

Addendum to my first little article on why it is important to start this publishing site:

August 10, 2025

I am writing this as a short update on my initial comments on my distress with academic publishing, and why I think it is time for a different concept. There is disturbing news on this subject, which I just heard about, and that I will talk about below.

In the “old days” (prior to about 2015) people used to actually read papers that were published in academic journals, and learned from them, sometimes developing contacts for future collaboration. All my work in Australia for 7 years was precipitated by an article I read in *Antiquity* and my contact with those authors. In the last decade, having spent much time with academic promotion and tenure committees, I began to realize that no one actually read any of the papers that applicants for tenure or promotion were listing on their CVs. There was usually a method within these committee meetings to calculate the value of published works by counting up the number of peer review articles, their pages, and then modified with a metric on how “prestigious” the journals are that they are publishing in. Almost no one ever actually read any the papers! Reading papers has also become difficult as journals have changed the way they do things: to read a paper you must pay a fee or be part of an academic library system that will pay the fee for you. Or if you are lucky, the article is “open access” where the authors have paid a subvention fee to make their work available. That can cost as much as \$3,700 per article, but I think sometimes more depending on the field. All this has made browsing articles of interest either very costly or just difficult.

My friends in the UK and Europe also told me about silly ways that universities and departments compete for public funds there. All this calculus is based on number and “quality” of the peer-reviewed journal articles that faculty publish. I doubt much reading of these articles is taking place in Europe either. The business of publishing has taken note of this trend, and their economic model now revolves around getting articles published for fees (coming from various sources), and not necessarily because the published work is of quality or interest.

On August 6 I read in the *Wall Street Journal* an article titled ***“Fake papers Flood Scientific Journals”***. In that article it discussed a new business enterprise called “Paper Mills”, which are organized entities that generate research papers for a fee. This is precipitated by a desperation of faculty and universities to elevate their published paper count. These papers are of poor quality, containing fabricated data, plagiarism, or unprofessional content. These are then sold to authors who want to publish quickly, regardless of the actual work they have done. The goal is getting papers out there in the peer-reviewed literature, knowing that no one will likely read them (or understand them!). They have the appearance of legitimate research but are essentially fake. Often these are sent to journals who also charge fees to publish these papers, often in China, or other places in Asia. So far, this scam has mostly been in areas of biomedicine but is now broadening to other fields.

In the article I read that Wiley’s (publisher of *Archaeological Prospection*), that publishes about 1600 journals has retracted 11,300 papers that were generated from these “mills”. And this huge corporation has shut down 19 journals whose editors were complicit in this scam. Taylor and Frances, which publishes 2700 journals has not been as transparent, and has refused to acknowledge this is happening with them. But they are also in the process of retracting fake papers. One estimate by people looking

into this scheme is that 32,700 articles have been published in the illegitimate and unethical way since 2016.

I am only bringing up this disturbing story to highlight how I think academic publishing is broken. Whether our little Open Access publishing venture in our “niche field” will make a difference in the grand scheme of scientific publication is unlikely. But at least it is a “try” and I hope will be beneficial to all of us.

August 15, 2025: I got responses from a number of our subscribers when I sent this out as an e-mail. They all had similar experiences and were “burned out” on the old method of publishing. With many horror stories on AI being used to generate fake publications in some journals. Others with similar complaints that I had regarding the lack of readership of any of our articles, and how all this is being done as a scam that is being perpetrated on us with a collusion between universities and publishing firms (that is perhaps a little overwrought, but there may be something to it).