



Academic publishing and profitability

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Editorial Essay: Why Do We Still Have Journals?

Gerald F. Davis¹

Abstract

The Web has greatly reduced the barriers to entry for new journals and other platforms for communicating scientific output, and the number of journals continues to multiply. This leaves readers and authors with the daunting cognitive challenge of navigating the literature and discerning contributions that are both relevant and significant. Meanwhile, measures of journal impact that might guide the use of the literature have become more visible and consequential, leading to "impact gamesmanship" that renders the measures increasingly suspect. The incentive system created by our journals is broken. In this essay, I argue that the core technology of journals is not their distribution but their review process. The organization of the review process reflects assumptions about what a contribution is and how it should be evaluated. Through their review processes, journals can certify contributions, convene scholarly communities, and curate works that are worth reading. Different review processes thereby create incentives for different kinds of work. It's time for a broader dialogue about how we connect the aims of the social science enterprise to our system of journals.

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How similar is academic publishing to commercial publishing?



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ASK
Art, Science
and Knowledge

- . Content deluge and standardization
- . A winner takes all business
- . A star business
- . A multiplatform business
- . A multirevenue business

Content deluge and standardization



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- . Number of journals
- . Research and research publishing as a process
- . The explosion of grey material
- . Poverty of ideas, wealth of methods
- . The standardization of rethorics and languages
- . The publish or perish hysteria

A winner takes all business

- . Journals vs books
- . Impact factor
- . The language battle



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A global star business



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. The Pikery effect → right book, right time

Not a new author → the spirit level and uk
political agenda

France – sep 2013 60.000 copies + USA
+ 30.000 copies in France

the Economist feb 2014

USA may 8 Paul Krugman NYRB then
David Brooks

From specialists to popular audience

A multiplatform business



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- . Format matters A LOT
- . Multimedia matters A LOT
- . Data matter A LOT
- . Graphics matter A LOT

Ease of read, ease of access as important as
qualit of content

A multirevenue business

- . Sale of products
- . Sale of services
- . Bundles
- . Archives
- . Toll access vs Open access vs Self published



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So what?



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Develop a much more cooperative attitude. A competitor at home could be a precious ally abroad

Clarify the raison d'être and a role in the bigger picture

Watch out for critical mass

Experiment with a big eye on costs

Watch out for the not invented here syndrome → seek "partnerships in crime"