

Journal publishing and author self-archiving: Peaceful Co-Existence and Fruitful Collaboration

SUMMARY: The UK Research Funding Councils (RCUK) have proposed that all RCUK fundees should self-archive on the web, free for all, their own final drafts of journal articles reporting their RCUK-funded research, in order to maximise their usage and impact. ALPSP (a learned publishers' association) now seeks to delay and block the RCUK proposal, auguring that it will ruin journals. All objective evidence from the past decade and a half of self-archiving, however, shows that self-archiving can and does co-exist peacefully with journals while greatly enhancing both author/article and journal impact, to the benefit of both. Journal publishers should not be trying to delay and block self-archiving policy; they should be collaborating with the research community on ways to share its vast benefits.

This is a reply to the public letter by Sally Morris, Executive Director of [ALPSP](#) (Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers) to Professor Ian Diamond, Chair, RCUK (Research Councils UK), concerning the [RCUK proposal](#) to mandate the web [self-archiving](#) of authors' final drafts of all journal articles resulting from RCUK-funded research, making them freely accessible to all researchers worldwide who cannot afford access to the official journal version, in order to maximise the usage and impact of the RCUK-funded research findings.

It is extremely important that the arguments and objective evidence for or against the optimality of research self-archiving policy be [aired and discussed openly](#), as they have been for several years now, all over the world, so that policy decisions are not influenced by one-sided arguments from special interests that can readily be shown to be invalid. Every single one of the points made by the ALPSP below is incorrect – incorrect both from the standpoint of both objective evidence and careful logical analysis. We accordingly provide a point by point rebuttal here, along with a plea for an end to publishers' efforts to block or delay self-archiving policy -- a policy that is undeniably beneficial to research and researchers, as well as to their institutions and the public that funds them. Publishers should collaborate with the research community to share the benefits of maximising research access and impact.

(Please note that this is not the first time the ALPSP's points have been made, and rebutted; but whereas the [rebuttals](#) take very careful, detailed account of the points made by ALPSP, the ALPSP unfortunately just keeps repeating its points without taking any account of the detailed replies. By way of illustration, the [prior ALPSP critique](#) of the RCUK proposal (April 19) was followed on [July 1](#) by a [point-by-point rebuttal](#). The reader who compares the two cannot fail to notice certain recurrent themes that ALPSP keeps ignoring in their present critique. In particular, 3 of the 5 examples that ALPSP cites below as evidence of the negative effects of self-archiving on journals turn out to have nothing at all to do with self-archiving, exactly as pointed out in the earlier rebuttal. The other 2 examples turn out to be positive evidence for the

potential of sharing the benefits through cooperation and collaboration between the research and publishing community, rather than grounds for denying research and researchers those benefits through opposition.)

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***ALPSP response to RCUK's proposed position
statement on access to research outputs***

***ALPSP: Although the mission of our publisher members is to
disseminate and maximise access to research information***

The principle of *maximising access to research information* is indeed the very essence of the issue at hand. The reader of the following statements and counter-statements should accordingly bear this principle in mind while weighing them: Unlike the authors of books or of magazine and newspaper articles, the authors of research journal articles are not writing in order to sell their words, but in order to share their findings, so other researchers can use and build upon them, in order to advance research progress, to the benefit of the public that funded the research.

This usage and application is called *research impact*. Research impact is a measure of research progress and productivity: the influence that the findings have had on the further course of research and its applications; the difference it has made that a given piece of research has been conducted at all, rather than being left unfunded and undone. Research impact is the reason the public funds the research and the reason researchers conduct the research and report the results. Research that makes no impact may as well not have been conducted at all. One of the primary indicators – but by no means the only one – of research impact is the number of resulting pieces of research *by others* that make use of a finding, by *citing* it. Citation counts are accordingly quantitative measures of research impact. (The reader is reminded, at this early point in our critique, that it is impossible for

a piece of research to be read, used, applied and cited by any researcher who cannot access it. *Research access is a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for research impact.*)

Owing to this central importance of impact in the research growth and progress cycle, the authors of research are rewarded not by income from the sales of their texts, like normal authors, but by ‘[impact income](#)’ based on how much their research findings are used, applied, [cited](#) and built upon. Impact is what helps pay the author’s salary, what brings further RCUK grant income, and what brings [RAE](#) (Research Assessment Exercise) income to the author’s institution. And the reason the public pays taxes for the RCUK and RAE to use to fund research in the first place is so that that research can benefit the public – not so that it can generate sales income for publishers. There is nothing wrong with research also generating sales income for publishers. But there is definitely something wrong if publishers try to prevent researchers from maximising the impact of their research, by maximising access to it. For whatever limits research access limits research progress; to repeat: *access is a necessary condition for impact.*

