2010 *PLoS ONE* published quite a few more Gold OA articles than Elsevier did in the entire year in 2,639 journals. (Of course SH had to throw rocks at Taylor, calling the earlier post "numerology." One would expect no less from a zealot.)

The earlier post gave the numbers; this one considers the reasons. Taylor offers four guesses, each with an interesting discussion. I'll provide his boldfaced reasons and, where appropriate, my [summary of his discussion]—but you're encouraged to read the original.

First, there is an ideological reason. [Authors who care about OA want to be in OA journals published by OA publishers.]

Second, there is a legal reason. [PLoS uses CC-BY. Elsevier's terms are....fuzzy.]

Third, there are technological reasons to prefer PLoS. [No length limits or limits on figures; videos are OK; articles available in XML as well as PDF and HTML; article-level metrics; comments on the articles.]

And finally, there is an economic argument, too. [PLoS ONE's fee is less than half that of Elsevier—and even the high-IF *PLoS Biology* is a little cheaper.]

I suspect that, for at least a few thousand authors, there's a second ideological reason: A growing number of authors *don't want to be involved with Elsevier*.

And, indeed, the first of 16 comments (after Taylor specifically asks for other thoughts—it's a relatively small number) is from Heinrich Mallison, saying:

There also is something called stubbornness: pissed off by Elsevier's behaviour of the past, some people may simply go "anywhere else" even if all other factors are equal.

Other points raised include a superior UI for PLoS as compared to ScienceDirect.

Local costs for journals

This is mostly a single data point, but it's interesting nonetheless—prepared by Wendy Robertson and [posted February 16, 2012](#) at the blog of the University of Iowa Libraries. It's quite short and to the point. Robertson prepared it to "keep Iowa faculty informed about the cost of journals from a variety of sources." It's mostly a table for FY2011 and a pie chart for ejournal expenditures in FY2010.

The table includes cost and number of titles for six publishers and two projects (JSTOR and Project Muse)—and I'd love to see the missing two rows at the bottom: "Others" and "Total." But what's there is striking enough: Elsevier gets \$1.64 million for 2,095 titles; the next highest, Wiley/Blackwell, just over half of that—\$868 thousand—for 1,304 titles; with Springer and Sage following up at \$607 thousand and 400 journals, \$244 thousand and 608 journals respectively. Nobody else gets even \$100,000; JSTOR (the fee for back content) is closest, at \$98K for 2,319 journals, and the next publisher—Cambridge—just under \$44K for 145 titles. Basically, Elsevier gets nearly as much (95%) as the three other largest commercial publishers *combined*—and the next four, representing more than 3,100 journals, don't even add up to Sage's total.

The pie chart is, if anything, even more dramatic. Elsevier is a full third of the pie; Wiley/Blackwell's not quite half as much (16%). "Other"—everybody except societies (11%), university presses (3%), and the other five publishers noted for FY2010 (including Taylor & Francis, Lippincott and Nature as well as those already mentioned)—make up 10% of the pie.

One-third. That's impressive. If anybody says "Why Elsevier and not the other Big Pigs?" one short answer is "Because it's *by far* the Biggest Pig." At least at the University of Iowa.

Dear Elsevier Employees, With Love, From @FakeElsevier

For a while, @FakeElsevier was one of the more amusing Twitter accounts. There's now also a blog,

The Real Fake Elsevier, where this post appeared [on February 19, 2012](#). If you're wondering: Fake Elsevier is a "practicing scientist that you probably haven't heard of before, who is fortunate to manage a plucky little group of really smart, hard-working scientists, at an institution you probably have heard of." Based on spelling, I'm guessing American, but based on punctuation, I'd guess British, so... Beyond that I would not be *interested* in knowing: Pseudonymity is frequently there for good and understandable reasons.

At least as of December 27, 2012, the blog is not what you'd call active: There's exactly one post (in addition to some supporting pages), the one I'm discussing. With 157 comments. The blog uses CC BY (surprise, surprise), so I can post as much of it as I want—as long as I say it's by, well, FakeElsevier.

As anyone who is reading this probably already knows, the publishing giant Elsevier has recently placed itself at the center of a shitstorm of animosity from the research community, thanks in part to its vocal (and financial) support of the [Research Works Act](#) (RWA). Currently, the National Institutes of Health mandate that the research products they fund with tax dollars must be made freely available to the public; the RWA would make such mandates illegal, enabling Elsevier to keep research papers resulting from taxpayer-funded research behind paywalls for as long as they like. There's some douchey attempted subterfuge in the language of the bill about not locking up the research results themselves, but make no mistake: research papers are our output as researchers, and they are what makes up the scientific literature. While manipulating the legislative process for financial gain would be galling by itself, Elsevier has a [long history of douchey](#) behavior towards the academic community, and the RWA is really just the latest straw on the camel's back.

In case it's not obvious, there are *four* links in the last sentence above, not one—going back as far as 2004, and the link at "of" leads to a whole set of behaviors that could be considered, well, douchey.

So this post, a wee bit longer than the 140-character tweets FakeElsevier is known for, is serious: "not-in-character, as-concise-as-I-can-make-it, get-straight-to-the-point statement of what I see as our grievances." And it's addressed to Elsevier employees because FakeElsevier believes that "the vast majority of Elsevier employees are not personally evil, naive, or irrational, and that they in fact genuinely want to help make the world a better place." I suspect that's an entirely sound belief.

