

Peer review -

a responsibility and a power of the university?

Bård Smedsrød, Eirik Reierth, Lars Moksness, Leif Longva.
UiT The Arctic University of Norway



Peer review -

a responsibility and a power of the university?

or

a private affair between the individual researcher
and the publishing houses?

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Part 1

Where is journal peer review located on the map of scholarly publishing stakeholders?

Part 2

Why should the university be conscious of their ownership of and responsibility for scholarly peer reviewing?



Part 1

Where and how is journal peer review located on the map of scholarly publishing stakeholders?

- who owns peer review?
- who pays for peer review?
- who depends on peer review?



Part 1

Where and how is journal peer review located on the map of scholarly publishing stakeholders?

- who owns it?
- who pays for it?
- who depends on it?

How to draw the map of publishing stakeholders to prepare for a meaningful discussion?



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Journals/pub
lishers



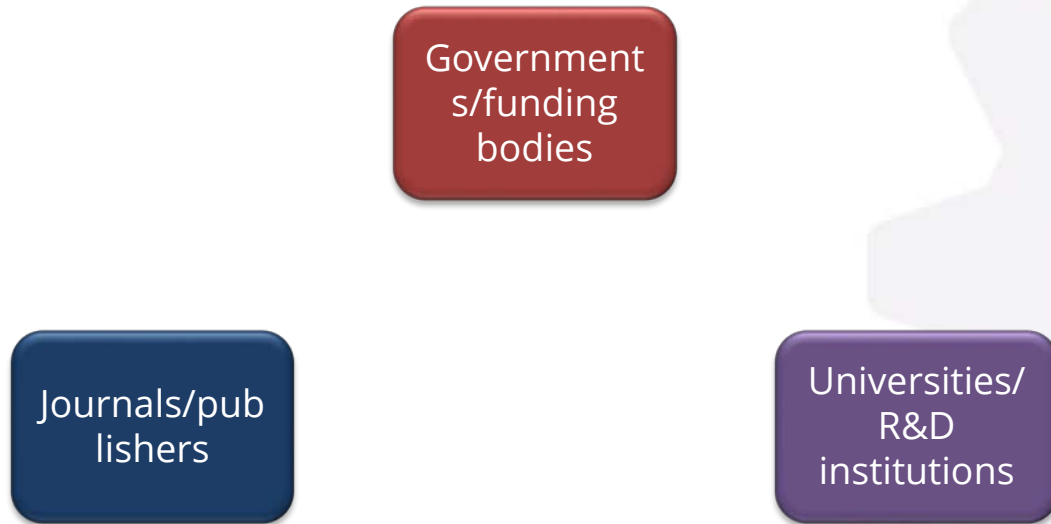
Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Journals/pub
lishers

