

<https://plus.google.com/117663015413546257905/posts/3RBvY7HTSNL#117663015413546257905/posts/3RBvY7HTSNL>

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**John Baez**

Partagé en mode public - [20 déc. 2013](#)

A prominent French scholar writes:

**In France, the present negotiations we face with Elsevier concerning subscriptions are also fierce. Yesterday all academic French institutions received the announcement that negotiations have broken down, and we will no longer be able to access their journals on December 31st.**

**If you could provide me details about similar negotiations with Elsevier you have heard about, I will forward them to colleagues in charge of the present negotiation. I am also looking for information concerning the fact that Elsevier pays some of us in an obscure way (there is no contract, other editors are not informed, etc.). This might explain why some of our colleagues are supportive of Elsevier.**

If you contact me, I can arrange to have information passed on to this scholar - while maintaining your anonymity if you like.

You can send me a private message on G+. Or, my email address can be found on my webpage.

(There's a slight intelligence test involved.)

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**Mike Taylor**

**20 déc. 2013**

Is there a copy of this announcement anywhere? I would like to see exactly what was said.

**marlene delhay**

**20 déc. 2013**

Who is this 'prominent french scholar' ?

**Mike Taylor**

**20 déc. 2013**

It seems obvious that the prominent French scholar wishes to remain anonymous, and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't respect that.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Bober on Twitter pointed me to this page, which has more information (though in French): <http://www.polechimie-balard.fr/actualites/335/elsevier--toujours-lincertitude-pour-le-1er-janvier-2014.htm>

[Mike Taylor](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Can anyone offer a reasonably idiomatic translation of this into English? Good Translate does a tolerable job and I can pretty much make out the substance of the meaning, but I wouldn't want to attempt to render it into actual English, for fear of changing the meaning of idioms I'm unfamiliar with.

[Lieven Marchand](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Mike Taylor

Here's my go at translating:

The final phase of the negotiations between Elsevier and the Ministry for Higher Education and Research (MHER) is taking place these days and we still don't have any assurances that a financial agreement will be reached. The MHER steers this operation now because on the one hand the negotiators of the Couperin consortium, who were mandated by the universities, the engineering schools and the EPST(?) have finished their mission and on the other hand Elsevier has obtained that all French establishments are part of the national license. In other words, the old model that left each university free to choose whether or not to take a subscription has become obsolete.

This new 5 year contract has to guarantee Elsevier a fixed earnings from the start. The current phase of the negotiations deals with the global amount of the contract, the yearly increases of the fees and the way these costs will be divided among our establishments. [ These proposals can't be made available at the moment so as not to disturb the work of the negotiators. ]

Elsevier has also obtained that the number of establishments concerned by this national license will be far higher than before. In the past, 200 establishments had a subscription to all or a part of the Freedom Collection, this indivisible bundle of around 1600 journals. In the future, the scope will be about 640 establishments, of which 440 didn't previous consult these journals.

One of the consequences is that the Ministry will deduct this subscription at the source, from the dotations of universities and other establishments, the principle being that every establishment will have to pay its share determined by a certain repartition model. As we do not know which deal will be reached, we can't anticipate the fees for Montpellier and its divisions. On the other hand if no decision has been made before 15 december and no deal reached, all access will be cut on January 1st. (The Abes(?) has asked Elsevier to stop access on January 1st 2014 because of the uncertainty about the negotiations. (AEF(?) press release of 06/12/2013).

[Andrew England](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

So Elsevier is cutting off access to all French universities? Who could possibly be on their side after January 1st?

[Hamilton Carter](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

I've heard that the subscriptions to the physical review journals from [+APS Physics](#) aren't being renewed either. Any truth to this?

[Christophe Leroy](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Elsevier is negotiating the expansion of their sales from universities & schools to 640. But this time they negotiate with the Minister, not with 440 schools. Sounds like they are going to make more dough...

[Timothy Gowers](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

It's a strange position to be in, but I very much want the negotiations to fail and for access to be cut off on January 1st. That way, academics in France will be forced to adjust to life without access to ScienceDirect, which I think will be easier than they might imagine (though I realize that I speak as a mathematician and my experiences may not be representative across all sciences). Once they've made that adjustment, Elsevier's bargaining position in France will be permanently weakened. The alternative appears to be some kind of "compromise" that locks 640 institutions into an expensive deal for five years. Given the uncertainty about what is going to happen to journals, it seems mad to accept such a long-term deal.

