

Oligopolies of Knowledge and Open Access: Perspectives from the Global South

Oligopolios del conocimiento y acceso abierto: perspectivas desde el sur

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Empire and Communications (1950)

- Harold Innis described how the monopoly of knowledge built up in relation to parchment was replaced by a new monopoly of knowledge built up in relation to paper. A monopoly of knowledge on printing ensued.
- We witness similar monopolistic strategies in the control that few publishers have on scholarly publishing today.

Oligopolies of Knowledge

- **10** publishers (*ten*) account for approximately **54%** of all revenue generated by the **top 57** world publishing companies.
- Combined, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis and Wiley-Blackwell -- represent almost **50%** of *all* published social sciences papers in 2013.
- Ranked by revenue, **the top 4** publishers are *all* scientific or educational publishers: Pearsons, ThomsonReuters, Relx Group (formerly Reed Elsevier, at the top) and Worters Kluwer.

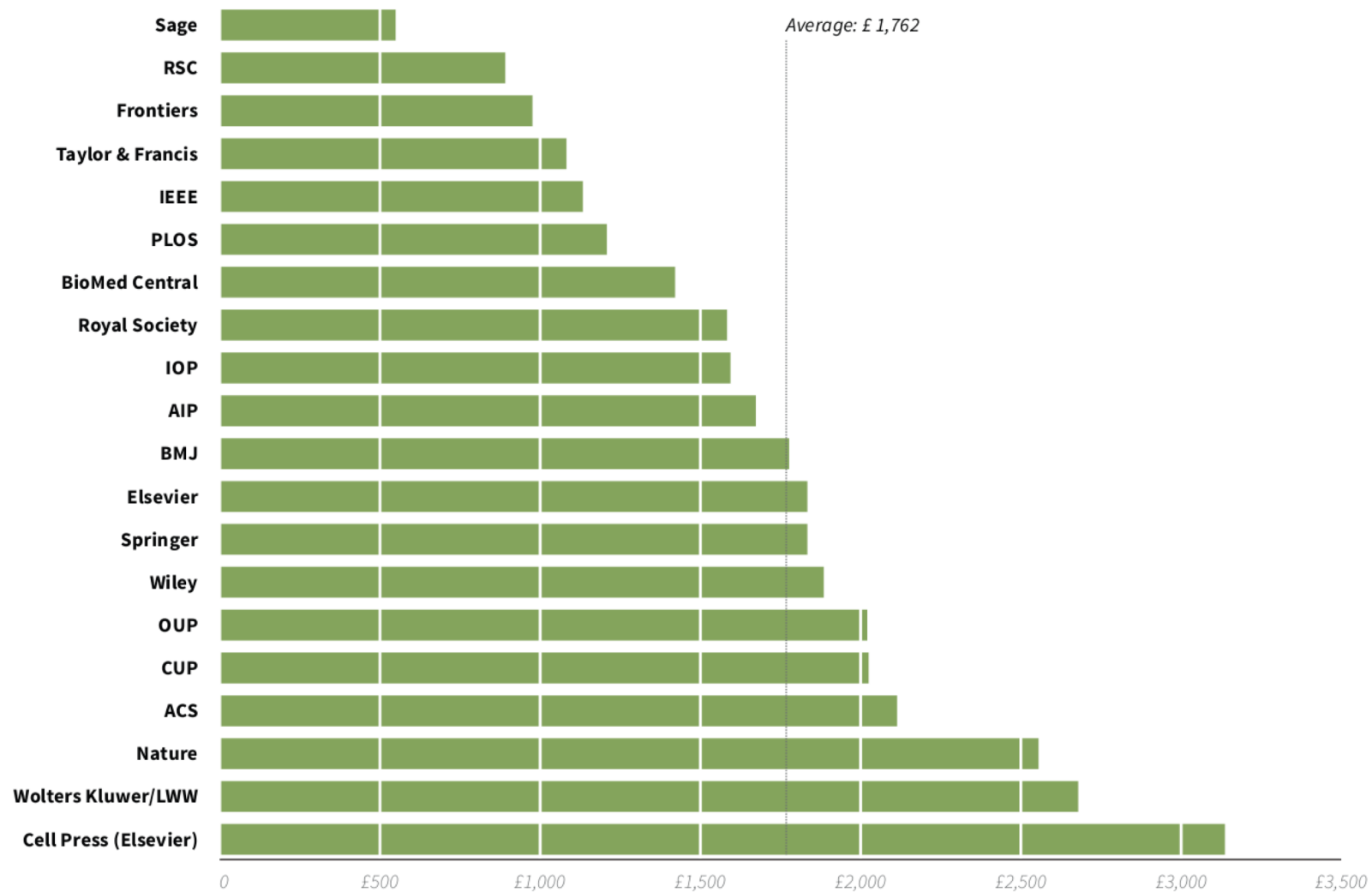
Oligopolies of Knowledge

- The academic publishing market that Elsevier leads has an annual revenue of **\$25.2 billion**.
- In 2013 Elsevier reported a higher percentage of profit than Apple, Inc.
- **94 Million Pounds** is what the top 10 academic publishers received in subscription revenues from UK academic libraries in 2014 alone.
- Hybrid Publishing has allowed commercial publishers to subsume Open Access into their portfolio, transforming it into a business model and limiting its scope.

Subscription
expenditure
of UK higher
education
institutions
with ten
publishers,
2010-14
(Lawson,
Meghreblian
& Brook,
2015)