Universities/
R&D
institutions

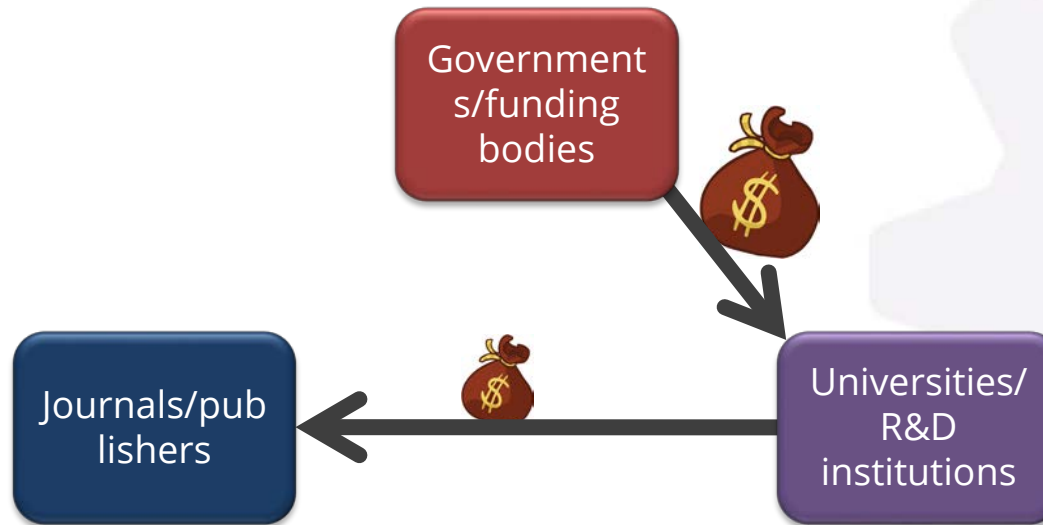
PEER REVIEW

Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders



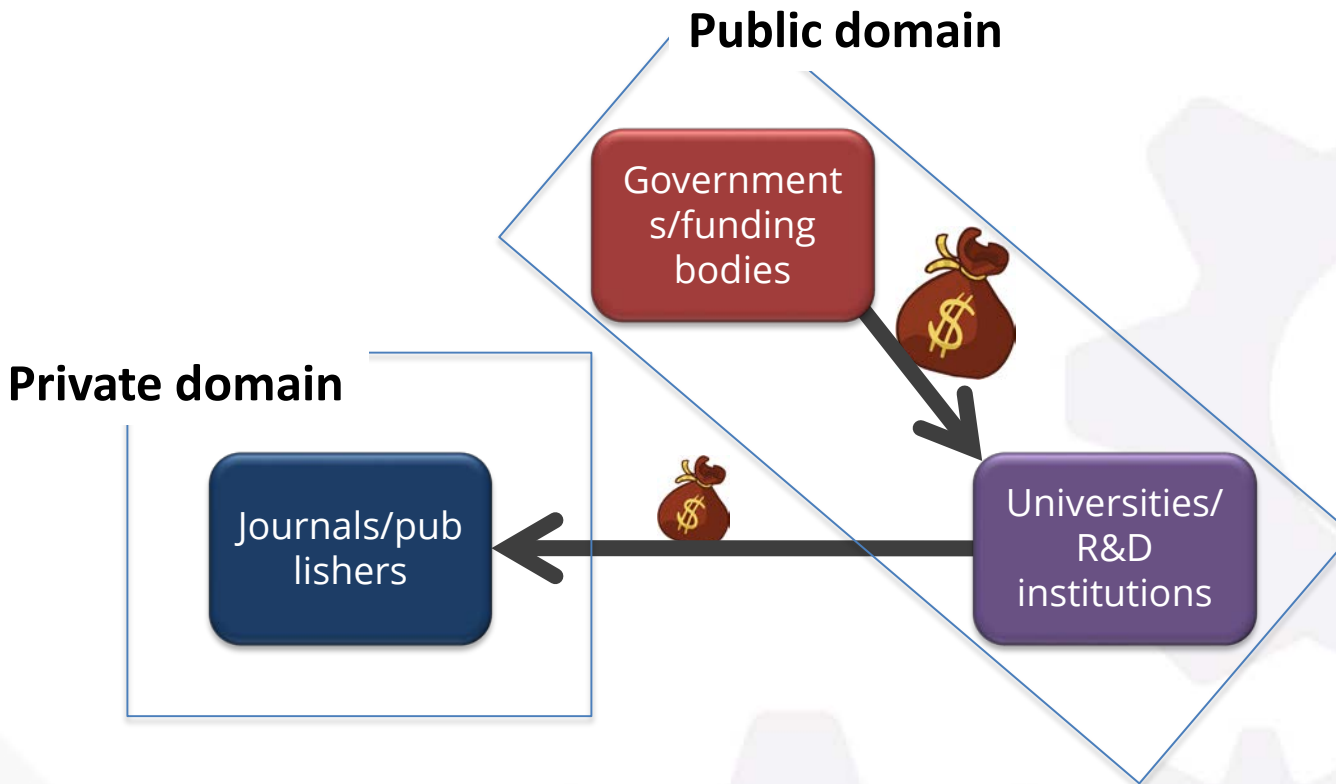
Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Flow of money