[Mike Taylor](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Agreed: it's a very strange time to be negotiating a five-year deal on *any* terms. Perhaps that is the sticking-point in the negotiations?

[Robert Byrne](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

There is a lesson here for any institution that hires academics based on these kinds of journal publications: they are forcing compliance with a system they cannot themselves afford!

[marlene delhay](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Access should be cut because the contract ends on 31/12/2013. That's all we can be sure of so far.

[Bruce Marko](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Evilsvere is back at it again I see, thanks for keeping up the fight.

[Stéphanie Bouvier](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Hamilton Carter

This is true : APS refuses to negotiate and wants to impose increases ranging from 8-40% depending on the institution.

[Christophe Leroy](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Elsevier is committing suicide in honor of Aaron Schwartz?

[Scott Hatch](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

I'm afraid slavery to the journals is very much alive in both Singapore & Hong Kong. Professors & Grad Students alike rise or perish on their moving average rate of publications in a rag owned by Elsevier, the universities specify it. I often wonder if the deans all have Swiss bank accounts for their kickback.

[Stéphanie Bouvier](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Hamilton Carter

Université d'Angers, FR : <http://bu.univ-angers.fr/billet/2013/aps-arret-de-labonnement>

[Sylvain Soliman](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Timothy Gowers

That way, academics in France will be forced to adjust to life without access to ScienceDirect\_

Please note that many academics in France do not depend on the *Couperin consortium* to get access to publications. Most notably, as far as I understand, the CNRS\* uses INIST (a completely separate entity, dedicated to the CNRS) to negotiate its access.

The consequences are thus that *some* academics will still get Elsevier publications while others won't... I'm pretty sure, those that won't will find a way...

\*: in France we have this strange idea that research can be done in Universities, coupled with teaching, or in — possibly completely separated — labs where people are pure researchers with no teaching duty. That's the case of the many CNRS labs, but also of domain-specific institutions like INSERM, INRA, INRIA, etc.

[marlene delhay](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Sylvain Soliman

Well, the CNRS is now a member of Couperin, and as the negotiation is lead at a national level, its result will have an impact on lots of academics...

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

This is a good play by Elsevier. If they are successful it will set a precedent for future negotiations. They will play "hard" and "stretch the legal limits of play". Ministers always favor, in fact, look forward to such plays. I think they already have pre-negotiated the result actually, but all this is a guess. Losing this makes them look bad and lose future negotiating power. Winning this will be awesome. They will ensure victory and have prepared well for it, the academics on the other hand, well I'd just say they are too passively, negatively stimulated by this, they just hope a breeze blows it all away soon. I like Elsevier's resolve and determination to make money. I think the scientific community does need a sheppard since they are incapable of guiding themselves. For every slow, by the way, scattered move academics make, Elsevier makes a fast focused scientific rational decision on how to earn more profit. I hope France proves me wrong, but that hope is like calm sea breeze, I can only see whether by temporary cut access, or immediate caving in, increased future profit.

[Dima Pasechnik](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Scott Hatch

In HK and SG deans have already ripped the benefits of the system, they can very well go without a Swiss account...

[Bruce Marko](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Colin Gopau

That type of shortsighted, narrow minded, thinking is the whole problem. They don't sell toys, they sell knowledge and hinder the progress and potential of humanity in one selfishness action. Perhaps you should take your rhetoric to the Fox News page where other short sighted

people will agree with you

[Timothy Gowers](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

One idea that would shake up the system if widely adopted would be a form of protest where people submit their papers to high-cost journals, and then withdraw them if they are accepted, placing the acceptance letter and referee's report online. That way, the paper can be made freely available and is also certified for free. I'm not sure I'd dare to do this, but I like the thought that it is theoretically possible.

[David Roberts](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

<https://plus.google.com/117663015413546257905/posts/3RBvY7HTSNL#117663015413546257905/posts/3RBvY7HTSNL> Timothy Gowers

Yes, I proposed that some time ago (I can't remember where, a blog or Math2.0 perhaps). I'm almost at the point where I feel could do that, as I'm not 100% certain I'll have a long-term career in academia (though I'd like to), so it would be a gesture that won't affect me.

