

Elsevier

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Elsevier (Dutch pronunciation: [ˈɛlzəviːr]) began in 1880 as a publisher of scientific and medical information in print journals and books. Today, the company has evolved into one of the world's leading providers of scientific, technical, and medical information, and a technology company serving over 30 million scientists, health professionals, and students worldwide.^[2] It is a part of the RELX Group^[3] (known until 2015 as Reed Elsevier). Based in Amsterdam, the company serves customers in over 170 countries.^[1]

Leading products include journals such as *The Lancet* and *Cell*, the ScienceDirect collection of electronic journals, the *Trends and Current Opinion* series of journals, and the online citation database Scopus.

Elsevier annually publishes approximately 400,000 articles in 2,500 journals.^[1] Its archives contain over 13 million documents and 30,000 e-books.^[4] Total yearly downloads amount to 900 million.^[1]

In 2015, Elsevier reported a profit margin of approximately 37% on revenues of £2.070 billion.^[1] Elsevier's high profit margins, and especially its copyright practices, have subjected it to heavy criticism by researchers.^[5]

Elsevier



ELSEVIER

Industry	Information and Analytics
Founded	1880
Headquarters	Amsterdam, Netherlands
Revenue	£2.070 billion (2015) ^[1]
Parent	RELX Group
Website	Official website (http://www.elsevier.com/)

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History

Elsevier was founded in 1880^[6] and took the name from the Dutch publishing house Elzevir which has no connection with the present company.^[6] The Elzevir family operated as booksellers and publishers in the Netherlands; the founder, Lodewijk Elzevir (1542–1617), lived in Leiden and established the business in 1580.

The expansion of Elsevier in the scientific field after 1945 was funded with the profits of the newsweekly *Elsevier*, which first issue appeared on 27 October 1945. The weekly was an instant success and earned lots of money.^[7] The weekly was a continuation, as is stated in its first issue, of the monthly Elsevier, which was founded in 1891 to promote the name of the publishing house and had to stop publication in December 1940 because of the Nazi occupation.

In 1947, Elsevier began publishing its first English-language journal, *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*.^[8]

In 2013, Elsevier acquired Mendeley, a UK company making software for managing and sharing research papers. Mendeley, previously an open platform for sharing of research, was greatly criticized for the acquisition, which users saw as acceding to the "paywall" approach to research literature. Mendeley's previously open sharing system now allows exchange of paywalled resources only within private groups.^[9] *The New Yorker* described Elsevier's reasons for buying Mendeley as two-fold: to acquire its user data, and to "destroy or coöpt an open-science icon that threatens its business model."^[10]

In December 2013, Elsevier announced a collaboration with University College, London, the UCL Big Data Institute.^[11] Elsevier's investment is "substantial" and thought to be more than £10 million.^[12]

Company figures

In the primary research market during 2015, over 1.3m research papers were submitted to Elsevier. **Over 17,000 editors (almost all of whom are unpaid) managed the peer review and selection of these papers, resulting in the publication of more than 400,000 articles in over 2,500 journals.**^[1]

Revenue sources are broken down in either format or geographic region. Approximately 41% of revenue by destination in 2014 was derived from North America, 27% from Europe and the remaining 32% from the rest of the world. Approximately 76% of revenue by format came from Electronic, 23% came from Print, and 1% came from face-to-face.^[1]

Elsevier employs more than 7,200 people in over 70 offices across 24 countries. The company publishes 2,500 journals and 30,000 e-books. It is headed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ron Mobed.^[13] In 2003 its publishing accounted for 25% of the world market in science, technology, and medical publishing.^[6]

In 2015, Elsevier accounted for 35% of the revenues of RELX group (£2.070 billion of £5.971 billion). In operating profits, it represented 42% (£760 million of £1,822 million). Adjusted operating profits (with constant currency) rose by 2% from 2014 to 2015.^[1]

Operating divisions

Elsevier has two distinct operating divisions: Science & Technology and Health Sciences. Products and services of both include electronic and print versions of journals, textbooks and reference works and cover the health, life, physical and social sciences.

Science and technology

The target markets are academic and government research institutions, corporate research labs, booksellers, librarians, scientific researchers, authors, and editors.

Flagship products and services include VirtualE, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Scirus, EMBASE, Engineering Village, Compendex, Cell, SciVal, Pure, and Analytical Services.

There are the following subsidiary imprints, many of them previously independent publishing companies: Academic Press, Butterworth-Heinemann, CMP, Digital Press, Elsevier, Gulf Professional Publishing, Morgan Kaufmann, Newnes, Pergamon Press, Pergamon Flexible Learning, Syngress Publishing, William Andrew.

