

A Personal Statement on the Current State of Academic Publishing

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Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis and other similar profit-seeking corporations are destroying academic publishing. It is time for academic communities to take ownership of our own work and insist on the maintenance of high standards.

Don't get me wrong. I have the utmost appreciation for Lucy Fleet and Ties Nijssen, philosophy editors at Springer; for Anjan Chakravartty and Greg Radick, outgoing editors of sections of *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, published by Elsevier (and for Rachel Ankeny, who has succeeded Greg); for Eric Scerri, the editor of *Foundations of Chemistry*, published by Springer; and for Jenny Rampling, the outgoing editor of *Ambix*, recently taken over by Taylor & Francis. These and numerous other academic editors are integral parts of the academic community that is as important to me as my own family.

But we must not continue to go along with the profit-maximizing and standard-lowering practices of the dominant commercial publishers, which include outrageous pricing, the outsourcing of production to incompetent outfits, and an irresponsible automation of the editorial process.

I am now personally withdrawing my participation from the work of the above-named and other similar companies, aside from seeing through existing obligations. I will not publish books or articles with them. I will not serve as an editor or a reviewer for them. My next two books are contracted with university presses, and I will do similarly with journal articles and book chapters. And I will encourage others to take a similar stance.

I recognize that I am in a luxurious position of feeling able to choose where I publish, since I have already done all the academic ladder-climbing that I ever want to do. But that is all the more reason for me to do something. If even those of us who can act with relative impunity do not act, then who will?

We can do so much better than continue to serve as unappreciated cogs in corporate machines that have little regard for academic standards. I have had wonderful experiences of collaborating with Cambridge and Oxford University Presses in producing high-quality top-tier journals that also give great financial benefits to the academic societies involved (the British Society for the History of Science, and the British Society for the Philosophy of Science, respectively). Joachim Schummer provides a shining example in editing the highly regarded online journal *HYLE* independently; this has only been possible through considerable personal sacrifice on his part, and we ought to be supporting people like him much more strongly.

Once upon a time the profit motive in publishing might have served important academic interests, for example with the House of Elzevier publishing Galileo and Descartes when their home countries were suppressing their works. This is not the case any more. Scholarly esteem will be given where we scholars give it; there is no need to funnel it through the vehicles of greed.