

Lib4RI- UPDATE #21

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OPEN ACCESS WEEK

Open Access Big Deals - A Closer Look

The new Swiss Open Access big deals with Elsevier and Springer Nature have been praised as an «[important step](#)» and «[key milestone](#)» towards achieving the goal of Open Access. Although Open Access big deals undoubtedly offer immediate benefits to scientists, they also might have adverse effects on scholarly publishing in the long run – a downside that is often glossed over. In this commentary, we therefore draw attention to the limitations and flaws of national Open Access big deals.

In our last newsletters, we informed you about the new Swiss Open Access (OA) big deals with major publishers Elsevier (see [Lib4RI Update 19](#)) and Springer Nature (see [Lib4RI Update 20](#)). While the contract terms differ in detail, OA big deals have one thing in common: They enable scientists to have their research papers published immediately OA by the publisher without having to personally pay article processing charges (APCs). Instead, libraries cover the costs within their subscription agreements.

The Swiss OA big deals are part of the [Swiss OA Strategy](#) intended to make all publicly funded research freely accessible by 2024. Not only do they give Swiss researchers unrestricted *reading* access to important journals, they also provide *OA-publishing* possibilities. This offers them many benefits: prepaid OA-publishing options in well-known journals, fulfilment of funder requirements, less administrative effort and – in the end – higher author visibility, citation, and impact. Furthermore, OA big deals prevent so-called «double-dipping», meaning that publishers cannot charge twice – once for subscription (i.e. reading) and again for APCs (i.e. publishing).

On the flipside, the immediate benefits of OA big deals for scientists are countered by possible long-term disbenefits to scholarly publishing, which we discuss in more detail [here](#).



«Corymboson plate with Chimera» by Carole Raddato is licensed under CC BY-SA.

Marginalising Competitors

OA big deals are upholding unfair competition by involving mainly large legacy publishers such as Elsevier and Springer Nature and providing a remission of APCs for publishing OA with them. This gives the well-established for-profit publishing powerhouses an advantage while marginalising smaller competitors, including pure OA publishers such as PLOS or Copernicus. A further consequence is that potential new OA publishers are kept from entering – or driven off – an already oligopolistic scientific journal publishing market (read more [here](#)). Thus, OA big deals are failing to create the market conditions necessary for a fair and competitive scholarly publishing system.

Institutionalising Hybrid Open Access

The Swiss OA big deals support predominantly «hybrid OA journals» rather than «pure OA journals». «Hybrids» are subscription journals that allow researchers to publish individual articles OA for a fee while all other articles in the journal can only be accessed with a subscription. In pure OA journals all articles are published OA and can be accessed without a subscription. Generally, pure OA is less costly than hybrid OA. Unfortunately, Swiss scholars now have every incentive to publish in hybrids, as the cost of publishing in these journals is covered by the OA big deals. Consequentially, the Swiss OA big deals are helping to keep subscription journals alive, although they will not lead us into a 100 % OA future (read more [here](#)).

Sustaining High Costs

One main goal of the [Swiss OA Strategy](#) is to contain the escalating costs of scholarly publishing in the long-term. Although «cost neutrality» was achieved by the Swiss OA big deals with Elsevier and Springer Nature in the short-term, future price increases are to be expected due to a combination of factors. The Swiss OA big deals are allowing the big publishers to maintain their power and dictate high prices. Furthermore, any model that is based on the number of published articles (multiplied with an APC) will inevitably result in price increases, as scientific publishing in peer-reviewed journals has been rising for decades by several percent annually (read more [here](#)).

Restricting Author Rights

In some cases, the Swiss OA big deals unnecessarily restrict author rights and limit the further use of publications. For example, some articles published via the OA big deals are published under a CC BY-NC(-ND) instead of a CC BY license. While the latter is compatible with the [Berlin Declaration on OA](#), the former is not.

What CC license should I choose?

We recommend choosing a **CC BY license** whenever possible! Under the CC BY-NC-ND license, the reuse of your work is significantly restricted. This may unnecessarily limit the distribution and potential readers of your work (read more [here](#)).

Perpetuating Global Inequalities

Whereas OA undoubtedly increases the availability of publications in the Global South, critics hold that global inequalities in the ability to publish scientific articles might be reinforced – bar some limited and patronising waivers (read more [here](#)).

Are there Solutions?

The next round of negotiations with the big publishers should address these problems. Besides sealing OA big deals with large legacy publishers, we should also negotiate national OA agreements with smaller publishers – especially pure OA ones – to make OA publishing more competitive. Until national OA agreements have been negotiated with smaller publishers, institutional OA funds (as already in place at [Eawag](#), [Empa](#) and [WSL \[internal\]](#)) can help to counteract the ever-increasing market power of big publishers.

The cost-neutrality of the current Swiss OA big deals is a positive factor. However, cost-efficiency of publishers varies greatly. To optimise OA affordability in the long run, we need to shift publication costs from expensive publishers to cost-efficient ones – certainly a difficult endeavour.

Ultimately, we will only break up the existing oligopoly of scholarly publishing – along with its escalating costs for the entire system – if alternative systems without subscriptions and APCs are firmly established. We are already seeing many important initiatives driven by libraries, scientists, and funders such as the journals listed in the [Free Journal Network](#), the [Wellcome Trust Open Research publication platform](#), and the [Open Library of Humanities](#), to name but a few. It is time for academics to take back control of research publishing and move away from for-profit publishers parasitising on taxpayers' money.