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Flow of money



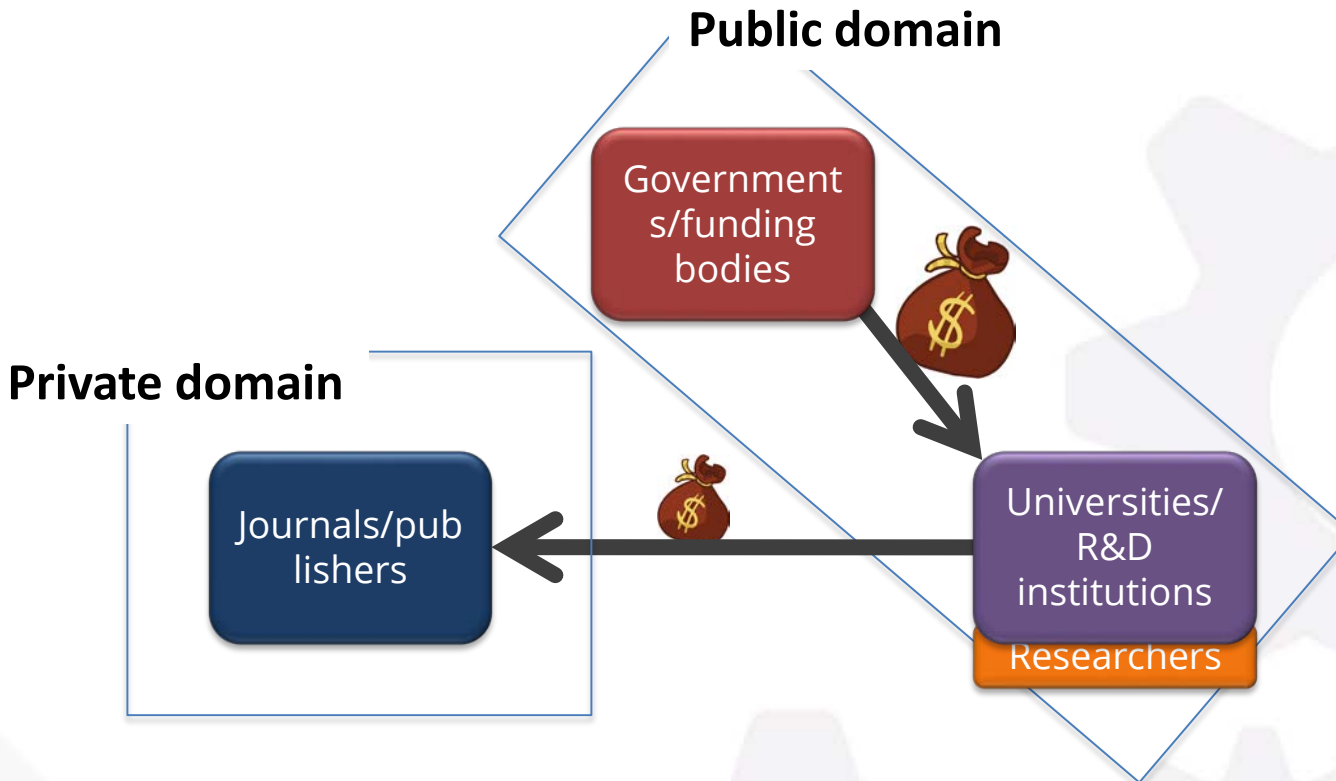
Another stakeholder must be included on this map to make the discussion meaningful and realistic:

THE RESEARCHER



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Flow of money

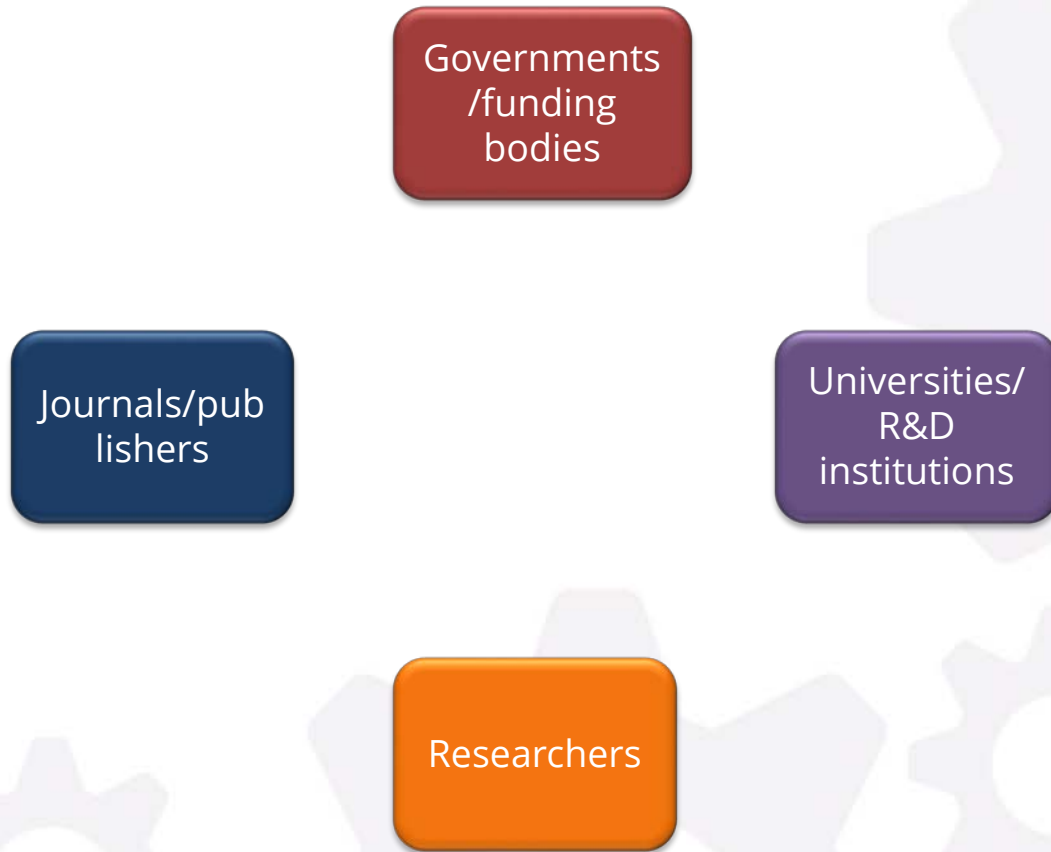


Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

A more realistic map reflecting the way many of us perceive the stakeholders of scholarly publishing