ScienceDirect is Elsevier's platform for online electronic access to its journals and over 6,000 e-books, reference works, book series, and handbooks. The articles are grouped in four main sections: *Physical Sciences and Engineering*, *Life Sciences*, *Health Sciences*, and *Social Sciences and Humanities*. For most articles on the website, abstracts are freely available; access to the full text of the article (in PDF, and also HTML for newer publications) often requires a subscription or pay-per-view purchase.

Health sciences

The target market is physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, medical and nursing students and schools, medical researchers, pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, and research establishments. It publishes in 13 languages including English, German, French Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Japanese, Hindi, and Chinese.

Flagship publications include: The Consult series (FirstCONSULT, PathCONSULT, NursingCONSULT, MDConsult, StudentCONSULT), Virtual Clinical Excursions, and major reference works such as *Gray's Anatomy*, *Nelson Pediatrics*, *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*, *Netter's Atlas of Human Anatomy*, and online versions of many journals^[14] including *The Lancet*.

The subsidiary imprints, previously independent publishing companies are Saunders, Mosby, Churchill Livingstone, Butterworth-Heinemann, Hanley & Belfus, Bailliere-Tindall, Urban & Fischer, and Masson.

Global conferences

Elsevier is conducting conferences, exhibitions and workshop worldwide, with over 50 conferences a year covering life sciences, physical sciences & engineering, social sciences, and health sciences. In 2014 Elsevier conducted 48 conferences attended by 11328 delegates from 128 countries.^[15]

Criticism and controversies

In addition to issues indicated in this section, Elsevier's parent company (Reed Elsevier) has been criticised for its links to the weapons industry.

Pricing

In recent years the subscription rates charged by the company for its journals have been criticized; some very large journals (more than 5000 articles) charge subscription prices as high as £9,634, far above average,^[16] and many British universities pay more than a million pounds to Elsevier annually.^[17] The company has been criticized not only by advocates of a switch to the open-access publication model, but also by universities whose library budgets make it difficult for them to afford current journal prices. For example, a resolution by Stanford University's senate singled out Elsevier's journals as being "disproportionately expensive compared to their educational and research value," which librarians should consider dropping, and encouraged its faculty "not to contribute articles or editorial or review efforts to publishers and journals that engage in exploitive or exorbitant pricing."^[18] Similar guidelines and criticism of Elsevier's pricing policies have been passed by the University of California, Harvard University, and Duke University.^[19] In July 2015 the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) announced a plan to start boycotting Elsevier, which refused to negotiate on any Open Access policy for Dutch universities.^[20]

Resignation of editorial boards

In November 1999 the entire editorial board (50 persons) of the *Journal of Logic Programming* (founded in 1984 by Alan Robinson) collectively resigned after 16 months of unsuccessful negotiations with Elsevier Press about the price of library subscriptions.^[21] The personnel created a new journal, *Theory and Practice of Logic Programming*, with Cambridge University Press at a much lower price,^[21] while Elsevier continued publication with a new editorial board and a slightly different name (the *Journal of Logic and Algebraic Programming*).

In 2002, dissatisfaction at Elsevier's pricing policies caused the European Economic Association to terminate an agreement with Elsevier designating Elsevier's *European Economic Review* as the official journal of the association. The EEA launched a new journal, the *Journal of the European Economic Association*.^[22]

In 2003, the entire editorial board of the *Journal of Algorithms* resigned to start *ACM Transactions on Algorithms* with a different, lower-priced, not-for-profit publisher,^[23] at the suggestion of *Journal of Algorithms* founder Donald Knuth.^[24] The *Journal of Algorithms* continued under Elsevier with a new editorial board until October 2009, when it was discontinued.^[25]

The same happened in 2005 to the *International Journal of Solids and Structures*, whose editors resigned to start the *Journal of Mechanics of Materials and Structures*. However, a new editorial board was quickly established and the journal continues in apparently unaltered form with editors

D.A. Hills (Oxford University) and Stelios Kyriakides (University of Texas at Austin).^{[26][27]}

In August 2006, the entire editorial board of the distinguished mathematical journal *Topology* handed in their resignation, again because of stalled negotiations with Elsevier to lower the subscription price.^[28] This board then launched the new *Journal of Topology* at a far lower price, under the auspices of the London Mathematical Society.^[29] After this mass resignation, *Topology* remained in circulation under a new editorial board until 2009, when the last issue was published.^{[30][31]}

