

In an interesting article entitled “**Academic publishers make Murdoch look like a socialist**”, published in “The Guardian” on August 29 last year, Georg Monbiot railed against the monopoly of large multinational publishing houses, placing them at the top of the list of the Western world’s most ruthless capitalists.

What he was complaining about was the excessive costs of gaining access to science.

*“Everyone claims to agree that people should be encouraged to understand science and other academic research. Without current knowledge, we cannot make coherent democratic decisions. But the publishers have slapped a padlock and a “keep out” sign on the gates.*

*Reading a single article published by one of Elsevier’s journals will cost you \$31.50. Springer charges €34.95, Wiley-Blackwell, \$42. Read 10 and you pay 10 times. And the journals retain perpetual copyright. You want to read a letter printed in 1981? That’ll be \$31.50.”*

This article gave me the inspiration for this short editorial, which opens the first issue of 2012, a space graciously granted me by the Scientific Directorate, for which I am most grateful.

This historic Italian dentistry publication has now attained the same level of international prestige enjoyed by the Italian school of dentistry. Our goal of getting the journal indexed in the most important bibliographic databases has been reached and “Annali di Stomatologia” is, today, the only Italian journal offering open access. Different studies show that open access (OA) to research literature has the potential to accelerate recognition and dissemination of research findings. Articles published as immediate OA articles on a journal website have higher impact than self-archived or otherwise openly accessible articles. We found strong evidence that, even in a journal that is widely available in research libraries, OA articles are more immediately recognized and cited by peers than non-OA articles published in the same journal. OA is likely to benefit science by accelerating dissemination and uptake of research findings.

It is not only individual researchers who benefit from open access. Their institutions benefit as well, if the research output from that institution is available for all to read and build upon. The main benefits of open access, for an institution, are increased visibility and presence on the Web and therefore increased impact for its research; the open access collection in the repository provides the means for the institution to manage its research programmes more effectively; the open access collection also provides the means for the institution to measure and assess its research programmes.

In conclusion, none of the advantages of traditional scientific journals need be sacrificed in order to provide free online access to scientific journal articles. Objections that open access to scientific journal literature requires the sacrifice of peer-review, revenue, copyright protection, or other strengths of traditional journals, are based on misunderstandings. The road to heaven is still long, but much has already been achieved, and for this I wish to extend my warm thanks to all those who have made a contribution.

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