

Can we afford to go Gold? (Can we afford not to?)

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21 March 2017

Intro:

- 1.5 years as University Librarian
- 31 years as professor of economics
- speaking now primarily as an economist

Logistical note: I don't like putting my entire talk on the screen – humans can't read and listen at the same time

- my arguments are in the speaker notes, and I'll publish the slide deck with the notes included if you want to review my arguments later



We have a design problem

<http://ianlarsen.tumblr.com/post/57969586315/diagnosing-product-design-problems>

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Have:

- Trusted certification
- Incentives for author participation
- Quality control
- Findability
- Preservation

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“quality control”: typography, copy and style editing, metadata

Want:

- Trusted certification
- Incentives for author participation
- Quality control
- Findability
- Preservation
- Universal open access
- Cost-based payments

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“Universal”: immediate, read access

“Cost-based”: payments to publishers cover their costs including required (competitive) rate-of-return....not monopoly profit rate

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“Universal”: immediate, read access

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Without losing other desiderata:

1. How to get universal OA?
2. How to reduce monopoly power of big publishers?

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So, 2 key questions

These will be my focus: how do we get these without giving up other desiderata?

Key point: We are scientists – we solve problems by breaking them into components

There are interactions, but to first approximation, **two separate issues**

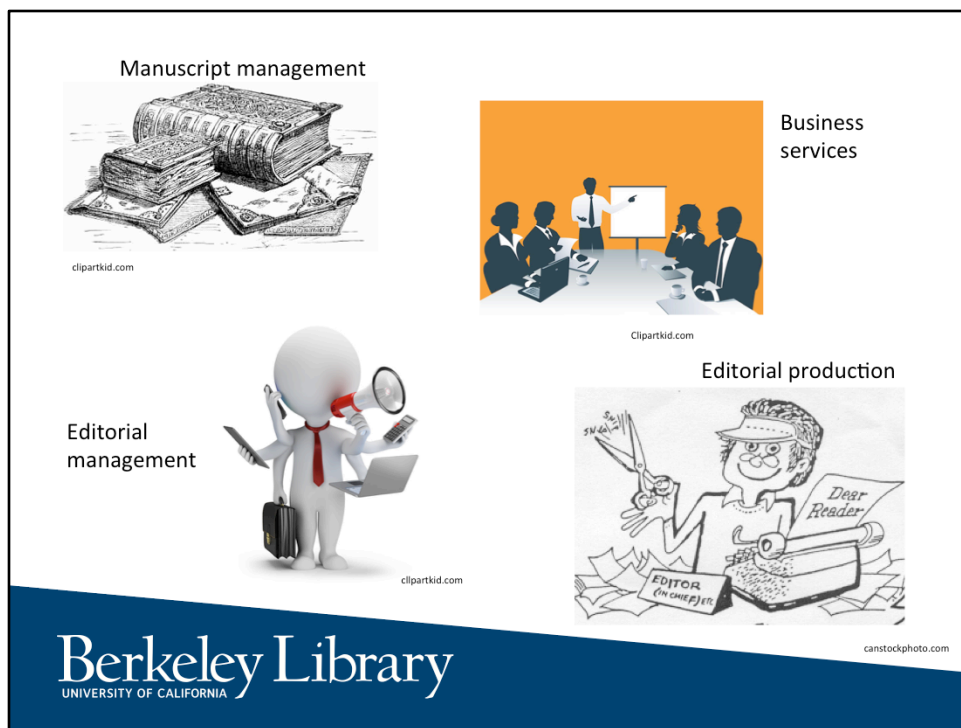
Eg, would be a success if we get just OA as long as don't **worsen** market power balance

Delightfully, I think moving to pre-payment can solve **both** problems, but if you don't agree, let's win on at least one (without making the other worse)

Publishing has real costs

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First, a quick refresher on some fundamental economics of publishing – these determine which solutions are feasible



Credits:

Manuscripts: Clipartkid.com

Manager: <http://www.canstockphoto.com/>>(c) Can Stock Photo / AnatolyM

Editor: Liturgical Clip Art Calledsouth via Clipartkid.com


Business: <http://clipartfans.com/resource/business-clip-art/business-clip-art-105.jpg>>



Pennies from heaven?

