

Open Access Journals: Transparent Science or Shady Business?

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Imagine -You are a young European scientist. You submit your excellent article – the reviewers are enthusiastic – but your institution does not have a budget for publishing your article in an open access (OA) journal – you have a family to nourish -well, do you have some 700 to 2.500 USD to pay yourself for publishing your article?

The only chance you might have is to apply to waiving. Maybe you have a friend in the Sudan who agrees to act as first author instead of you in order to get the work published for free because scientists from developing countries have better chances not to be obliged to pay publication fees.

Imagine -you are a lateral thinker. You are not supported by an academic institution or your head of department. E.g., Albert Einstein did not receive any funding from his first employer, the Swiss Patent Office, for publishing his scientific articles. Could he have afforded to publish his pioneering work in an OA journal?

Imagine -you have to rush to an airport and you need to take a taxi. After the ride you explain to the taxi driver that he should pay you the fare instead of you paying him, just the condition scientists accept with OA journals now?

Imagine – Your public institution provides funds for publishing in an OA journal: well, in this case, eventually, it is the taxpayer who pays the fees.

Consequences

The more OA journals will predominate, the more science will be biased towards who can afford to publish.

OA journals are easy to access by everyone. This means that the impact and citation factors will increase more easily as compared to subscription journals.

It is not clear **what the money requested by OA journals is destined for.**

The highly specialized academic reviewers are usually not paid for their work.

There are no printing costs.

Is this perhaps the reason why OA access journals spring up like mushrooms and inundate the email accounts of academics by publication offers?

OA journals advantages for the publisher

- High profit
- Particularly high impact factor
- No cost for manuscript review
- No printing and distribution cost

OA journals advantages for the reader

- Free internet access

OA journals advantages for the author

- Particularly high impact factor due to the easy access of readers

OA journals disadvantages for the author

- No money no publication
- Funds taken away from study budget

OA journals

- **advantages for the scientific community**
 - Easy worldwide access to scientific information
- **disadvantages for the scientific community**
 - Impact bias towards scientists who can afford publishing as compared to scientists who cannot
 - Science becomes a business affair

What can be done?

As a first step, in order to correct the scientific bias caused by this situation, we propose to

adjust the impact and citation factors of articles published in OA journals. That could be done by dividing these factors by a defined proportion of the publishing fees and would thereby also contribute to discourage predatory OA journals.

Further correcting measures must be addressed and discussed by the scientific community to prevent science from becoming just a business affair.

Other suggestions?