



Academic Publishing in the 21st Century, Past Trends, Future Options

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Increasingly journals are being challenged by the free nature of the internet. Already venues like Research Gate provide a free method of sharing research and experimental results to a community of scholars. Libraries are eliminating back issues of print volumes of journals and restricting print copies. Access to journals back issues is made available to libraries at exorbitant prices and websites that carried out of print journals disappear overnight. While other entities like Google Scholar and Google Books offer the promise of immediate and infinite access to all kinds of publications, the longevity and cost of such venues is up in the air. Change to the internet takes place with a speed that is related to the fashion of the time and the patience of investors. In this environment I welcome a new internet publisher like OMICS in the hope that it will have a long life and will prosper in the interests of science. No one can predict the future, but beginnings can result in creatures that change over time escaping the initial interests of parents. Perhaps that will happen in the best of possibilities. While charges of publication are always a consideration for researchers to get their materials in print, the history of charges has been long and varied. Open Access journals appear to have a new business model, but really it is a variation of one long in existence.

Open Access publications have been springing up right and left for the past 5 or 6 years. They usually ask for a publication fee and claim that it covers their costs as they do not advertise. Pay to publish is not new, for over 200 years scientists have paid to have their work in print. Most first line scientific journals have page charges, reader's fees and/or publication fees (see: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/journals/ajs/submission_fee.html?journal=ajs for example or <http://www.plos.org/publish/pricing-policy/publication-fees/>. I have never paid these as there are plenty of journals around. There is some discussion of this in the scientific community (<http://community.intuit.com/posts/how-to-handle-authors-page-charges-for-a-scientific-journal-2>). Competition among open access journals has resulted in some offering memberships and a yearly charge but you then are told you can publish so many pages per year.

The trick to the standard open access journal (this is becoming complicated as Springer has recently made most of its journals both open access pay to publish and free of charge depending on the choice

of the editor) is to strategize. Some people feel they are fooled by the fact that many Open Access journals do not make up front statements of cost or charges before accepting submissions. Usually they have a click in the submission window for this and authorize icon in lieu of a signature for copyright transfer. Most people simply do not read these documents, but buried in them for these open access journals is an agreement to pay a publication fee. Most journals require you to sign a release and fax or scan a copy back to them. It is my understanding that a click and authorize release may not be binding. Usually I include a separate letter stating that I am retaining the right to republish especially if I think my article might be a candidate for a book chapter or to be included in a reader. I have organized two workshops on my campus over the past 20 years in legal problems for scholars and practitioners in science that were led by Bay Area Lawyers for the Arts. These were funded by the Bay Area Art Conservation Guild of which I am Vice President. People should avail themselves of similar legal opinion.

The whole issue of pay to publish has become embedded in the problem of tenure and publish or perish, though today junior and untenured faculty are more likely to be retained if they demonstrate an ability to bring in grant money or contracts and bequests. The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, like many scientific journals used to charge page charges for papers that were submissions of results from federal and other granting agencies. These grants required publication of results and had line items for this. These papers also created a problem with peer review as they were not actually peer reviewed but only authorized by granting officers. They used to appear with a masthead over the title or at the end of the article stating "This is an advertisement." "Paid for with page charges." or some such disclosure. But all articles in the Proceedings pay page charges and fees (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proceedings_of_the_National_Academy_of_Sciences_of_the_United_States_of_America). This issue of peer review was hotly debated in Nature in the 1990s, especially as it related to grant reviews. It really comes down to what you want to do. If you do not want to publish in a group like OMNI or any other open access journal just do not submit. As I said Elsevier is now aggressively pushing this publication model as a means of surviving in an increasingly open access world.

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