<http://www.penniesfromheaven.nl/publishing/>

What will pay for these services?



subscription fees
APCs
philanthropic grants
gov't subsidies
consortial payments

There are currently several payment streams

They all serve a similar role: getting money to publishers to cover costs

No one is intrinsically better than any other

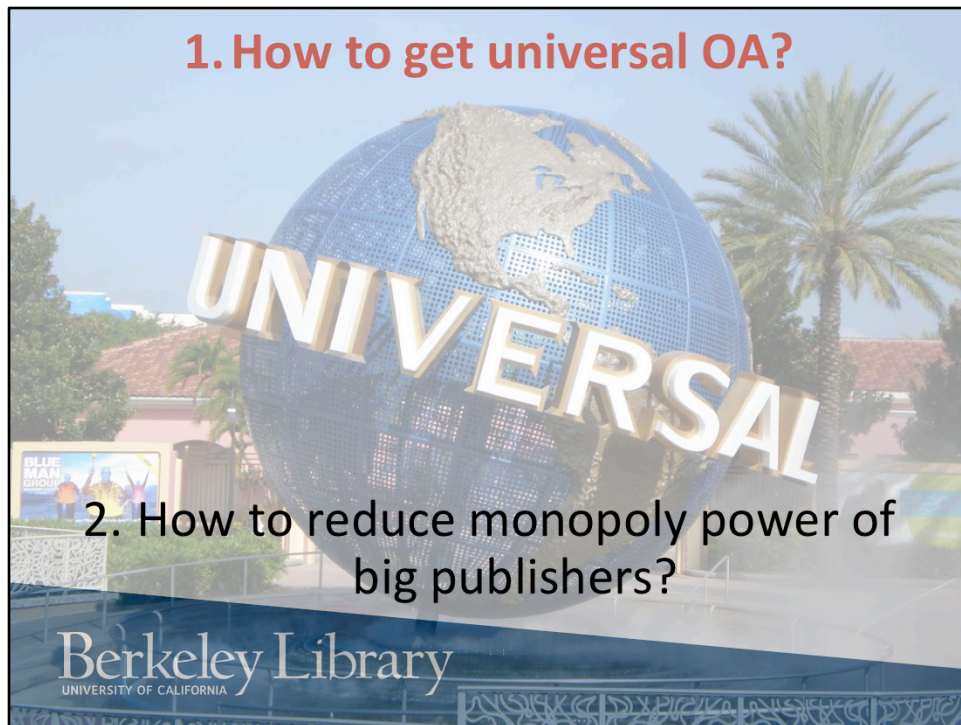


Unavoidable a priori from the economics of publishing....

1. Real costs

2. Stream of revenue essential

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Post-pay (subscriptions + anything)
incompatible with universal OA

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- Journals provide this to authors
- Readers can get this from OA

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If journals produce articles and make them available OA,
readers can get what they want without paying subscriptions
- death spiral

Maybe can get subscriptions plus degraded or limited OA
Needs to be degraded enough for subscription demand to stay up
E.g., 12-24 month embargoes
If provided through repositories (like PubMed Central, arXiv.org) additional quality
hits: version control and findability

Can we achieve open access without
paying anyone?

NO



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Let me break it down into refuting some common myths

Myth: “Green OA is the answer”

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NO

- 1) No incentives: After 25 years, only about 10-15% coverage (even true for PubMed Central)
- 2) Doesn't eliminate costs of publishing (eScholarship about \$500K / yr direct costs, for limited service)
- 3) Doesn't provide trusted certification
- 4) Poor findability

Myth: “We don’t pay for arXiv.org”

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YES WE DO. It is supported by (voluntary) institutional contributions: about \$1M / yr

And it doesn’t provide many of the desiderata

For it to provide the full suite, it will cost much more

Myth: “Peer review is freely donated
so if we cut out publishers we’ll save a
lot”

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Someone needs to organize peer review, and ensure its quality

Post-hoc, crowd-sourced peer review is not working – and unlikely it could

- incentives to participate? why do reviewers review?
- With name-brand journals, generalized reciprocity – want to get my submissions well-reviewed in the future
- And, need trusted third parties to certify reviewer quality

Myth: “We don’t need peer review”

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Many librarians and others talk about “alternative” scholarly communications models
- but the authors evince approximately zero interest

Peer review is essential for author participation:
We need some amount of validation and certification:

- for science and society,
 - a filter on too much content
 - and so we don’t make decisions on bad results
- for researcher evaluation (P&T)



Can we achieve open access without
the big publishers?

NO

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Key barrier: faculty/researcher professional reward system

#1 motivation for selecting publication venue is prestige

deep culture — can't be changed by top-down policy, can't be changed fast

Also, large society publishers subsidize other society activities

Pre-pay doesn't work.
Are APCs the only way to implement
gold OA?

