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Free Information, Not Free Labor

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ABSTRACT

The increased institutional demand for all faculty to publish scholarly work, even for faculty in non-research institutions, has created a near perfect two-sided market effect for commercial entities to profit from the labor of already overburdened academics while offering little-to-no compensation to these individuals or their institutions. As significant, institutional-level pushback against the cost of access to scholarly materials has begun to coalesce, it seems prudent if not pressing to revisit once more the longstanding debates over labor, cost, and access in scholarly publishing and to argue for more ethical, equitable, and democratizing models. To that end, this essay 1) argues for the notion that all for-profit commercial academic publishing and distribution is predatory and perpetuates an unethical labor model in which commercial entities profit from free labor in the academy and 2) asks how the open source movement offers a model for more ethical, non-profit publishing practices. It concludes that making newly published work freely available in open repositories, whether run by individual or groups of colleges or universities, should function as only a first step towards rethinking the forms of journal article and book and the means by which they are produced.

Keywords: academic labor, academic publishing, commercial publishing, open access, open source, scholarly communication

It is no secret that academia has problems with exploited labor. By 2011, for example, tenured or tenure-track faculty represented only approximately a quarter of college instructors, down from around 45 percent in 1975 (Trends, 2013); and adjuncts both make up the majority of instructional staff and continue to be its most rapidly increasing segment, all at a median remuneration per course, as of a few years ago, of $2,700 (Birmingham, 2017), leading to some living out of their cars or on food stamps (Birmingham, 2017; Flannery, 2017; Gee, 2017). McKenna (2015) discussed the negative effects of adjunct exploitation on students and Wessler (2015) its costs to taxpayers. In addition, the increased institutional demand for all faculty to publish scholarly work, even for faculty in non-research institutions, has created a near perfect two-sided market effect for commercial entities to profit from the labor of already overburdened

academics while offering little-to-no compensation to these individuals or their institutions. While there has been increased scrutiny of predatory journals, these venues, as *The New York Times'* Kolata (2017) put it, "will publish almost anything, for fees that can range into the hundreds of dollars per paper."

Mainstream academic publishers have been able to appeal to academics to write scholarly journal articles gratis, and edit these journals for free, while simultaneously selling these publications back to the colleges and universities through library subscriptions. As the editors of Geoforum (2019) summarized, in an editorial concerning their own place in the publishing landscape and the role of commercial publisher Elsevier in that place, "In a commercial publishing model, private publishers own the means of production while authors, editors, reviewers and other support staff provide the labour entailed in journal publication" (p. 1). For this labor, most are paid either nothing or "modest stipends far below what would be the minimum wage in their home countries" (p. 1) and the "surplus value produced by all this labour is then captured by commercial publishers" (p. 1-2). At a moment when resistance to paying for access to scholarship is increasingly being enacted, the movement in Europe to eliminate paywalls for scientific research (Else, 2018), France's refusal to renew its library subscriptions with Springer, Sweden and Germany's impasse with Elsevier (Kwon, 2018), and the University of California system's cancelation of its subscription contract with the same company (McKenzie, 2019), we may do well to interrogate the sector of for-profit commercial academic publishing not only as a budgetary issue but also as an issue of ethical labor practices in higher education. It is therefore worth considering not only that predatory journals may be representative of a related constellation of ethical issues in academic labor, but also that the academy should recognize *all* for-profit commercial academic publishing as predatory.

According to Kolata (2017), 10,000 predatory journals are currently in operation, an explosive growth that likely stems from an oversaturated academic labor market where regular academic publishing is expected (Chou & Chan, 2017), often beginning at the graduate student level. In some disciplines, Ph.D. programs produce more graduates, than the market will bear. In the United States, for example, fewer than half of graduates with a Ph.D. in English secured tenure-track employment between 1980 and 2015 (Colander & Zhuo, 2015, p. 139). Colander and Zhuo concluded that, with the expansion of some larger Ph.D. programs, the United States requires only about 25 percent of existing graduate English programs (p. 149). Sauermann and Roach (2012) reached a similar conclusion about the sciences, stating that their the supply of science PhDs who are interested in faculty research positions markedly exceeds the available positions.

