

Babini D. (2014). The risk of open access becoming integrated into existing commercial publishing - the need of a global system of noncommercial open access scholarly communications. *Rev Eletron de ComunInflnovSaúde* [Internet]. out-dez 2014; 8(4):438-442. <http://www.reciis.icict.fiocruz.br/index.php/reciis/article/view/431/1078>

The risk of open access becoming integrated into existing commercial publishing - the need of a global system of non-commercial open access scholarly communications¹

El riesgo de que el acceso abierto sea integrado dentro del sistema tradicional de publicación comercial – necesidad de un sistema global no comercial de comunicaciones académicas y científicas.

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Abstract

In Europe and USA scholarly communications have been outsourced and one of the most profitable businesses was built by main international commercial scholarly publishers, which today offer to take care of open access, building a new enclosure to knowledge for the Global South, and distracting governments, funding agencies and the scholarly community, in the North and in the South, from the need to build a global open access ecosystem based on shared and interoperable institutional, national and international non-

¹ Based on the presentation at the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association-OASPA's 6th Conference on Open Access Scholarly Publishing (COASP), UNESCO, September 2014. <http://river-valley.zeeba.tv/apcs-the-new-enclosure-to-knowledge/>

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commercial open access repositories and publishing platforms. If we want voices from the Global South to have more participation and impact in global conversations about issues that concern us all, the global scholarly community has to take good care of open access scholarly communications, including the peer-review, quality control and evaluation indicators systems.

Keywords

Scholarly communications; open access; repositories; journals; research evaluation; article processing charges (APCs)

Resumen

Las comunicaciones académicas en Europa y Estados Unidos se han tercerizado a las principales editoriales académicas comerciales que han desarrollado uno de los negocios más rentables, y que hoy se ofrecen para ocuparse del acceso abierto, construyendo nuevos cercamientos al conocimiento para el Sur Global, esta vez cobrando por publicar, y distraendo a los gobiernos, agencias que financian la investigación y la comunidad académica, tanto en el Norte como en el Sur, de la necesidad de construir un ecosistema global no-comercial de acceso abierto basado en repositorios institucionales, nacionales e internacionales colaborativos e interoperables y plataformas de publicación. Si queremos que las voces del Sur Global tengan más participación e impacto en las conversaciones globales sobre temas que nos preocupan a todos, la comunidad académica y científica mundial debe ser quien cuide de las comunicaciones académicas en acceso abierto, incluyendo la revisión por pares, el control de calidad y los sistemas de indicadores de evaluación.

Palabras clave: comunicaciones académicas; acceso abierto; repositorios; revistas científicas; revistas académicas; evaluación de la investigación; cobrar por publicar

we have to make an ongoing series of decisions all of the time...

we have to think about who is being included and who is being excluded.....

..... what seems open to us today, we have to ask ourselves ...will this seem open tomorrow?

John Willinsky³

Several decades ago, the scholarly community in Europe and USA has outsourced scholarly communications and one of the most profitable businesses⁴ was built by main international commercial scholarly publishers. With profit margins of 30-40%⁵, mainly based on the fact that salaries of author, reviewers and many times editorial committees, are paid, directly or through tax exemptions⁶, with public funds and other research funds. Commercial scholarly publishers have taken good care of closed scholarly communications, taken good care that only the “best” journals, defined in their own terms, are included in “mainstream” indicators to evaluate science⁷⁻⁸⁻⁹⁻¹⁰, thus perpetuating a vicious circle where voices from the Global South, about issues concerning the largest

³John Willinsky at the Conference Opening Science to Meet Future Challenges [streaming video]. [Warsaw, Poland]: 11 March 2014. [cited 2014 November 22]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jODzw_5q7EU

⁴ Monbiot, G. Academic publishers make Murdoch look like a socialist. The Guardian [Internet]. 29 August 2011 [cited 2014 November 22]; Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/aug/29/academic-publishers-murdoch-socialist>

⁵Taylor, M. The obscene profits of commercial scholarly publishers. 2012 Jan 13 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: Saurapod Vertebra Picture of the Week [Internet blog]. [Place unknown]: Available from: <http://svpow.com/2012/01/13/the-obscene-profits-of-commercial-scholarly-publishers/>

⁶Shieber, S. Public underwriting of research and open access. 2014 Apr 4 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: The Occasional Pamphlet on Scholarly Communications [Internet blog]. Cambridge, Mass. Available from: <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/pamphlet/>

⁷Vessuri H, Guédon J-C, Cetto A M. Excellence or quality? Impact of the current competition regime on science and scientific publishing in Latin America and its implications for development. Current Sociology. 2014 September; 62: 647-665.

⁸ Chan L, Kirsop B, Arunachalam S. Towards Open and Equitable Access to Research and Knowledge for Development. PLoS Med 2011; 8(3). Available from: <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001016>

⁹Chan L, Gray E. Centering the Knowledge Peripheries through Open Access: Implications for Future Research and Discourse on Knowledge for Development. In: Open development : networked innovations in international development / edited by Matthew L. Smith, and Katherine M.A. Reilly. Cambridge, MIT Press, 2013 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available from: https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/44099/1/Chan%26Gray_Open%20Development.pdf

¹⁰Czerniewicz L. Inequitable power dynamics of global knowledge production and exchange must be confronted head on. 2013 Apr 29 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: The impact blog [Internet]. London: London School of Economics-LSE. Available from: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/04/29/redrawing-the-map-from-access-to-participation/>

populations of the world, have little possibilities of being voiced, read, used, when building new research and discussing priority issues for a sustainable world.