Library News



It's International Open Access Week!

The global Open Access Week is an opportunity for the academic and research community to continue to learn about the potential benefits of Open Access, to share what they've learned with colleagues, and to help inspire wider participation in helping to make Open Access a new norm in scholarship and research. Learn more about how you can get involved at openaccessweek.org.

Image by [Openaccessweek](#)

To mark the occasion, we are offering a Lib4RI webinar on Open Access on 22 October 2020 at 10:00-11:30. There, you will become acquainted with the different models of Open Access, including research funders' policies. Online registration is still open until 20 October 2020. [Register here](#).



Webinar Miniseries Autumn 2020

Due to the ongoing corona situation, our biannual training modules on [Searching & Managing Scientific Information](#) usually offered to all affiliates of Eawag, Empa, PSI and WSL will be replaced by a [webinar miniseries](#) (via Zoom) covering some selected topics. We hope to be back with a full set of training modules in spring next year. Please refer to [Lib4RI's training website](#) for more details and registration links. Read the [full news article](#).

Image by [Kai Stachowiak](#)

Goodbye NEBIS, hello Swisscovery

In early December, the [NEBIS](#) lending network will be dissolved and replaced by swisscovery, the new nationwide library system operated by the [Swiss Library Service Platform](#) (SLSP). Lib4RI has joined the new SLSP network together with almost 500 other academic libraries from all over Switzerland. Swisscovery will include more than 30 million books, series, journals and non-book documents as well as more than 3 milliard electronic articles. Naturally, all Lib4RI print and electronic holdings previously in NEBIS will also be searchable and accessible via swisscovery.

New registration required

All users – including previous users – must re-register via a SWITCH edu-ID in order to access the new system. Existing NEBIS user data will not be migrated to swisscovery. We will inform you in due time.

Returns of active loans, stop of new loans and orders

As active NEBIS and LIB4RI loans won't be migrated to swisscovery they need to be returned. A short period before and during the system change it won't be possible to borrow any documents. New loan orders from other NEBIS libraries will be deactivated even earlier. Then, ordering documents from another NEBIS network library to your home library won't be possible until the new swisscovery system is live.

We'll keep you updated on more details, incl. the time table for the system change, probably available with our next post around mid October. Read the [full news article](#).



Image by Lib4RI

New Lib4RI-Info «DORA»

We have a brand-new Lib4RI-Info. The new [Lib4RI-Info #P1](#) on DORA shows you how to use DORA, submit the correct version, search for publications, create publication lists and much more. DORA is the institutional repository and bibliography for any publication authored, edited or published by Eawag, Empa, PSI or WSL or resulting from research performed at PSI research facilities. Each research institute has a [separate institutional DORA repository](#). DORA acts simultaneously as a bibliography (DORA is a source for publication lists on the institutional websites and for academic reports), an archive (DORA preserves the full texts of the institutes' publications) and an Open Access repository (researchers are able to make a full-text version of their scientific articles freely available in DORA). Have a look at our [other Lib4RI-Infos](#). Read the [full news article](#).



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New plagiarism check service

You can now send your manuscripts to us for a free plagiarism check. Plagiarism – in other words copying context from other sources without proper citation – has always been prosecuted and nowadays is thoroughly checked. Many journals and funders check your manuscript for plagiarism and the result can be a reason to reject your submission.

We use the software [PlagScan](#) to perform the analysis for you. You can simply send us your manuscript through this [online form](#) and we will provide you with the results within a few days. Please note, that the results only indicate the level of similarity between your manuscript and other sources online and not by default a level of plagiarism. We do not interpret the results, but provide you with information on how you can do so. For more information, please see our detailed website on the [plagiarism check service](#).

Should you have any questions do not hesitate to contact us per email to publicationservices@lib4ri.ch. Read the [full news article](#).

Beyond the Library

Impact Factor / Highly Volatile

This study analyses how a single paper affects a journal's impact factor (IF). It finds that IFs are highly volatile. For example, the top-cited paper of 818 journals caused their IF to increase by more than 25%. The authors question the reliability of IF rankings given the high IF sensitivity to a few papers that affects thousands of journals. Read on at [The MIT Press](#).

Open Science / Uptake by Institutions Worldwide

Policies promoting open science culture must be accompanied by indicators that allow monitoring the uptake of such policies and their effects on research publishing practices. This study presents indicators of OA at the institutional level for universities worldwide and discusses further steps needed to foster OA practices and policies. Read on at [PeerJ](#).

Open Access / What's Driving APCs?

The tremendous variance of article processing charges (APCs) across journals cannot be explained by costs. This study sheds light on the various determinants of APCs. It shows that publisher market power, size and hybrid-OA models best explain APC variance. "Academia runs the risk not to take advantage of the cost-reducing opportunities inherent to digitization [...]. Big publishers may [...] sustain their comfortable profit situation leveraging their existing market power". Read on at [SpringerLink](#).

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Lib4RI - Library of Eawag, Empa, PSI & WSL

Überlandstrasse 133
8600 Dübendorf
Schweiz

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