Hence, for researchers and their institutions, the need to ‘maximise access to research information’ is not just a pious promotional slogan: Whatever denies access to their research output is denying the public the research impact and progress it paid for and denying researchers and their institutions the impact income they worked for. Journals provide access to all individuals and institutions that can afford to subscribe to them, and that is fine. But what about all the other would-be users -- those researchers world-wide whose institutions happen to be unable to afford to subscribe to the journal in which a research finding happens to be published? There are [24,000 research journals](#) and most institutions can afford access only to a [small fraction](#) of them. Across [all fields](#) tested so far (including [physics](#), mathematics, biology, economics, business/management, sociology, education, psychology, and philosophy), articles that have been self-archived freely on the web, thereby maximising access, have been shown to have 50%-250+% [greater citation impact](#) than articles that have not been self-archived. Is it reasonable to expect researchers and their institutions and funders to continue to renounce that vast impact potential in an online age that has made this impact-loss no longer necessary? Can asking researchers to keep on losing that impact be seriously described as ‘maximising access to research information’? Now let us see on what grounds researchers are being asked to renounce this impact:

ALPSP: *we find ourselves unable to support RCUK’s proposed position paper on the means of achieving this. We continue to stress all the points we made in our previous response, dated 19 April, and are insufficiently reassured by RCUK’s reply. We are convinced that RCUK’s proposed policy will inevitably lead to the destruction of journals.*

If it were indeed true that the RCUK’s policy will inevitably lead to the destruction of journals, then this contingency would definitely be worthy of further time and thought.

But there is in fact no objective evidence whatsoever in support of this dire prophecy. All [evidence](#)¹ from 15 years of self-archiving (in some fields having reached 100% self-archiving long ago) is exactly the opposite: that self-archiving and journal publication can and do continue to *co-exist peacefully*, with institutions continuing to subscribe to the journals they can afford, and researchers at the institutions that can afford them continuing to use them; the only change is that the author's own self-archived final drafts (as well as earlier pre-refereeing preprints) are now accessible to all those researchers whose institutions could *not* afford the official journal version (as well as to any who may wish to consult the pre-refereeing preprints). In other words, the self-archived author's drafts, pre- and post-refereeing, are *supplements* to the official journal version, not *substitutes* for it.

In the absence of any objective evidence at all to the effect that self-archiving reduces subscriptions, let alone destroys journals, and in the face of 15 years' worth of evidence to the contrary, ALPSP simply amplifies the rhetoric, elevating pure speculation to a putative basis for continuing to delay and oppose a policy that is already long overdue and a practice that has already been amply demonstrated to deliver something of immense benefit to research, researchers, their institutions and funders: dramatically enhanced impact. All this, ALPSP recommends, is to be put on hold because some publishers have the 'conviction' that self-archiving will destroy journals.

ALPSP: A policy of mandated self-archiving of research articles in freely accessible repositories, when combined with the ready retrievability of those articles through search engines (such as Google Scholar) and interoperability (facilitated by standards such as OAI-PMH), will accelerate the move to a disastrous scenario.

The objective evidence from 15 years of continuous self-archiving by [physicists](#) (even longer by [computer scientists](#)) has in fact tested his grim hypothesis; and this evidence affords not the slightest hint of any move to a "disastrous scenario." Throughout the past decade and a half, final drafts of [hundreds of thousands of articles](#) have been made freely accessible and readily retrievable by their authors (in some fields approaching 100% of the research published). And these have indeed been extensively [accessed](#) and retrieved and used and applied and [cited](#) by researchers in those disciplines, *exactly as their authors intended* (and far more extensively than articles for which the authors' drafts had not been made freely accessible). Yet when asked, both of the large physics learned societies (the *Institute of Physics Publishing* in the UK and the *American Physical Society*) [responded](#) very explicitly that they could identify *no* loss of subscriptions to their journals as a result of this critical mass of self-archived and readily retrievable physics articles¹. The ALPSP's doomsday conviction does not gain in plausibility by merely being repeated, ever louder.

[Google Scholar](#) and [OAI-PMH](#) do indeed make the self-archived supplements more accessible to their would-be users, but *that is the point*: The purpose of self-archiving is to *maximise access to research information*. Some publishers may still be in the habit of reckoning that research is well-served by access-denial, but the providers of that research

– the researchers themselves, and their funders – can be forgiven for reckoning , and acting, otherwise.

ALPSP: Librarians will increasingly find that ‘good enough’ versions of a significant proportion of articles in journals are freely available; in a situation where they lack the funds to purchase all the content their users want [emphasis added] it is inconceivable that they would not seek to save money by cancelling subscriptions to those journals. As a result, those journals will die.

First, please note the implicit premise here: Where research institutions “lack the funds to purchase all the content their researchers want,” *the users (researchers) should do without that content, not give it to one another, as the RCUK proposes*. And why? Because researchers giving their own research to one another will make journals die.