NO

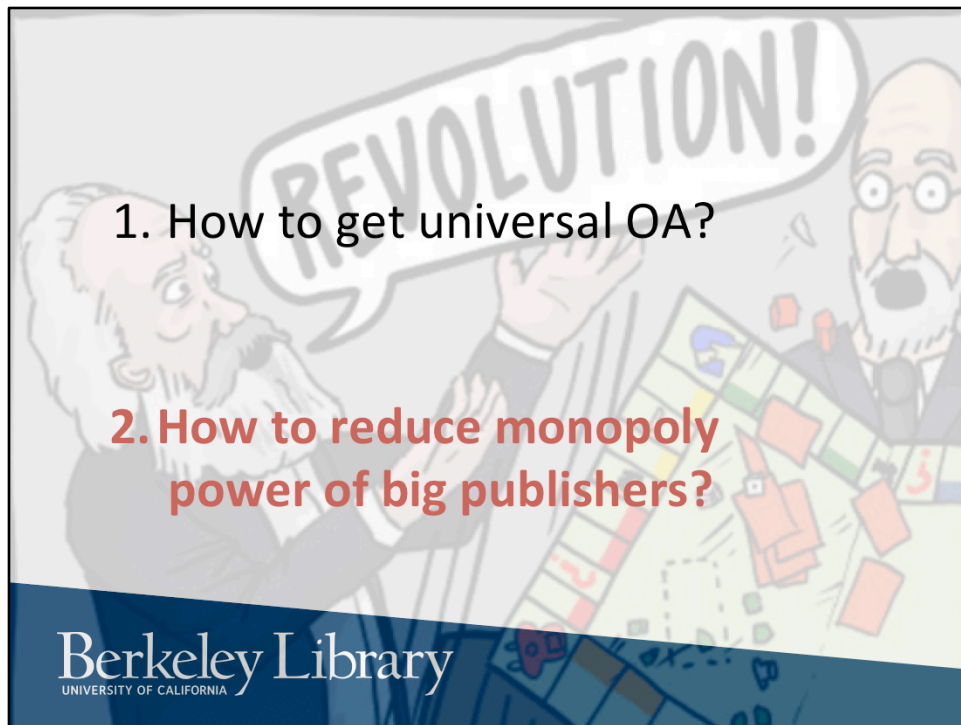
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NO

Needs to be *some* mechanism for transferring funds — from research consumers
— to publishers
 someone needs to pay someone

SCOAP3, arXiv.org

Gates Foundation arrangement with Science



So, 2 key questions

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Will APCs reduce university/funder/
author power, and increase publisher
power?

NO

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NO

Source of publisher market power is the transfer of copyright

Changing from post-payment to pre-payment **doesn't create any new market power**

In fact, **if authors have skin in the game**, they now have incentive to use their power over copyright to pressure publishers

[“Pressure” can be simple and atomistic (don't need to band together): simply deciding where to submit *in part* based on price]

[Journals need prestigious editorial boards: if the boards are authors who pay APCs they'll have direct incentive to pressure publishers]

What about changing *who* pays (e.g., from libraries to authors)

don't need to do that: **could pay APCs centrally**, through library or other single unit

could do both: Library negotiates to pay Elsevier APC of \$1000 for up to 1000 articles / year (\$1M); beyond that faculty pay

In fact, APCs may be best hope – aligns
author incentives with readers

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The authors create the work, own the intellectual property

The scholarly communications system exists primarily to support them

Connecting payment for access to motives of authors and research funders more directly is **necessary** to get them to work against monopoly exploitation

