

Ethics of Research Publication

Over the last few weeks we've looked at a number of different issues concerning how research goes through the publication process, both in terms of commercially published academic journals and how articles published in such journals can be made open access.

Within many research institutions, the mantra of 'publish or perish!' still holds true. For an academic, getting research into publication, can often be a condition of tenure; additionally, which journal you are seen to be published in because of its impact factor also matters. As often as not, when an academic and/or practitioner does achieve publication in a commercially published peer reviewed journal, it becomes an opportunity for celebration; particularly if your article is one that gets cited on a regular basis. What this can lead to though is an extremely competitive process, where you need to be seen to be published in the right journals.

There can be a variety of viewpoints to the scenario above. Some would say 'what's wrong with this'? Others might take the view that it's a system that has worked well for years – why change it?

However, at international and national level, while not underestimating the difficulties involved in change, particularly given the leverage of commercial academic publishers and the dominant role which they have had and seek to continue to have in the research publication process, research institutions are starting to question the ethics of the existing research publication process. Essentially, the questions being asked are why was the research undertaken in the first place and how do we remove cost barriers and peer pressures to sharing and gaining access to the results of that research, which can impact both thinking and practice?

These are the considerations which are leading towards the development of an Open Agenda, which includes Open Science, Open Access, Open Research and more; all of which are aimed at making research openly and immediately available with the added possibility of sharing and collaboration, with no diminishment of the quality assurance process, which research receives if it goes through the commercial publication route at moment – and consequently a challenge for all of us who undertake research in any form – not 'if' but 'how' do we make it happen.

Next week; Open Access Journals and Quality Review