When it exists, academic labor surplus brings with it a concomitant increase in demands for quantifiable scholarly achievement in hiring, retention, promotion, and awards such as grants (Davies & Felappi, 2017; Sullivan, 2014). Waaijer, Teelken, Wouters, and van der Weijden (2018), in discussing scientific disciplines, contended that such pressures create a contrived competitive environment. These pressures help to create the conditions in which predatory journals can exist and thrive. In fact, Kolata (2017) argued "predatory" is something of a misnomer as the relationship between these journals and the academics who publish in them resembles less predator and prey than a "new and ugly symbiosis." Likewise, Beall's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers, which aggregates links to "Potential predatory scholarly open access publishers" (Beall's List, 2018), represents another aspect of the response to the ever-shifting manifestations of Kolata's "new and ugly symbiosis."

For example, in 2017, Queensborough Community College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY), found itself at the center of some controversy when it was reported that at least a dozen members of the instructional staff had published work in predatory journals. According to complaints, not only did these potentially questionable publications count positively within the reappointment and promotion process, but city and federal public funds were allegedly used for publishing costs in at least some cases (Kolata, 2017). This discovery elicited an immediate response from the University that included an advisory memo written by Mark E. Hauber, CUNY's University Vice Provost for Research, that provided a checklist for avoiding predatory publishers and "journals of ill repute." In doing so, Hauber (2017) acknowledged a "lack of frank discussion about this topic nationally or locally" as a contributing factor and called for a more open dialogue at all levels of the university (p. 1). As significant, institutional-level pushback against the cost of access to scholarly materials has begun to coalesce, it seems prudent if not pressing to revisit once more the longstanding debates over labor, cost, and access in scholarly publishing and to argue for more ethical, equitable, and democratizing models.

This essay is structured by two intersecting ideas:

(1) First, it proposes that all for-profit commercial academic publishing and distribution is predatory and perpetuates an unethical labor model in which commercial entities profit from free labor in the academy.

(2) Subsequently, it asks how the open-source movement might offer a model for more ethical, non-profit publishing practices.

The Problematic Persistence of For-Profit Publishing and Distribution

We should ask, then, whether the benefits to academics, students, and the public justify the continuation of for-profit commercial academic publishing and distribution in the age of audit culture? Audit culture—upon which the collection *Audit cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics, and the academy,* edited by Strathern (2000), represents a significant early body of work—involves applying quantitative measures of the type originally found in the corporate world to teaching and research in order to guarantee so-called accountability.
The relationship among these entities and the increasing burden on instructional staff of indirectly compensated labor, including publishing expectations, might be less objectionable were it not, perhaps most importantly, for issues of access. Profiting from providing access to scholarly material also means indirectly profiting from the labor of the faculty and staff who wrote, peer reviewed, and edited those materials, and who are indirectly compensated (and, some would argue, at unsustainable levels relative to increasing expectations) for that time and labor as part of their salary and through mechanisms such as release time. If the best position for workers is to control the means of production, then, in the academy as a whole, scholars are not yet in the best position, particularly when it comes to distribution (Lehner & Finley, 2016).

While many or even all the steps of creating a journal, for example, may be under the control of the editors, reviewers, and contributors, most of the scholarly work is still disseminated through profit-driven databases. Unsurprisingly, for-profit commercial publishers hope to expand the types of academic output to which they control access. Esposito (2018) identified the plans of large publishers to acquire textbook companies and sell "inclusive access" to textbooks as "a perfect set of conditions for consolidation, market dominance, and eventual creeping price increases." Distribution of scholarly work through paid subscriptions also creates situations such as those in which faculty, staff, and students in large university systems can have

electronic access only to materials for which their own particular colleges within the system pay. Again, these are restrictions that create profit mechanisms around material that was created by free labor.