The post has two major sections. Both are worth reading. I'm quoting the first section in full,

and leaving the second one—"Adapt or be disintermediated"—for you to read directly.

It's not about money and never has been

I get the impression that the PR people at Elsevier would love to reduce the debate to something so simple. Through this lens, they see scientists as being irrational, or naive to the realities of the economics of publishing. Maybe there are some out there who really believe that publishing has no costs associated with it, but I think the majority do understand that even if we are doing all of the writing and reviewing, inviting/hounding reviewers and building/maintaining websites costs real money. We could debate about what exact costs are reasonable, and we could argue about how much of the process is actually done by scientists themselves, but doing so would detract from the real point:

As far as we are concerned, publishers have ONE JOB: disseminating the results of our work to the widest possible audience.

Helping us manage anonymous peer review by our colleagues, and "credentialing" papers with respect to their importance are—for better or worse—parts of this process, but the core thing that we need from publishers is the distribution of our work. Back in the days before the internet, the need to outsource distribution was painfully obvious, since physical paper journals needed to be carted around the planet in order to distribute our work to colleagues. Given the physicality of distribution, centralized subscription-based pricing even made good sense, since receiving institutions needed libraries and librarians to store and catalog the physical copies, and the storage and purchasing made sense as two sides of the same coin. However, in the internet age, the idea that you would restrict access to anyone seems utterly asinine. Let me say it in bold, just to be clear:

In the internet age, Elsevier is doing an unbelievably shitty job of accomplishing its ONE AND ONLY PURPOSE: to distribute our work as broadly as possible.

See now why we, as customers, are unhappy? You're distributing our work to a really small audience, and you're making even that access irritating and painful. Don't patronize us by telling us how you are "committed to universal access". If you were genuinely committed to universal access, you'd make things universally accessible. Your marginal distribution cost is effectively zero, so why not act like it? Along the way, you've obscured the true flows of money both on the author-side and the subscriber-side, and you've set up an unwholesome set of incentives that play to scientists' worst impulses (and to your benefit). Researchers at big institutions can afford to be apathetic about the plight of those at smaller ones, because they

can afford the enormous subscription fees that block access to research, and individual researchers have a financial incentive to choose cheaper closed-access options, even when open access options are theoretically available. Such decisions are in turn driven by scientists' limited budgets and their need to fill their CVs in order to get promoted or get funding. The result is a fractured, Balkanized literature, riddled with paywalls. Make no mistake, scientists themselves are complicit in contributing this mess because of these individual incentives, even if they are aware of the negative system effects. And this is why funding agencies — whose goal is making sure taxpayers see the benefits of the work they fund — have stepped in to demand that scientists and publishers use their money appropriately. Elsevier's attempts to [subvert](#) that through lobbying... again, see why we're mad?

"BUT THE COSTS! HOW WILL WE SUPPORT THE COSTS?" you cry. We'll leave aside, for a moment, that you pull down an astonishing-in-any-industry, surely-ripe-for-disruption [36% profit margin](#). The obvious (to me at least) solution is that all work needs to be made available under a true open access license (think [Creative Commons BY](#)), so that anyone can access it, and funding agencies need to shoulder the costs of doing so in a much less circuitous way. This would be a radical suggestion, except for the fact that the [Public Library of Science](#) (PLOS) was founded under these exact assumptions years ago and is making this model work, RIGHT NOW. Authors pay some \$1.5-2.5k or so to cover the costs of managing peer review and making the paper available (usually this comes out of grant funds and is comparable to existing page/figure charges at the likes of Elsevier), and in return, PLOS does an amazing job of making the work available to anyone with an internet connection. If authors cannot afford the fees, they are waived. PLOS seems to understand its one job, and it behaves accordingly, to the benefit of all.

"BUT THE COSTS! We would be forced to make everyone pay \$3k for the '[sponsored article](#)' option in order to maintain business as usual!" Indeed, if you feel your added value is worth \$3k, so be it. It would be more obvious to everyone that Elsevier is a pricey option (e.g. relative to the much cheaper PLOS), and yes, some less well-funded labs might not be able to afford to publish in Elsevier journals if you were unwilling to waive the fees as PLOS does. If authors decide that the clout of the journals Elsevier has launched or acquired is worth the extra money, then so be it; this would be a straightforward market force. However, the status quo is intolerable from any reasonable perspective: if you lock away large swathes of the literature such that many institutions (not to mention the public) can't even ACCESS it... that goes against everything that science is about. And it serves me as your customer

very poorly. Remember, your ONE job, that I am counting on you to help me with, is to make my research available. If you fail in this job and subvert the scientific literature with self-serving pay-walls, don't be surprised that we [organize against you](#). Don't be surprised if we call Elsevier an enemy of science, or a parasite on the process of scientific and medical research. We have devoted our lives to science, and we care about it, and you are doing the one thing that threatens its integrity most: locking it up.

See why I quoted the whole thing? I'm *not* a scientist. I can't say this quite as forcefully. The second half is absolutely worth reading—but, you know, [go there](#) to read it.

What of the comments? There are a lot of them. Many of them are long. Some good points are raised. One Elsevier employee does—guess what?—try to derail the discussion by focusing on pseudonymity (*which is not the same as anonymity*), you know, "the points are worthless because we don't know who's making them." Jeffrey Beall accuses FakeElsevier of being a bully, based on nothing I can figure out. Mostly, there are a lot of good discussions, the most recent comment being in March 2012.