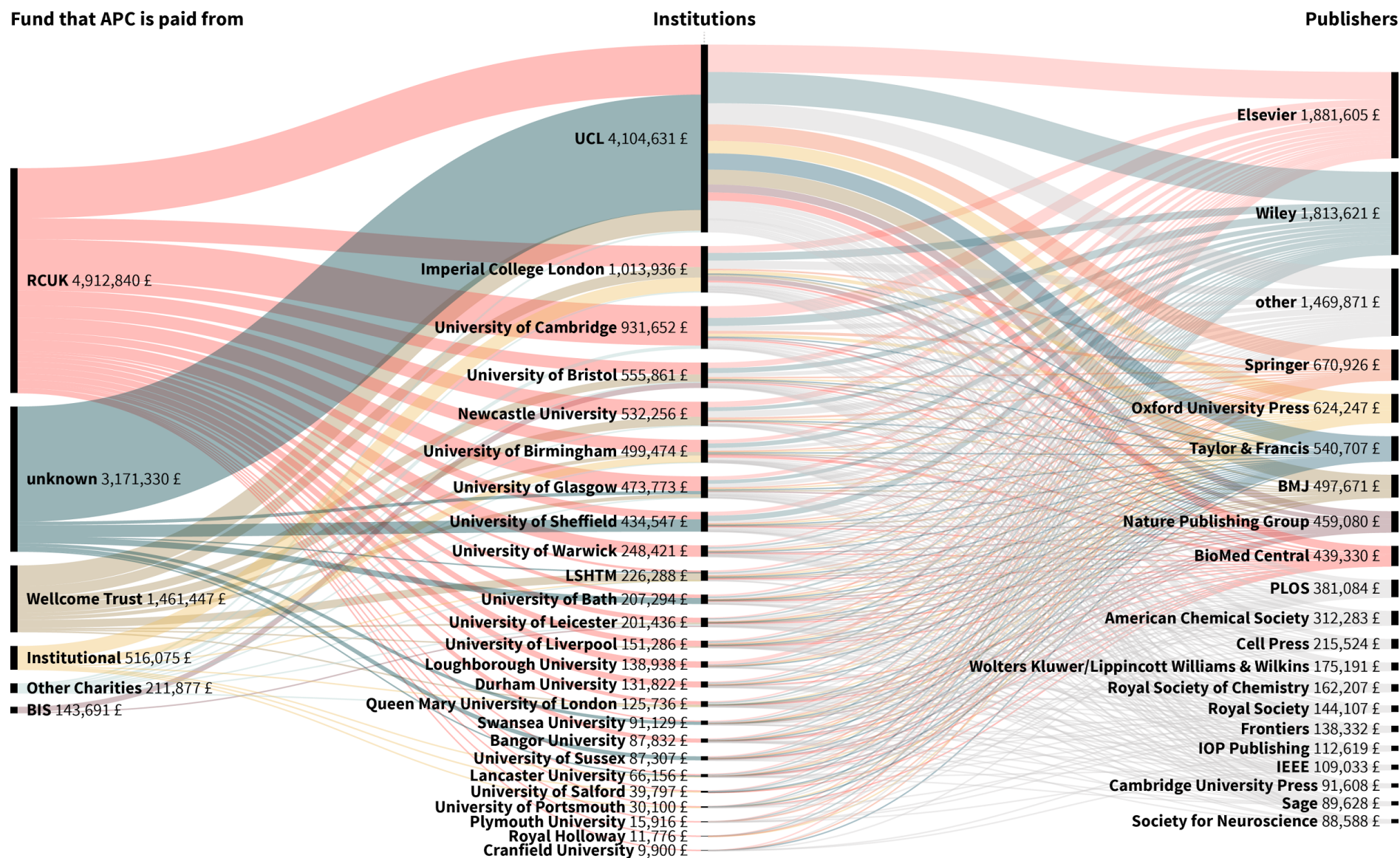
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Elsevier	£34,177,020	£36,781,827	£39,079,332	£39,476,813	£39,812,145
Wiley	£13,460,226	£14,662,250	£15,616,311	£16,369,917	£16,875,190
Springer	£7,311,046	£7,309,094	£7,906,177	£7,940,116	£8,542,997
Taylor & Francis	£8,319,095	£9,140,572	£9,710,528	£10,084,350	£10,828,334
Sage	£4,495,313	£5,085,196	£5,608,296	£5,869,791	£5,990,818
Oxford University Press	£1,996,163	£2,163,242	£2,395,136	£2,669,757	£2,925,607
Cambridge University Press	£1,447,978	£1,462,214	£1,690,078	£1,832,177	£1,885,485
Nature Publishing Group	£2,998,040	£3,593,308	£4,066,962	£4,273,822	£4,430,900
Royal Society of Chemistry	£806,129	£867,752	£1,062,237	£1,062,948	£1,101,860
Institute of Physics Publishing	£1,091,517	£1,119,070	£1,197,958	£1,279,691	£1,373,533
Total for these 10 publishers	£76,102,528	£82,184,527	£88,333,015	£90,859,384	£93,766,870

