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OLIVIA SOLON SCIENCE DEC 17, 2013 10:47 AM

Elsevier clamps down on academics posting their own papers online

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IT STARTED EARLIER this month, when Elsevier sent open access forum [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/) 2,800 takedown notices for articles it owns the copyright to within a couple of weeks. Academia.edu is a research-sharing website which

allows academics to post their papers online in order to "accelerate the world's research". On 6 December, many of the academics who had signed up to the service received an email from Academia.edu explaining that their papers were going to be delisted.

Guy Leonard, a research fellow at the University of Exeter, posted a [screengrab of the message](#), which said: "Academia.edu is committed to enabling the transition to a world where there is open access to academic literature. Elsevier takes a different view and is currently upping the ante in its opposition of academics sharing their own papers online."

He also tweeted his dissatisfaction with the action:

Since then, Elsevier has also targeted academics at the University of Calgary who had posted their research papers on publicly accessible university web pages. "In going after the University of Calgary, Elsevier have declared their position as unrepentant enemies of science," said an [outraged palaeontologist Mike Taylor](#), from Bristol University on his blog.

Taylor also urged people to sign the [Cost of Knowledge declaration](#), a protest by academics against the business practices of Elsevier. So far, more than 14,000 researchers have pledged to refrain from publishing, refereeing or editorial work in Elsevier's journals. The declaration argues that Elsevier charges "exorbitantly high prices" for subscriptions to individual journals and forces libraries to buy large, expensive bundles.

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Elsevier's head of Global Corporate Relations Tom Reller [said in a statement](#) that the organisation issues takedown notices "from time to time" when "the final version of the published journal article has been posted". He said that researchers can already share the final published versions of their articles with colleagues and use it for internal teaching and training or other versions of their article "following some simple guidelines". They can also choose to publish in one of Elsevier's Open Access journals. "Why do we send take down notices? One key reason is to ensure that the final published version of an article is readily discoverable and citable via the journal itself in order to maximise the usage metrics and credit for our authors, and to protect the quality and integrity of the scientific record. The formal publications on our platforms also give researchers better tools and links, for example to data," Reller explains.

Academia.edu was targeted, he says, because it made final versions of the articles publicly available.

Reller adds that this is fine for articles published in open access journals because the publishing costs are covered by the author or funder (generally paying between £1,000 and £3,000 for the privilege). "However, it is a problem for subscription/non-Open Access articles, where most publishers' current business model is based on paid access post-publication. Hence we can't allow published journal articles to be freely accessible on a large scale -- especially not through other for-profit companies, who want to benefit from our and other publishers'

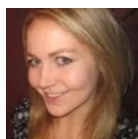
efforts. What library will continue to subscribe if a growing proportion of articles is available for free elsewhere?"

Reller also responded to those who were concerned that research sharing platform Mendeley (which Elsevier bought in April 2013 and which competes with sites such as Academia.edu) was getting preferential treatment in this copyright fiasco. He said that this is not the case -- Mendeley is asked to remove Elsevier journal articles as well -- and that when Mendeley receives take-down notices from other publishers, it offers those publishers the opportunity to write their own message to end-users. This, he says, gives them "an opportunity to communicate with their authors, in a friendly and cooperative way".

***Updated 16:15 17/12/2013:** This article wrongly stated that Elsevier sends Mendeley takedown notices. It does ask Mendeley to remove articles from Elsevier journals, but doesn't send official legal notices. The final paragraph has been amended to point out that this is not the case:

Mendeley receives takedown notices from other publishers.*

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