

Review of: "Publish or perish: time for a rethink?"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Significance

It is important to consider how the scholarly publishing ecosystem might be revised to promote the public good. Readers need affordable access to knowledge that has been vetted for quality. For-profit scholarly publishers hold monopolies over the knowledge they publish and can therefore charge unfair prices for that content.

The first version of this paper reads like a news story rather than an academic article. The authors should provide the readers with an introduction to the paper that outlines the goals of the paper and the method of investigation. There are no empirical research results offered, so I assume this is a literature review. The paper will need to provide a justification for why the literature review is needed. Why is the existing literature on scholarly publishing insufficient? What will this paper provide that previous publications such as those cited by the authors have not?

Argumentation

The authors have misrepresented the scholarly publishing industry in several ways:

"Publish or perish" culture is not responsible for Article Processing Charges. APCs are the result of backlash against toll access publishing which excludes readers with fewer resources. Publish or perish is responsible for "vanity publishing" in which authors pay to have their work published regardless of its quality.

APCs do not necessarily result in faster publishing. They result in open accessibility. It takes just as long to review and revise an article which is published via APC as an article which is published through the traditional method. Journals without peer review result in faster publishing.

Journals with APC charges are not necessarily easier to publish in. There are some journals with APC charges without quality peer review, and others with APC charges that do have rigorous peer review.

The authors claim that Open Access means researchers pay to publish and their publications are immediately freely available for everyone. That is only true for some types of Open Access. There is OA which incorporates peer review, and therefore is not immediately available for everyone. There is also OA which does not require a fee for authors to publish. Please see these resources to learn more about Open Access: <https://guides.library.cornell.edu/openaccess>

The authors claim that APCs are driving publisher profits. Actually, APCs were created to solve the crisis in which university scholars create and review research and then universities are forced to purchase subscriptions to that content.

APCs didn't cause the problem, they were supposed to be the solution. However, for-profit publishers have taken advantage of APCs to continue to charge universities for the research scholars produce and reap 20-40% profit margins from content they do not create. The only difference is that now the scholars pay for publication rather than reading. Publishers own monopolies on scholarly articles, which are non-substitutable goods. Therefore, demand for the articles does not decrease when price increases. APCs have not been successful in their purpose, but they didn't create the problem.

Resolving these issues in the argumentation will be important in the next version of the paper.