Greater expansion and acceptance of electronic publication means that the situation within academic publishing has improved, but for-profit models, and the labor exploitation that they arguably involve, have hardly disappeared. With the definition of open access (OA) pointed to by Fitzpatrick (2012) as the lack of any constraint on access, reproduction, and distribution other than the ability to access the internet, the need to allow authors to maintain the integrity of their scholarship, and the need to properly acknowledge and cite scholars' work (p. 349-350). She specified, "'Open access means free access, not just in the sense of 'gratis'--work made available without charge--but also in the sense of 'libre'--work that, subject to appropriate scholarly standards of citation, is free to be built upon" (p. 350). Amiran (2010) usefully summarized some of the continuing obstacles to even more widespread adoption of open-access models, writing that:

> two self-sustaining mechanisms in journal publishing, legitimation and copyright, perpetuate the OA impasse. ... Neither is necessary to publishing, except to assure universities that they spend well. They are pragmatic rather than principled mechanisms that allow journals to get money from presses and for presses to get money from universities. … [W]e want someone else to guarantee our actions, to tell us that our own work is legitimate, even if that someone else is actually ourselves. So we can say that the presses are pragmatic bodies made to reflect our own authority, and that they enforce an obsolete copyright to do so. (p. 257)

Anderson (2018), writing close to a decade after Amiran, observed that the death of the subscription model believed to be approaching twenty years ago never materialized. He pointed out that OA "continues to be a relatively minor part of the scholarly publishing economy" and cites that it is difficult to make OA business models work and the way in which Gold OA, which signifies publications available directly from the publisher, has engendered "conformity rather than disruption, both in the pricing of services but also by further entrenching the largest publishers, who are better positions to execute on its underlying economies of scale." Drawing connections to developments in Silicon Valley and social media, he further makes the case that the subscription model is poised to make an aggressive return.

Davis (2011), focusing on scientific journals, made an interesting argument for journals replacing unpaid faculty editors with paid professional editors, whom he says that he has found to exhibit less bias and more fairness because they have no career stake in promoting certain theories and, without teaching and service duties, can actually spend their time keeping up with the scholarly literature. This intriguing recommendation would do much to disrupt the current paradigm and remove some of the labor burden from faculty, but it would still require significant funding, which doesn't seem a likely path to abolishing pay-to-access models without also rethinking how funding for scholarly publications works. Amiran suggested one such way: increasing university support of in-house journals, arguing that "if universities were to do more to support the journals that their own faculty produce, then a decentralized model of legitimation and financing could work for the academy at large" and that the "increase in expenses would be more than offset by the university's larger savings in subscriptions to journals, which would all now be open access" (p. 257-258). Journals then "would be paid for by someone else, i.e., the

other universities that produce them. Such a system would also help smaller schools that may not have the resources to produce journals" (p. 258). How likely a shift like this is to occur in a time of public disinvestment in higher education is difficult to say, but that should not dissuade us from exploring and advocating for alternative modes less influenced by corporate and capitalist cultures.

Indeed, the urgency for such exploration may, happily, be increased by an announcement in September 2018 by 11 research-funding agencies based in Europe that will require, beginning in 2020, all papers resulting from research that they have funded available for free immediately, with "a liberal publishing license that would allow anyone else to download, translate or otherwise reuse the work" (Else, 2018). This declaration, based in the position that "no science should be locked behind paywalls," comes from stakeholders that, as a group, award $8.8 billion in funding each year, and their decision may affect 85% of journals in the fields in which these agencies are involved (Else, 2018). The new requirement thus holds the potential for significant influence in shifting how the dissemination of academic work occurs, at least in the sciences.

