

WIKIPEDIA

Elsevier

Elsevier (Dutch pronunciation: [ˈɛlzəviːr]) is an information and analytics company and one of the world's major providers of scientific, technical, and medical information. It was established in 1880 as a publishing company.^{[1][2]} It is a part of the RELX Group,^[3] known until 2015 as Reed Elsevier. Its products include journals such as *The Lancet* and *Cell*, the ScienceDirect collection of electronic journals, the *Trends* and *Current Opinion* series of journals, the online citation database Scopus, and the ClinicalKey solution for clinicians. Elsevier's products and services include the entire academic research lifecycle, including software and data-management, instruction and assessment tools.^[4]

Elsevier publishes approximately 420,000 articles annually in 2,500 journals.^[1] Its archives contain over 13 million documents and 30,000 e-books.^[5] Total yearly downloads amount to more than 900 million.^[1]

Elsevier's high profit margins (37% in 2016^{[1][6]}) and its copyright practices have subjected it to criticism by researchers.^[7]

Elsevier



ELSEVIER

Industry	Information and Analytics
Founded	1880
Headquarters	Amsterdam, Netherlands
Revenue	£2.32 billion (2016) ^[1]
Parent	RELX Group
Website	Official website (http://www.elsevier.com/)

Contents

- History**
- Company statistics**
- Operating structure**
 - Global conferences
- Gold or Green Open access model**
- Corporate affairs**
 - Corporate social responsibility
- Criticism and controversies**
 - Pricing
 - Resignation of editorial boards
 - Action against academics posting their own articles online
 - Lobbying efforts against open access
 - Chaos, Solitons & Fractals*
 - Sponsored journals
 - Shill review offer
 - Who's Afraid of Peer Review
 - Selling open access articles
 - Blocking text mining research
 - Sci-Hub and LibGen Lawsuit controversy

- 6.12 [Wikipedia](#)
- 6.13 [Boycotts](#)
- 7** **Imprints**
- 8** **See also**
- 9** **References**
 - 9.1 [Citations](#)
 - 9.2 [Sources](#)
- 10** **External links**

History

Elsevier was founded in 1880^[8] and took the name from the Dutch publishing house [Elzevir](#) which has no connection with the present company.^[8] 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 published its first issue on 27 October 1945. The weekly was an instant success and earned lots of money.^[9] 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*.^[10]

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.^[11] *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](#)".^[12]

In December 2013, Elsevier announced a collaboration with [University College, London](#), the UCL Big Data Institute.^[13] Elsevier's investment is "substantial" and thought to be more than £10 million.^[14]

Company statistics

In the [primary research](#) market during 2016, researchers submitted over 1.5 million [research papers](#) to Elsevier-based publications. Over 20,000 editors managed the peer review and selection of these papers, resulting in the publication of more than 420,000 articles in over 2,500 journals.^[1]

In 2013, the five editorial groups Elsevier, [Springer](#), [Wiley-Blackwell](#), [Taylor & Francis](#) and [SAGE Publications](#) published more than half of all academic papers in the peer-reviewed literature.^{[15][16]} At that time, Elsevier accounted for 16% of the world market in science, technology, and medical publishing.^[17]

Elsevier breaks down its revenue sources by format and by geographic region. Approximately 42% of revenue by geography in 2016 derived from North America, 26% from Europe and the remaining 32% from the rest of the world. Approximately 79% of revenue by format came from electronic usage, 20% 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. It is headed by [Chief Executive](#)

Officer (CEO) Ron Mobed.^[18]

In 2016, Elsevier accounted for 34% of the revenues of RELX group (£2.320 billion of £6.895 billion). In operating profits, it represented 40% (£853 million of £2,114 million). Adjusted operating profits (with constant currency) rose by 2% from 2015 to 2016.^[1]

Operating structure

Following the integration of its Science & Technology and Health Sciences divisions in 2012, Elsevier has operated under a traditional business structure with a single CEO.^[19]

Products and services include electronic and print versions of journals, textbooks and reference works, and cover the health, life, physical and social sciences.

The target markets are academic and government research institutions, corporate research labs, booksellers, librarians, scientific researchers, authors, editors, 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 products and services include VirtualE, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Scirus, EMBASE, Engineering Village, Compendex, Cell, SciVal, Pure, and Analytical Services, 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^[20] including *The Lancet*.