Second, RCUK-funded researchers publish in [thousands of journals](#) all over the world -- the UK, Europe and North America. Their publications, though important, represent the output of only a [small fraction](#) of the world’s research population. Neither research topics nor research journals have national boundaries. Hence it is unlikely that a ‘significant proportion’ of the articles in any particular journal will become freely available purely as a consequence of the RCUK policy.

Third, journals die and are born every year, since the advent of journals. Their birth may be because of a new niche, and their demise might be because of the loss or saturation of an old niche, or because the new niche was an illusion. Scholarly fashions, emphases and growth regions also change. This is ordinary intellectual evolution plus market economics.

Fourth (and most important), as we have already noted, physics journals already *do* contain a ‘significant proportion’ of articles that have been self-archived in the physics repository, [arXiv](#) -- yet librarians have [not cancelled subscriptions](#)¹ despite a decade and a half’s opportunity to do so, and the journals continue to survive and thrive. So whereas ALPSP may find it subjectively “inconceivable,” the objective fact is that self-archiving is *not* generating cancellations, even where it is most advanced and has been going on the longest.

Research libraries – none of which can afford to subscribe to all journals, because they have only finite journals budgets – have always tried to maximise their purchasing power, cancelling journals they think their users need less, and subscribing to journals they think their users need more. As objective indicators, some may use (1) usage statistics (paper and online) and (2) citation impact factors, but the final decision is almost always made on the basis of (3) surveys of their own users’ recommendations². Self-archiving does not change this one bit, because self-archiving is not done on a per-journal basis but on a per-article basis. And it is done [anarchically](#), distributed across authors, institutions and disciplines. An RCUK mandate for all RCUK-funded researchers to self-archive all their articles will have no net differential effect on any particular journal one way or the other.

Nor will RCUK-mandated self-archiving exhaust the contents of any particular journal. So librarians' money-saving and budget-balancing subscription/cancellation efforts may proceed apace. Journals will continue to be born and to die, as they always did, but with no differential influence from self-archiving.

But let us fast-forward this: The RCUK self-archiving mandate itself is unlikely to result in any individual journal's author-archived supplements rising to anywhere near 100%, but if the RCUK model is followed (as is quite likely) by other nations around the world, we may indeed eventually reach 100% self-archiving for all articles in all journals. That would certainly be optimal for research, researchers, their institutions, their funders, and the tax-paying public that funds the funders. Would it be disastrous for journals? A certain amount of pressure would certainly be taken off *librarians'* endless struggle to balance their finite [journal budgets](#): The yearly journal selection process would no longer be a struggle for basic survival (as all researchers would have online access to at least the author-self-archived supplements), but market competition would continue among publisher-added-values, which include (1) the paper edition and (2) the official, value-added, online edition (functionally enriched with XML mark-up, citation links, publisher's PDF, etc.). The market for those added values would continue to determine what was subscribed to and what was cancelled, pretty much as it does now, but in a calmer way, without the mounting panic and desperation that struggling with balancing researchers' basic inelastic survival needs has been carrying with it for years now (the 'serials crisis').

If, on the other hand, the day were ever to come when there was no longer a market for the paper edition, and no longer a market for some of the online added-values, then surely the market can be trusted to readjust to that new supply/demand optimum, with publishers continuing to sell whatever added values there is still a demand for. One sure added-value, for example, is peer review. Although journals don't actually perform the peer review (researchers do it for them, for free), they do administer it, with qualified expert editors selecting the referees, adjudicating the referee reports, and ensuring that authors revise as required. It is conceivable that one day that peer review service will be sold as a [separate service](#) to authors and their institutions, with the journal-name just a tag that certifies the outcome, instead of being bundled into a product that is sold to users and their institutions. But that is just a matter of speculation right now, when there is still a healthy demand for both the paper and online editions. Publishing will co-evolve naturally with the evolution of the online medium itself. But what cannot be allowed to happen now is for researchers' impact (and the public's investment and stake in it) to be held hostage to the status quo, under the pretext of forestalling a doomsday scenario that has no evidence to support it and all evidence to date contradicting it.

ALPSP: The consequences of the destruction of journals' viability are very serious. Not only will it become impossible to support the whole process of quality control, including (but not limited to) peer review

Notice that the doomsday scenario has simply been taken for granted here, despite the absence of any actual evidence for it, and despite all the existing evidence to the contrary. Because it is being intoned so shrilly and with such ‘conviction’, it is to be taken at face value, and we are simply to begin our reckoning with accepting it as an unchallenged premise: but that premise is without any objective foundation whatsoever.

