

A (free) roundup of content on the Academic Spring

Got wind of the Academic Spring but not sure what it's all about? We round up the news and views on what might prove to be the biggest revolution in academic publishing



Will the academic spring liberate researchers from the paywall of publishers? Photograph: Affinity/REX FEATURES

As far back as 2004 the seeming contradiction of publicly-funded research made only available at prohibitive cost through journals, has attracted the attention of HE leaders and policy makers. In July of that year, journalist Donald MacLeod reported on what MPs were calling "a revolution in academic publishing, which would make scientific research freely available on the internet".

At the time, Sir Keith O'Nions, director general of the research councils, said: "I think it would be a pretty brave decision of the government at the present time to say it has sufficient confidence in the open access business model ... to shift rapidly from something it knows and trusts to an open access model." And there the case rested.

Fast forward to present day, the near ubiquitous use of social media, the growth of the 'copyleft' movement which seeks to allow work to be shared more freely and a blog by a Cambridge mathematician announcing that he would no longer be submitting papers to Elsevier, the largest publisher of scientific journals, and the Academic Spring was born.

The following articles trace the development of the discourse across the Guardian:

Wellcome Trust joins 'academic spring' to open up science

Wellcome backs campaign to break stranglehold of academic journals and allow all research papers to be shared free online

Science must be liberated from the paywalls of publishers

Research that is funded by the public should be freely available to all – a move to open access modes of publication is overdue, says professor Stephen Curry

Government backs calls for research data to be made freely available

Wellcome Trust's proposal that results of public- and charity-funding research be made public receives ministerial backing

Academic journals: an open and shut case

The Wellcome Trust's initiative to establish an open-access journal should put an end to a silly system

Letters: Information that we want to be free

But while the weight of the academic community and government seems to be behind this move toward open access in academic publishing, not everyone supports the academic spring. On the blog, the Scholarly Kitchen, Kent Anderson, CEO/publisher of the Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery and former director of Medical Journals at the American Academy of Pediatrics, calls the Academic Spring "shallow rhetoric aimed at the wrong target."

Here are a few other blogs we thought you might like:

Elsevier – my part in its downfall

The blog by Tim Gowers, credited with starting the Academic Spring

Open access journals: are we asking the right questions?

The academic publisher Elsevier is being boycotted by the online HE community due to the prohibitive costs of its journals. But is an open access model the right solution, asks Martin Paul Eve

A perspective from the library services community

A successful boycott of Elsevier demonstrates that populist rebellions have a place within the information-sharing community, says Barbara Fister

Only papers that are freely available should be accepted by the REF

Theoretical astrophysicist, Peter Coles makes the connection between the Academic Spring and the Research Excellence Framework

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