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

- Fuel universities
- Fuel funding bodies
- Allocate research grants

Governments
/funding
bodies

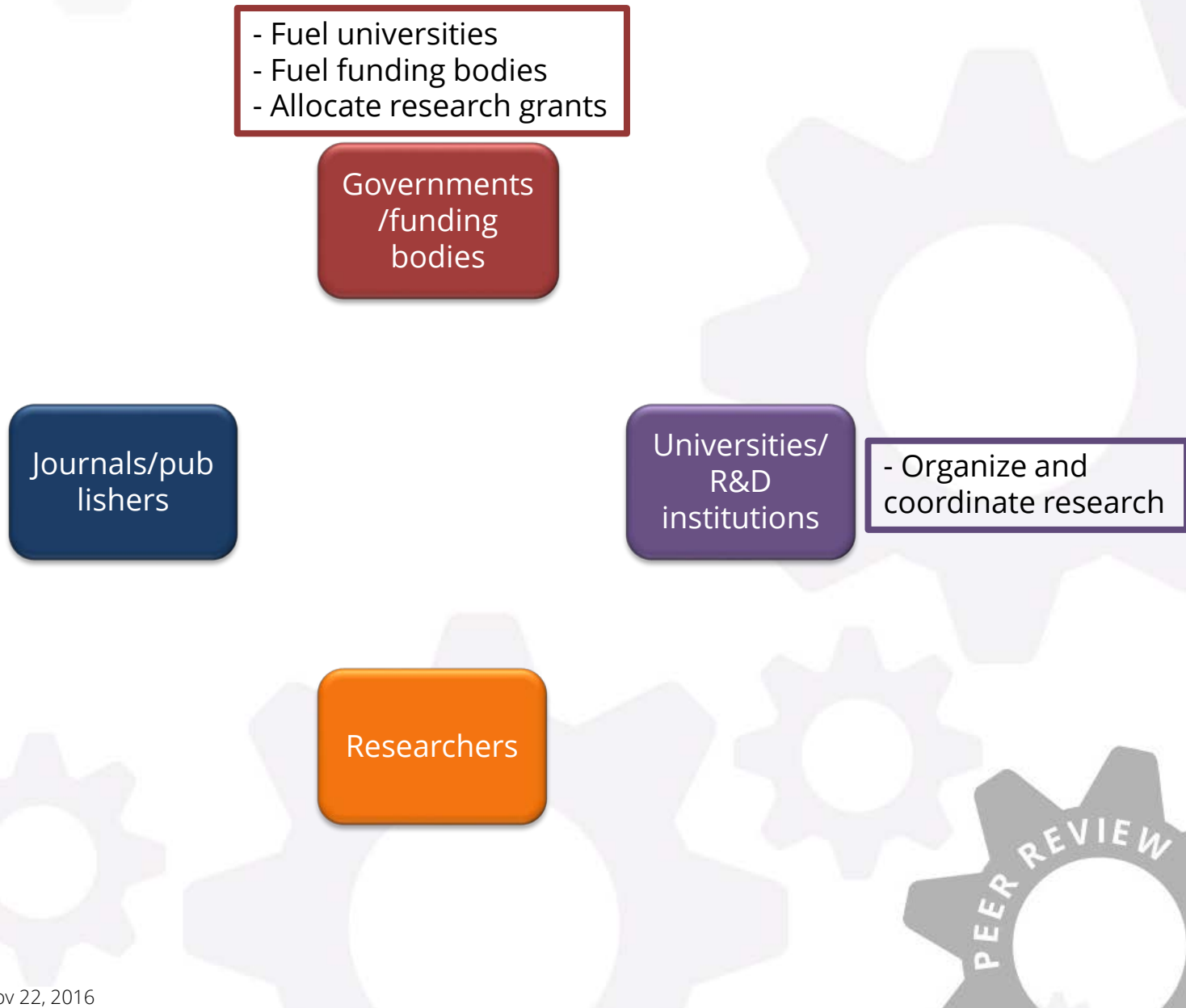
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Universities/
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Researchers

PEER REVIEW

Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders



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- Receive manuscripts from researchers
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- Organize and coordinate research

Researchers

PEER REVIEW

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Researchers

- Generate research ideas; design and carry out research
- Write manuscripts and submit to journals
- Write grant applications

PEER REVIEW

Something important missing here

?