In early spring 2018, a consortium representing over 250 research organizations and universities in France announced that it would not renew its subscriptions to Springer's more than 2,000 journals due to an inability to resolve fee negotiations (Kwon, 2018). In 2018, hundreds of German and Swedish institutions declined to sign an agreement with Elsevier without fundamental changes to how it charges for publication of and access to research (McKenzie, 2019). Similarly, in spring 2019, the University of California system, which accounts for almost 10 percent of U.S. output in academic publishing, canceled its subscription contract with Elsevier due to an inability to come to an agreement on costs and fees (McKenzie, 2019). Such disputes, no matter their resolution, must be a worrying sign for for-profit publishers

Springer Nature itself announced in March 2019 a partnership with ResearchGate to make articles published in 23 of their journals since November 2017 freely available through the authors' ResearchGate profiles (Madisch & Inchcoombe, 2019). However, OA publishing is not the silver bullet which many believe it to be. Anderson (2016) critiqued the related assumptions that digital is more inexpensive than print and that technology is cheap. While OA is free for writers and readers, there are still costs, and still a question of how to meet them. As Fitzpatrick (2012) urged, "If not-for-profit scholarly publishing is to survive, we must focus on developing a new kind of agility, one that takes advantage of our freedom from the profit imperative and focuses on relatively low-cost modes of innovation" (p. 352).

One such idea, connected to longstanding, but slow-to-be-embraced, recommendations for greater support for multimedia projects, might be to rethink "the journal" entirely. Jackson (2014) noted the case of an edited collection that became "a platform allowing authors to comment on each other's work prior to publication" and the release of another collection "as an OA, openly reviewable manuscript" on which "authors and community readers [were] all working collaboratively on review" (p. 544). DoBell (2018) concisely weighed the advantages and disadvantages of repositories, as well as the possibility of a "guild" rather than a peer review model (p. 153). What if, for instance, this type of platform was extended to create something like open repositories, institutional or otherwise, with "articles" that don't have to be "finished" can function as sites of scholarly conversation and continue to evolve? Why not borrow from digital projects and more widely apply concepts the of a "continuum of work" without a "single publication moment" (Jackson, p. 544)?

Guldi (2013), who advocates making scholarship "more deeply integrated with the flow of information on Web 2.0," makes a similar recommendation (p. 19). Among her other

suggestions—such as collective, peer-generated tagging and filtering; a movement beyond the "traditional canon of essays, editorials, and books review" to include written work outside of these categories, as well as audio, video, and curated images; an abandonment exclusivity in publication; and the possibility of having a work "usefully reviewed and edited by hundreds of individuals—she notes that current technology makes it possible to publish a work as "'officially under review'" and revise it over, say, over a year (p. 23). Guldi correctly positioned this model as potentially useful not only for the individual author(s) but also for the discipline as a whole. In thinking through these recommendations, it will be useful next to consider the open-source movement in the technology sector as providing a complimentary model for the free circulation of information and in contradistinction to arguments against OA.

Free Information, Not Free Labor: The Need for Open Access in Scholarly Publishing

Information wants to be free
Stewart Brand, Hackers Conference, 1984

In the second portion of this essay, it is important to frame the need for all scholarship to be OA within the context both of current practices in institutions of higher education and the arguments of subset of scholarly communications researchers, exemplified by Bealls (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015). While knowledge production has long been seen as a centralized process, counternarratives have emerged (Duh, Duh, Droftina, Kos, Duh, Korošak, & Korošak, 2018); and the open-source movement can provide both an analog and a model for the type of diffuse creation and distribution of scholarship advocated by Jackson (2014) and Guldi (2013).