Average APC price paid to
publishers by UK institutions,
2015



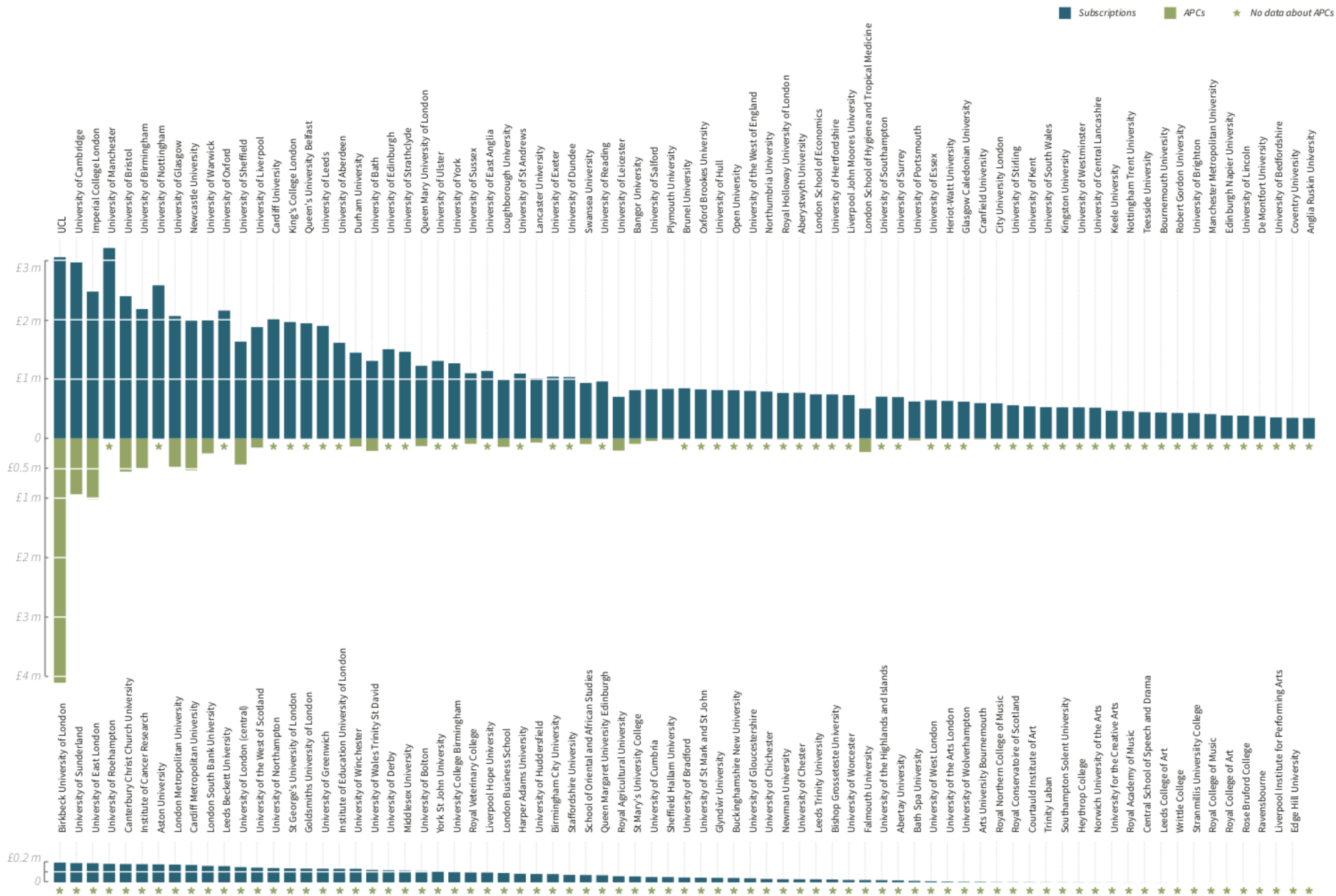
(Lawson et al, 2015)

APC payments by 25 UK institutions, 2014



(Lawson et al, 2015)

Expenditure on subscrip APCs in the UK, 2014



(Lawson et al, 2015)

Oligopolies of Knowledge

- World University Rankings are commercial products based on proprietary data from Scopus, which is owned by Elsevier.
- Web of Science (WoS) was until recently Thomson Reuters property. WoS is the basis for The Journal Impact Factor, also proprietary metric.
- On 11 July 2016 Thomson Reuters Corp. agreed to sell its intellectual property and science business (including WoS) to private-equity funds affiliated with Onex Corp. and Baring Private Equity Asia for **\$3.55 billion** in cash.
- Elsevier's dominance is nearly total. Hybrid journals published by for-profit publishers have extended the dominance of for-profit publishers, particularly Elsevier due to its symbiotic relationship with Scopus, and of the university rankings with Scopus and WoS.