Why Are We Boycotting Elsevier?

Barbara Fister discusses that question in [her February 24, 2012](#) "Library Babel Fish" column at *Inside Higher Ed*. She begins: "In my circles, the answer to this question is fairly obvious." But that won't be true for people who haven't been "bruised by current practices." She manages to boil it down to two bullet points:

- Elsevier's business model depends on limiting access to our work, and we publish it to make it accessible.
- Though other publishers have the same model, Elsevier is really big and has [a particularly bad record](#), so it gets to go first.

That link goes to a Library Loon post, "Why Elsevier?" that I covered in the RWA essay.

So there it is...well, no, that wouldn't make a column. Fister discusses why students may not understand the screwed-up nature of current scholarly article publishing, offers notes on the boycott with particularly relevant links (including one to the piece just discussed), notes some other issues—and lists pre-tenure librarians who are taking part in the boycott and showing their commitment to making a difference.

A good piece followed by three dozen comments, many of them worthwhile, some not.

Elsevier and open access: Mike Taylor's journey

Six, count them, six posts by Mike Taylor at *Sauropod Vertebra Picture of the Week*, as he attempts to determine just what Elsevier's \$3,000 "sponsored article" fee actually gets you. The posts appear on [February 2, 2012](#), [February 24, 2012](#), [March 6, 2012](#), [March 7, 2012](#), [March 19, 2012](#) and [March 21, 2012](#). The first title is "What actually is Elsevier's open-access license?"; the last, "Pay to download Elsevier's 'open access' articles." A few excerpts and notes.

Early on, Taylor pays Elsevier a slight compliment: Because the "sponsored article" option can *only* be chosen once an author's been notified that an article's accepted, there can't be a conflict of interest.

But, Taylor wonders, *what do you get* for that choice? In some other cases (e.g. PLoS and Springer's "Open Choice") it's clear: the article carries a Creative Commons BY (attribution) license, meaning it's fully open to copying, reuse, textmining, whatever.

Is this true of Elsevier's open-access articles?

I don't know.

It's actually surprisingly tricky to discover exactly what the terms of Elsevier's open-access option are: they're not spelled out on their [Sponsored Articles page](#), which talks only about "the option to sponsor non-subscriber access to individual articles"; nor on the [article sponsorship form](#) linked from that page which speaks of "making it available to non-subscribers on Elsevier's electronic publishing platforms"; nor in this [other article sponsorship form](#) that I found elsewhere on their site.

One of Elsevier's minions eventually said that Elsevier is "experimenting with various licenses for our OA content" and offers examples.

In "Episode 4: A New Hope" (part of the second post), Taylor is sent a link to information sent to published authors—a [text page](#) in the form of a JPEG, a great way to prevent me or anybody else from copy-and-pasting. (PDF, I can see. *JPEG of text? Why?*) Here's the thing: The statement offers a truly partial list of rights—not only is anything even remotely resembling "commercial" use excluded, but any use must contain both a link to a citation and a link to the published article. This isn't OA in my book, or in Taylor's either.

The third installment points to [a post](#) in which Heather Piwowar tries to get permission to do some textmining on Elsevier articles. After a conference call involving Piwowar's university librarian and six Elsevier officers, Piwowar got permission. Taylor says:

The happy ending for Heather is that she's managed to get Elsevier's permission to do at least part of her

project, although the process involved a monumental waste of everyone's time, including a conference call between Heather, her librarian, and six Elsevier staff, plus consultations with lawyers.

The sad part is that, as Heather acknowledges in her post, all of this manoeuvring has done absolutely nothing to help the many other authors who might have awesome text-mining project ideas: all of them will have to go through the same ludicrously inefficient process. (That's assuming that they, like Heather, are fortunate enough to catch a senior Elsevier executive's attention on Twitter. Because otherwise, Elsevier are actively discouraging researchers from approaching them directly. Why? Because the Elsevier Director of Universal Access's "only hesitation was that she might be overwhelmed by requests from others who also want text mining access". Heaven forfend that people should waste her time trying to obtain access!)

But that's not the really stupid part. Here's the really stupid part. Heather writes:

I asked for the text of the standard reuse agreement. It was sent to me but I was asked not to share it publicly because "it is a legal element".

What this means that *no-one is allowed to know* what the text-mining terms are. Extending this, it means that no-one who publishes in an Elsevier journal knows what rights they have conferred on, or withheld from, future text-miners. And that includes those authors who have elected to take Elsevier's "sponsored article" option — this is just one more aspect of the agreement they sign that is completely unspecified. So when I pay \$3000 to make my article "open access", *I do not know and have no way to find out* whether that means it will be available for text-mining, and if so what the text-mining project is allowed to do with its results.

I'll skip over the next post, which relates mostly to broken links and whether Elsevier really gives a damn. (The corporate Elsevier, that is: Some employees clearly do.)

The March 19 chapter deals with broken links, private communications and a slightly more useful link—but also a pretty clear statement from Elsevier that, with the \$3,000 "Sponsored" choice, authors *still* must assign copyright to Elsevier—and that paying for "open access" (in this case using scare quotes advisedly) means that "your paper will be freely available to all on Science Direct only for all time." [Emphasis added.] Download a copy and send it to somebody else? Read that quoted phrase again...