The Exemplar of the Open-Source Movement

Various academic labor issues arguably arise from the same set of underlying systemic problems, pressures, and inequalities of increasing professional requirements without corresponding increases in allotted time and resources, rendered sustainable in some disciplines by an oversaturated labor market. Townsend and Rosser (2007), for instance, found that, in the aggregate, workload for full-time faculty in the United States, including research requirements for promotion and tenure, significantly increased between 1993 and 2004 (p. 10, 12). Dobele and Rundle-Theile (2018), citing Houston, Meyer, and Paewai (2006), Santoro and Snead (2012), and Soutar, Wilkinson, and Young (2015), identified the same trend on an international scale, noting that universities worldwide have changed their business models to accommodate decreased government funding, greater competition, more pressure from students, and demands for more rigorous standards of accountability and workload performance (p. 410-411). Bergstron (2001) pointed to the result that commercial academic publishers greatly profit from the professoriate because publishers have aligned their profit centers with scholarly demands of the university. Given these conditions, we can question whether what might legitimately be termed exploitative practices extend beyond the realm of predatory academic publishing and signal the need for a full shift to OA academic publication. That is, should information be free? In 1984, while engaged in an on-stage conversation with Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, Stewart Brand articulated the position from which an essential idea of Cypherpunk philosophy, 'Information wants to be free,' was born. Nearly 40 years after Brand's (1984) statement, the sentiment reflected in his remark succinctly frames one of the central discussions in scholarly publishing.

Unfortunately, in the academy, much scholarly information has been far from free, residing behind paywalls or available only via expensive library subscription, practices that rely on free academic labor and the products of that labor to generate profit for commercial academic publishing companies. For many academics and Cypherpunks alike, the notion of academics sharing their research, and open-source tools, freely seems a clearly worthy objective.

Brand's (1984) original exchange is longer, noting both nuance and degrees of complexity in the Cypherpunk ideology and debates around monetizing scholarly publishing:

> On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So, you have these two fighting against each other. (Brand, 1984)

This tension, which has been expressed in various contexts and iterations, including by Brand (2009) himself, framed the essential Cypherpunk position on the freedom of information. Noting the dialectical nature of information, Brand (1984) expertly described the complicated positionality that information inhabits. More precisely, Brand understood the inherent power of information and its potential: 1) as a commodity for which people would willingly pay a premium; and 2) as a possibly liberatory tool, affording people required insights needed to garner greater freedoms. From an economic standpoint, Brand acknowledged how information could be possibly be sold and redeployed, potentially stripped of intentionality and the artistic rigor that inspired the original creation. The importance of the mission, of both open-source publishing tools and open-access publications as they are vying to eliminate paywalls, is to redefine how knowledge is created, reviewed, and disseminated. In an ethical model of academic labor, if the labor is free, then the product should be free and freely accessible.

Brand's (1987) statement on information, for many academics and public intellectuals, has been considered sufficiently complex that it has been used as a general heuristic to understand the Cypherpunk philosophy. Yet if we stop at Brand's pronouncements on information, we may overlook the deeper, richer, and fully open-source utilitarian structure that Hughes (1993) proposed in the Cyberpunk Manifesto. Hughes maintained that not only does information want to be free, but moreover academic tools should and do want to be free too. Although academic publishing, coding, information, and inventions are very rarely spoken about as being similar intellectual or ontological phenomena (ontological referring to phenomena as they exist in reality), they tend to afford the same type of advancements, and Hughes's comments on coding can help us to think of the works as more traditionally considered in discussions about open-access publication:

> Cypherpunks write code. We know that someone has to write software to defend privacy, and since we can't get privacy unless we all do, we're going to write it. We publish our code so that our fellow Cypherpunks may practice and play with it. Our code is free for all to use, worldwide. We don't much care if you don't approve of the software we write. We know that software can't be destroyed and that a widely dispersed system can't be shut down. (Hughes 1993, p. 1)