As ALPSP mentions peer review, however, is this not the point to remind ourselves that among the many (unquestionable) values that the publisher does add, peer-review is a rather anomalous one, being an unpaid service that researchers themselves are rendering to the publisher gratis (just as they give their articles gratis, without seeking any payment)?

As noted [above](#), the implementation of peer review *could* in principle be sold as a separate *service* to the author-institution, instead of being bundled with a *product* to the subscriber-institution; hence it is not true that it would be ‘impossible to support’ peer review even if journals’ subscription base were to collapse entirely. But as there is no evidence of any tendency toward a collapse of the subscription base, this is all just hypothetical speculation at this point.

ALPSP: but in addition, the research community will lose all the other value and prestige which is added, for both author and reader, through inclusion in a highly rated journal with a clearly understood audience and rich online functionality.

Wherever authors and readers value either the paper edition or the rich online functionality – both provided only by the publisher -- they will continue to subscribe to the journal as long as they can afford it, either personally or through their institutional library. As noted [above](#), this clearly continues to be the case for the physics journals that are the most advanced in testing the waters of self-archiving. Publishers who add sufficient value create a product that the market will pay for (by the definition of supply, demand and sufficient-value). However, surely the interests of research and the public that funds it are not best-served if those researchers (potential users) who happen to be unable to afford the particular journal in which the functionally enriched, value-added version is published are denied access to the basic research finding itself. Even more important and pertinent to the RCUK proposal: The fundee’s and funder’s research should not be denied the *impact potential* from all those researchers who cannot afford access.

Researchers have always given away all their findings (to their publishers as well as to all requesters of reprints) so that other researchers could further advance the research by using, applying and building upon their findings. Access-denial has always limited the progress, productivity and impact of science and scholarship. Now the online age has at last made it possible to put an end to this needless access-denial and resultant impact-loss; the RCUK is simply the first to propose systematically applying the natural, optimal, and inevitable remedy to all research output.

Whatever publisher-added value is truly value continues to be of value when it co-exists with author self-archiving. Articles continue to appear in journals, and the enriched functionality of the official value-added online edition (as well as the paper edition) are still there to be purchased. It is just that those who could not afford them previously will no longer be deprived of access to the research findings themselves

ALPSP: *This in turn will deprive learned societies of an important income stream, without which many will be unable to support their other activities – such as meetings, bursaries, research funding, public education and patient information – which are of huge benefit both to their research communities and to the general public.*

(Notice, first, that this is all still predicated on the truth of the doomsday conviction -- ‘that self-archiving will inevitably destroy journals’ – which is contradicted by all existing evidence.)

But insofar as learned-societies ‘other activities’ are concerned, there is a very simple, straight-forward way to put the proposition at issue : Does anyone imagine that researchers would knowingly choose to *continue subsidising learned societies’* admirable good works -- meetings, bursaries, research funding, public education and patient information – *at the cost of their own lost research impact?*

The ALPSP doomsday ‘conviction’, however, has no basis in evidence. All indications to date are that learned societies will continue to publish journals -- adding value and successfully selling the added-value -- in peaceful co-existence with RCUK-mandated self-archiving. But entirely apart from that, ALPSP certainly has no grounds for asking researchers to renounce maximising their own research impact for the sake of financing learned societies’ good works (like meetings, bursaries and public education) – good works that could finance themselves in alternative ways that were not parasitic on research progress, if circumstances were ever to demand it

The ALPSP letter began by stating that the mission of ALPSP publisher members is to ‘disseminate and maximise access to research information’. Some of the journal-publishing learned societies do indeed proclaim this to be their mission; yet by their restrictive publishing practices they actively contradict it, and defend the undeniable contradiction by invoking a disaster scenario (very like the one ALPSP repeatedly cites) in the name of protecting the publishing profits that support all of the society’s other activities. Yet this is not the attitude of forward-thinking, member-oriented societies that understand properly what researchers in their fields need and know how to deliver it. Here is a quote from Dr Elizabeth Marincola, Executive Director of the American Society for Cell Biology, a sizeable but not huge society (10,000 members; many US scientific and medical societies have over 100,000 members):

"I think the more dependent societies are on their publications, the farther away they are from the real needs of their members. If they were really doing good work and their members were aware of this, then they wouldn't be so fearful.....

When my colleagues come to me and say they couldn't possibly think of putting their publishing revenues at risk, I think 'why haven't you been diversifying your revenue sources all along and why haven't you been diversifying your products all along?' The ASCB offers a diverse range of products so that if publications were at risk financially, we wouldn't lose our membership base because there are lots of other reasons why people are members."³

This perfectly encapsulates why we should not be too credulous about the dire warnings from learned societies that self-archiving will damage research and its dissemination. The dissemination of research findings should be a high-priority service for societies – a direct end in itself, not a financial activity to generate profit to subsidise other activities, at the expense of research itself.