Which brings us to the final chapter in this particular story, the March 21, 2012 post. Taylor notes that it's still not possible to get a "good, clear, ex-

PLICIT statement” on this—but the significance of that quoted phrase becomes clearer as Taylor tries to download a Sponsored article so he can forward it to some students. Namely, when he wants to *download one copy of a “free” article*, he’s asked for £10.88: call it \$17 or so.

Admittedly, this particular “free” article might not be Sponsored—but that emphasized text in an earlier paragraph suggests a similar restriction.

New Open Access Working Group Formed:

Formulating Response to Elsevier’s Policy Change

This item is by Richard Olton and [appeared in the March/April 2012 MIT Faculty Newsletter](#). It deals with another wrinkle in Elsevier’s earnest attempt to make research available as widely as possible. To wit: MIT adopted an [Open Access Policy](#) in 2009 but didn’t fully implement it at the time; since, they’ve been working on that. The policy calls for faculty to make a copy of each final version of an article available for deposit in an OA repository.

A central issue that the group needs to address concerns publishers’ responses to the MIT Policy. Some publishers—MIT Press is a shining example—have supported it from the beginning. Some were wary at first, but have now found ways to accommodate the Policy’s requirements; examples here include *Nature* and Springer. Others haven’t yet said much.

One publisher, Elsevier, has, however, taken a very different tack. They issued a revised author contract that indicates authors “must obtain an express waiver” from the MIT policy in order to publish with them. And last year they put in place a new Posting Policy, i.e., a policy governing how their authors can publish their pieces on the Web.

Emphasis modified: in the original, that second paragraph appears in red type.

The new policy? In general, authors can post articles on their own websites (which, to be sure, is neither the same as nor as effective as doing so in an institutional or subject repository)—but there’s a caveat: this does not extend to “repositories with systematic posting mandates.” Here’s the actual Elsevier policy:

“However, our policies differ regarding the systematic aggregation or distribution of AAMs [Accepted Author Manuscripts] to ensure the sustainability of the journals to which AAMs are submitted. Therefore, deposit in, or posting to, subject-oriented or centralized repositories (such as PubMed Central), or institutional repositories with systematic posting mandates is permitted only under specific agreements between Elsevier and the repository, agency or

institution, and only consistent with the Publisher’s policies concerning such repositories.”

Olton calls the wording “very unclear”:

But it is clear that Elsevier is trying to do what it can to undermine such policies, and to confuse faculty about what they are and are not allowed to do. Certainly that is the interpretation of the Coalition for Open Access Repositories, who, in their [response](#), “strongly oppose the changes made by Elsevier to its article posting policies” and “join the research community in condemning Elsevier for its recent business practices and lobbying that undermine policies and activities promoting open access to scholarly literature.”

There’s more to the post and it’s worth reading.

How Elsevier can save itself

Another Mike Taylor multipost discussion—this time with three parts (not including a coda for other publishers). Part 1, [appearing April 22, 2012](#), offers “Easy” measures. Part 2, [appearing April 26, 2012](#), offers “Medium” measures. Part 3, [appearing May 2, 2012](#), offers “Hard” measures. Oh, wait, there’s a “part 0” offering background; it [appeared on April 20, 2012](#).

Taylor starts from Claudio Aspesi’s investment report on Elsevier and its conclusion:

Adding [acrimonious relationships with the research community](#) to the difficult ones it already has with academic librarians looks self-defeating. We believe that Elsevier needs to rethink altogether how it thinks of researchers as customers, or it could end up, in a few years, facing [the same hostility it encounters](#) with much of the academic librarian community.

This time, the emphasis is (apparently) in the original. Taylor’s just here to help...

It should now be clear to everyone who’s been paying attention that Elsevier has got itself into a rotten position. No-one trusts it or likes it. Even people who act as associate editors for its journals are seem to be feeling that’s something to be a bit apologetic about rather than something to declare proudly. The feeling has grown stronger and more widespread—the [Cost of Knowledge](#) boycott is now closing in on 10,000 signatories—and all but the most head-in-the-sand types are now being forced to recognise that the distrust, dislike and resolution is real and significant, and that it’s not going away.

It’s at 13,026 as I write this; growth has slowed, but not stopped. Meantime, Taylor notes that the Elsevier *people* he’s conversed with have been “friendly, reasonable and polite” albeit sometimes with “an undertone of hurt.” So he offers some ideas on winning back trust, since researches *do* remember

things like phony journals. (Taylor says, *and I most certainly agree*, that a publishing monoculture with PLoS as the only real publisher would be just as bad as the current situation, if not quite in those words. We need a range of involved parties.)

What are Taylor's easy steps? Here are the headings; the series includes *much* more detail:

- Be explicit about "sponsored article" terms
- Be explicit about non-sponsored article terms
- Make it trivially easy to find sponsored articles
- Stop lying about copyright transfer
- Root out and destroy stupid conditions

What do these measures have in common? *None of them will cost Elsevier anything*. These are things that should be done as soon as humanly possible, by which I mean "within the next week" rather than "we'll set up a group to look into it, and report back at the next six-monthly management meeting".

These measures are about transparency and sanity. They are the kinds of changes that will start to put some trust back in place. Being up-front and clear about what the access situation is will start to chip away at the sense that Elsevier has something to hide. Getting rid of palpable lies about copyright transfer will be a start towards enabling us to believe Elsevier when they tell us other things. None of this is enough to make an enemy into a friend; but it will at least help us to feel we're facing an *honourable* enemy.

