HOW TO REFORM SCIENCE PUBLISHING

A hard set of rules to impose by law, immediately

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16 July 2023

https://denisrancourt.ca/entries.php?id=132

There can be little doubt that the establishment-funded science publishing industry is in urgent need of reform, or an outright overhaul, if not a complete suppression of the industry, for the good of humanity.

Science publishing has largely become what rightly can be called "science propaganda", in the service of special elite interests. These special interests include large-scale financial predation, social engineering to secure elite-class interests, and geopolitical dominance.

The multi-decadal shift — from post-World-War-II freedom to complete evisceration of the practice of science in the public interest — and the new near-total absence of professional independence among salaried scientists are indicators of advanced totalitarianism in our so-called democratic Western societies.

If I had a magic wand, how would I reform science publishing? Alternatively, what structural impediments could be implemented to frustrate wholesale science propaganda?

Here are some basic rules that I would impose by law on the science publishing industry, and on authors wishing to publish in so-called peer-reviewed science journals.

These rules are necessary because scientists are not independent and do not think for themselves. Scientists, like other professionals,[2] are careerists who are employed by powerful institutions and corporations. In an advanced state of

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[2] Schmidt, Jeff. "Disciplined Minds", 2000, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, ISBN 0-7425-1685-7. http://disciplined-minds.com/

totalitarianism, scientists are not free to research and to communicate. They self-censor and hide behind specialization and jargon. Rare whistleblowers that prove the rule are severely punished, and banished from the profession.

In times when scientists are free to be creative, and have professional independence, such as prior to World War II in the Western World, the recent artifice of (usually anonymous) "peer review" is not necessary. Peer review, as practiced by today's science journals, is known by science historians to be a liability, creating disciplinal self-censorship and allowing editors to be intellectually negligent.[3] Virtually all the greatest discoveries in physics were made and published prior to "peer review".

If one's merit and societal recognition as a scientist came from being read, understood and appreciated for one's actual ideas and analyses, irrespective of where one is published and who one's employer is, then there would be no need to regulate the science publishing industry. But that is a utopia.

Here are the rules I would implement immediately regarding all "peer-reviewed science journals" ("science journals") that claim or imply any degree of editorial independence, which are used in citation-analysis evaluations of scientists.

1. The rules cannot be circumvented by publishers using "freedom of expression" or "market freedom" pretexts. Science publishing is a central requirement for democracy, and the public's right to know is paramount. It is the freedom of expression of the individual authors and their access to the public audience that must be protected. Science publishing must not be a propaganda venture for elite interests.

2. Salaried government and academic scientists, and all scientists working for corporations that receive government research funding, or perform contract work for government, or sell services or products to government are barred from publishing in science journals that do not adopt these rules.

3. They can of course publish elsewhere, such as on websites or via contact lists.

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[3] Mazur, Susan. "David Noble: Peer Review, Where Are The Scholars?" *SCOOP Independent News*, 26 February 2010. https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL1002/S00222/david-noble-peer-review-where-are-the-scholars.htm Archived here: https://archive.ph/0gB3q

4. Submitting authors should have professional independence, and their research results should not be directed or vetoed by their employers or outside interests. Authors should declare any potential or significant interference with their professional independence.

5. Publishers of science journals must publicly disclose the details of their managerial, ownership and finance structures, and their yearly funding and revenues.

6. Publishers of science journals must strictly adhere to a policy of absolute editorial independence, without publisher interference, and must ensure and protect editorial independence of their scientist editors.

7. Journal staff, editors and reviewers cannot receive payments or benefits from commercial or government-related outside interests.

8. All author submissions must be accompanied with a guarantee of open access to the raw data, the equations and algorithms of computer programs, and anything required to reproduce the study and its results. Proprietary information is not a shield against this requirement. Science, by definition, must be verifiable.

9. There can be no size or page limit to any supplementary or supporting material that an author wishes to submit, in addition to the article itself.

10. In the case of clinical trials, the public and other researchers must have unimpeded access to all the same data and records that any national regulatory body could demand, or that are needed for scientific verification.

11. All conflicts of interest must be declared by the authors. Editors may reject submissions purely on a valid basis of conflict of interest, especially if large financial or political interests are in play.

12. Every author submission to a science journal must be handled with complete public transparency, from submission to acceptance or rejection, inclusively, including all appeals, reviews, responses, and versions of the article and its supporting materials, irrespective of whether the article is ultimately accepted or rejected by the journal. This means:

i. The said public transparency must be pro-active, and include complete publishing of all the steps on a freely accessible and searchable website. This applies irrespective of whether the article is ultimately accepted or rejected by the journal.

ii. No one involved in the process can be anonymous. All who act in editorial and review roles must be publicly identified. This equally applies to rejected articles.

iii. All the versions of the article must be stored and publicly available, including all supplementary materials. This equally applies to rejected articles.

iv. All correspondence between editors, authors and reviewers must be public, including reviewer responses that the editors decide not to use or to disregard. This equally applies to rejected articles.

v. Publishers should allow all post-processing non-trivial comments about the articles, and such comments must also be public, in the spirit of continued review of the work (and of the reviewer and editor comments). This equally applies to rejected articles.

13. In real terms, science publishing, of articles meant to be reliable and used to rank and evaluate researchers, must be an open book.

14. The public should have free access to all the materials, without any registration or other barriers.

15. Rejection of articles without review should be rare, and limited solely to cases of clearly abusive submissions.

16. Perceived “importance” cannot be a criterion for rejection.

17. An article cannot be rejected on the basis that it is partly, largely or primarily a critique or re-analysis of a previously published article. Such combative critique articles must be welcome and should be afforded all the same regular opportunities for publication (such as equal space in the same journal) as the article being critiqued.

18. A general category must exist, for articles that do not fall into an existing specialization or sub-topic within the broader area of interest of the journal. As such, area of specialization or sub-topic within the broader discipline cannot be a criterion for rejection, nor can breadth beyond the journal's chosen area of interest. Journals must not constructively exclude novel work using specialization as a pretext, and should admit interdisciplinary research that overlaps with and overflows from the journal's chosen area of interest.

19. Reviewers must identify any conflicts of interest.

20. Rejection should be reserved for identified fatal flaws or scientific errors that cannot be fixed by the authors, without producing an essentially new article or study.

21. Editorial decisions must provide reasons, beyond merely stated unspecified agreement with reviewers. The editor must appreciate the arguments and make a scientific judgement, which is explicitly reasoned. Actual science editors must be brought back, rather than continue with in-effect managerial editors.

22. There must be an appeal process regarding any final editorial decision or determinative treatment. The appeal process must be separate and independent, preferably performed by an independent body not controlled by the publisher, following principles of administrative law. The appeal process is entirely transparent, and is included in the public record of the submission of the original article, as per above.

23. The appeal decision must be open to judicial review by a competent court, following applicable judicial review criteria in the judicial jurisdiction of the corresponding author.

In upcoming posts, I plan to provide recent excruciating examples of my own struggles to co-publish in top medical journals, including winning appeals and such. The sagas that unfold in those exchanges are surrealistic. They illustrate the depth of the problem and the brazen behaviours of editors. Coming soon.