ALPSP: The damaging effects will not be limited to UK-published journals and UK societies; UK research authors publish their work in the most appropriate journals, irrespective of the journals' country of origin.

The thrust of the above statement is rather unclear: The self-archiving itself will indeed be distributed across all journals, worldwide. Hence, if it had indeed been 'damaging', that damage would likewise be distributed (and diluted) across all journals, not concentrated on any particular journal. So what is the point being made here?

But in fact there is no evidence at all that self-archiving is damaging to journals, rather than co-existing peacefully with them; and a great deal of evidence that it is extremely beneficial to research, researchers, their institutions and their funders.

ALPSP: We absolutely reject unsupported assertions that self-archiving in publicly accessible repositories does not and will not damage journals. Indeed, we are accumulating a growing body of evidence that the opposite is the case [emphasis added], even at this early stage

We shall now examine whose assertions need to be absolutely rejected as unsupported, and whether there is indeed 'a growing body of evidence that the opposite is the case'.

What follows is the ALPSP's 5 pieces of putative evidence in support of their expressed 'conviction' that self-archiving will damage journals. Please follow carefully, as the first two pieces of evidence [1]-[2] -- concerning usage and citation statistics -- will turn out to be positive evidence rather than negative evidence, and the last three pieces of evidence [3]-[5] -- concerning journals that make all of their own articles free online -- turn out to have nothing whatsoever to do with author self-archiving:

ALPSP: For example: [1] Increasingly, librarians are making use of COUNTER-compliant (and therefore comparable) usage statistics to guide their decisions to renew or cancel journals. The Institute of

Physics Publishing is therefore concerned to see that article downloads from its site are significantly lower for those journals whose content is substantially replicated in the ArXiv repository than for those which are not.

How does example [1] show that ‘the opposite is the case’? As has already been reported [above](#), the *Institute of Physics Publishing* (UK) and the *American Physical Society* have both stated publicly that it can identify no loss of subscriptions as a result of nearly 15 years of self-archiving by physicists! (Moreover, publishers and institutional repositories can and will easily work out a collaborative system of pooled *usage statistics*, all credited to the publisher’s official version; so that is no principled obstacle either.)

The easiest thing in the world for Institutional Repositories (IRs) to provide to publishers (along with the link from the self-archived supplement in the IR to the official journal version on the publisher’s website that is dictated by good scholarly practice) is the [IR download statistics](#) for the self-archived version of each article. These can be pooled with the download statistics for the official journal version and all of it (rightly) credited to the article itself. Another bonus that the self-archived supplements already provide is [enhanced citation impact](#) – of which it is not only the article, the author, the institution and the funder who are the co-beneficiaries, but also the journal and the publisher, in the form of an [enhanced journal impact factor](#) (average citation count). It has also been demonstrated recently that download impact and citation impact are [correlated](#), downloads in the first six months after publication being predictive of citations after 2 years.

All these statistics and benefits are there to be shared between publishers, librarians and research institutions in a cooperative, collaborative atmosphere that welcomes the benefits of self-archiving to research and that works to establish a system that shares them among the interested parties. *Collaboration* on the sharing of the benefits of self-archiving is what learned societies should be setting up meetings to do – rather than just trying to delay and oppose what is so obviously a substantial and certain benefit to research, researchers, their institutions and funders, as well as a considerable potential benefit to journals, publishers and libraries. If publishers take an adversarial stance on self-archiving, all they do is deny themselves of its potential benefits (out of the groundless but self-sustaining ‘conviction’ that self-archiving can inevitably bring them only disaster). Its benefits to research are demonstrated and incontestable, hence will incontestably prevail. (ALPSP’s efforts to delay the optimal and inevitable will not redound to learned societies’ historic credit, and the sooner they drop their filibustering and turn to constructive cooperation and collaboration, the better for all parties concerned.)

ALPSP: *[2] Citation statistics and the resultant impact factors are of enormous importance to authors and their institutions; they also influence librarians’ renewal/cancellation decisions. Both the Institute of Physics and the London Mathematical Society are therefore troubled to note an increasing tendency for authors to cite*

only the repository version of an article, without mentioning the journal in which it was later published.

Librarians' decisions about which journals to renew or cancel take into account a variety of comparative measures, citation statistics being one of them². Self-archiving has now been analysed extensively and shown to *increase* journal article citations substantially in [field after field](#); so journals carrying self-archived articles will have higher impact factors, and will hence perform *better* under this measure in competing for their share of libraries' serials budgets. This refutes example [2].

As to the proper citation of the official journal version: This is merely a question of proper scholarly practice, which is evolving and will of course adapt naturally to the new medium; a momentary lag in scholarly rigour is certainly no argument against the practice of self-archiving or its benefits to research and researchers. (Moreover, publishers and institutional repositories can and will easily work out a collaborative system of [pooled citation statistics](#) – all credited to the official published version. So that is no principled obstacle either.)