Here are Taylor's "medium steps"—measures that "probably will cost Elsevier something (though most likely not as much as they fear)":

- Change the "sponsored article" licence to CC-BY
- Stop being obstructive about text-mining
- Dump the "you can self-archive unless mandated to" rule
- Withdraw opposition to the FRPAA
- Be open about subscription prices

Again, Taylor's discussions are worth reading, although if you've read this far you probably have some idea what all of these are about. That fifth point: Wouldn't that be a step forward? Taylor's closing comment for that portion:

What do these measures have in common? *None of them will cost Elsevier much—maybe even save them some money*. These are things that should be done as a priority, as in within a month or so. They're not hard, they just need the will to make them happen. If Elsevier don't move quickly on these things, the door will slam shut and leave them outside.

If they *do* move quickly, then they'll have made real steps towards re-casting themselves as a friend of science, and of scientists.

And then there are the hard things:

- Convert to Gold open access
- Support the FRPAA
- Do it now

Taylor finds it obvious that "Publishers reliant on subscription revenue must find another source of income or they will crash." (The next paragraph is lovely, and I'm *not going to touch it here*.) He also suggests that, "once" (let's say "if and when") green OA really takes hold, scholars may *lose interest* in journals—call it the Brembs future. Which is why he stresses #3:

So the spectre hanging over Elsevier isn't just the destruction of their subscription model, but the possibility that by the time they get into gear and switch to Gold OA, it'll all be over and the world will have lost interest in journals. Certainly if university libraries start redirecting their saved subscription money towards in-house publishing efforts, the chances of that will increase dramatically.

He doesn't believe that either reducing subscription prices or unbundling the Big Deal would help much; he thinks those are red herrings. If I believed full OA would catch on as rapidly as Taylor seems to, I might agree—but I just don't see things happening that rapidly. Still, a good set of posts. Will Elsevier listen? Taylor doesn't think so.

I had another couple of pieces, mostly referring to or just quoting more Aspesi financial commentary about Elsevier—but I don't think they say much new. So that's the end of this section.

The Future!

A smattering of items about the future and open access, with no special focus among them.

Nature's open-access offering may sound death knell for subs model

Paul Jump wrote this report [on January 13, 2011](#) at *Times Higher Education*—after Nature Publishing Group (NPG) announced the launch of *Scientific Reports*, a "high-volume open-access journal spanning the natural sciences." The lead paragraph says this launch "is being tipped to accelerate the extinction of subscription fees in science publishing, and could also prompt the closure of many specialist journals."

Scientific Reports is a Gold OA megajournal like *PLoS ONE*—with a very similar APC of \$1,350 (which rose to \$1,700 in 2012). The article quotes

various folks on the impact of this—with Cameron Neylon saying “I think this is the death knell for the majority of ‘middling’ journals and the large number of low-volume, low-profit, low-prestige journals.”

What of [Scientific Reports](#)? It’s definitely operational, but still in relatively early stages. According to the November 2012 monthly report (the site includes a link for the most current monthly report), 898 papers had been published through the end of November 2012, 122 of them in November. Mean time from submission to publication is 110 days; there were more than 312,000 HTML and PDF views in November 2012.

Not everyone assumed instant death for traditional publishing:

Jason Wilde, NPG’s business development director, argued that a subscription-based model would continue to be the best option for highly read journals that publish a low number of high-quality articles. The journals’ high rejection rates meant that article-processing charges would have to be set prohibitively high or subsidised by submission charges to cover peer-review costs.

Christina Pikas kicked off a discussion at Friendfeed [on January 19, 2011](#) by linking to [a PLoS post](#), “Welcome, Nature. Seriously.” The post includes a PDF of an ad that does indeed read as a sincere welcome from PLoS, inspired by a similar ad that Apple ran when IBM started building personal computers. It’s an interesting ad (as is the decades-old Apple ad).

The discussion involves projections for when OA would be the publishing model of choice. Bill Hooker suggested 2020 as the date at which at least half of articles added to PubMed would be OA—and, better than that, *libre* OA (with rights beyond simply reading). Pawel Szczesny upped the ante: “2015-16 is the latest with the main impulse coming outside of scientific community.” Steve Koch suggested April 28, 2013 for a very specific milestone: the point at which more than half of *new additions* to PubMed would be OA—and it’s clear that Koch isn’t wildly serious about this. Peter Binfield splits the difference: January 1, 2015 as a tipping point for *PubMed*, that is, the point at which more than half of *new PubMed* inclusions will be OA. (Noting that reaching a tipping point for the kinds of articles in PubMed doesn’t necessarily mean that *all* subscription journals are doomed. Not even close.)

OA again

This somewhat less optimistic projection ([appearing January 20, 2012](#)) comes from Tom Wilson, publisher and editor-in-chief of [Information Research](#), a

Gold OA journal with no author-side fees that’s been publishing steadily since 1995. I’m quoting nearly all of it because Wilson speaks from experience.

Sixteen years ago, when I started Information Research it was so blindingly obvious that academics could create and publish their own journals at relatively modest cost that I assumed that in ten to fifteen years, open access would be the norm. It isn’t, because a number of things get in the way.

First, few (and increasingly fewer) academics have the motivation and the time to start up new journals—and yet new journals are being created continually and edited by the same academics, with contributions reviewed by the same academics. In other words, they have time and motivation to work for publishers, but no time or motivation to work for their academic community. I don’t see this changing since, before all else, humans are driven primarily by self-interest.

