



Elsevier wants our feedback. Here's mine

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WRITE A REVIEW

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So, apparently Elsevier are launching a new open access mega-journal some time this year, joining the bandwagon of similar efforts from almost every other major publisher. A lovely acknowledgement of the roaring success of PLOS ONE, who did it first a long time ago.

They're only ~8 years behind, but they're learning. I for one am pleased they are asking the research community what they want from this new journal. One of their "key points" in the press release is: "the journal will be developed in close collaboration with the research community and will evolve in response to feedback"



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Well, I'm a member of the research community. I'm a BBSRC-funded postdoc at the University of Bath. I publish research myself AND I re-use published research, so I have a dual perspective that Elsevier should find useful. Here's my feedback on their new open access journal proposal:

- Does the research community really need or want a new journal?

We have at least 27,000 other peer-reviewed journals (source: Ulrich's). I can't see anything in Elsevier's proposal that's really new, or better than anything that already exists – you'll be hard pressed to beat PeerJ. More journals add to the fragmentation of the research literature – it's already hard to search across all these journals effectively. Why not just accept more volume in existing journals? It'd be great if you flipped *The Lancet*, *Cell*, and *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* to full (100%) open access journals, and rejected less submitted papers that present sound science. I genuinely do not

know of any researcher that asked specifically for an additional new Elsevier journal.

- Stay true to the **definition** of open access

The definition of open access always has been, and always will be this:

By “open access” to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. (BOAI)

If you're going to allow the **CC-BY-NC-ND** licence then *by definition* you can't call it an open access journal. Either don't allow that restrictive non-open licence, or call this new journal a 'free-to-read' journal or a 'public access' journal. These are the established terms for cost-free but not open journal content that the research community uses. Speak our language for a change instead of **deliberately opaque legalese**.

- Take feedback on the design of your new journal from the WORLD not just the research community
Approximately 80% of the world's academic research is taxpayer or charitably funded. The world is therefore your customer, not just researchers. Ask the world what they want from your new journal.

- Make data archiving mandatory (all articles), under **OKD-conformant open licences** (where possible)
Take inspiration from the **Panton Principles**: “Science is based on building on, reusing and openly criticising the published body of scientific knowledge” – help researchers do the best science possible by not allowing them any excuses to not share non-sensitive data with their colleagues. The 'email the author' system has been widely proven not to work, in my own experience too.

- Make peer reviews open for all to see, post-publication alongside the paper
At the time of review, you can do single or double blind, but after the manuscript is accepted and published, please publish the reviews alongside the accepted paper. The research community can then see for themselves how good peer review is at your new journal. Allow people to sign their reviews if they wish to (and personally I think this is best in most circumstances).

- Encourage data citation

Do I really need to explain this one? Old school academic editors have apparently been striking these out at some journals. Please make all editors aware that this is both a good thing and is encouraged.

- Encourage authors to provide their **ORCIDs** upon submission, (and ORCIDs for reviewers and editors too please)

This will help people disambiguate who's who's which is important when there are **at least 7 million active researchers**.

- Charge a reasonable **APC** (\$1350 or less), and be generous with fee waivers and discounts for those that cannot afford them

Anything more than \$1350 per article for a new journal in 2015 is daylight robbery. For the first year of publication you should waive charges for everyone, as everyone else does.

- Provide open, full text XML

Great for text-mining. We don't need your API. Just give us the content.

There you go Elsevier – that's my feedback. If you can do ALL of the above or better, I might even publish with you myself. I have stated what I think you should do; it's up to you now to implement it. I anticipate the launch of your glorious new journal. When your new journal comes out I shall revisit this post & score your new journal against it.

I encourage all other researchers & **the scholarly poor** who feel similarly, to also make their feelings known to Elsevier, and to add points I have perhaps overlooked. I'd say good luck Elsevier, but you don't need luck with your **fat profit margins** – it's simple to openly publish a good peer-reviewed research journal – just get on and do it already.

Sincerely,

Ross Mounce, PhD