The French *École Normale Supérieure* has stopped having Elsevier publish the journal *Annales Scientifiques de l'École Normale Supérieure*^[32] (as of 2008).^[33]

The elevated pricing of field journals in economics, most of which are published by Elsevier, was one of the motivations that moved the American Economic Association to launch the *American Economic Journal* in 2009.^[34]

In May 2015, Stephen Leeder was removed from his role as editor of the Medical Journal of Australia after its publisher decided to outsource the journal's production to Elsevier. As a consequence, all but one of the journal's editorial advisory committee members co-signed a letter of resignation.^[35]

In October 2015, the entire editorial staff of the general linguistics journal *Lingua* resigned in protest of Elsevier's unwillingness to agree to their terms of Fair Open Access. Editor in Chief Johan Rooryck also announced that the *Lingua* staff would establish a new journal, *Glossa*.

Action against academics posting their own articles online

Digimarc, a company representing Elsevier, recently told the University of Calgary to remove articles published by faculty authors on university web pages; although such self-archiving of academic articles may be legal under the fair dealing provisions in Canadian copyright law, the university complied. Harvard University and the University of California, Irvine also received takedown notices for self-archived academic articles, a first for Harvard, according to Peter Suber.^{[36][37]}

Months after its acquisition of Academia.edu rival Mendeley, Elsevier sent thousands of takedown notices to Academia.edu, a practice that has since ceased following widespread complaint by academics, according to Academia.edu founder and chief executive Richard Price.^{[38][39]}

Chaos, Solitons & Fractals

There was speculation^[40] that the editor-in-chief of Elsevier journal *Chaos, Solitons & Fractals*, Mohamed El Naschie, misused his power to publish his own work without appropriate peer review. The journal had published 322 papers with El Naschie as author since 1993. The last issue of December 2008 featured five of his papers.^[41] The controversy was covered extensively in blogs.^{[42][43]} The publisher announced in January 2009 that El Naschie had retired as editor-in-chief.^[44] As of November 2011 the co-Editors-in-Chief of the journal were Maurice Courbage and Paolo Grigolini.^[45] In June 2011 El Naschie sued the journal *Nature* for libel, claiming that his reputation had been damaged by their November 2008 article about his retirement, which included statements that *Nature* had been unable to verify his claimed affiliations with certain international institutions.^[46] The suit came to trial in November 2011 and was dismissed in July 2012, with the judge ruling that the article was "substantially true", contained "honest comment" and was "the product of responsible journalism". The judgement noted that El Naschie, who represented himself in

court, had failed to provide any documentary evidence that his papers had been peer-reviewed.^[47] Judge Victoria Sharp also found "reasonable and serious grounds" for suspecting that El Naschie used a range of false names to defend his editorial practice in communications with *Nature*, and described this behavior as "curious" and "bizarre".^[48]

Sponsored journals

At a 2009 court case in Australia where Merck & Co. was being sued by a user of Vioxx, the plaintiff alleged that Merck had paid Elsevier to publish the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine*, which had the appearance of being a peer-reviewed academic journal but in fact contained only articles favourable to Merck drugs.^{[49][50][51][52]} Merck described the journal as a "complimentary publication," denied claims that articles within it were ghost written by Merck, and stated that the articles were all reprinted from peer-reviewed medical journals.^[53] In May 2009, Elsevier Health Sciences CEO Hansen released a statement regarding Australia-based sponsored journals, conceding that they were "sponsored article compilation publications, on behalf of pharmaceutical clients, that were made to look like journals and lacked the proper disclosures." The statement acknowledged that it "was an unacceptable practice."^[54] *The Scientist* reported that, according to an Elsevier spokesperson, six sponsored publications "were put out by their Australia office and bore the Excerpta Medica imprint from 2000 to 2005," namely the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine* (*Australas. J. Bone Joint Med.*), the *Australasian Journal of General Practice* (*Australas. J. Gen. Pract.*), the *Australasian Journal of Neurology* (*Australas. J. Neurol.*), the *Australasian Journal of Cardiology* (*Australas. J. Cardiol.*), the *Australasian Journal of Clinical Pharmacy* (*Australas. J. Clin. Pharm.*), and the *Australasian Journal of Cardiovascular Medicine* (*Australas. J. Cardiovasc. Med.*).^[55] Excerpta Medica was a "strategic medical communications agency" run by Elsevier, according to the imprint's web page.^[56] In October 2010, Excerpta Medica was acquired by Adelphi Worldwide.^[57]