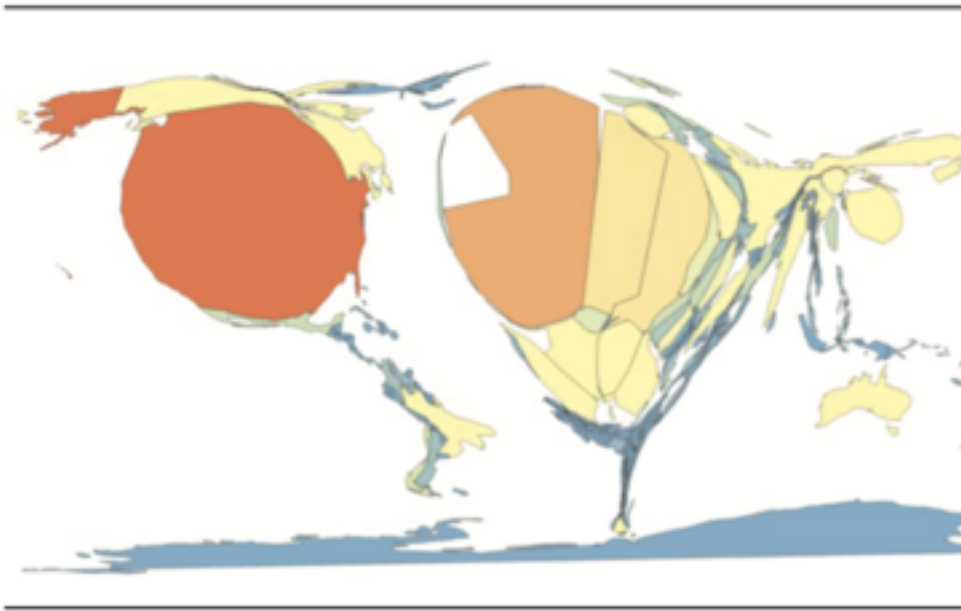
The Whole Package: Conflict of Interest

- There is an implicit conflict of interest where a dominant key player produces, distributes, measures and provides tools for assessment of the content they profit from.
- “Both of these commercial databases [Scopus and Web of Science] severely underestimate the scholarly production of [the Global South] and provide a skewed and mis-leading picture of the publishing activities of developing countries.”

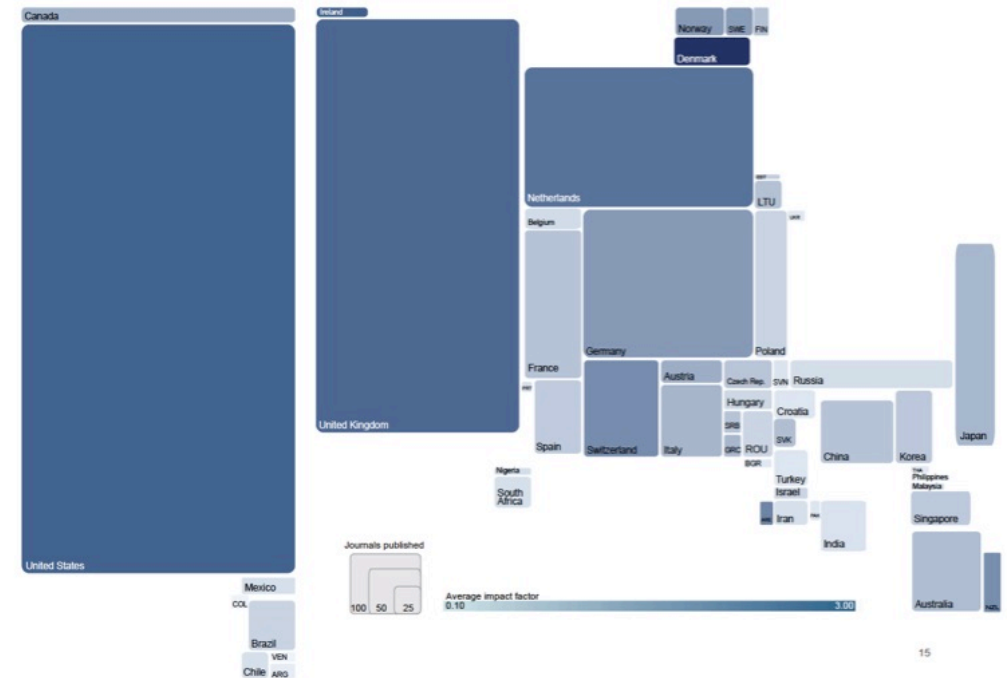
-Juan Pablo Alperin, 2014:21

What's Wrong with These Pictures?

