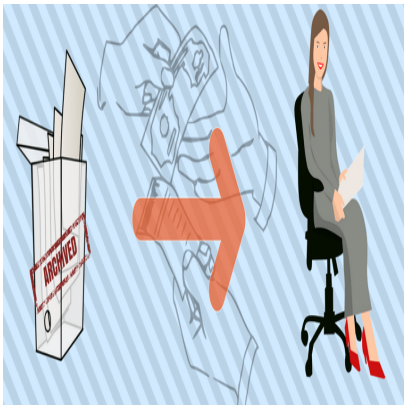


Description

The business of academic publishing is controversially inaccessible to its target audience; the academic community. Specifically, Elsevier and Taylor & Francis have been on the news regularly, due to disputes with universities in this regard. In recent disagreements, South Korean Universities cited the higher subscription rates that Elsevier charged. It also mentioned Elsevier's misleading package deals of little-read journals. Meanwhile, librarians from UK/Irish institutions, and representatives of Research Libraries UK and beyond, urged Taylor & Francis to drop subscription charges. Overall, collaborative academic movements to improve accessibility to academic research journals could revolutionize the existing model of the publishing industry.

Flipping the Existing Business Model of Academic Publishing

Elsevier's business model, at $1000/year to access one journal title, alongside annual fee increase of 5%, faces rising academic resistance. A German consortium, Projekt DEAL, repeatedly attempted to negotiate better pricing with Elsevier, for improved open access. This spurred boycotts and similar negotiations across universities in Finland, Peru, and Taiwan. In a similar move, the Finnish library consortium also led the #NoDealNoReview boycott. As a cumulative result, a consortium of South Korean Universities, reached a new deal with Elsevier to access its database ScienceDirect.

Following on from the South Korean Universities, the Finnish Consortium (FinElib) similarly joined Elsevier to outline a three-year agreement. The agreement would provide Finnish academic organizations access to Elsevier's extensive research collection. The agreement further allows Finnish researchers to publish their articles at a discounted rate in Elsevier's journals. These articles have open access to the researchers. The agreement termed the Science Direct Freedom Collection, collectively allow Finnish Universities subscription access to ~1,850 journals on Elsevier's ScienceDirect. Universities intend to seek more concessions, in similar negotiations, in the future. In addition, existing pirate open-access platforms such as Sci-Hub have also added pressure to change the traditional publishing model.

Publishers Reverse the Decision on Additional Charges for Archived Materials

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Meanwhile, in the UK, academics have forced Taylor & Francis to retreat from increasing charges for accessing archived journals. This decision was in effect after more than 110 universities signed a letter of protest. The publishers initially intended to introduce a “moving paywall” that included a 20-year span of papers, in the “front file”. Essentially, these publications would move forward with time, causing additional costs to access these papers as a separate package. Head librarians of the UK and Irish institutions opposed the new policy, as it would increase administration activities alongside substantial costs. The letter of protest alluded the move would create confusion and annoyance while diminishing archival coverage considered ‘opportunistic’.

Improving Partnerships in Academic Publishing

In response to the backlash, Taylor & Francis issued a statement that the new policy would not be implemented. Historic access was reinstated as part of the main subscription, alongside an apology for concerns generated by the new policy. Following the statement, library directors greeted the development and appreciated easy access to scholarly publications for University students and staff. Negotiations between Irish Universities and their next deal with Taylor & Francis are ongoing. Increasingly, the academic institutions are challenging academic publishers to implement a more accessible publishing model, while diminishing excess costs. Perhaps revolutionary change can be progressively achieved to replace the traditional academic publishing model after all.

What do you think about the open access controversy between publishers and researchers? Please let us know your thoughts in the comments section below.

Category

1. Industry News
2. Publishing News

Date Created
2018/03/02
Author
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