Scholarly publishing: Map of stakeholders

Allocate research grants, based on **peer review** of applications, which is much based on journal peer review



Coordinate journal **peer review**

Journals/pub lishers

Peer review

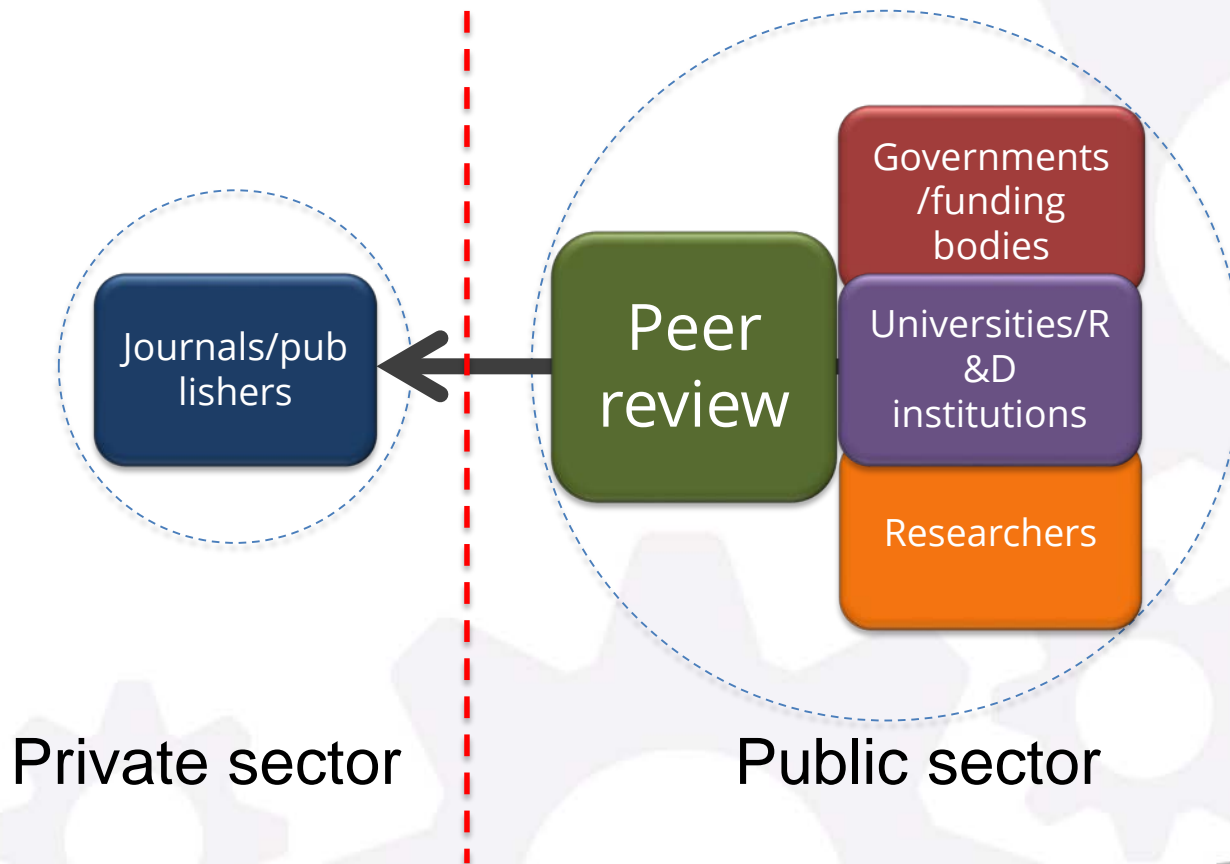
Universities/ R&D institutions

Use journal **peer review** to employ researchers and allocate local research grants

