

Ten ‘Personal’ Reasons why I am skeptical about Open Access (OA): Thoughts of an Individual Researcher

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Although a great deal of hurdles are overcome with so many 'models' of Open Access (OA), I do have a lot of concerns about it when it comes to Individual research in this collaborative world. Everyone would acknowledge that there are good and bad OA publishers- who have done fairly a great job and those who have largely failed. And this is true for subscription journals as well. I enumerate my personalized opinions on OA, one by one:

- 1. Pay to Publish model:** This would be my biggest concern as a PI, in future esp. when my Institution would not have OA journal subscription or support. As a PI in a resource limited laboratory, in any given country, I would not be to pay the hefty OA fee of \$ 500-\$ 2/3,000 and about. In order to make research accessible to 'all' why would I pay a commercial business, this is a huge amount. If I wish to contribute a single-authored review of importance, why (and most importantly, how?) would I cough up that huge amount of money? Being asked a few times over survey by new OA models started by research social networking websites, I would shy away for the sheer reason of involved expenses, outreach, limited subscription to these websites by research area-leaders and so on. Paying a lot more to sell one's own work, give away the rights and not to mention a far more complicated system of submission to publication than ever before.
- 2. OA vs Predation:** Without even going into Jeffrey Beall's perpetually growing list of subscription or predatory or OA listed journals, it is very much evident that many a times the border between all these three are missing- as experienced as an author. OA advertising as fastidiously as any other predatory counterpart. A great study enlisted next to a bogus one in an OA journal's index. As long as it is OA, quality goes for a toss and we approve of it?
- 3. OA is not blind:** That is not all is fair, like any other subscription or orthodox journals, single-blind and open reviews, pre-publication or post-publication reviews can leave a bad taste as an 'author' like any other model. It has all the signatures of failures of peer review like any other publishing model. So, why the hype, at all?
- 4. What OA makes and what it does:** Article submitted, reviewed, OA fee paid; then still why the authors have to format references (the most bogus side of academic efforts which is worthless, least said in terms of efforts and time!), check the galley proof, sign and return this document and that. For that 'fat money' would not these be warranted? What is the OA publishers doing with that money-paying their staff (are there enough of them? If not then why not make submission to publishing process faster).

5. **Reviewers are Free, though:** No matter when I review for subscription or OA journals, I 'have to provide free service' within stipulated time. No incentives for reviewing! This needs a sea change for scientific 'policing', serious and honest peer-review, getting rid of junky research papers. Why as a Reviewer I must care if it is an OA journal or not. But, the review days given by the journal office are strangulating, annoying, and unaccommodative most of the times. In addition, no printing charges borne by the journal, no distribution expenses, authors pay and reviewers are free- where all the money goes?
6. **OA models with "NO" rejection:** From personal experience, I must say that a bunch of journals in their peer-review process lack a "reject" button altogether for the submitted articles! This is alarming, and the talk of the day for most academicians I meet. From Journals named "P" to "F" (on conditions of anonymity, and for people with learned guessing skills!) all suffer through this syndrome. Some articles are sometimes beyond repair from submission, but end up being "right there" with "a horrendously iterative process of peer review process in place" where the "Editor" is a mere onlooker of the fiasco/ farcical review process. Is OA all about obtaining a digital object identifier (DOI) for \$ X? For any quality of research?
7. **OA diluted and contributed to predation?:** From Web-of Science, to DORA, to SCI, to Google Scholar indexing everything seems to say that everything is OA and difficult to perceive as to why everything OA is indexed here and there? Lost among so many of true and fake OA. Where it is being archived to with whom also diluting the intended target of OA? In the name of OA, how many Emails plague our mail boxes every day? Is predation surviving on the OA's "name-shake"?
8. **OA must publish review comments/ process compulsory "open":** Unless this is done, the taxpayer does not get to see the evolving process of science, publication, peer-review; but only ponders on the final product. This would be another way to make the peer review process serious and responsible. In this regards, retractions-websites and "X"-facts website would not be necessary to enlighten the scientific community on lack of reproducibility.
9. **OA does not ensure robustness/ reproducibility in science:** Like any other models, the flaws and pitfalls in the investigation/ study/ met analysis/ experiments/ fraud can exist. Albeit, instead of getting concealed in printed hard copies of journals in some obscure library to hiding behind an expensive pay-wall, they would be glaring in public sights. Does not ensure though the leakage of poor science and bad peer-review process.
10. **OA journals lack the Oomph of Traditional but Elite status:** They are the new kids in the block, can make you publish a lot, quickly but then when it comes to matching the grant, funding and tenure-obtaining or career-changing publications in so called "elite" journals, they are no match. Simply put as that. Because still the academic hiring and HR systems run on "impact" and "indices", those who judge and form committees are from "the-then systems", and nothing would change overnight even if OA was intended to address it, and not just profiteering. Something is "twitted faster" (aka. Journal house themselves!) does not mean is "catchy, important, crowd-pulling, or sustainable".
Also, I must wrap up by saying that we do NOT live in a perfect world and everything has pros and cons, but then are we "weighing in a lot", in exchange of just 'free access' to articles!