

Description

The focus is on the ongoing efforts by the academic community to ensure mandatory open access for scientific journals. Researchers and publishers have been under controversy several times regarding this issue.The consortium, FinELib, is one notable step forward in this direction. Recently, there have been similar agreements secured by VSNU, a consortium of 14 Dutch Universities, and SpringerNature and Oxford University Press (OUP), are also notable. However, the stalemate between French Universities and SpringerNature over a mutually acceptable agreement is a concern for the academic community. Let us learn about these in details.

The Dutch Universities Win

After years of efforts, VSNU, an association of universities of Netherlands, has entered into 'publish-and-read' models with major publishing houses like SpringerNature, OUP, and Wiley. This agreement has combined the fee for publishing open-access research and viewing another paywalled article. This has ensured that the annually published 2,000 titles with Springer are now open access. Also, the Dutch have begun to publish more open-access research. The publishers have also agreed that 100% open access may be possible but at better rates. A change in the publishing model may helpful in this regard. In fact, the Dutch researchers seem to be leading these endeavors.

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A substantial amount of sustained effort has gone into these agreements. However, not all have been fruitful enough. As in the case of Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), negotiations were stalled and suspended on many occasions. This has deprived the community of access to their research. Both the sides are dealing with it patiently. The academic community hopes that they reach an agreement soon, in the interest of open access and research.

Battleground in France

While the story in the Netherlands has more positive attributes than setbacks, the French story is more of a war correspondence. A national consortium of 250 French academic institutions has canceled the subscription to the journal, SpringerNature

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. This resulted due to failed negotiations over the increased subscription charges proposed by SpringerNature. Couperin.org, the French consortium, has reported that it will lead to a loss of $6 million to SpringerNature. The publisher has kept its doors open for further negotiations as of now. The researchers at the French Universities can still access the articles available to them, but nothing so far on the increased subscription charges.

Debate Rages On

Multiple factors have contributed to the debate for providing open access to research funded by public money. The prime factor is an increase in the subscription fee, especially by SpringerNature, in spite of rising in open access publishing. Other reasons include EU's mandate for open access, and significant public spending over research and growth of open access publishing platforms like ScholarlyHub. The academic community is protesting against the paywall and the high publishing and subscription charges imposed by the journals. On the other hand, the publishers are citing financial non-viability as the reason for not agreeing to open access terms.

Research institutions globally have expressed concerns over multiple rounds of public spending for the same research. Acording to them, the research is funded and reviewed using public funds. So, it should be freely available to them, without any additional charges for subscription. With the growing popularity of platforms like Sci-Hub, researchers have even begun to question the need for subscriptions. This, and other options like seeking cooperation from colleagues, has added fuel to the researchers' war machines.

As publishers keep up their fight for higher subscriptions, more and more institutions are getting inspired by French and Dutch Universities. They are also opening up negotiations for open access agreements. It is now up to the publishing giants like SpringerNature and Elsevier to respond to the disruptions brought about by open publishing platforms.

What do you think of this move of the universities against the publishers? Whom do you support? Please let us know your thoughts in the comments section below.

Category

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