Why force the OA transition now?
An economist’s view

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It isn’t normal:
Most firms can’t dictate terms and ignore consumer preferences

To force a transition:
Need to understand what’s different about big for-profit publishers, and how to overcome their advantage
We aren’t making enough progress
Open access progress after 25 years: 6-11%

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<tr>
<th>University</th>
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<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins University</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>University of California, Los Angeles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvard University</td>
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<td>Rice University</td>
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<td>University of California, San Diego</td>
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<td>Columbia University</td>
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<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
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<td>Vanderbilt University</td>
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<td>Yale University</td>
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</tr>
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*Open Access Publishing: Top Ranking Universities*


Analysis by Lokman I. Meho, American University Beirut
Power increasing: Top 5 publishers, 1973–2013

[Graph showing the percentage of papers in Natural and Medical Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities published by Reed-Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, American Chemical Society, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, and Other publishers over the years 1970 to 2010.]
We can’t afford to continue
UC Berkeley Library cost vs. revenue / student (2010-18)

NB: Library cost index is wtd. avg. of labor and materials cost
We have an opportunity now
Why so little progress?

Publishers don’t want an OA business model
  • With pay-to-read, they have monopoly power over readers
  • With pay-to-publish, there is increased competition

With monopoly power, they are able to refuse to change business model
But they are vulnerable, now

Wherefrom publisher monopoly power?

- Authors give copyright → legal exclusive right to provide access

We’re having a moment: *access much less exclusive*

- OA (including pre-publication versions), and especially...
- Grey and black market servers
Evidence of vulnerability

Over 20 consortia & major universities have cancelled at least one Big Deal

• E.g., Germany, Sweden, CalTech, Florida State cancelled Elsevier

Key: researchers *tolerant* because of alternative access

• E.g., Caltech: only 5% of user download demand has come to library for access assistance
• The other 95% satisfied directly by users
We need more action, *now*
We cannot just sit by and watch the few and the brave

Germany, Sweden, Plan S: less than 10% of Elsevier revenue

Elsevier and others mounting legal and technical actions to stop pirates
  • If they succeed, they regain the market power to blockade transformation
University of California has gone to the barricades

Big Deal contract expires 31 December

We have proposed a publish-and-read contract with N. American-compatible funding model

UC responsible for nearly 10% of US research publications

We are far apart – stay tuned