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.

Global conferences

Elsevier conducts 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 11,328 delegates from 128 countries.^[21]

Gold or Green Open access model

Elsevier announced the gold or green open access journal models.^[22]

Corporate affairs

Corporate social responsibility

The Elsevier Foundation supports libraries in developing countries, women scientists and nursing facilities.^[23]

In 2016 Elsevier's not-for-profit Elsevier Foundation committed \$1m a year, for 3 years, to programmes

encouraging diversity in science, technology and medicine and promoting science research in developing countries.^[24]

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 (with more than 5,000 articles) charge subscription prices as high as £9,634, far above average,^[25] and many British universities pay more than a million pounds to Elsevier annually.^[26] 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".^[27] Similar guidelines and criticism of Elsevier's pricing policies have been passed by the University of California, Harvard University, and Duke University.^[28] 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.^[29] In December 2016, Nature Publishing Group reported that academics in Germany, Peru and Taiwan are to lose access to Elsevier journals as negotiations had broken down with the publisher.^[30] A complaint about Elsevier/RELX was made to the Competition and Markets Authority in December 2016 by three UK based Academics.^[31]

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.^[32] The personnel created a new journal, *Theory and Practice of Logic Programming*, with Cambridge University Press at a much lower price,^[32] 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.^[33]

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,^[34] at the suggestion of Journal of Algorithms founder Donald Knuth.^[35] The Journal of Algorithms continued under Elsevier with a new editorial board until October 2009, when it was discontinued.^[36]

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).^{[37][38]}

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.^[39] This board then launched the new *Journal of Topology* at a far lower price, under the auspices of the London Mathematical Society.^[40] After this mass resignation, *Topology* remained in circulation under a new editorial board until 2009, when the last issue was published.^{[41][42]}

The French École Normale Supérieure has stopped having Elsevier publish the journal *Annales Scientifiques de l'École Normale Supérieure*^[43] (as of 2008).^[44]

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.^[45]

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.^[46]

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*.^[47]

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.^{[48][49][50]}

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.^{[51][52]}

After Elsevier acquired the repository SSRN in May 2016 academics started complaining that some of their work has been removed without notice. The action was explained as a technical error.^[53]

Lobbying efforts against open access

Elsevier have been known to be involved in lobbying against open access^[54]. These have included the likes of:-

- The Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPPA)^{[55][56]}
- The Research Works Act^{[57][58][59][60][61][62][63]}
- PRISM.^{[64][65][66]} In the case of PRISM, the Association of American Publishers hired Eric Dezenhall, "The Pit Bull Of Public Relations"^[67]
- Horizon 2020^{[68][69][70][71]}
- Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)^{[72][73][74]}

Chaos, Solitons & Fractals

There was speculation^[75] 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.^[76] The controversy was covered extensively in blogs.^{[77][78]} The publisher announced in January 2009 that El Naschie had retired as editor-in-chief.^[79] As of November 2011 the co-Editors-in-Chief of the journal were Maurice Courbage and Paolo Grigolini.^[80] 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.^[81] 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.^[82] 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".^[83]

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.^{[84][85][86][87]} 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.^[88] 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."^[89] *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.*).^[90] Excerpta Medica was a "strategic medical communications agency" run by Elsevier, according to the imprint's web page.^[91] In October 2010, Excerpta Medica was acquired by Adelphi Worldwide.^[92]

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.^[93]

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?*^[94] 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.^[95] 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.^[96]

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.^[97] 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.^[98] Elsevier are one of the most frequent publishers who have been found to be selling open access content.^{[99][100][101]} The resource Paywall Watch "is a website dedicated to monitoring and documenting notable problems at academic publishers" which documents such cases.^{[102][103][104]}

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.^{[105][106]} The data were collected via parsing of downloaded PDF and HTML files,^[107] although Elsevier claimed that the method used was scraping.^[108]

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.^{[109][110]} A group of researchers, writers, and artists wrote an open letter in support of Sci-Hub and LibGen.^[111]

Wikipedia

In 2015, Elsevier announced a service called 'ScienceDirect Wiki Editor' which offered 45 "top Wikipedia editors free access" to their otherwise paywalled ScienceDirect platform.^[112] This was met with a mixed response.^{[113][114][115]}