Again, this can and will be quite easily and naturally remedied, collaboratively, through a system of pooled citation and reference statistics – all credited to the official published version. This is just a matter of adapting scholarly practices naturally to the new medium (and that too is inevitable). It borders on the absurd to cite something whose solution is so simple and obvious as serious grounds for preventing research impact from being maximised by universal self-archiving!

ALPSP: *[3] Evidence is also growing that free availability of content has a very rapid negative effect on subscriptions. Oxford University Press made the contents of Nucleic Acids Research freely available online six months after publication; subscription loss was much greater than in related journals where the content was free after a year. The journal became fully Open Access this year, but offered a substantial reduction in the publication charge to those whose libraries maintained a print subscription; however, the drop in subscriptions has been far more marked than was anticipated.*

This is a non-sequitur, having nothing to do with self-archiving, one way or the other (as was already pointed out in the [prior rebuttal](#) of APLSP's [April critique](#) of the RCUK proposal): This example refers to *an entire journal's contents* -- the official value-added versions, *all being made freely accessible, all at once, by the publisher* -- not to the anarchic, article-by-article self-archiving of the author's final draft by the author, which is what the RCUK is mandating. This example in fact reinforces what was noted earlier: that RCUK-mandated self-archiving does not single out any individual journal (as OU Press did above with one of its own) and drive its self-archived content to 100%. Self-archiving is distributed randomly across all journals. Since journals compete (somewhat) with one another for their share of each institution's finite journal acquisitions budget, it is conceivable that if one journal gives away 100% of its official, value-added contents

online and the others don't, that journal might be making itself more vulnerable to differential cancellation (though not necessarily: there are [reported examples](#) of the exact opposite effect too, with the free online version increasing not only visibility, usage and citations, but thereby also increasing subscriptions, serving as an advertisement for the journal). But this is in any case no evidence for cancellation-inducing effects of self-archiving, which involves only the author's final drafts and is not focussed on any one journal but randomly distributed across all journals, leaving them to continue to compete for subscriptions amongst themselves, on the basis of their relative merits, exactly as they did before.

ALPSP: [4] The BMJ Publishing Group has noted a similar effect; the journals that have been made freely available online on publication have suffered greatly increased subscription attrition, and access controls have had to be imposed to ensure the survival of these titles.

Exactly the same reply as above: The risks of making 100% of one journal's official, value-added contents free online while all other journals are *not* doing likewise has nothing whatsoever to do with anarchic self-archiving, by authors, of the final drafts of their own articles, distributed randomly across journals.

ALPSP: [5] In the USA, the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences found that two of its journals had, without its knowledge, been made freely available on the Web. For one of these, an established journal, they noted a subscriptions decline which was more than twice as steep as the average for their other established journals; for the other, a new journal where subscriptions would normally have been growing, they declined significantly. While the unauthorised free versions have now been removed, it is too early to tell whether the damage is permanent.

Exactly the same artifact as in the prior two cases. (The trouble with self-generated Doomsday Scenarios is that they tend to assume such a grip on the imagination that their propounders cannot distinguish objective evidence from the 'corroboration' that comes from merely begging the question or changing the subject!)

In all three examples, *whole journals* were made freely available, all at once, in their entirety, along with all the added value and rich online functionality that a journal provides. This is not at all the same as authors self-archiving only their own final drafts (which are simply their basic research reports), and doing so on a single-article (rather than a whole-journal) basis. Yet the latter is all that the RCUK proposes to mandate. Hence examples [3]-[5] are really a misleading conflation of two altogether different matters creating the illusion of support for what is in fact an untenable conclusion on which they actually have no bearing one way or the other.

[Moreover -- even though it has nothing at all to do with what the RCUK is mandating -- if one does elect to look at evidence from whole-journal open access then there are many more examples of journals that have benefited from being made freely available: *Molecular Biology of the Cell*'s subscriptions, for example, have grown steadily after free access was provided by its publisher, [The American Society for Cell Biology](#)³. That journal also enjoys a high impact factor and healthy submissions by authors, encouraged by the increased exposure their articles receive. The same has happened for journals published by [other societies](#)⁴.]

ALPSP: *In addition, it is increasingly clear that this is exactly how researchers are already using search engines such as Scirus and Google Scholar: Greg R. Notess, Reference Librarian, Montana State University, in a recent article in Information Today (Vol 29, No 4) writes 'At this point, my main use of both [Scirus and Google Scholar] is for finding free Web versions of otherwise inaccessible published articles.'*

This is merely a repetition of ALPSP's earlier point about [OAI](#) and [Google Scholar](#).
Reply: Yes, these wonderful new resources do increase access to the self-archived supplements: but that's the point! To maximise research access, usage and impact.