Shill review offer

According to the BBC, "the firm [Elsevier] offered a £17.25 Amazon voucher to academics who contributed to the textbook *Clinical Psychology* if they would go on Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble (a large US books retailer) and give it five stars." Elsevier said that "encouraging interested parties to post book reviews isn't outside the norm in scholarly publishing, nor is it wrong to offer to nominally compensate people for their time. But in all instances the request should be unbiased, with no incentives for a positive review, and that's where this particular e-mail went too far", and that it was a mistake by a marketing employee.^[58]

Who's Afraid of Peer Review

One of Elsevier's journals was caught in the sting set-up by John Bohannon, published in *Science*, called *Who's Afraid of Peer Review?*^[59] The journal *Drug Invention Today* accepted an obviously bogus paper made-up by Bohannon that should have been rejected by any good peer review system.^[60] Instead, *Drug Invention Today* was among many open access journals that accepted the fake paper for publication. As of 2014, this journal had been transferred to a different publisher.^[61]

"The Cost of Knowledge" boycott

In 2003 various university librarians began coordinating with each other to complain about Elsevier's "big deal" journal bundling packages, in which the company offered a group of journal subscriptions

to libraries at a certain rate, but in which librarians claimed there was no economical option to subscribe to only the popular journals at a rate comparable to the bundled rate.^[62] Librarians continued to discuss the implications of the pricing schemes, many feeling pressured into buying the Elsevier packages without other options.^[63]

On 21 January 2012, mathematician Timothy Gowers publicly announced he would boycott Elsevier, noting that others in the field have been doing so privately. The three reasons for the boycott are high subscription prices for individual journals, bundling subscriptions to journals of different value and importance, and Elsevier's support for SOPA, PIPA, and the Research Works Act.^{[64][65][66]}

Following this, a petition advocating non-cooperation with Elsevier (that is, not submitting papers to Elsevier journals, not refereeing articles in Elsevier journals, and not participating in journal editorial boards), appeared on the site "The Cost of Knowledge". By February 2012 this petition had been signed by over 5,000 academics,^{[64][65]} growing to over 13,000 by January 2013.^[67]

Elsevier disputed the claims, arguing that their prices are below the industry average, and stating that bundling is only one of several different options available to buy access to Elsevier journals.^[64] The company also claimed that its profit margins are "simply a consequence of the firm's efficient operation".^[66]

On 27 February 2012, Elsevier issued a statement on its website that declared that it has withdrawn support from the Research Works Act.^[68] Although the Cost of Knowledge movement was not mentioned, the statement indicated the hope that the move would "help create a less heated and more productive climate" for ongoing discussions with research funders. Hours after Elsevier's statement, the sponsors of the bill, US House Representatives Darrell Issa and Carolyn Maloney, issued a joint statement saying that they would not push the bill in Congress.^[69]

Selling open access articles

In 2014 Elsevier was found to be selling some articles which should have been open access, but had been put behind a paywall.^[70] A related case occurred in 2015, when Elsevier charged for downloading an open access article from a journal published by John Wiley & Sons. However, it was not clear whether Elsevier was in violation of the license under which the article was made available on their website.^[71]

Blocking text mining research

In November 2015 Elsevier blocked a scientist from performing text mining research at scale on Elsevier papers, even though his institution already pays for access to Elsevier journal content.^{[72][73]} Elsevier allows text mining via their corresponding API, but not by the screenscraping method the scientist used.^[74]

Sci-Hub and LibGen Lawsuit controversy

In 2015 Elsevier filed a lawsuit against the sites Sci-Hub and LibGen, which make available copyright protected articles for free. Elsevier also claimed illegal access to institutional accounts.^{[75][76]} A group of researchers, writers, and artists wrote an open letter in support of Sci-Hub and LibGen.^[77]

Imprints

Imprints are brand names in publishing. Elsevier uses its imprints to market to different consumer segments. Many of them have previously been the company names of publishers that were purchased by Reed Elsevier.

- Academic Press
- Baillière Tindall
- BC Decker
- Butterworth–Heinemann
- Churchill Livingstone
- Gulf Professional Publishing
- GW Medical Publishing
- Hanley & Belfus
- Medicine Publishing
- Morgan Kaufmann Publishers
- Mosby
- Newnes
- North-Holland Publishing Company
- Pergamon Press
- Saunders
- Syngress
- William Andrew
- Woodhead Publishing (including Chandos and Horwood)

See also

- List of Elsevier periodicals
- 2collab, a free researcher collaboration tool launched by Elsevier in 2007 and discontinued in 2011
- Sci-Hub, an open-access website providing free access to paywalled academic papers on a massive scale that's involved in a legal case with Elsevier

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