[David Roberts](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

I wonder if, in the event negotiations don't go through, it would be cheaper to go without subscriptions and rely on preprints, emailing authors, repository copies and buying what can't be found otherwise.

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Bruce Marko

1) Can you point out the shortsighted narrow minded parts? 2) When you have done so, consider each piece in light of my entire post. 3) Is considering what is the goal and moves off your opposition myopic? Elsevier studies the scientific community, do you study them? They are playing very well to win, do you want them to win? This play is very strong, I mean one man to gain favor with instead of many universities, and that man "funds the universities". So what's the scientist next move?

4) Did you consider how a minister typically makes a decision? Who advises the minister here? I mean how was this board chosen? Does he know anything about this issue, what is at stake? How would he come to a decision, by seeking advice from whom? What factors could influence him either way? Will this need to be passed in government or just a ministerial decision? You can't make a good move until you know these things.

5) In the translation given above how did this happen "The final phase of the negotiations between Elsevier and the Ministry for Higher Education and Research (MHER) is taking place"? Or this "Elsevier has obtained that all French establishments are part of the national license. In other words, the old model that left each university free to choose whether or not to

take a subscription has become obsolete"? This took some lobbying from Elsevier don't you think?

6) Imagine the yearly profits (not that 100% or close will be transferable) of Elsevier, Springer and Wiley alone going not to stakeholders outside of science, but back into Science itself, how fast would the LHC or LISA have been financed by scientists?

Minister can be taken to mean a very small group if you please.

[John Baez](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

I got an email from someone in response to the account of the "prominent French scholar" I quoted in my post here:

"I must correct the information given in this email, which is not accurate. The negotiation process with Elsevier has not broken up, on the contrary we have rich and constructive discussions. So far, no announcement concerning the negotiation's ending has ever been published. It is true that a letter was sent to Elsevier, asking them to cut access to the Freedom collection if no agreement can be reached by December, 31st, but this announcement was made for administrative reasons. We have no reason to think that the negotiation should fail."

[David Roberts](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

I don't mean to cast aspersions, but when the academic union and the senior management email us about pay negotiations they sound just like the two sides presented here by +[John Baez](#). One says that all is going smooth with broad agreement and only a few things to work out, the other says that nothing is agreed whatsoever, and that the other party is not bargaining in good faith. I'll let you figure out which is which, and how this might relate to the topic here.

[Bruce Marko](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Colin Gopaul

Sure can.

1/ you place paper over people.

2/ the knowledge they hoard and restrict access to could benefit all people, or could help those without access to higher education but with a high degree of aptitude.

3/ if this was about durable goods you would have a great point. Its not.

4/ this topic is far more nuanced than the typical corporate interaction, its not just about money, if it was, you would be correct.

5/ you are likely correct about the ministril response, however this is irrelevant.

6/ I use the terms narrow minded and short sighted because your not seeing the big picture, your seeing the revenue. I don't know what you do for a living, but your reaction suggests finance or something with money because all you see are the money and buisness interactions, and give a decent analysis from that perspective. This is about educators, students, and everyone else having access to the body of knowledge and progress that is the human race.

Evilsvere stands directly in that path for the sake of profit.  
You're clearly intelligent, open your eyes, ask yourself what they really sell, because it isn't books and subscriptions.  
That is what I mean...

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**20 déc. 2013**

Answering Bruce Marko

Please read what I wrote, thanks.

What is the context of Elsevier pursuit in this? Is it not revenue. So that is what I'm addressing. The benefits you say are known, we are on the same side, yet you attack perfectly good ideas of how to fight Elsevier. Yours won't win, no member of any government will listen to you about those other points until you put some dollars and cents to them. Have you ever met such people, business people, government officials?

Also, if in one post I didn't mention the things you find precious, does that mean the readers here don't know it, discuss it etc on many other forums?

What drives Elsevier is more important than you give it credit. While you argue with me what one should think, they are united in their vision. +1 for Elsevier.

