

Description

Following a recent ruling by a district court in Virginia in favor of the American Chemical Society (ACS), several domains of the controversial pirate website, Sci-Hub, have become inactive. In addition to slapping $4.8 million in damages, the ruling also stated that internet search engines and web-hosting services should refrain from providing access to such websites that engage in copyright infringement.

As of now, the domains for sci-hub.io, sci-hub.ac, and sci-hub.cc have now been made inactive and set to the status of “serverHold,” which indicates that the domain is deactivated in the DNS. With this change, users are not able to easily access Sci-Hub; however, the domain sci-hub.bz is still functional. Although the court order has resulted in the inactivation of several domains for Sci-Hub, Elbakyan reports that she intends to keep Sci-Hub functional and is currently working on a fix for the DNS issues.

For those unaware of Sci-Hub, Alexandra Elbakyan started it in 2011 with the aim to make research papers free by bypassing paywall barriers in academic publishing. In fact, earlier this year, Sci-Hub had faced a similar lawsuit from Elsevier, which it lost and the ruling awarded ~$15 million in damages to Elsevier.

Martin Eve, a Literature, Technology, and Publishing professor at the University of London, Birkbeck, stated that such DNS takedowns might prove sufficient for academic publishers but it will not lead to the complete shutdown of Sci-Hub. Academics will find other means to continue accessing the website. He also added that publishers should instead develop better models for scholarly communication that involve open access to research studies thereby reducing the need for portals like Sci-Hub.

For more details on the background and legal issues around Sci-Hub, you can read the following articles on Enago Academy:

https://www.enago.com/academy/does-sci-hubs-pirated-papers-mean-the-end-of-subscription-journals/

https://www.enago.com/academy/elsevier-seeks-millions-from-sci-hub-for-copyright-infringement/

https://www.enago.com/academy/how-is-sci-hub-affecting-academic-publishing/

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