Secondly, it has so far proved impossible to get the message across to university administrators that the present system costs them money that could be redirected to better use. Essentially, the idea is too radical and if vice-chancellors, rectors, etc. are any one thing, it is not radical. They’ll happily shuffle around departments and create new faculties or disband them, but ask them to take a really critical look at the present system of scholarly communication and its alternatives and they’ll shuffle back into their holes.

Thirdly, governments everywhere are at the beck and call of business. If a business sector tells the minister that a move of OA will cause the loss of n thousand jobs, the minister will rapidly back off, whether the business proposition is true or not. Faced by a determined business lobby, ministers are wimps. In any event, certainly in the UK, none of them has any knowledge of the academic research process and scholarly communication.

So there we have it: no drive from below, no support in the middle, and apathy and capitulation to the forces of the market at the top.

He notes that the situation isn’t helped by “dodgy ‘publishers’”—most of which he doesn’t expect to make it through a decade. He’s generally not fond of APC-charging journals. He regards APC-based journals and subscription journals as part of the same model, which he believes *will* ultimately collapse—but not as a result of the actions of academics.

Opening Ceremonies

That’s Barbara Fister [on July 18, 2012](#) at “Library Babel Fish” in *Inside Higher Ed*, noting the extent to which she can mark time in her academic library by “dates when journals stopped arriving” because the library could no longer afford them.

But I am cheered by a trend that I suspect will leave a ring behind in this hypothetical tree this year—a nice fat ring of growth and new opportunities. This year we seem to be seeing a significant shift in attitudes toward open access scholarly publishing. There was the [Elsevier boycott](#), then the [defeat of the Research Works Act](#). [The World Bank decided](#) to make all of their work open access. The [Wellcome Trust strengthened](#) their already strong policy. [Europe has leapt ahead](#) of us with projects like [OAPEN](#) and the [Directory of Open Access Books](#) (modeled on the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#)) and with public stands by the EU and the UK in [support of open access](#) – not in a hypothetical someday, but very soon. An [open access petition to the White House](#) also gained over 28,000 signatures, more than is needed for it to trigger official attention. Publishers are scrambling to announce new ways to ransom the freedom of your research; both SAGE and Taylor & Francis will let the public read research published in many of their journals, provided you pay \$3,000 for the privilege. Though that is no more sustainable than the current cost of library subscriptions, it is an indication that publishers are feeling the ground shifting, too.

Fister sees much broader recognition of and support for OA than a year previously—not because libraries can’t afford subscriptions but because scholars are thinking that it makes more sense. She recognizes a lot of work ahead and closes:

But this year, at last, it seems possible. In fact, it’s beginning to feel inevitable.

More futurist rhetoric

That’s the label applied by the Library Loon to [a SAGE report](#), “Moving towards an open access future: the role of academic libraries,” that appeared in August 2012. The Loon’s comment [appeared September 4, 2012](#) at *Gavia Libraria*. I originally planned to comment on the SAGE report first, then the Loon’s comments—but, after reading the SAGE report, I’m opting to just deal with the Loon. I will admit that, knowing SAGE is the third publisher (along with two university presses) that chose to sue a university (Georgia State) for aggressive use of fair use rights, I begin with the same skepticism regarding a SAGE-produced report on OA and libraries that I would regarding an Elsevier-produced report.

As it happens, SAGE worked with the British Library in this case. I’m not sure that helps. The Loon says Sage “plans to (con)descend from on high to tell us librarian peons what role we will play in open access.”

The Loon is thinking of many librarians all over the world—the ones who have been working toward

open access for a decade or more, in the teeth of litigious and mendacious publisher obstructionists—when she expresses a sincere desire to knock SAGE tumbling off its high horse. Preferably into a nice muddy fen. Containing leeches.

She notes her distaste for certain kinds of future-mongering, a distaste I share.

The Loon understands—none better—that library support for open access has been weak, equivocal, even two-faced. The way to fix this is not to erase what has been done, certainly not to erase the folk who did it despite (often) lukewarm support or even opposition from their library colleagues, administrators, and environment. All that accomplishes is [to send yet more talented, hardworking, once-enthusiastic librarians fleeing](#). This may, of course, be SAGE’s goal, in which case, well-played.

Open-access movement. Will you kindly *stop* this style of futurist rhetoric? Please? Before it damages you further?

Will some OA advocates continue to treat libraries and librarians as pointless in the future? Certainly, just as some have for years regarded librarians as nothing more than purchasing agents to move journal articles from publisher to scholar. Is it destructive? Absolutely.

Whither Science Publishing?

That’s John Dupuis [on September 5, 2012](#) at *Confessions of a Science Librarian*—and he’s taking off from a set of interviews in *The Scientist*, “[Whither Science Publishing?](#)” The latter is a large piece, grouping many answers to each of several questions—and it involves publishers and scientists but not one working librarian. None. (Traditional publishers are well-represented, including one true attack dog—roughly half of the contributors are from traditional publishers.)

Dupuis offers his own answers to the questions. You may find his answers interesting reading. I’ll quote his ten-year projection (noting that the *Scientist* contributors mostly waffled):

In a 10 year time frame, sometimes it looks simultaneously like everything has changed and that nothing has changed. I suspect we’ll still have that feeling in 10 years. In my view, the most important piece of the puzzle is the incentive structure of science that is so intimately tied to the legacy publishing system. Sadly that’s the kind of thing that tends to change one funeral at a time.