Hughes was definitive in his promulgation of using, creating, and defending open-source tools to advance society. Granted, his above claim is often used for privacy arguments, yet the sentiment

is plain: open-source tools are freely available for everyone and can be used in any way that the coder sees fit. By substituting the word publishing for the word software, the idea is saliently clear: ideas should be freely available, and decentralization militates against suppression. Wagner (2003), citing both Brand (1984) and the spirit of Hughes (1993), extended the argument by detailing that all information, including inventions, cannot be controlled and rightfully belong in the public domain because of the “intangible nature of information” (p. 995). Brand and Hughes, both Cypherpunks, and Wagner, a legal scholar, occupy different positions in social space, yet all three agree on the fundamental nature of academic inquiry and scientific research, and the importance of disseminating this information broadly and freely, for the benefit of humanity rather than for commercial profit. In fact, the notion of beneficence is a fundamental idea that is shared as the underpinning frameworks of basic scientific research, human subject research (National Commission, 1979), academic inquiry, and technological progress. Based on the underpinning of Wagner’s work, any restraint on information, including patents or proprietary knowledge, seems to contradict the spirit of academic inquiry and the uses of its products for societal benefit. Linux founder, Linus Torvals (2019) made a similar point when he said in an interview, “I often compare open source to science. To where science took this whole notion of developing ideas in the open and improving on other people’s ideas and making it into what science is today and the incredible advances that we have had” (Young, 2019). As his statement suggests, at the heart of open source is innovative change for the benefit of the world. Without Torvals’s open-source Linux kernel discoveries, much of the technological advancement of the last twenty-five years could have been lost if he had simply protected his ideas through a patent or had sold the ideas on the open market.

While it may not be entirely new to note such issues in terms of publishers—Amiran (2010) called the OA debate twenty years old nearly ten years ago (pp. 252-253). Past discussions and calls for change have not so far revolutionized either the expectations or mechanisms of scholarly publishing. OA publishing may indeed pose a foundational threat to the long-standing business frameworks of for-profit academic publishers, and scholarly indexing platforms such as Google Scholar, directories such as the Directory of OA Journals (https://doaj.org/) and large, OA online repositories such as CUNY Academic Works (https://academicworks.cuny.edu/) have already taken steps to disrupt for-profit distribution models. However, for-profit publishers continue to hold a great deal of power and, thus, to deserve continued robust debate. Google Scholar, for instance, has expanded its footprint and usefulness to index and include OA publications, but the results still include many links to subscription databases. The commercial publishers of these databases can charge journals for inclusion and then charge institutions for access, profiting at multiple points from labor for which the creators of their content are most often only indirectly remunerated. As noted, locking scholarship behind paywalls creates a variation of artificial scarcity which comprises large portions of library budgets. These increased institutional costs are often passed on to students. Additionally, for-profit academic publishers resist the OA argument by claiming that scholarly products are property, thereby affording a legal argument for establishing paywalls and creating a way to extract value from what are essentially freely created products by charging academic libraries lucrative subscriptions.

Considering Beall’s Work: Why Open-Access Publishing Should be the Only Standard

In light of the discussion above, the salient point may have already been made. That is, the Cypherpunks and the Open Software movement understood that freely sharing scientific innovations held the potential to technologically revolutionize the world. And, when examining the base technological infrastructure that supports the Internet and the developers' motivations for freely writing and sharing the code required for such technological innovation (Hertel, Niedner, & Herrmann, 2003), the undergirding philosophy and supportive practices are so greatly at odds with for-profit commercial publishing frameworks that it is not altogether clear where to begin to delineate the differences (Lehner & Finley, 2016). Suffice it to say that in no small way, the for-profit commercial publishing tends to obfuscate and even undermine the free sharing of scholarship by centralizing the knowledge dissemination process.

In order to further our proposition that all for-profit commercial academic publishing is predatory and that the spirit of the open-software movement sets a useful example of the ethos of freely sharing knowledge and ensuring its open dissemination, the arguments aligned against openly publishing scholarly information, in particular as formulated in Beall's (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) scholarly work, which is front and center in the scholarly communication arguments against OA. Prior to this discussion, it should be noted that after a number of legal threats, Beall and the University of Colorado removed all content from the scholarly blog known as Beall's list. Considering that Bealls was no longer running Beall's list as early January, 2016 (Silver, 2017), the archived list that bears his name must be understood as separate from his published work since that time.