Figure 3.1.
Cartogram of Number of Journals in WoS in 2012



(Alperin 2014)



(Graham, Hale and Stephens 2012)

Who Is Measured? By Whom? How? Why?

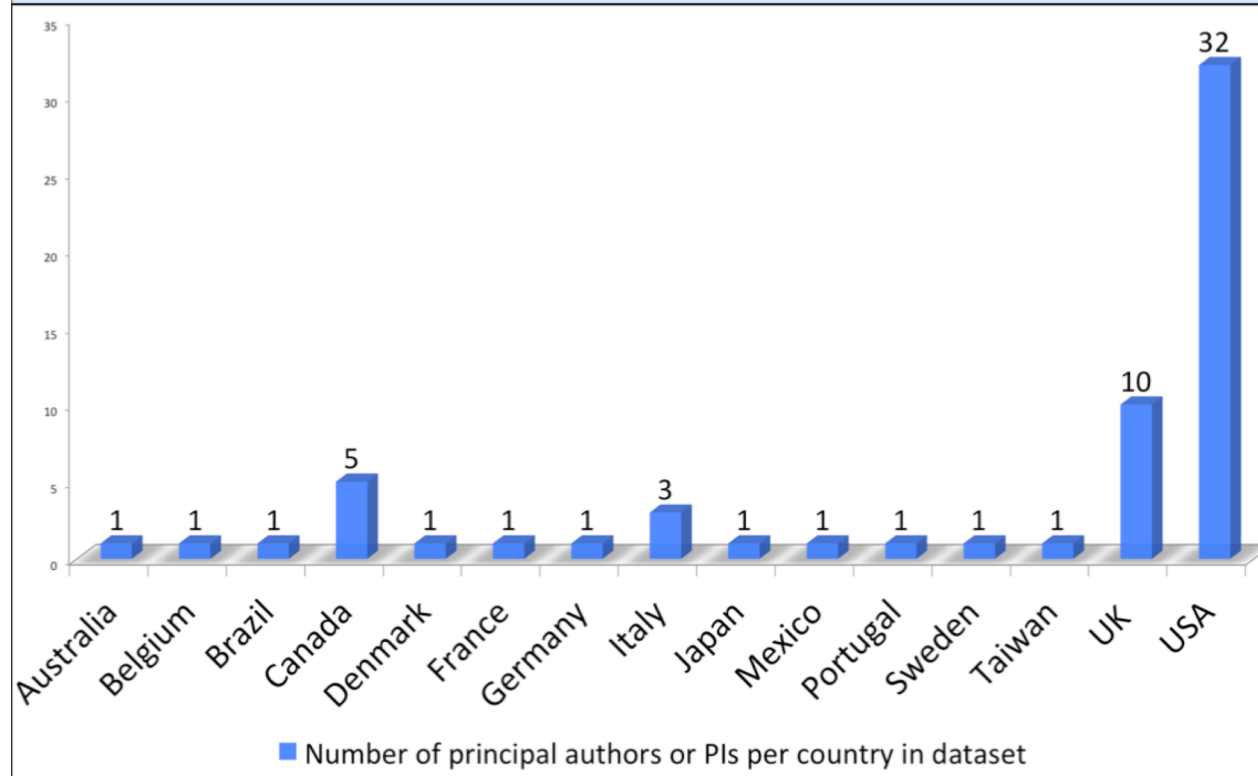
- An Italian or Latin American Literature scholar publishing in English would score/rank better than a colleague that publishes on the same subject and with the same rigour in Italian or Spanish in platforms without proprietary indicators.
- What will the fate of our cultural heritage be if we are being discouraged to describe, analyse, assess and study it through our own languages and on our own platforms, and when our cultural heritage and scholarly production is also being digitised, produced and assessed **by the same 4 or 5 for-profit publishers from the North?**
- A constant concern from researchers in the Global South is that of the international “visibility” of publications.