Other search engines that retrieve free access articles (such as [citebase](#), [citedseer](#) and [OAIster](#)) likewise serve the research community by enabling any unsubscribed researchers to find and access to drafts of articles they could not otherwise use because they are accessible only by subscription. ISI's [Web of Knowledge](#), a paid service, finds the authors' free versions as well as the journals' subscription-only versions, which researchers can then use whenever they or their institutions can afford subscription, license, or pay-per-view access; [Scirus](#), a free service, likewise retrieves both, as does [Google](#) itself (if at least the reference metadata are made web-accessible). All these services do indeed help to maximise access, usage and impact, all to the benefit of the impact of that small proportion of current research that happens to be spontaneously self-archived already (15%). The RCUK mandate will increase this benefit systematically to that remaining 85% of UK research output that is still only accessible today to those who can afford the official journal version.

ALPSP: *'I found a number of full-text articles via Google Scholar that are PDFs downloaded from a publisher site and then posted on another site, free to all.'*

This point, on the other hand, is not about author self-archiving, but about pirating and bootleg of the publisher's official version. RCUK is not mandating or condoning anything like that: The policy pertains only to authors' own final drafts, self-archived by them -- not to the published version poached by 3rd party consumers, which is called [theft](#). (Hence this point is irrelevant.)

ALPSP: 'Both Scirus and Scholar were also useful for finding author-hosted article copies, preprints, e-prints, and other permutations of the same article.'

Exactly as one would hope they would be, if one hopes to 'maximise access to research'.

ALPSP: In the light of this growing evidence of serious and irreversible damage, each publisher must have the right to establish the best way of expanding access to its journal content that is compatible with continuing viability.

So far no evidence whatsoever of 'serious and irreversible damage' (or indeed of any damage) caused by author self-archiving has been presented by ALPSP. (This is unsurprising, because in reality no such evidence exists, and all existing evidence is to the contrary.)

Of course publishers can and should do whatever they wish in order to expand access to their journal content and remain viable. But they certainly have no right to prevent researchers, their institutions and their funders from likewise doing whatever they can and wish in order to expand the access to, and the impact of, their own research findings – nor to expect them to agree to keep waiting passively to see whether their publishers will one day maximise their access and impact for them.

100% self-archiving is already known to be both doable and to enhance research impact substantially; self-archiving has also been co-existing peacefully with journals for over a decade and a half (including in those fields where 100% self-archiving has already been reached) ; 100% self-archiving overall is already well overdue, and years' worth of research impact have already been [needlessly lost](#) waiting for it. ALPSP has given no grounds whatsoever for continuing this delay for one moment longer. It has merely aired a doomsday scenario of its own imagination and then adduced 'evidence' in its support that is obviously irrelevant and defeasible. What is certain is that research impact cannot be held hostage to publishers' anxieties, simply on the grounds of their subjective intensity.

ALPSP: This is not best achieved by mandating the earliest possible self-archiving, and thus forcing the adoption of untried and uncosted publishing practices.

Self-archiving in October 2005 is not 'the earliest possible self-archiving' ' It is self-archiving that is already at least a [decade overdue](#). And it has nothing to do with untried and uncosted publishing practices: Self-archiving is not a *publishing* practice at all; it is a *researcher* practice. And it has been [tried and tested](#) – with [great success and great benefits](#) for research progress – for over 15 years now. What is needed today is more [self-archiving](#) – 100% -- not more delay.

Or does the 'earliest possible' here refer not to when the RCUK self-archiving mandate is at last implemented, but how early the published article should be self-archived? If so,

the answer from the point of view of research impact and progress is unambiguous: *The final draft should be self-archived and made accessible to all potential users immediately upon acceptance for publication* (prefinal preprint drafts even earlier, if the author wishes). No research usage or progress should be held back arbitrarily for 3, 6, 12 or more months, for any reason whatsoever.

It cannot be stressed enough just how crucial it is for RCUK to resist any pressure to impose *any sort of access-denial period, of any length*, during which unpaid access to research findings would be embargoed -- findings that the RCUK has paid for, with public money, so that they can be immediately reported, used, applied and built upon, for the benefit of the public that paid for it, not so that they can be embargoed, for the benefit of assuaging publishers' subjective fears about 'disaster scenarios' for which there does not exist a shred of objective evidence. Any delay that is allowed amounts to an embargo on research productivity and progress, at the expense of the interests of the tax-paying public. That is exactly what happened recently to the [US National Institutes of Health's public access policy](#), setting US research access and impact back several years.