In 2017, Elsevier then launched a rival service to Wikipedia titled 'ScienceDirect Topics' with a science definitions service "that provides encyclopedia-style entries on key scientific topics".^{[116][117][118]}

Boycotts

"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.^[119] Librarians continued to discuss the implications of the pricing schemes, many feeling pressured into buying the Elsevier packages without other options.^[120]

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.^{[121][122][123]}

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,^{[121][122]} growing to over 13,000 by January 2013.^[124]

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.^[121] The company also claimed that its profit margins are "simply a consequence of the firm's efficient operation".^[123]

On 27 February 2012, Elsevier issued a statement on its website that declared that it has withdrawn support from the Research Works Act.^[125] 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.^[126]

Germany

Germany's DEAL project which includes over 60 major research institutions, including Göttingen University, has announced that all of its members are cancelling their contracts with Elsevier, effective January 1, 2017. The boycott is in response to Elsevier's refusal to adopt "transparent business models" to "make publications more openly accessible".^{[127][128][129][130][131][132][133]} Horst Hippler, spokesperson for the DEAL consortium states that "taxpayers have a right to read what they are paying for" and that "publishers must understand that the route to open-access publishing at an affordable price is irreversible".^[129] In July 2017, another 13 institutions announced that they would also be cancelling their subscriptions to Elsevier journals.^[134] As of August 2017, at least 185 German institutions have now cancelled their contracts with Elsevier.^[135]

Netherlands

In 2015 a consortium of all of Netherland's 14 universities threatened to boycott Elsevier if it could not agree that articles by Dutch authors would be made open access and settled with the compromise of 30% of its Dutch papers becoming open access by 2018. Gerard Meijer, president of Radboud University in Nijmegen and lead negotiator on the Dutch side notes that "it's not the 100% that I hoped for".^{[129][136][137][138]}

Taiwan

In Taiwan more than 75% of universities, including the region's top 11 institutions, have joined a collective boycott against Elsevier. On 7 December 2016, the Taiwanese consortium, CONCERT, which represents more than 140 institutions, announced it would not renew its contract with Elsevier.^{[129][139][140][141]}

Finland

In 2015 Finnish research organizations paid a total of 27 million euros in subscription fees. Over one third of the total costs went to the Elsevier. The information was revealed after successful curt appeal following a denied request on the subscription fees, due to confidentiality clauses in contracts with the publishers. ^[142] Establishing of this fact lead to creation of tiedonhinta.fi (<http://tiedonhinta.fi>) petition demanding more

reasonable pricing and open access to content signed by more than 2 800 members of the research community.^[143] While deals with other publishers have been made, this was not the case for Elsevier, leading to the [nodealnoreview.org](http://www.nodealnoreview.org) (<http://www.nodealnoreview.org/>) boycott of the publisher signed more than 600 times.^[144]

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](#)
- [CMP](#)
- [Cell Press](#)
- [Churchill Livingstone](#)
- [Digital Press](#)
- [Elsevier](#)
- [Gulf Professional Publishing](#)
- [GW Medical Publishing](#)
- [Hanley & Belfus](#)
- [Masson](#)
- [Medicine Publishing](#)
- [Morgan Kaufmann Publishers](#)
- [Mosby](#)
- [Newnes](#)
- [North-Holland Publishing Company](#)
- [Pergamon Press](#)
- [Pergamon Flexible Learning](#)
- [Saunders](#)
- [Syngress](#)
- [Urban & Fischer](#)
- [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](#), a website providing free access to otherwise paywalled academic papers on a massive scale that is involved in a legal case with Elsevier

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- Campaign success: Reed Elsevier sells international arms fairs (<http://www.caat.org.uk/issues/arms-fairs/reed-elsevier/>)
- Mary H. Munroe (2004). "Reed Elsevier Timeline" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20141020153836/http://www.ulib.niu.edu/publishers/Holtzbrinck.htm>). *The Academic Publishing Industry: A Story of Merger and Acquisition*. Archived from the original (<http://www.ulib.niu.edu/publishers/index.htm>) on 20 October 2014 – via Northern Illinois University.

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