[Timothy Gowers](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering David Roberts

I meant to say that it wasn't my idea, but I couldn't remember where I had got it from. Anyway, I think it was a great idea.

[Christophe Leroy](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering Colin Gopaul and Bruce Marko

They also sells things they don't produce... The results of publicly funded efforts. Plus the level of integrity of these articles is under question. A lot of the stuff they publish is nice sounding rubbish that should be retracted more often. Elsevier provides no value to this integrity (or lack thereof). In other words Elsevier doesn't provide a better service than twitter...

[Bruce Marko](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering Colin Gopaul

Ahh touche sir. From the perspective of unity and purpose you are correct. They have both, the educators have purpose but are disparate. Perhaps in some lofty intellectual way you were suggesting a course of action, but I could not see it. If your purpose was to promote unity through antagonism then its not a very good plan. Heavy handed criticism is a poor motivator, if that's what that was, which I am still uncertain of...

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering Bruce Marko

Thanks for taking the time to try to grasp what I was saying in that post, and most impressively without knowing if I was a janitor or postman. It does take considerably more effort to hear what someone says over what position they hold. I mention this because it will factor in how the minister makes their decision. I would think their ears hear some things more than others. I would love someone to say more on the background of the members of the advisory team.

Have you seen, Nielsen video

[TEDxWaterloo - Michael Nielsen - Open Science?](#)

The name is "open science" in case I messed up the copy and paste on this device I'm using. Also, sometime read "Capitalism and Slavery" by Eric Williams, to gain some insight at humanitarian and economic power in reasoning with the "masters". Regarding its central thesis not much has change, but this latter statement is my opinion.

The wealth of the publishing Oligopoly and their parent companies is enormous, and that gives them real bargaining power. Lots of strategies must be employed to get people of various backgrounds and culture to get on board. Corporate culture is different from academic culture (neither of which I have discovered I like). In that world prior to all this, Elsevier was a textbook case of success. Their central thesis is research has a value and thus should be sold. I don't think we can change that in them, but we can change what and how the next generation values research.

[Taufik MetaNaratif](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering Scott Hatch

*I'm afraid slavery to the journals is very much alive in both Singapore & Hong Kong.*

Actually, it is acutely affecting as well academicians from most of the developing countries.

[Bruce Marko](#)

**21 déc. 2013**

Answering Colin Gopaul

The long game is probably the correct course in truth. Perhaps the next generation won't perceive open online publications as tantamount to career suicide. All the same, I wouldn't mind if the paradigm would shift considerably sooner...

[Will Hill](#)

**22 déc. 2013**

Elsevier is being very short sighted to not realize that anyone might call their bluff. Cutting off all universities is a national affront to people who are capable of publishing everything

themselves. That's what everyone needs to do anyway. Digital restrictions and copyright laws that don't allow people to build public libraries are frauds contrary to the purpose of copyright and publishing. French universities should digitize and publish their entire stacks. Why are we allowing publishers to extort us with our own work? Screw them.

[Timothy Gowers](#)

**22 déc. 2013**

My understanding of the situation (after a conversation with the prominent French academic) is that mathematicians and physicists would be quite happy to call Elsevier's bluff, but biologists and medics wouldn't. Since all the journals are bundled together, the different disciplines can't act separately. So at least part of any anger one might feel should perhaps be directed at our colleagues in biology and medicine (though perhaps "anger" is not the most politically sensible word).

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**22 déc. 2013**

I think the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) may be the best people who could provide them with details about the bundling policy of Elsevier and successful negotiating strategies. For example, it is known many universities and university consortiums pay different amounts and have different bundled packages with no "real correlation" between packages and cost. The ARL through many legal battles have managed to get access to some of this info and may be best able to advise on how to break their bundling packages or minimize cost. But Elsevier went national, so hopefully some of these strategies might still apply.

Still I'm curious how is it that they market this bundling so rigid that its worst than cable, phone and internet packages and these also have a few dominant companies.

I would think surely a government can say "your bundling package is insane" and make a case on behalf of those fields that need Elsevier and those that demand far better or would prefer to make do without. Maybe it violates some law like forcing you to buying broccoli, eggs, beef and pork when purchasing a car" who cares if you're vegetarian, muslim, hindu or just don't like broccoli. This reminds me of the culture when a girl married one guy, she married all the brothers.