What about Article-level/Alternative Metrics (altmetrics)?

- In 2014, we used the Altmetric Explorer to search and collect published outputs with "digital humanities" in their metadata. We obtained a dataset that after manual refining contained **62** outputs with unique identifiers.
- The dataset included mention counts for **12** major types of online mentions. Later we used Google Scholar to identify citation counts for each output. The dataset ranks outputs by quality and quantity of online mentions (the Altmetric score).

Guess Who's on Top?

The dataset contained 62 outputs with unique identifiers whose main authors or PIs were from 15 different countries.

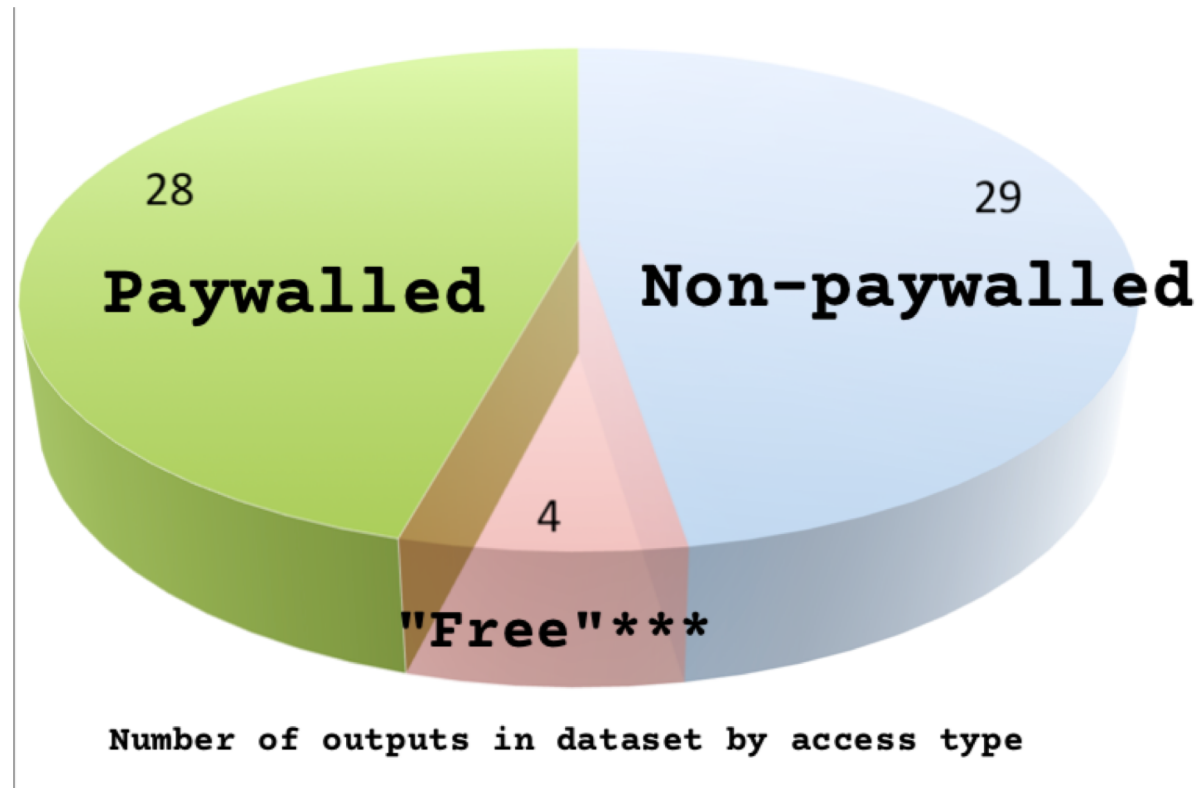


(Priego et al 2014)

Getting Attention: Open or Closed?

