

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

O risco do acesso aberto ficar atrelado às editoras comerciais existentes – a necessidade de um sistema global de publicações acadêmicas de acesso aberto não comercial

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

*Dominique Babini*ⁱⁱ

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-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)

ⁱ 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/>

ⁱⁱ Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO), Buenos Aires, Argentina | orcid.org/0000-0002-5752-7060 | dasbabini@gmail.com

Resumo

Na Europa e nos Estados Unidos, as publicações acadêmicas têm sido terceirizadas, e um dos negócios mais lucrativos nesse cenário foi criado pelas principais editoras acadêmicas comerciais internacionais que, hoje, se oferecem para cuidar do acesso aberto, construindo uma nova área para o conhecimento fechada aos países do Sul. Assim, desviam a atenção de governos, de agências de financiamento e da comunidade acadêmica, no Norte e no Sul, no que se refere à necessidade de construir um ecossistema mundial baseado em plataformas de publicação e repositórios de acesso aberto não comerciais institucionais, nacionais e internacionais, compartilhados e com interoperabilidade. Se quisermos que as vozes dos países do Sul tenham mais participação e impacto nos debates globais sobre questões que nos preocupam, a comunidade acadêmica global deverá cuidar das publicações acadêmicas de acesso aberto, inclusive dos sistemas de revisão por pares, de controle de qualidade e de indicadores para avaliação.

Palavras-chave: Publicações acadêmicas; Acesso aberto; Repositórios; Periódicos científicos; Avaliação de pesquisas; Taxas para publicação de artigos

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 repositórios 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; repositórios; revistas científicas; revistas académicas; evaluación de la investigación; cobrar por publicar

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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 Willinskyⁱⁱⁱ

Several decades ago, the scholarly community in Europe and USA has outsourced scholarly communications and one of the most profitable businesses¹ was built by main international commercial scholarly publishers. With profit margins of 30-40%², mainly based on the fact that salaries of author, reviewers and many times editorial committees, are paid, directly or through tax exemptions³, 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 science⁴⁻⁷, thus perpetuating a vicious circle where voices from the Global South, about issues concerning the largest 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 access⁸, seeking to reproduce the previous model of irrational pricing⁹, twisting open access so it boomerangs back into its own assets¹⁰, building a new enclosure to knowledge for the Global South¹¹. In an international context where only 30% of journals charge APC's¹², 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 repositories^{iv} 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 access¹³:

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 English in the North, or in local languages in local/regional publishing outputs. Understanding knowledge as a commons¹⁴ 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 regions^v are a clear indication that a down-up approach can very well serve open access policies being issued by governments and funding

iii John 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

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

v Examples 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.

agencies^{vi}. 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 access¹⁵.

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 Poynder¹⁶

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vi Examples 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/>

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