
Marie Farge modified several times the 'Elsevier' page of Wikipedia explaining that the cost of peer-reviewing is not paid by Elsevier

From Wikipedia History backlog

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A person (Guillaume2023) discarded her addition on the 'Elsevier' page, this several times. She then exchanged the following arguments with him.

18 February 2012 12:27 (UTC)

Marie Farge

Bonjour,

I was much too busy until now to have time to answer you.

On the page 'Elsevier' of Wikipedia you can read: 'Elsevier employs more than 7,000 people in over 70 offices across 24 countries. In addition, there are 7,000 journal editors, 70,000 editorial board members, 300,000 reviewers and 600,000 authors for its publications.' On February 15th

I added after publication the important precision: (all of them, besides rare exceptions, perform that work without being paid by Elsevier). Your arguments were: (Un sourced, and wrong anyway Elsevier pays its editors, board members and reviewers get reductions on books and such (and their numbers put the number of boycott signatories rather nicely in perspective...). I do not agree with your statement. I am member of the editorial board of the journal 'Applied and Computational Harmonic Analysis' (ACHA) since 1993 when we created this mathematical journal with Academic Press which then moved to Elsevier when it bought Academic Press in 2000. Incidentally, ACHA was created by the group of scientists who developed wavelet theory. I would like to testify that I have never been paid by Elsevier, neither have any reduction on books. The only 'privilege' members of the editorial board get is a free copy of the journal, that technically makes sense since we need to follow what is published in ACHA (while our academic institutions have not all subscribe to get it). Last week Ingrid Daubechies, one of the three chief editor of ACHA signed the petition 'The cost of knowledge', resigned and publicly mentioned in the New York Times of February 13th that she has never been paid by Elsevier. I have been associate editor in two other mathematical journals and in 40 years of career I have only received a mug from SIAM (Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics) to thank me when I left the editorial board.

Let us consider the figures given on wikipedia: 'In addition, there are 7,000 journal editors, 70,000 editorial board members, 300,000 reviewers and 600,000 authors for its publications. The company publishes 2,000 journals and 20,000 books [1]'. Note that in reference [1] those 977 000 persons are mentioned as 'partners'. Let us now assume that for each of those 2000 journals one chief editor is paid by Elsevier (I have no proof of this but I can ask the three chief editors of ACHA), this would make 2000 paid editors, i.e., 0.2% of the scientists working for Elsevier. This is what I mean by 'rare exceptions'. After you discarded my addition, I put it back with 'few exceptions' hoping to please you better, but you removed it again. I have talked to biologists, physicists and chemists who confirmed me that in their field too all those scientists are not paid by Elsevier (besides the case of some one who has been running a chemistry journal for 31 years and who recognized receiving money from Elsevier). My point in adding the sentence you have discarded is that Elsevier never explain that. No mention of this is made in reference [1]. If you are an academic scientist you will certainly understand why we think this is a problem.

I have been asked by CNRS to write a recommendation concerning relations between researchers and publishers that you can download from <http://wavelets.ens.fr> in 'Publications', paper n° 316.

Looking forward to hear from you, best regards,

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18 February 2012 16:40 (UTC)

Guillaume2303

Bonjour,

Elsevier has actually historically been one of the more generous publishers towards its editors, board members, and reviewers. Academic Press may have had a different culture and as it still is operated separately from the rest of Elsevier, this may still be the case. I know many editors in my field (neuroscience) and they are all paid for their efforts. I have been EIC of a journal with Blackwell, and I was also paid. These payments, I can assure you, are not trivial and amount to a fair part of one's total salary (depending on the size of the journal and the work involved, this may be up to \$20,000 -that's the highest I know, there may be higher). Elsevier actually pays a slightly higher rate than Blackwell (now Wiley-Blackwell), which is already a rather generous publisher. Book authors receive reductions if they buy other books, as far as I know, this also goes for article authors. For most journals, board members of course hardly do anything, so not paying them a salary is quite reasonable (it is my understanding that this is actually different in the field of mathematics). Authors never get paid, by any publisher. Nowadays, I have to put aside a sizeable chunk of my research budget to get my work published in OA journals, unless, of course, I go with Elsevier or other non-OA publishers. One of Elsevier's problems is that some of their journals are very large and therefore cost a lot. Everybody seems to get hung up on the fact that they have journals that cost \$20,000. Nobody seems to complain about a mediocre journal from another publisher, providing 4 issues yearly with a total of 200 pages and costing over \$1500. Brain Research (one of the more expensive Elsevier journals) gives you more pages in a single issue and has about 50-60 of those in a year. In any case, I have no references to source my assertion that editors get paid, but you don't have one that clearly shows they are not paid either, meaning that according to WP standards, you cannot put that in the article. The statement that authors don't get paid does not belong in the Elsevier article at all (it could be mentioned in the article on academic publishing), as this is industry standard all over the academic publishing industry, whether subscription journals or OA journals. Given that you are counselling the CNRS on these issues, here's a thought that I think you should take into consideration. Suppose tomorrow all journals become OA. No more subscription rates to pay! Libraries will save big amounts of money. We researchers, however, will now face considerable expenses getting our research published (somebody will have to pay the cost of peer review, typesetting, correcting grammar/typos, maintaining web sites, etc, etc). Do you think that in the current climate, governments and

universities will take the savings made on the library budgets and give them back to us? Of course, not! It's another welcome cost-cutting measure. Just as the decision that we now have to pay M2 students out of our lab budgets means that the government does not have to pay them separately any more and, under the guise of social justice, has taken a sizeable chunk out of our lab budgets. OK, end of this rant, back to work. Hope this clarifies my reasoning here. --

Guillaume2303 (talk)

Marie Farge managed to identify this person, who is an American scientist working for CNRS in a laboratory in Bordeaux, and she contacted him by phone. He argued as before that to prove her point she should refer to a published paper. She then convinced him that the figures given in the 'Elsevier' page is not objective since the reference given there is a paper from Elsevier, 'Elsevier at a glance'. He then accepted to discard the whole sentence. It then became:

Elsevier employs more than 7,000 people in over 70 offices across 24 countries. The company publishes 2,000 journals and 20,000 books. It is headed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ron Mobed [1]. In 2003 its publishing accounted for 25% of the world market in science, technology, and medical publishing.

[1] Elsevier at glance

<http://www.elsevier.com/about/at-a-glance>
