Open Access
vs
Commercial Publishers

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(partly based on own experience)
Problem

Society pays for research twice:

1. by funding it,
2. by buying the outcome of this research in the form of scientific articles from the publishers.
Some Peculiarities

“Most probably scientific publishing is the only branch of industry that relies on a massive voluntary work. This voluntary work is done by highly competent people, namely scientists. It is one of the very few branches of industry in which the producers are openly criticized by their main customers, the libraries.”

“We entrusted publishers with the task of dissemination of our work but most of the commercial publishers view our publications as just another commercial product. This is not what we meant. [...] Would you do a voluntary work for Microsoft? How about Coca Cola? After all, we also rely on their products.”
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K.R. Apt, 
No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking.

Voltaire
Running a Journal: Old Fashioned Way

- Find a name and arrange for the ISSN number,
- Set up an address for receiving manuscripts,
- Find an Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board,
- Arrange for the standard letters (for the acknowledgement of the submission, acceptance, conditional acceptance, and for rejection) and provide them to the members of the Editorial Board,
- For each received submission arrange for the review process,
- To each submission assign a number and track its editorial status,
- If it is accepted, arrange for typesetting of the final version,
Running a Journal: Old Fashioned Way

- Send the galley proofs to the author,
- Arrange for processing the corrections,
- Once there are enough articles for a single issue, arrange for its printing and for dispatching it,
- Handle the financial aspects of the subscriptions:
  - maintain the list of subscribers,
  - send invoices,
  - process checks or bank transfers,
  - take care of reminders,
  - take care of sending lost copies.
- Running a journal = iteration of the above steps for each journal issue.
Running a Journal: A Modern Way

New Steps.

Set up a website with the following information:

- Scope of the Journal,
- Editorial Board,
- Submission Information,
- Referee Instructions,
- Policy for Appeals of Handling Manuscripts,
- Conflict of Interest Policy for Papers Authored by the Editor-in-Chief,
- Accepted Papers,
- Procedure for Submitting Accepted Articles.
Running a Journal: A Modern Way

- Handle the whole submission process by email.
- Once an article is accepted arrange that the author typesets it according to the publisher’s style file and submits the source files.
- Send the galley proofs to the author and arrange that the author processes the corrections.
- New twist: force the author to fill a lengthy web form. This automatically takes care of the assigning a number and tracking the editorial status.
- Note. Submitting a paper to a Springer journal takes now 15 min of tedious form filling.
Some Observations

- Lot of work moved from the publisher towards the author.
- The old model of publishing got completely replaced by a new one.
- In the new model the publishers earn money by denying access to information instead of by providing access to information.
- This results in the mentioned problem: society pays for research twice.
- Prices of commercial journals increased tremendously.
- 20 % of the market is in the hands of Elsevier.
- Scientific libraries became very expensive.
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*Candide*, Voltaire (1758)
Some Quotes (2)

Even Harvard University, whose library is the largest academic library in the world, is not immune to the access crisis motivating much of the campaign for public-access policies. In fact, the Harvard library system has had to make a painful series of budget-driven journal cancellations, and we are deciding on a set of further cancellations at this very moment.

Alan M. Garber, Provost, Harvard University, 14 January, 2012.
Elsevier’s business does not make money by publishing our work, but by doing the exact opposite: restricting access to it. *Academic publishers have become the enemies of science*, Mike Taylor, Guardian, 16 January 2012.
What Keeps this System in Place

- Clever marketing:
  - bundling,
  - expanding journals (TCS grew from 1732 pages in 1982 to 7170 in 2011),
  - confidential clauses in contracts,
  - …

- Prestige and vanity.

- Our assessment procedures (‘List the membership of the Editorial Boards’)

- Financial matters.
  Examples: ACM, CUP, Elsevier, …,
Winds of Change (1)

Winds of Change (2)

- Defections of Editorial Boards.  

- Declarations and Recommendations.  
  **Examples**:
  - Berlin Declaration on open access (2003).

- Boycotts.  
  **Example**: Boycott of Elsevier (triggered by Tim Gowers in January 2012): (12,766 signatories, 10 from CWI).  

- NWO: Incentive Fund Open Access.

- Rise of open access journals.
Open Access Initiatives

Successful Examples

- Journal of AI Research, JAIR (founded in 1993!).
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (Mirror Site: University of Amsterdam, ILLC.)
- Electronic Proceedings in Theoretical Computer Science, ENTCS (94 volumes published in 4 years).
- Open access initiatives in which CWI researchers are involved:
  - Logical Methods in Computer Science, (LMCS),
  - Theory of Computing, (ToC),
  - Computing Research Repository (CoRR).
What is to be Done

(Scholar and scientific societies should take a responsibility for launching open access journals. Authors should give preference to inexpensive or open access journals. Referees should ask for being paid for their reviews for commercial journals. Institutions should encourage researchers to support open access journals. Evaluation procedures should put emphasis on membership in the editorial boards of open access journals.

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Some Pitfalls and Problems

- **Needed:**
  - a reliable assessment of the publishing costs,
  - a meaningful economic model.
- **Predatory** open access publishers.
- **Quality control.**
  Role for scientific societies.
Do We Need Publishers at All?
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No: we know how to run a scientific journal.
Do We Need Publishers at All?

- **No:** we know how to run a scientific journal.
- **Yes:** for its **trademark**.
Do We Need Publishers at All?

- **No:** we know how to run a scientific journal.
- **Yes:** for its **trademark**.
- **Thing to do:** create good **trademarks**. Another task for scientific societies.
THANK YOU
Some References

- Zeszyty Literackie (‘Literary Notebooks’).
- Theory and Practice of Logic Programming.
- ACM Transactions on Computational Logic.