Researchers

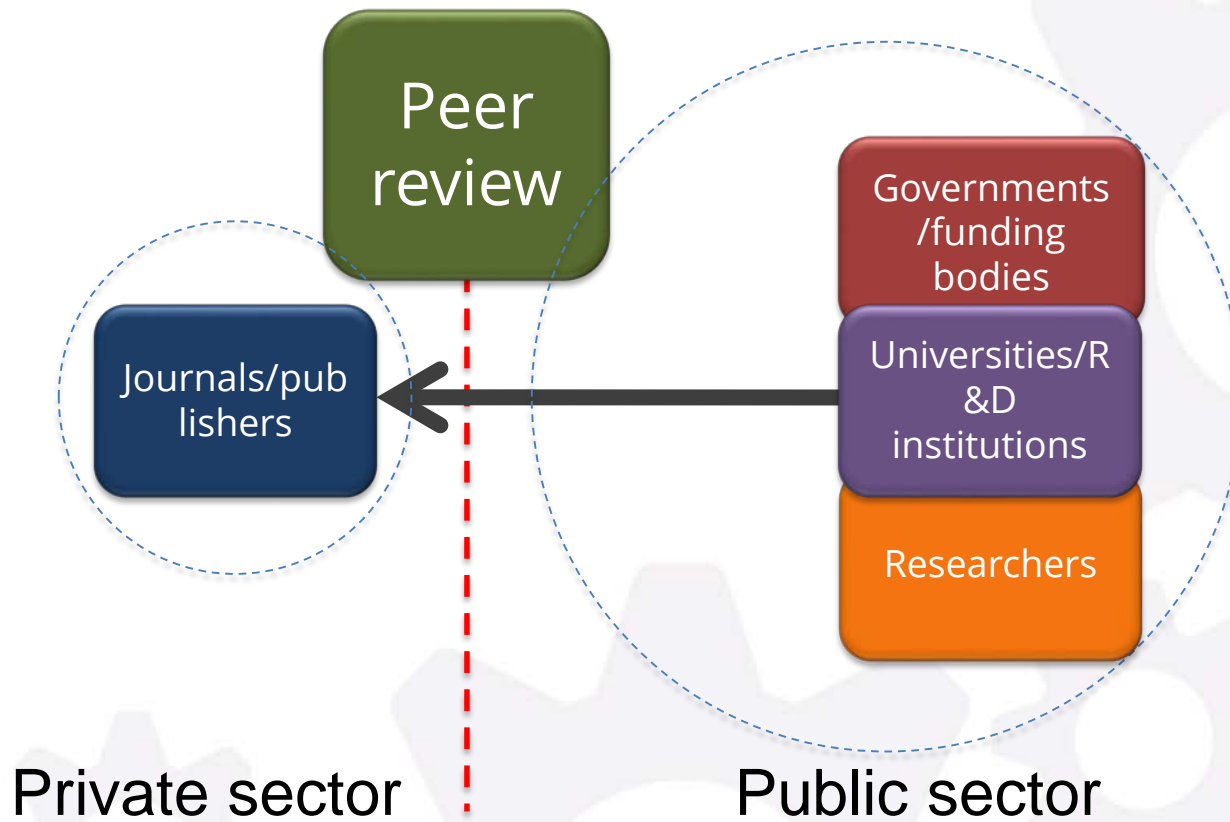
- Carry out **journal peer review**
- Write grant applications and carry out **reviewing of peers' grant applications and job applications**

REAL REALITY: Peer review is owned by the university



PERCEIVED REALITY:

Peer reviewing is a volunteer activity provided by researchers, to be utilized as a gratis service for the publishers

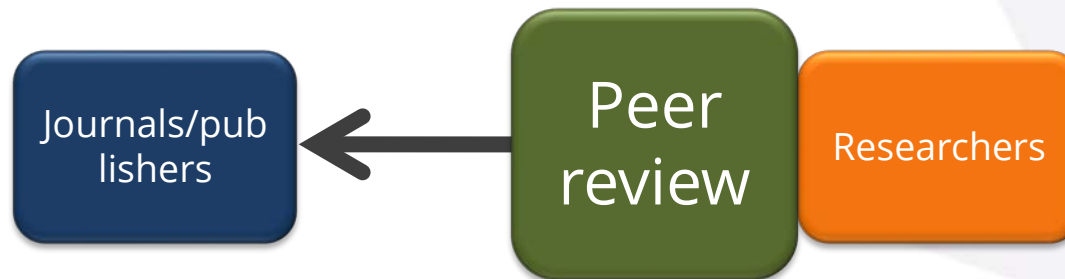


This delusion makes it possible for the publishers to maintain their rather lucrative business model



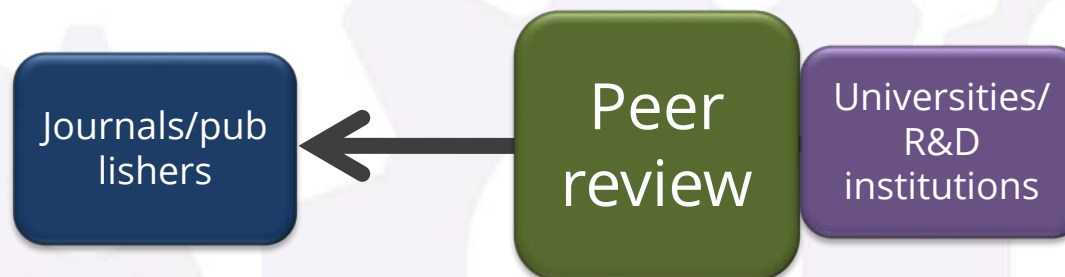
Journal peer reviewing -

A private affair between the individual researcher and the publishing houses?



