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Empire and Scholarly Communications Monopolies of Knowledge and the Global South

Dr Ernesto Priego, City, University of London, UK; Dr Domenico Fiormonte, Roma Tre University, Italy

Who do academics make money for?

10

10 publishers (ten) account for **54%** of all revenue generated by the **top 57** world publishing companies.

4

Ranked by revenue, in 2015 the **top 4** publishers were **all** scientific or academic publishers.

\$25.2 B

As of 2015, the academic publishing market had an annual revenue of **\$25.2 billion**.

In 2013, Elsevier reported a higher percentage of profit than Apple, Inc.

£94 M

94 Million Pounds is what the top 10 academic publishers received in subscription revenues from UK academic libraries in 2014 alone.

World rankings: who dominates and why?

\$3.55 B

World University Rankings are commercial products based on proprietary data from Scopus, which is owned by Elsevier.

Web of Science was until recently Thomson Reuters property. WoS is the basis for The Journal Impact Factor, also proprietary metric.

In 2016 Thomson Reuters Corp. sold its IP and science business including Web of Science to private-equity funds for **\$3.55 billion** in cash.

We have a responsibility to think critically about the interests of for-profit third-parties.

There is an implicit conflict of interest where a dominant key player produces, distributes, measures and provides tools for assessment of the content they profit from.

It is crucial that researchers retain control over how their work is conducted and disseminated. Can it be done?

50%!

Combined, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis and Wiley-Blackwell -- represent almost **50%** of all published social sciences papers in 2013.

Hybrid journals published by for-profit publishers have extended the dominance of for-profit publishers, particularly Elsevier due to its symbiotic relationship with Scopus, and of the university rankings' with Scopus and WoS.

We witness a similar monopoly of knowledge to those described by Innis in *Empire and Communications* (1950) in relation to paper and print in the control that few publishers have on scholarly publishing today.

"Both of these commercial databases [Scopus and Web of Science] severely underestimate the scholarly production of the region and provide a skewed and mis-leading picture of the publishing activities of developing countries."

-Juan Pablo Alperin, 2014:21

The challenge for the global south

What will the fate of our cultural heritage be if we are being discouraged to describe, analyse, assess and study it through our own languages and on our own platforms, and when our cultural heritage and scholarly production is also being digitised, produced and assessed by **the same 4 or 5 for-profit publishers from the North?**

The maps of academic production



Academia's goal is to share knowledge.

The best interests of for-profit publishers is to maximise profits (Logan 2017).

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