Fortunately, there is a simple compromise that will completely immunise the RCUK mandate from any possibility of being rendered ineffectual in this way:

What all RCUK-funded researchers *should be required to self-archive in their own Institutional Repositories (IRs) immediately upon acceptance for publication* are:

- (1) the article's *metadata*
(author name, date, article title, journal name, etc.).
plus
- (2) The article's *final draft* (full-text)

That fulfills the RCUK *requirement*. The access-setting, however, can then be given two options:

(OA) Open Access

(both the metadata and the full-text are made freely accessible to everyone worldwide)

or

(IA) Institutional Access

(the metadata are freely accessible worldwide but the full-text is made accessible only to the fundee's institution, its employees, and its funders, such as the RCUK and RAE, for record-keeping, grant-fulfillment and performance-assessment purposes).

The RCUK fundee is *strongly encouraged* (but not required) to set access to OA immediately.

As [90% of journals](#) have already given article self-archiving their official green light, 90% of articles can be set to OA immediately. For the remaining 10%, the author can set the article at IA initially, but of course its metadata (author, title, journal, etc.) will immediately be openly accessible worldwide to all would-be users, just as the metadata of the OA 90% are. That's enough data so that would-be users can immediately email the author for an 'eprint' (the author's final draft) if they cannot afford to access the journal version. The author can keep emailing eprints to each would-be user until either the

remaining 10% of journals updates their policy or the author tires of doing all those needless keystrokes and sets the article to OA. In the meanwhile, however, 100% of RCUK-funded research will be immediately accessible webwide, 90% of it directly, and 10% of it with author mediation, maximising its access and impact. Nature can take care of the rest at its leisure.

ALPSP: It is clearly unrealistic to consult adequately with all those likely to be affected over the summer holiday period, and we therefore urge you to extend the consultation period and to defer, for at least 12 months, the introduction of any mandate for authors to self-archive. In the meantime, we would like to take up RCUK's expressed willingness to engage with both publishers and learned societies, beginning with a meeting in early September with representatives of ALPSP; we propose one of the following dates : 5th September, 6th September, 7th September, 8th September
We look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Sally Morris, Chief Executive

The consultation has been going on since [long before](#) 'the summer holiday period' and there has already been far more delay and far more research impact needlessly lost than anyone can possibly justify. Some members of the publishing community are quite leisurely about continuing to prolong this needless loss of research impact and progress in order to continue debating, but the research community itself is not (as indicated, for example, by the ill-fated demand for open access -- by a deadline of September 1, 2001 - - on the part of the [34,000 researchers](#) who signed the PloS petition).

RCUK should go ahead and implement its immediate-self-archiving mandate, with no further delay deferral, and *then* meet with ALPSP and other interested parties to discuss and plan how the [UK Institutional Repositories](#) can collaborate with journals and their publishers in pooling download and citation statistics, and in other other ways of sharing the benefits of maximising UK research access and impact. Any further pertinent matters and developments can be discussed as well -- but not at the cost of further delaying what is indisputably the optimal and inevitable (and long overdue) outcome for research, researchers, their institutions, and their funders -- and for the public, which funds the research on the understanding that its use and applications are meant to be maximised to benefit the public's interests, not minimised to protect other parties' from imaginary threats to their interests.

(A shorter UK version of this critique --

<http://openaccess.eprints.org/index.php?archives/18-guid.html> -- has been co-signed by the following UK senior researchers [**in boldface**] and sent as hard copy to the recipients of the ALPSP statement. The present longer analysis is also co-signed by some prominent international supporters of the RCUK initiative.)

Tim Berners-Lee (UK, Southampton & US, MIT)

Dave De Roure (UK, Southampton)

Stevan Harnad (UK, Southampton & Canada, UQàM)
Nigel Shadbolt (UK, Southampton)
Derek Law (UK, Strathclyde)
Peter Murray-Rust (UK, Cambridge)
Charles Oppenheim (UK, Loughborough)
Yorick Wilks (UK, Sheffield)

Subbiah Arunachalam (India, MSRF)
Hélène Bosc (France, INRA, ret.)
Fred Friend (UK, University College, London)
Peter Suber (US, Earlham)

References:

1. Swan, A (2004). [Re: Open Access vs. NIH Back Access and Nature's Back-Sliding](#). American Scientist Open Access Forum: 3 February 2005.
2. Personal communication from a UK University Library Director: "I know of no HE library where librarians make cancellation or subscription decisions. Typically they say to the department/faculty 'We have to save £X,000' from your share of the serials budget: what do you want to cut?'. These are seen as *academic* --not metrics-driven -- judgements, and *no* librarian makes those academic judgements, as they are indefensible in Senate... [S]uch decisions are almost always wholly subjective, not objective, and have nothing to do with the existence or otherwise of repositories."
3. [The society lady: an interview with Elizabeth Marincola](#). Open Access Now: 6 October 2003
4. Walker, T (2002) [Two societies show how to profit by providing free access](#). Learned Publishing **15**: 279-284.