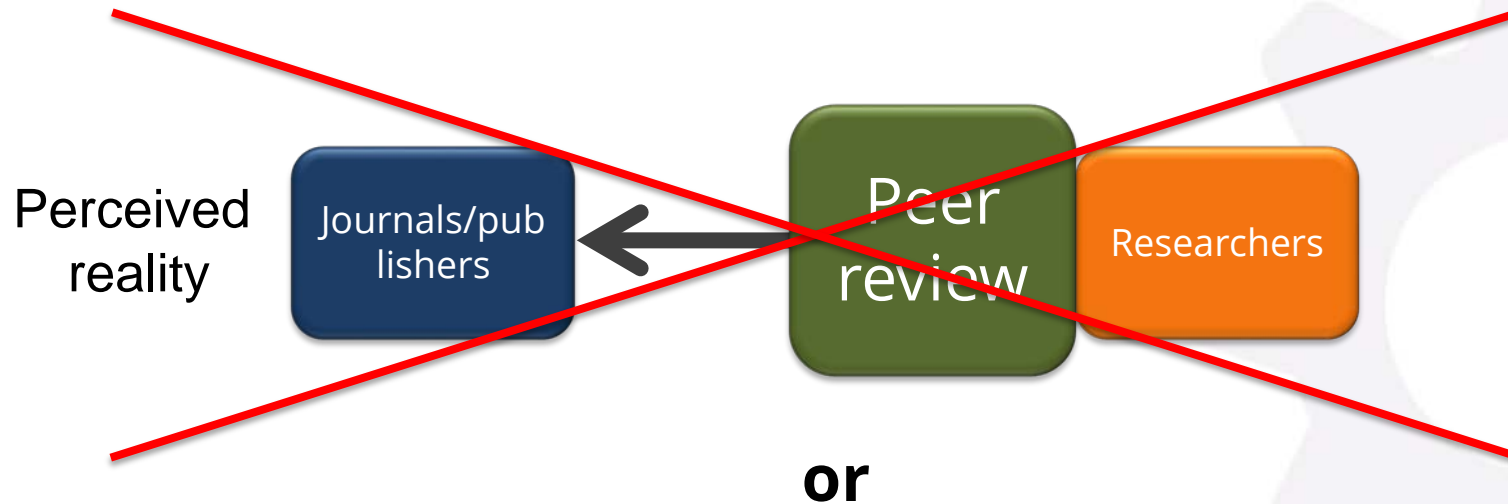
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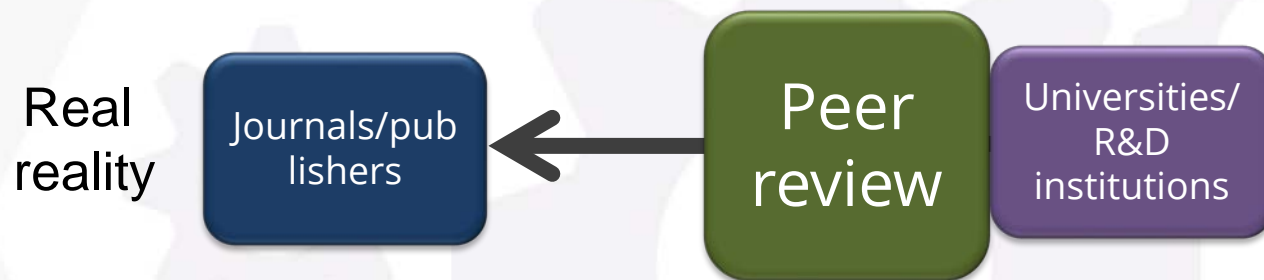


Journal peer reviewing -

A private affair between the individual researcher and the publishing houses?



a responsibility of the university?



The cost of peer reviewing -who pays and who benefits?



The cost of peer reviewing -who pays and who benefits?

