

Review of: "[Commentary] To Publish Scientific Journals: For Some, the Big Business of the Century"

Eike Schallehn¹

¹ Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I agree with the suggestion that pay-to-publish did have a tremendously negative impact on peer reviewing. The pay-to-publish market was created in response to a demand from the scientific community and its tendency to measure science quantitatively using metrics based on numbers of publications and citations instead of quality, fueled by money being available from public funding. The article "Over-optimization of academic publishing metrics: observing Goodhart's Law in action," by Michael Fire and Carlos Guestrin, is a good read on that. And the low barriers of digital publishing just kickstarted the escalation.

On the other hand, I do not see how opening a market for reviewing (which then could not be called peer reviewing anymore, I guess) would solve this problem or compensate for the negative impact. It just means more money flowing, but the commentary does not conclusively describe why this should have a positive impact on the quality of the reviews or the reviewing and publication processes.

Established researchers being critical of the described publishing processes is a good sign. But young researchers may be in a position where they have to play along in a game, for which they may or may not realize how flawed its current state is, because they do not know anything else.

For many years, we had the well-known problems with pay-to-read publishing (most problematic: publicly funded research not being publicly available), but at least it "regulated the market" based on quality, not quantity, because you pay only for quality as a consumer.

This comment on a commentary is written mostly from the perspective of more than two decades as a reviewer.