And now, commercial publishers offer to take care of open access, charging an average of USD 2.097/2.727 per article for article processing charges (APCs) to publish in open access¹¹, seeking to reproduce the previous model of irrational pricing¹², twisting open access so it boomerangs back into its own assets¹³, building a new enclosure to knowledge for the Global South¹⁴. In an international context where only 30% of journals charge APC's¹⁵, it is of great concern to see the advancement of the article processing charges (APCs) model as the best way forward for open access publishing, even at lower prices than commercial publishers, distracting governments, funding agencies and the scholarly community, in the North and in the South, from the need to build a global open access ecosystem based on shared and interoperable non-commercial institutional, national and international open access digital repositories¹⁶ and publishing platforms that do not charge users and do not charge authors/institutions. This will allow accomplishing the International Council for Science-ICSU goals on open access¹⁷:

The scientific record should be:

- *free of financial barriers for any researcher to contribute to;*
- *free of financial barriers for any user to access immediately on publication;...*

Access to knowledge is a human right. Internet, the Web and new information and communication technologies provide each time more opportunities for developing regions to contribute to local/regional, as well as global conversations. These contributions need to receive quality control and evaluation indicators, independently of being published in

¹¹Björk B-C, Solomon D. Developing an effective market for open access article processing charges. Final report. (2014). Espoo, Finland and Michigan, USA; 2014 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available from: <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Open-access/Guides/WTP054773.htm>

¹²Willinsky J. The replicability of research's irrational publishing economy. 2014 Nov 20 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: Slaw Canada's online legal magazine [Internet blog]. Available from: <http://www.slw.ca/2014/11/20/the-replicability-of-researchs-irrational-publishing-economy/>

¹³Rentier B. The success of Open Access is revealing new dangers. The fight isn't over yet. 2014 Oct 25 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: Ouvertures immédiates [Internet blog]. Belgium. Available from: <https://bernardrentier.wordpress.com/2014/10/25/the-success-of-open-access-is-revealing-new-dangers-the-fight-isnt-over-yet/>

¹⁴Babini D. APC's – a new enclosure to knowledge. At: COASP - 6th Conference on Open Access Scholarly Publishing. [streaming video]. [UNESCO, Paris, France]: 2014 Sept 19 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available at: <http://river-valley.zeba.tv/apcs-the-new-enclosure-to-knowledge/>

¹⁵Directory of Open Access Journals [Internet]. Lund, Sweden: the Directory of Open Access Journals; [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available from: www.doaj.org

¹⁶Open access digital repositories are registered in www.doar.org

¹⁷International Council for Science-ICSU. Open access to scientific data and literature and the assessment of research by metrics. 2014 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available from: <http://www.icsu.org/general-assembly/news/ICSU%20Report%20on%20Open%20Access.pdf>

English in the North, or in local languages in local/regional publishing outputs. Understanding knowledge as a commons¹⁸ is helping us think in ways we can manage open access also as a commons. The global scholarly community needs to take control of the peer-review process and the evaluation indicators system. Open access repositories and journal portals managed as collaborative initiatives by universities and other research organizations in developing regions¹⁹ are a clear indication that a down-up approach can very well serve open access policies being issued by governments and funding agencies²⁰. Implementing open access in each country is about investing in the development of open access repository and publishing infrastructure, issuing open access policies, educating and promoting open access²¹

If we want voices from the Global South to have more participation and impact in global conversations about issues that concern us all, the global scholarly community has to take good care of open access scholarly communications.

If the research community wants to ensure that it gets an Open Access regime that best meets its needs it should be urgently embracing Open Access today, and on its own terms. If it waits until Open Access is thrust upon it will likely have to accept it in a far less pleasing way. Act Now or Repent at Leisure!

Richard Poynder²²

¹⁸Hess Ch, Ostrom E, editors. Understanding knowledge as a commons: From theory to practice. Cambridge: MIT Press; 2006 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. 382 p.

¹⁹Examples of non-commercial open access regional journal portals in developing regions are SciELO and Redalyc (Latin America), AJOL and Scielo SA (Africa). Several universities run collections of their own open access journals, examples of universities with more than a hundred journals in their collection: the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), and the University of Chile. In recent years main research universities from developing regions have started developing, or planning, institutional open access digital repositories, which interoperate with national and regional systems of digital repositories, as is the case of 9 countries of Latin America in La Referencia, member of COAR-Confederation of Open Access Repositories.

²⁰Examples in Latin America: Peru and Argentina have passed in Congress in 2013 national legislation requiring open access repositories for publicly-funded research, Mexico in 2014, and still in Congress in Brazil and Venezuela. World national and institutional open access policies are registered in <http://roarmap.eprints.org/>

²¹Swan A, Willmers M and King T. Opening access to Southern African research: recommendations for university managers. SCAP (Scholarly Communication in Africa project). 2014 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. Available

from: http://openuct.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/media/SCAP_Brief_4_Swan_et_al_Opening_Access.pdf

²²Poynder R. The State of Open Access. 2014 Mar 21 [cited 2014 Nov 22]. In: Open and Shut [Internet blog]. England. Available from: <http://poynder.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/the-state-of-open-access.html>