- Direct cost of reviewing an article: £100
(Smith, R. Breast cancer research 2010, 12 Suppl 4, S13.)
- Unpaid non-cash costs of peer review undertaken by academics: £1.9bn globally each year
(www.rin.ac.uk)
- Survey at UiT: 15-20,000h spent annually on journal peer reviewing
(Refsdal, M. Peer review at the University of Tromsø: A study of time spent on reviewing and researchers' opinions on peer review. Master thesis 2010)
- **In reality public funds pay 3x for the work: i) to do it; ii) to peer review it, and iii) to access it. The commercial publishing houses benefit greatly from this.**



Do the universities care how and how much their employees work "for free" to do peer review for the journals?

Question asked to faculty staff at major universities in Europe, USA and Japan:

"Does your university regard reviewing as an important activity of its scientific staff, by incentivizing or controlling it in any way (similar to how teaching and research are incentivized and controlled)"



Do the universities care how and how much their employees work "for free" to do peer review for the journals?

Replies, in unison:

- i) *No active interest by the university to make sure that peer reviewing carried out by their employees follow certain standards*
- ii) *No measures taken by the university to incentivize peer reviewing*
- iii) *Peer reviewing is not included by the university as a compulsory work task for scientific staff*



Part 2

Why should the university be conscious of their ownership of and responsibility for scholarly peer reviewing?

- negotiate prices with the big publishing houses
- accelerate implementation of open access
- increase the quality of research



Why universities should identify journal peer review as an activity coordinated and owned by the universities

- Increased power to improve the standards and performance of peer reviewing. The university, but not the journals, may decide on matters such as:
 - i) Should all scientific staff do their share of peer review?
 - ii) Should the quality and ethics of peer review be peer reviewed, in the same way as research itself is peer reviewed?
 - iii) Should peer review be regarded as being just as important as doing research and writing papers?
 - iv) Should peer review be implemented as part of the curriculum?
 - v) Should new models of peer reviewing be explored?



More why: Negotiating power!

- The hours paid by the university to do peer review should be viewed as in-kind payment
 - - from the universities to the publishers
 - - on top of what the universities pay for subscriptions and article processing charge (APC)
- Realizing peer review as part of the payment opens up for the universities to use their peer review effort in negotiations to achieve:
 - - fair subscription prices
 - - fair APC
 - - implementation of true open access



More on negotiating power

Realizing they are actually paying for the substantial cost of peer reviewing the universities may decide to pay less to the publishing houses

Universities/tax payers pay the publishers in three ways:

- 1) By writing the papers for free
- 2) By peer reviewing for free
- 3) By subscribing + paying article processing fee

But the universities only negotiate the pecuniaries in point 3)!

- If the publishers are too greedy and unwilling to reduce their prices in point 3), why not hold back the in-kind payment done in point 2)?



A new bargaining strategy

Bargaining chip: **Threaten to withdraw the peer review labor** from publishers who are unwilling to enter into agreement at a reasonable price.

- University researchers may continue submitting papers anywhere
- The university will continue to pay for the access to the published papers
- The university will continue to pay article processing charges (APCs)
- But the university may hold back the in kind-payment of the peer review effort

International cooperation:

- The international community of universities may agree to join forces in holding back peer review towards the least agreeable publishers.
- They will notice!



Peer review can be a powerful bargaining chip for the universities to implement 100% OA

Coordinated international action is needed for this to happen.

EU exclaims that by 2020 the union will have established 100% OA*. This is not possible without a large-scale coordinated international action.

Step 1: Agree on a common international policy that peer review is provided and maintained by the universities.

Step 2: Use this as a coordinated negotiation power to push the publishing houses to implement 100% OA. *This power is strong.*

* <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/may/28/eu-ministers-2020-target-free-access-scientific-papers>



Realizing that peer review is a responsibility of the university enables new strategies to

- increase the quality and reliability of peer reviewing (implement peer review as part of the curriculum)
- increase the management and policy shaping of peer review
- reduce fraud and flaws in peer reviewing
- all these measures will contribute to increasing the research quality



CONCLUSIONS

- Peer reviewing in some way is the only accepted way of quality checking published research.
- Journal peer reviewing is mother of academic peer reviewing (grant and job applications).
- Scholarly journals are totally dependent on peer reviewing to preserve their reputation as reliable publishing channels of scientific research.
- Universities give peer reviewing service away for free to the publishing houses.
- Astonishingly, universities show virtually no interest in peer reviewing, and have not yet realized the considerable negotiation power they miss when subscription prizes are discussed with the publishing houses.
- By taking ownership and responsibility of the peer review process the universities may contribute considerably to accelerate the implementation of 100% OA.
- By waking up and realize their ownership of and responsibility for peer reviewing the universities will enable maintenance and policy shaping of peer reviewing that is badly needed, to increase efficiency, quality and reliability of this corner stone of scholarly research.



Peer review is key!