- The **3** most-mentioned papers were **not paywalled (but *not* strictly Open Access**)**.
- The paper with the highest number of mentions was a grey literature output deposited openly on SSRN.
- There were **no** outputs published in fully-Open Access Journals (**CC-BY**).
- The most license in the dataset was **CC-BY-NC-ND (1 article)**.

Getting Attention: Open or Closed?



(Priego et al 2014)

Alternative Metrics for Discovery

- Our dataset reflected that outputs with “digital humanities” in their metadata were not published in fully-fledged Open Access journals.
- The role of SSRN and Arxiv as open repositories was found to be relatively significant.
- The absence of clear licensing information is perceived to be problematic, as is the lack of any outputs licensed with CC-BY.
- The fact the 3 most-mentioned outputs were available without a paywall might signal towards the potential of Open Access for greater public impact.
- Though the dataset reflects a predictable dominance of authors based in the USA, the dataset points to a growing presence of international digital humanities researchers.
- Pervasive Identifiers such as DOIs are required; journals and/or publishers must be tracked by the service– many (most?) published outputs remain untracked and unmeasured.

Key Issues for the Global South

- Hegemony of the Global North, and the English language, in the *whole* research lifecycle, from funding to publishing to indexing to research data management to assessment to ranking
- Proliferation of journals and dissemination mechanisms outside the radar of the hegemonic infrastructures of research assessment
- Disrepute of Global South, publishing houses, professional associations and university presses- witch hunt campaign by the Global North to continue damaging their reputation

Open Access Kidnapped

- For-profit publishers have embraced Open Access models through a variety of often-contradictory licensing schemes, financed by Article Processing Charges where the author pays to open outputs up
- Hybrid Publishing (paywalled journals that also offer Open Access 'options' incur in double-dipping, where libraries and academics pay twice for the same content
- Opacity of pricing (sometimes only obtainable via FOI requests) that frustrate competition, transparency, critique and accountability
- Reputational value remains the most valuable bargaining chip for for-profit publishers

Key Issues for the Global South

- Governments, funders, employers, scholarly associations passively accepting hegemonic notions of 'excellence' defined and imposed from the Global North
- Ambition of scholars and their employers to get integrated into the current hegemonic infrastructures
- Peer Review, Pricing, Technological Infrastructures, Research Data Management Standards are designed with Global North infrastructures in mind, and imposed top-to-bottom

Propositions

- Open Access as a strategy and set of scholarly values remains desirable for the Global South- the legacy subscription model creates further inequality
- Open Access is not just about business models (how to finance scholarly publishing), but about a specific type of research workflow, about having openness embedded in the whole research cycle (this means also transparency, accountability, reproducibility) and covers metrics and methods of assessment too

Propositions

- Open Access implies specific modes of licensing that can offer different degrees of openness as currently defined, as long as they don't short-circuit the goals of open science
- We won't be able to transform scholarly communication business models towards greater equality until we transform traditional research workflows and IP paradigms so they embed openness first

Propositions

- It is crucial that Global South researchers, as key participants and stakeholders in scholarly communications, retain control over how their research is conducted and disseminated- this requires first an interrogation and redefinition of notions of 'excellence' (or its demotion) from the perspective of Global South contexts
- Internationally, we don't know yet how to *really* share-- and our methods of assessment, our ongoing appreciation of reputational and financial value are still based on vertical, exclusionary, closed-up structures- more equality means a challenge to privileged elites.

International Open Access Week 2018 Events

Upcoming Events (199)



<http://www.openaccessweek.org/events>

The Biggest Challenge...

- Until now the under-privileged (also called 'the scholarly poor') want belong to the privileged elites: to have libraries that subscribe to the same journals, to publish in those same journals, to be succeed in the paradigms defined by Global North hegemony.
- This is one of the many reasons why open access lacks more traction in the Global South.
- It is easy to blame the Evil Multinational Corporations for all the inequalities in scholarly communications, but what are we as scholars at least trying to do differently to avoid the perpetuation of the same?

Some References

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