Beall's (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) work has been a main rallying point, and often one of the few cited academic sources against open-access publishing. In following his academic work, and the subsequent legal suits resulting from the former, Beall's research seemingly subsumes a very complex set of knowledges at the intersection of the open-access movement and scholarly publishing ethics. Yet upon a fuller examination, Beall's work contributes less than anticipated to the discussion of open-access scholarly literature or open-source tools and does little to address the problems of monetizing scholarship. Having examined the example of decentralized open-source culture above, the authors consider the spirit of open source against Beall's advocacy of an open-access gold standard controlled by established authorities. Stated curtly, Beall's research does not sufficiently counteract the way in which academic publishing titans curate and profit from free academic labor and the academy's need for vetted scholarly research.

Academic publishing is admittedly an enormously complex topic. Even individual publishers may occupy a complicated position. For instance, many storied academic publishers, such as Elsevier, Sage, and Springer all have their own versions of 'pay for play' publishing arms, sometimes alongside OA arms, complicating the straightforward narrative that there are good and bad commercial publishers. Considering the manifold layers to the 'pay for play' publishing narrative, Beall (2013) has researched and written on the topic extensively. Yet, to date, Beall's (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) work has not satisfactorily addressed issues of scholarship as free labor generating profit for commercial entities. For example, Beall's (2013) claim that "competition for author fees among fraudulent publishers is a serious threat to the future of science communication" (p. 2) is similarly complicated by the fact that both well-regarded and predatory publishers can charge exorbitant publishing fees.

Responding to Beall's Rejections of Open Access

At the center of Beall's (2012; 2013; 2014; 2015) work, in essence is a view of scholarly communication as needing to be curated by a reputable source in order to guarantee quality scholarship. Beall (2015) criticized "gold standard" OA, which requires a publication fee, as open to abuse and thus to reducing the quality of scholarship. Beall (2013) discussed how science communication and the process of scholarly publishing was less corrupted during other eras:

> This was one of the great benefits of the traditional scholarly publishing system – it had no monetary component in the relationship between publishers and their authors. Adding the monetary component has created the problem of predatory publishers and the problem of financing author fees.

In this claim, and in the context of the broader article, Beall (2013) is referring to a different era when, seemingly, neither the researchers nor the scholarly publishing companies were incentivized by money. Yet it is not altogether clear when this age existed, since researchers have always desired a wide dissemination of their work and for-profit academic publishers, incentivized by profit, have provided this route. Olivarez, Bales, and Sare (2018) noted, given that respected journals may also charge publication fees, "even traditional model journals might classify as predatory." Other prominent academics have also taken issue with Beall's work, including Bivens-Tatum (2014), Olijhoek, Bjørnshauge, and Mitchell (2015), and CUNY's Berger and Cirasella (2015), to name only a few. Esposito (2013) noted that Beall's (2013) research tended to overlook the complexities of scholarly communication and was "(really an assault) of Gold OA and those who advocate it," an attack that had "crossed the line" (p. 1).

Aside from Beall's (2015) arguments against 'gold standard' open-access journals, which charge a fee for publication and thus are open to abuse, he asserts that 'green' OA, or institutional repositories eliminate the added value, "such as copyediting and long-term digital preservation," offered by traditional publishers, and argues that honest "platinum" open-access, which does not charge fees is too overrun with predatory journals to be a viable way forward. Beall (2014, 2015, 2018) has pointed out that many academics publishing their scholarship openly may not have had their work as fully peer reviewed as under mainstream publishers. Stated more plainly, at the center of at least one version of Beall's (2013) argument is the contention is that OA should be eschewed primarily because it is an anti-subscription model:

> The open access movement isn't really about open access. Instead, it is about collectivizing production and denying the freedom of the press from those who prefer the subscription model of scholarly publishing. It is an anti-corporatist, oppressive and negative movement, one that uses young researchers and researchers from developing countries as pawns to artificially force the make-believe gold and green open access models to work. The movement relies on unnatural mandates that take free choice away from individual researchers, mandates set and enforced by an onerous cadre of Soros-funded European autocrats. The open access movement is a failed social movement and a false messiah, but its promoters refuse to admit this. (Bealls, 2013, p. 89)

In Beall's (2013) argument above, and as critiqued by Esposito (2013) in the Scholarly Kitchen, the sentiment seems to reflect that the open-access movement is an exploitative, oppressive model pressuring academics to opt out of the subscription model of scholarly curation. As

Esposito noted, elements such as “the charge of collectivization, especially in a country that is only beginning to awaken from the nightmare of the Cold War, is a naked appeal to emotion, and not the best of emotions.” Moreover, if the open-access movement is not “anti-corporatist,” it should be. Is it collectivizing? Again, it should be (imagine if there were an academic writers’ union). The free choice that Beall cites here, which in many cases is a choice to allow for-profit academic publishers to profit from freely provided labor, privileges academics at wealthier institutions and holds little benefit for entities other than those same publishers.

Beall’s (2013) work does not seem to imagine possibilities beyond his three categories of gold, platinum, and green. These possibilities might take forms outside of the longstanding forms of journal article and book, such as the fluid, collaborative, crowd-sourced scholarship discussed by Jackson (2014) and Guldi (2013). Seen in the context of new knowledge creation, new methods, and new channels for dissemination, even if considered less prestigious than existing mainstream publishing, these possibilities are essential for the development of any academic specialty and more specifically for the growth of scholarly communication therein.

Conclusion

We have argued for the problematic status of for-profit commercial academic publishing and distribution. Scholarship is indirectly compensated in academia and is part of a most often heavy workload, making commercial profit from publishing research a form of inequity. OA publishing removes this element of profit, but, as discussed, it has not made as much progress as one might hope in eliminating for-profit academic publishing, as commercial academic publishers continue to wield enormous power. There is some sense, though, that this dynamic may be shifting, with some institutions recently pushing back against commercial publishers’ systems of subscriptions and fees. We have further argued that the open-source movement in the technology sector might be taken as a model for publishing, and scholars such as Beall (2012;2013;2014;2015) who stand against OA fail to see the potential of radically reimagining the creation and dissemination of scholarship.

This essay does not pretend to solve the problems, particularly of what might be considered labor exploitation, inherent in for-profit commercial academic publishing and distribution; rather, it serves as a reminder that we must continue to think about what innovative forms solutions might take. It is important to think of concerns over predatory and for-profit publishing not as separate but as continuous, as aspects of the same set of labor issues. We must keep discussing how we conceptualize and enact the labor of scholarship, how we value, measure, and reward labor in an era of austerity that shows little sign of ending. While audit culture is a facet of a capitalist mindset, and while capitalism has trained us to see cost and exclusivity as measures of value, and while we have found it hard to move decisively beyond that measure of value, we must continue to work towards a future in which scholarship can be truly free, in all senses of the word.

At the very least, all newly published work should be made freely available in open repositories, whether run by individual or groups of colleges or universities. This availability, however, should function as only a first step towards rethinking the forms of journal article and book and the means by which they are produced. Adding, for example, tools for commenting, collaboration, ongoing revision, and tagging to such repositories could fundamentally reshape how we think of and create scholarship, making it more flexible, wide-reaching, and equitable.

Meanwhile, predatory journals are a current focal point for scrutiny. Companies profiting from restricting access to information created in institutions of higher learning while those same institutions go underfunded and instructors underpaid and overburdened is likely the most predatory act of all.

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