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Jordan and the concept of accountability

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Jordan Grafman has been co-editor of Cortex for over 20 years (Fig. 1)

----- Please insert Figure 1 about here -----

The journal owes him big time. He has been instrumental in nurturing it and helping it thrive. He is a very attentive editor, respectful of the authors' work, yet firm in sustaining quality. Indeed, what I most admired in all these years of joint editorship has been his thoroughness. I vividly remember during a discussion characterised by divergent views on what a journal should publish, his courteous attempt to make the journal publisher at the time accept the concept of accountability.

This was a particularly interesting postulation for me, as the term is not easily rendered into Italian. If one checks the dictionary, it translates as "responsibility". The difference is not subtle. It is someone's *responsibility* to heed to their duties, but one should be held *accountable* after these duties have been carried out. Accountability refers to the consequences of someone's actions. Hence, in Italian accountability would be closer to *responsabilizzazione* than *responsabilità*.

I learned this lesson from Jordan: we should try to foresee the consequences of our decisions. In the world of scientific publishing, I now maintain that we academics, researchers, and clinicians failed to appreciate fully the consequences of publishing in Open Access (OA), which in principle seems such a great idea. The founding principles of OA were to minimise the power (and the revenues) of established of private publishing houses by making freely available all papers reporting studies funded by public money. The idea sprang from the lofty but naïve belief that online publishing does not cost much, and that enlightened funders would sustain these costs. We soon saw that there is no such a thing as a free lunch and that the authors themselves or their institutions had to bear the costs of OA. This paved the way to

the most harmful outcome of OA; the insurgence of predatory publishing. Next step was a three-party renegotiation: authors pushing for quality-controlled OA, university libraries cautious about their budget and publishing houses arguing that they offered additional value to the publishing of scientific papers and ease of their dissemination.

Let's all listen to Jordan's accountability notion. Rich, mainly Western, institutions should be held accountable for selfishly accepting deals, which carry the consequence of inhibiting access to publishing science to authors from poorer institutions. Academic libraries should be held accountable for delegating academic publishing to private companies rather than having the courage to reclaim ownership of science dissemination. Publishing companies should be held accountable for not spelling out clearly which values they do add to science dissemination. If we want to increase integrity in science and science publishing, we all should be held accountable.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. The last paragraph of our first editorial in volume 37, issue 1, 2001. Our obsolete enthusiasm for making papers available on-line is notable.

Finally, we are delighted to have the opportunity of taking Cortex to the next stage of its development. Our most urgent task will be to improve the world wide web page of Cortex. Our plan is to establish **Cortex-on-line**, making available recently published articles, an archive of previous issues, and other surprises and delights. We will keep you posted.

Sergio Della Sala and Jordan Grafman
Editors