

Negotiations with Elsevier: The crucial issues for the FinELib consortium

Elsevier has approached academic institutions and researchers in Finland. The letter states Elsevier's view on the negotiations between the FinELib consortium and Elsevier. These negotiations regarding online access to scholarly journals and open access publishing have been ongoing since 2016. Unfortunately, there has been no breakthrough in the negotiations. The crucial issues for the negotiations are cost development and open access. The FinELib consortium's view differs from Elsevier's on both issues.

Open Access

The central aim of FinELib negotiations is to speed up the transition to open access by offering researchers in Finland the right to publish their articles immediately as open access in as many high-quality scholarly journals as possible, without extra costs. This can be achieved by using the current subscription fees to also cover the costs of open access publishing. However, Elsevier's offer does not include immediate open access.

Elsevier has offered nothing new to the FinELib consortium. The open access options are the same that are already available to all researchers:

- Publishing in journals that are behind a paywall (hybrid journals) and paying a high article processing charge (APC) per article to have the article as open access
- Using the green open access model, where the accepted manuscript can be shared only a long period (typically 12–36 months) after publication

Both models allow Elsevier to maintain the current subscription model and continue introducing annual price increases on top of the already-high access fees. At the same time, Elsevier collects significant revenues from open access publishing. The average APC for Elsevier hybrid journals is about EUR 2,300. Publishing Finnish articles as open access in these journals would mean additional costs of over EUR 4 million per year, on top of the access fees.

Total costs – sky high?

In 2011 Finnish academic organisations paid almost EUR 7 million to Elsevier for subscriptions and in 2016 the amount has grown to [EUR 10 million](#). Accepting Elsevier's offer would mean that Finnish academic organisations' costs for accessing Elsevier journals would continue to increase significantly and open access would be paid for separately. At the same time, Elsevier's profit margin is over 30% yearly.

How to make a change for the better

If the money that is globally used for journal access fees were used to cover open access publishing, no extra money would be needed for open access. This was clearly shown in [an analysis by the Max Planck Institute in 2015](#). Many countries, e.g. Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and UK are negotiating with publishers to achieve the transition to open access. The academic community is actively demanding genuine transition models with moderate costs (see [No deal no review –boycott](#)).

Elsevier has claimed that it fully supports open access and works for the benefit of science. The academic community needs to see this support translated into a transition to immediate open access with sustainable pricing.

More information on the negotiations:

- [Scholarly publications - FinELib negotiations](#)
- [Negotiations worldwide](#)
- FinELib office: finelib@helsinki.fi