Edit - I'm not saying this in a bad way about the culture, just it reminded me of that.

Anyone has any ideas or fact on why its hard for biologists? At the cost of knowledge website biology comes in second to maths (I think) in the number of people signed. Is it that the number and the percentage are quite different? I expect medicine and engineering to be small. Their numbers signed certainly reflect a very small percentage of people in those fields.

It seems Elsevier is devoted to the unity of the sciences. Very noble indeed. But it's clear how coherent their decisions are from take down notices to make it harder to get access outside of them which serves as a means of making the decision to abandon them harder. I think may soon make it illegal to pass an author copy to your office neighbor or even office mate (if you share one).

[Dima Pasechnik](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

Has Elsevier ever been investigated by an anti-monopoly body? Is it clear that they are a monopoly to an extent large enough to become a subject of various anti-monopoly rules.

[John Baez](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

Answering Dima Pasechnik

Good question! All I see is that a proposed merger between Reed-Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer collapsed because of opposition from US and EU antitrust authorities:

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/s/spobooks/5621225.0001.001/1:6.4.5.2?rgn=div4;view=fulltext>

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

The ARL seem to be the people academics need to work with. See <http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/scholcomm/iaa> They've been at this for some decades now, see [http://books.google.tt/books/about/Report\\_of\\_the\\_ARL\\_serials\\_prices\\_project.html?id=xuXgAAAAMAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.tt/books/about/Report_of_the_ARL_serials_prices_project.html?id=xuXgAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y)

There are articles telling our present story since the 70's. Maybe some hungry law firm can make history with this in the area of information, copyright and publishing now that Elsevier is focus nationally.

Also, regarding you last post, see <http://newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/The-Debate-Heats-Up-Are-Reed-Elsevier-and-Thomson-Corp-Monopolists-17604.asp>

And the results

<http://business.highbeam.com/5083/article-1G1-75452321/us-justice-department-gives-ok-reedelsevier-buy-harcourt>

<http://business.highbeam.com/434953/article-1G1-146912240/justice-department-clears-sale-big-textbook-publisher>

[http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/press\\_releases/2001/8466.htm](http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/press_releases/2001/8466.htm)

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/rep\\_pub/reports/2001/457reed.htm#full](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/rep_pub/reports/2001/457reed.htm#full)

[Colin Gopaul](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

I'm sure you or some other professor may know a partner in some law firm with a PhD in maths who can be made interested in digging a bit deeper.

[Timothy Gowers](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

Answering Dima Pasechnik

Ironically, Elsevier claim that it is because of anti-monopoly laws that they keep their negotiations with universities secret (i.e., so that they can't be accused of colluding with Springer, Wiley, etc.).

[Marie Farge](#)

**23 déc. 2013**

Here is the English translation of the message that all scientists working in public academic or research institutions in France received on Wednesday December 18th:

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Due to difficulties during the negotiations with Elsevier conducted by the Consortium Couperin and other EPST (this stands for 'Scientific and Technological Public Institutions') including CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) concerning the renewal of the access contract and following a demand from ABES (Bibliographic Agency of Higher Education) operator of MESR (Ministry for Higher Education and Research), access to Elsevier publications will be interrupted on 31/12/2013. As a result portals of universities and Biblioplanets (CNRS) will no more offer you access to Elsevier by 01/01/2014, unless, of course, the order being countermanded if negotiations are resumed with Elsevier.

Thank you for dispatching this information among your communities. Note that the negotiation is for the next 5years and that one of the blocking points concerns hybrid journals.

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It is mentioned that access to Elsevier journals will be closed by January 1st 2014 "unless [...] if negotiations are resumed with Elsevier". This is a proof that negotiations were broken. The mail sent to John Baez on December 20th pretends the contrary. Please contact French scholars you know and try to figure out what is going on.

Here is the original text in French:

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Compte tenu des difficultes de negociations avec Elsevier menees par le Consortium Couperin et autres EPST dont le CNRS pour le renouvellement du contrat d'accès et a la demande de l'ABES (Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur) operateur du MESR, les acces aux publications d'Elsevier seront interrompus a compter du 31/12/2013. Il en resulte que les portails des universites et Biblioplanets (CNRS) ne vous offrirons plus ces acces a Elsevier a dater du 01/01/2014, sauf, bien sur contre ordre lie a la reprise des negociations avec Elsevier.

