

## **#Pay4Reviews: Academic publishers should pay scientists for peer-review**

The exploitation of scientists by traditional academic publishers is widespread, as they monopolize the right to distribute scientific papers, strip authors of their own article's copyrights, and charge them if they wish to read papers from their peers. It is then up to scientists to free themselves (and their papers) from the tyranny of academic publishers by refusing to perform free peer-reviews for them and by publishing open-access when possible. Starved of peer-reviewers, academic publishers would have nothing to publish, while subscription fees are doomed to disappear in an age of open-science. This system would also create incentives to perform peer-review: #Pay4Reviews

## #Pay4Reviews: Academic publishers should pay scientists for peer-review

Imagine you raise enough funds for a startup, spend a couple of years developing a new product, and when you are finally ready to release it, you are forced to hand it over to massive corporations that monopolize the right to sell and distribute your product. This is exactly what is happening to scientists today. Giant academic publishers like Reed-Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell and Springer, not only monopolize the right to distribute scientific papers but they also strip authors of their own article's copyrights while charging them (or their institutions) if they wish to read papers from their peers. And it gets even worse: Scientific papers pass through a peer-review process, whereby they are scrutinized by other scientists, but academic publishers pay nothing for this work. They simply profit from thousands of scientists producing and evaluating science for free. No wonder academic publishing is such a good business: Total yearly revenue is in the order of billions of US dollars and profit margins are comparable with those of the most profitable drug, bank and auto companies <sup>1</sup>.

The exploitation of scientists by publishers is widespread, as most do not have alternative publishing venues. Only scientists publishing in high-impact, reputable journals (most of which are owned by these corporations), are likely to find jobs in academic institutions or aspire a promotion within them. The alternative is publishing in open-access journals, which charge authors publication fees to make papers freely available to anyone (and as good old publishing corporations profit from unpaid peer-reviews). Publication fees from most open-access journals range between US\$ 1000 and 4000, which represent entire research budgets for some scientists <sup>2</sup>. The majority of such open-access journals are thus unaffordable to many, which are then forced to use the traditional pay-to-read academic publishers.

The solution is simple: Let market forces take power away from publishing corporations and return it to scientist. To do so scientists should charge publishers for reviewing articles and use this money to publish their own papers in open-access journals. Starved of peer-reviewers, academic publishers would have nothing to publish, while subscription fees are doomed to disappear in an age of open-science. This system would also create incentives to perform peer-review, which is now in short supply (as increasing competition for academic jobs prevent many researchers from engaging in voluntary, anonymous and time-consuming work). It is then up to scientists to free themselves (and their papers) from the tyranny of academic publishers by refusing to perform free peer-reviews for them and by publishing open-access when possible. Obviously the success of such a boycott lays in a unified response from scientists across fields <sup>3</sup>. And there is Sci-Hub to remove the remaining barriers in the way of science.

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