But I think it’s safe to say that in 10 year’s time we will definitely start to see attachment to journals and individual articles per se starting to fade, with a move to a looser, more iterative, more atomic system.

We will definitely see vastly more open access, open data and open notebooks although perhaps not yet to any sort of ultimate tipping point. Although I would hope that at least a few tipping points will be within view in that time frame.

Libraries will still have a vital role in the teaching and learning missions of higher education, but our role in the scholarly communications ecosystem is less secure. It's our job to make sure we find a role in funding, promoting, curating and in building the technical and social infrastructure of the coming Open Access universe. The opportunities are vast and within our reach.

That may be a good place to close this section.

A Little Humor

Other than what I say in comments throughout, what I said in the introduction and what I've said elsewhere—specifically in *Open Access: What You Need to Know Now*—I'm unprepared to draw ringing conclusions.

In the absence of such ringing conclusions, maybe the best way to finish is with a little humor—although these are primarily links, as it's tough to excerpt humor without killing whatever there was. Admittedly, most of these aren't *entirely* humorous...

An Open Access Tale

Konrad Lawson contributed this [on July 15, 2011](#) at “ProfHacker” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Lawson offers a scenario and its outcomes. You—a scholar—start out with the standard databases and find little or nothing on your new topic. Not even with a “fancy new cross-database search system.” So then you turn to Google Scholar and, after plowing through all the nonsense, find “a dozen articles directly related to your topic.” Half of them are in journals your institution doesn't subscribe to. The other half, though, provide fully accessible text, either HTML or PDFs.

You skim these remaining half dozen articles. Four of them are complete nonsense. One of them is void of anything original to argue but in its dry and detailed passages are a wealth of interesting new material and sources that are worth looking at if you happen to be doing research on just this particular topic. The last article is a gem. Though clearly not written by a native speaker it is not only full of interesting material but has a bold and thought-provoking thesis. Yet, somehow, you have never heard of this scholar or even the university she got her PhD from.

You finally notice the journal titles as you finish taking notes. Oh my, who has ever heard of the

Shimokitazawa University English Language Journal of [Your Field Here] Studies? The other dry but wonderfully detailed piece comes from the Rogaland Journal of [Your Field Here] Studies. What kind of peer review process was at work here? How do you know it wasn't half a dozen people who got together to publish each other's stuff? You don't, and you don't have time to look into the pedigree of the scholars on the editorial board.

So what do you do? Retreat to the safe haven of toll-access journals you don't have access to? Or cope with “the indisputable fact that one of the articles significantly broadened your thinking about your topic, while the other immediately doubled your source base and filled in gaps in your knowledge”?

The dilemma arises because OA is starting to happen; the rest of the column is about the rise of OA and DOAJ. All of this does suggest that scholars should start taking OA more seriously. And that's the point behind the humor.

Need I mention that, *even though the author never equated green and gold OA*, SH is right there SHOUTING ABOUT this? And I do mean SHOUTING ABOUT it.

The Open Access Irony Awards: Naming and shaming them'

Duncan Hull posted this [on February 15, 2012](#) at O'Really? and saw it as the start of an ongoing process—and, indeed, he links to ongoing OA Irony groups on [Citeulike](#) and [Mendeley](#). The theme should be obvious from the title.

Ironically, some of the papers that are inaccessible discuss or even champion the very Open Access movement itself. Sometimes the lack of access is deliberate, other times accidental—but the consequences are serious. Whether deliberate or accidental, restricted access to [public scientific knowledge](#) is slowing scientific progress [1]. Sometimes the best way to make a serious point is to have a laugh and joke about it. This is what the [Open Access Irony Awards](#) do, by gathering all the offenders in one place, we can laugh and make a serious point at the same time by naming and shaming the papers in question.

Hull offers half a dozen examples just for starters: a paper making the case for OA appearing in *The Lancet* (and not available); three on OA in *Science*; two from Nature Publishing Group; and so on. One commenter points out that an article listed among the examples is available as a green access post-print—but as the author points out, such sources are consistently less visible than the toll-access versions.

One of the two groups is up to more than 70 articles by now. While some may be questionable—a couple of the items in the original list are editorial or reporting rather than research—the idea continues to be useful humor.

My exciting new job at Elsevier: Inaugural editor-in-chief of The Journal of Applied Publishing Experiments

I wanted that job so badly, and frankly I think I'm better qualified, but John Dupuis is one of those scientific-type librarians, so naturally enough he landed the prestigious position, as he discusses [in this post](#) at *Confessions of a Science Librarian*.

I'm particularly jealous after reading the scope of the new journal:

The scope of the new journal is going to be very broad. It will be about the intersection between publishing, authoring and business models. And while the focus will be on practical solutions to difficult theoretical and economic problems, we will get into some high-falutin' theorising too.

Just a few articles from eminent scholars in the field:

Open Access for Fun and Profit

How Institutional Open Access Declarations Are the Tools of the Devil

Librarians Are Not Your Friends

Citizen Science: Would You Let Your Kids Operate the Large Hadron Collider?

The Best Libraries of Science Shouldn't Belong to the Public

The first issue's scheduled to appear a year after Dupuis' announcement. In addition to the usual bundles, the journal will be available for \$10 individual, \$10,000 institutional. Dupuis names some of the editorial board, names some of which you will have seen in this very roundup. The initial meeting was scheduled for June in Belize.