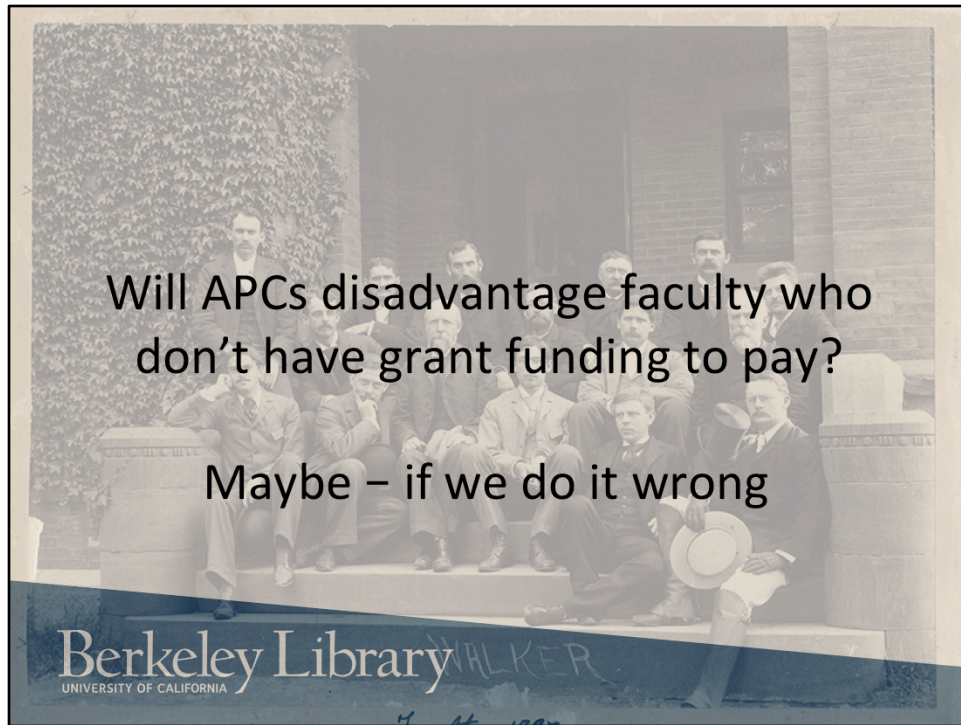
Will APCs disadvantage the global south?

NO

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They are net consumers –so they will generally pay less in APCs than they currently pay in subscriptions (see, e.g., “Pay it Forward”)

Any subsidies available today can be provided in an APC world



Maybe, but not if we are sensible

Cost of producing publications doesn't go up — so the money currently paying for subscriptions is sufficient

The challenge is re-distribution: flow the funds to those who are paying the APCs

Could have the libraries centrally pay APCs

or transfer subscription budget to research publication budget (held by VCR or distributed to individual faculty)

Funders are currently reimbursing universities for costs of subscriptions through F&A: could shift some to grants



<https://blog.udemy.com/how-to-write-a-summary-of-an-article/>

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What we want that we don't have

universal open access

controlled, cost-based payments

No economically coherent path for
Green OA to provide what we're
missing

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Pre-pay (Gold) can provide:

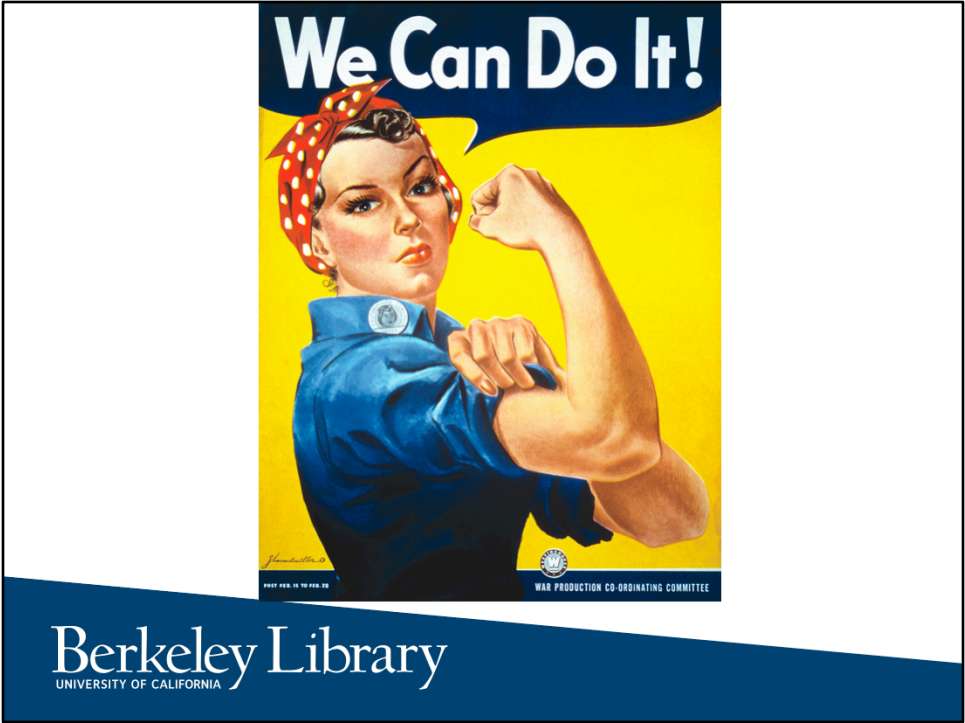
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Gold gets what we want

at possible cost of reducing author participation (“ability to pay” concern)

If we make transition sensibly, won’t hurt authors (and that is non-negotiable!)



We can do this – but must not hurt
authors

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