Merci de diffuser cette information aupres de vos communautes. A noter que la negociation porte sur 5 ans et qu'un des points d'achoppement concerne les revues hybrides.

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[Laurette Tuckerman](#)

**24 déc. 2013**

Answering Hamilton Carter

APS is a completely different case. APS prices vary according to a system of 5 Tiers, according to usage/size of institution, all posted transparently on the web. Prices for the upper two Tiers are increasing in 2014, those for the lower two are decreasing. All APS prices decreased substantially -- by between 20% and 60%, depending on the Tier -- between 2003 and 2008. Even after the increases announced for 2014, APS prices for all Tiers are lower than they were in 2003. Price increases in France are due to the fact that a number of institutions are in the upper two Tiers and that at least one important institution (Univ. Paris 7) has been promoted to a higher-use Tier. The APS prices are and have always been among the lowest in physics, by a factor of 5 or 10. The protests against the new APS prices come from either not being aware of this or else focusing only on immediate price increases rather than the prices themselves or the pricing history.

[Benoît Kloeckner](#)

**29 déc. 2013**

What I understand, as being in charge of subscriptions in my library, is that the negotiating consortium Couperin is being fiercer in the negotiation than it was for the preceding contracts, and that the letter asking for access to be cut is an administrative move giving them leverage. Its aim is to prevent Elsevier to provide access before the end of negotiation, and then charging for it. We do not know whether they will provide access in the beginning of 2014, but if they do it will be at their expense. Couperin seems to be quite serious about the terms they want see changed, but I would not say that negotiation was broken. The French version of the email posted by Marie Farge is slightly ambiguous ("reprise des négociations" can mean "next round of negotiation").

[John Baez](#)

**29 déc. 2013**

Answering Benoit Kloeckner

Thanks for the information.

[David Roberts](#)

**1 janv. 2014**

Has access been cut off?

[marlene delhay](#)

**1 janv. 2014**

Guess what ? No ! At least not at this time.

We haven't had more news about the deal, as most people are on vacation here until monday 6.

[Michelle Brook](#)

**2 janv. 2014**

I look forward to an update on this!

[John Baez](#)

**2 janv. 2014**

Me too! I'll let you know when I hear something.

[Marie Farge](#)

**17 fev. 2014**

Here is an update about the French 'Big Deal', that you were asking for.

On January 31st a memorandum of understanding was signed between Elsevier and Couperin (the consortium in charge of negotiating subscriptions with Elsevier). Although the contract is still pending, Elsevier has not interrupted access to its journals. I am convinced they are much too frightened to do so since scientists would thus become aware of their nasty negotiation practices.

I regret that no one has yet answered the initial demand for assistance :

'If you could provide me details about similar negotiations with Elsevier you have heard about, I will forward them to colleagues in charge of the present negotiation. I am also looking for information concerning the fact that Elsevier pays some of us in an obscure way (there is no contract, other editors are not informed, etc.). This might explain why some of our colleagues are supportive of Elsevier.'

Indeed it would be useful if some of you could provide examples of Elsevier's practices, concerning both subscriptions and payment for editorial work. Both should no longer be kept secret as is still the case.

Ted Bergstrom, an economist from UC Santa Barbara, gave interesting information on his blog about this : "Many of the Big Deal contracts signed by universities have confidentiality clauses that state that the library must not share information contained in the contract. Fortunately, most states have open records laws that invalidate such clauses and require state institutions including universities to make these contracts publicly available. We have invoked these laws in requests to a large number of libraries throughout the United States. In June, 2009, Elsevier contested our request for their contract with Washington State University. The judge ruled unequivocally in our favor and we have received the requested contract from WSU. As of August 10, 2009 we have received copies of contracts from 36 institutions in 28 states. We have been told that several more contracts are on the way."

<http://www.econ.ucsb.edu/~tedb/Journals/BundleContracts.html>

Unfortunately it seems that his blog has not been updated since 2009. Therefore it would be useful if you could provide more recent information about 'Big Deal' contracts you might have heard of.