I know this might come as a surprise to many who have perhaps known me as an open access supporter but really, perhaps it's time for all of us to grow up, put away our childish things and embrace reality. Show me the money, and all that.

It is, of course, entirely coincidental that the post appeared on April 1, 2012.

How to Succeed in Publishing Without Really Trying

Bryn Geffert wrote this piece, [appearing August 24, 2012](#) in *Inside Higher Ed*. It is another episode in the Screwtape Letters, this time beginning with Wormwood's aspiration to become an academic publishing

magnate. There is no way I am going to attempt to excerpt or summarize this, but I will quote one particularly nice paragraph (note the parenthetical comment):

I suppose it is theoretically possible that the Association of Research Libraries or the Association of College and Research Libraries (yes, they are two different institutions, thus making my point about libraries' inability to coordinate on this or any other movement) might someday make noise about a boycott. If so, just make some noise in return about the unfortunate possibility of a lawsuit alleging restraint of trade.

Go read this.

Is the NIH a cult?

Michael Eisen reveals the unfortunate truth in [this November 29, 2012 post](#) at *it is NOT junk*—apparently inspired by debates over California's Prop. 37 (which would have mandated the labeling of GMO foods), One person accused Eisen of having been brainwashed by the cult of the NIH.

So he did some thinking and review over his 20 years as a scientist in the NIH system—a cult member, if you will—and offers this illustrated study of whether the NIH meets the definitions of a cult.

Impossible to summarize, but I'm convinced.

Of Progress, Snipers and Inquisitors

I had originally planned to close this two-part roundup without adding more comments to those interleaved throughout. Originally, this section was headed Conclusions and consisted of the following:

And that, at long last, is the end of this roundup. It's concluded. For more conclusions, see me in April in Vancouver, Washington.

I still hope that those of you who care about OA and live in Oregon or Washington will find it worthwhile to sign up for my half-day preconference. But I did find the need to add a few comments here, after thinking about this stuff in the weeks since it was written.

I was also inspired by someone quoting from the first part. Unfortunately, what they quoted (I no longer remember where: maybe a tweet?) was from the introduction, where I quoted my reasons in late 2009 for *not* writing about OA any more, and specifically "I grow increasingly convinced that most scientists *just don't care*—either about libraries or about OA..." That downbeat comment appeared in November 2009. I don't believe it's as true now as it was then. I believe progress has been made and is

being made. Indeed, I believe 2011 and 2012 have seen considerable progress, with OA now an established and successful alternative to traditional scholarly journal publishing, one that offers a *preferred* future in which people have access to research articles they either need or want even if they lack the funding, institutional affiliation, or in-crowd status to get them in the current environment.

There's progress. Enough progress, I believe, that OA is unlikely to be derailed either by its obvious enemies (some publishers and at least one odious blog), by skeptics—among whom I sometimes number myself—or by two other groups: the snipers and the Inquisitors.

There's not much to say about snipers, those who may profess to favor OA or to be neutral about it but mostly take potshots at OA in the real world. One common methodology is the classic "I'm all in favor of X, but..." (or "however...") where in practice the person's only arguing against X. There are others. Snipers have always been with us; I've been one myself (less about OA than about other areas). I'd separate them from flat-out opponents because, in some cases, they really *are* theoretically in favor of OA: they just can't deal with it in the real world.

The more interesting and varied group is the Inquisitors, with a distinctive capital I. The Inquisitors feel the need to Purify OA, and if it dies or fares badly in the process, well, that's how Inquisition works. I think we're getting more Inquisitors as OA becomes more successful. It's not always clear whether an Inquisitor is *sincerely* in favor of OA (but only if it meets their pure criteria!) or if an Inquisitor is actually an opponent masquerading as a tough-minded supporter.

I'm not going to name names—except for one, where I have explicit permission to do so, as an example that it's easy to become an Inquisitor or at least use Inquisitorial methods. But here's a few examples of how Inquisitors work:

- Those who avidly support one form of OA and object, at length, when anything is done to support other forms of OA.
- Those who claim to support OA but insist that commonly-used licenses for OA material are wrong and harmful.
- Those who basically say it isn't OA unless it's fully libre, unless *all* authorial rights are waived.
- Those who hold OA publishers to much higher standards than traditional publishers, and who spend lots of time pointing out bad

OA publishers (using a broad and unforgiving definition of "bad") and little or no time mentioning successes. As for that particular inquisition: Yes, there are OA publishers who are only in it for the bucks. Convince me that there aren't fourth-tier commercial journals that will manage to get pretty much *any* article through peer review so they can sell subscriptions and charge page charges, and we can talk.

It's easy to become an Inquisitor. I'll admit to being reluctant to call access with an embargo OA, even Delayed OA, especially when the embargo is on not only the published version but also the Green OA version. To me, that's not OA—but that attitude may not be helpful. (Still, when one journal says it's for OA but has an embargo period of *fifteen years*—apparently the case with one humanities journal—it does get a little silly.) So that's the only Inquisitor I'll name: Walt Crawford, who really should know better.

The Inquisitors won't doom OA, and in some cases they might even improve it—but I believe they'll slow it down, and certainly give some of us cause to stay away much of the time. The snipers certainly won't doom OA. On the other hand, 100% complete OA to the published scholarly article literature isn't going to happen next year, almost certainly won't happen within a decade and is frankly unlikely within my lifetime. It's good to work toward that goal. Just don't be too unhappy if you don't quite get there.

Masthead

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