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Open science publishing practices can break commercial publishers' dominant position in the dissemination of scientific results

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In agreement with the main article by Andringa et al. (2024), the Green and Gold route, as well as Read & Publish agreements, indeed stand in the way of change to a more equitable and affordable system of open access publishing. This is hugely due to the profit motive of commercial publishers; the current *legacy* and *hybrid* publishers want to hold on to their old subscription revenues, and new *emerging*, *full* open access publishers go for an as fast as possible publishing process – of course exceptions aside. The latter don't always take peer review all too seriously and flood the market with special issues, which are both questionable practices (see Braak et al. 2024 on how to identify questionable publishing practices). This is a problem for scientific integrity and puts increased pressure on the already high demand for, and currently poor recognized, peer review. The question is whether we want to keep spending public money on commercial publishers that sometimes make more than 30% profit (Nicholson, 2024)?

Universities have been very successful in their open access strategy (for their own researchers). However, in recent years, the ever-raised APC fees, growing publication numbers and frozen budgets mean that there is increasing pressure on Read & Publish agreements. This results in caps (maximum of 'cost free' articles for researchers), limitations on the number of journals included and limitations on eligible publication types. This implies increasing costs for publishing, a lack of sovereignty and equity, and a need for change in the system of recognition and rewards. University Libraries, who negotiate Read & Publish agreements on behalf of their institutions, are aware of the

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developments in the scholarly publishing landscape. The UKB (the Dutch Consortium of University Libraries and the Royal Library of the Netherlands) and UNL are currently working on a critical revision of the strategy that has been followed the last ten years. Diamond open access will, of course, be implemented in this revision! Separately, the UKB is already committed to strengthening, sustaining and encouraging diamond open access (UKB, 2024).

In addition, the continuing focus on the publication medium (e.g., a specific authoritative journal) in combination with the current system of appreciation and recognition is an inhibiting factor for change or a breakthrough … Despite DORA (https://sfdora.org), COARA (https://coara.eu/) and the Recognition and Rewards Programme (https://recognitionrewards.nl/), there still is little movement away from traditional evaluation methods. This ensures that commercial publishers maintain a continued position of power in the publishing landscape: holding the author, funders, institutions in a (financial) 'headlock'. However, not the medium in which a research result was published should be the focus, but the published research result per se. It strikes me that the authors still mention the importance of IF's (Andringa et al., 2024, p. 10).

In my opinion, open science publishing practices, posting preprints and open peer review, in combination with diamond open access initiatives (journals or platforms) are the key to change and the formula for breaking the current status quo. Universities should encourage, or even require, their researchers to share preprints on dedicated preprint servers for the purpose of rapid dissemination of research results, and (open) community feedback before publishing them with a diamond publication initiative that provides (preferably) open peer review. Researchers can register published preprints and open peer review activities in the institutional research registration system (CRIS), as well as deposit (open, FAIR) data sets and other open science activities that contribute to transparency and openness of the research process. The same, of course, applies to editorial activities for diamond open access journals.

When the full scholarly record becomes more and more open science, and related open science practices become more and more part of the system of recognition and rewards, the last step – a final published (version of record) open article in a specific leading journal – will eventually lose its value. In time, this can break the commercial publisher's dominant position and the dissemination of scientific results will eventually come back under the control of the scientists themselves. (Note that I do underline the value of quality peer review for the dissemination of accurate and scientifically sound research results). This will of course take approximately another 5–10 (?) years, but the diamond open access platform SciPost (https://scipost.org/) already shows that this concept functions well for Physics and related scientific disciplines. Authors can directly submit their work through the preprint server ArXiv, and SciPost provides open peer review (peer-witnessed refereeing). The platform has published over 2000 articles since their establishment in 2016. A 'publishing platform' is however not appropriate for every scientific discipline, because science cultures differ.

Scholar-led diamond journals will keep playing an important role and therefore need structural financial support. Not only do they have an important function in maintaining digital sovereignty and 'bibliodiversity'. but they are also connective: around a journal exists a community of authors, peer reviewers, editors, and readers who all contribute and have their responsibilities. When diamond journals are brought together, as currently done in the Netherlands on the initiative Openjournals.nl (https://openjournals.nl/), this contributes to sustainability and collaboration. Best practices can be shared, costs can be reduced, and the platform can become a breeding ground for open science activities. And – see my suggested 'key to change' above – why wouldn't an open access diamond journal (such as DuJAL) not also already publish the submitted version/preprint directly open with its own DOI?

I also want to refer here to the 2025 open access 'policy refresh' of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (https://gatesfoundationoa.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/24807336892948-Open-Access-Policy-Refresh-2025): (1) all foundation funded manuscripts will be made available as an open access preprint with a CC-BY license, and (2) the foundation will also no longer support APC's per article basis. The foundation states: "By discontinuing to support these fees, we can work to address inequities in current publishing models and reinvest the funds elsewhere." This raises the possibility that the funds will be invested in diamond open access initiatives?

Diamond open access journals seek to publish the best possible scientific articles at the lowest possible cost, not driven by profit. Quality first, and no financial barriers to publish and thus encouraging equity in scientific publishing chances. However, publishing activities (infrastructure, typesetting, copyediting, DOI's and a secure backup) do not come for free. Furthermore, do not forget the in-kind, and not so well rewarded, contribution of researchers. Concluding, universities should encourage and reward researchers to serve on editorial boards of diamond journals. And, even more so, where this involves setting up, or 'flipping' an existing open (APC based) or subscription journal to diamond. In addition, universities could mandate preprint publishing on designated preprint servers (with version control and DOI's). This is, of course, supported by sustainable financing of diamond initiatives (individual journals or platforms) through direct funding or e.g. a Diamond Open Access Funds and the financing of supporting preprint initiatives such as ArXiv (and variants) and OSF Preprints.

Statement of interest

Pascal Braak is open access specialist at the Library of the University of Amsterdam and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. He is a member of the Open Access working group of the Dutch Consortium of University Libraries (UKB) and member of Open Science NL advisory panel Open Scholarly Communication.

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Statement of technology use

No AI-based generative technology was used in the preparation of this manuscript and the execution of the research that the manuscript reports upon.

Supporting information

None.

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