What now? Some lessons from the APA take-downs

Alex O. Holcombe

Blog post published June 15, 2017 in *Alex Holcombe's blog*
https://doi.org/10.59350/t0vvh-fdn14

Abstract

The APA's take-down notices have reminded us that our published articles are owned by them.

Keywords

Cognitive Neuroscience (Subfield)

Recommended citation

Holcombe, A. O. (2017, June 15). What now? Some lessons from the APA take-downs. *Alex Holcombe's Blog*. https://doi.org/10.59350/t0vvh-fdn14

Copyright

Copyright © Alex O. Holcombe 2017. Distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

The APA's take-down notices have reminded us that our published articles are owned by them.

> *APA is "refocusing" its takedown policy:https://t.co/IYMzM6rYUT @nathanieldaw @BrianNosek @JhendersonIMB*
>
> *— Fernanda Ferreira (@fernandaedi) June 15, 2017*

While the APA has claimed that the initiative was simply to "to preserve the scientific integrity of the research we publish and provide a secure web environment to access the content", the APA's $10 million a year of subscription income might have more to do with it. Indeed, the APA may be reliant on this income. If so, the APA's interests are in conflict with the interest of scientists, clinicians, and research funders. A top priority of these groups is maximizing the dissemination of knowledge.

By dissemination of knowledge, I don't just mean individuals being able to read articles after downloading a PDF. To allow improvements to scholarly infrastructure, including a future of automated error checking, fact mining, and meta-analysis, the authoritative version of scientific articles should not be locked behind paywalls.

On this front, let's give APA a bit of credit – they have investigated a transition away from subscription journals. The APA has started a fully open access journal (which has waived the APC fees for the first year), and they do allow full open access for a fee in all of their journals. However, the fee is relatively high at $4,000. To enable sustainable open access, we need the cost to be lower. If $4,000 is an indication of APA's costs, they are not where we should be putting our hopes for the future.

What should researchers do?

In a policy that is more liberal than that of many publishers, the APA allows posting author-formatted manuscripts that contain all the revisions made during the review process.

Posting author-formatted manuscripts is not the final solution to anything, but it can speed progress towards a solution. I refer to posting manuscripts to database-indexed repositories such as university repositories or PsyArxiv.org (disclosure: I am an [unpaid] member of PsyArxiv's Steering Committee). In contrast, posting to private entities such as ResearchGate and Academia.edu may not be a good idea: they cannot be trusted to keep things completely open – like SSRN, they may be bought by Elsevier or start locking things down to monetize their content.

How does posting our manuscripts advance a long-term solution? First, as more and more researchers habitually post their manuscripts, more universities become comfortable cancelling their journal subscriptions, forcing publishers to move towards other models.

Second, the repositories that researchers post their articles are themselves likely to become an integral part of the publishing future. The emerging overlay journals, for example, are simply webpages curated by editorial boards that link to articles in repositories. The editorial board solicits peer review of submitted articles (which needn't be uploaded beyond being already in the

repository as a preprint), which the authors then revise based on the reviews and once the editor is happy, the revised version – still hosted by the repository – is "published" on the journal webpage. The Center for Open Science is currently working on creating a peer review module for OSF, PsyArxiv, and their other repositories to facilitate this.

Overlay journals are a viable solution to the low-cost open access publishing problem, and use of Open Journal Systems as the editorial submission and peer review management system is another. OJS is already used by thousands of journals, at low cost. However, low cost does not mean zero cost. The costs, both in hours of labor and in technology, are substantial under any model. If the money won't be coming from subscriptions, where will it come from?

Charging fees directly to authors or their funders has worked for many open access journals, but this is not a comprehensive solution, as many authors do not have funding. This is one reason that in our Fair Open Access principles, we stipulate that authors should not be charged.

Universities and research funders should come together to pool resources to support scholarly communication infrastructure. This is already happening in certain initiatives such as the Open Library of the Humanities. More than 200 universities are members of OLH and provide funds to support the 14 journals they publish. Importantly, for OLH journals the publisher (Ubiquity) is a service provider. They do not own the journal.

Authors and editors can organize editorial boards to resign from publisher-owned journals and join an existing open access journal or create another, as has already happened many times. We provide some information resources for this at PsyOA. Just this year, the European Society for Cognitive Psychology abandoned their corporate subscription-based publisher and started *Journal of Cognition*, which uses Ubiquity and charges relatively low APCs.

Keep the conversation sparked by APA going and let's create a fully open access and sustainable future.

https://doi.org/10.59350/t0vvh-fdn14