

Mission or money?

Trends in scholarly publishing since c.1850

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Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

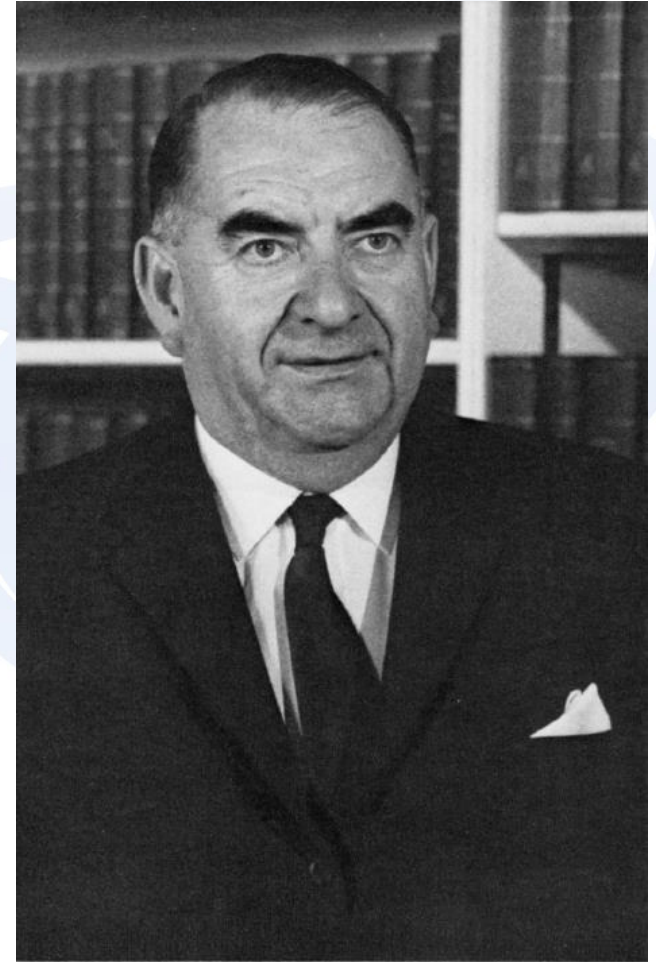


University of
St Andrews

The view from 1957

Maintaining the highest attainable standards in publishing scientific papers is the greatest service scientific societies could render to the community... [through] high-class refereeing.

Scientific societies must continue to predominate in scientific journal publication, for the moment **commercial gain** began to dominate this field **the welfare of the scientific community would suffer.**



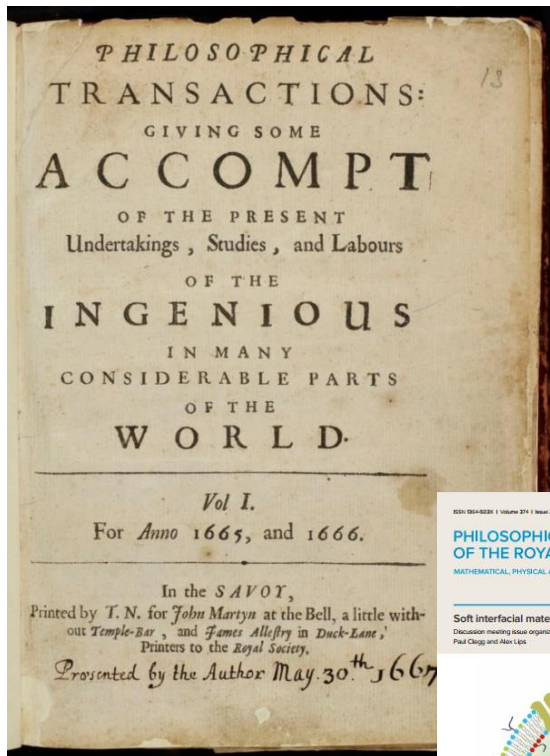
The Royal Society

David Christie Martin
Executive Secretary to the Royal Society

The 'Publishing the *Philosophical Transactions*' project

Studying the editorial and economic history of world's longest-running scientific journal

- Founded in 1665
- Published by the Royal Society since 1752
- Fantastic archive (including referee reports from 1832 onwards; and editorial and financial data)

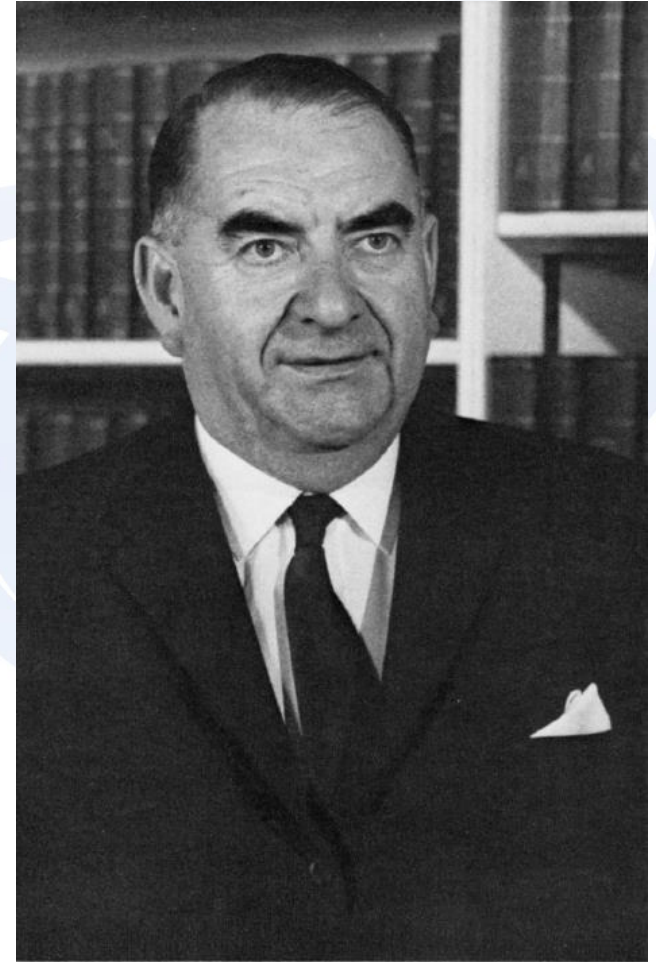


The view from 1957

... several commercial publishing houses **had realized that there was quite a bit of money to be made** in scientific publications...

Scientific societies should be the guardians of the quality of scientific publication of original work in learned journals. That was their chief *raison d'être*.

The commercial houses **had another aim in life** and their high charges, justified on commercial grounds, might become a danger...



The Royal Society

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The view from 1895

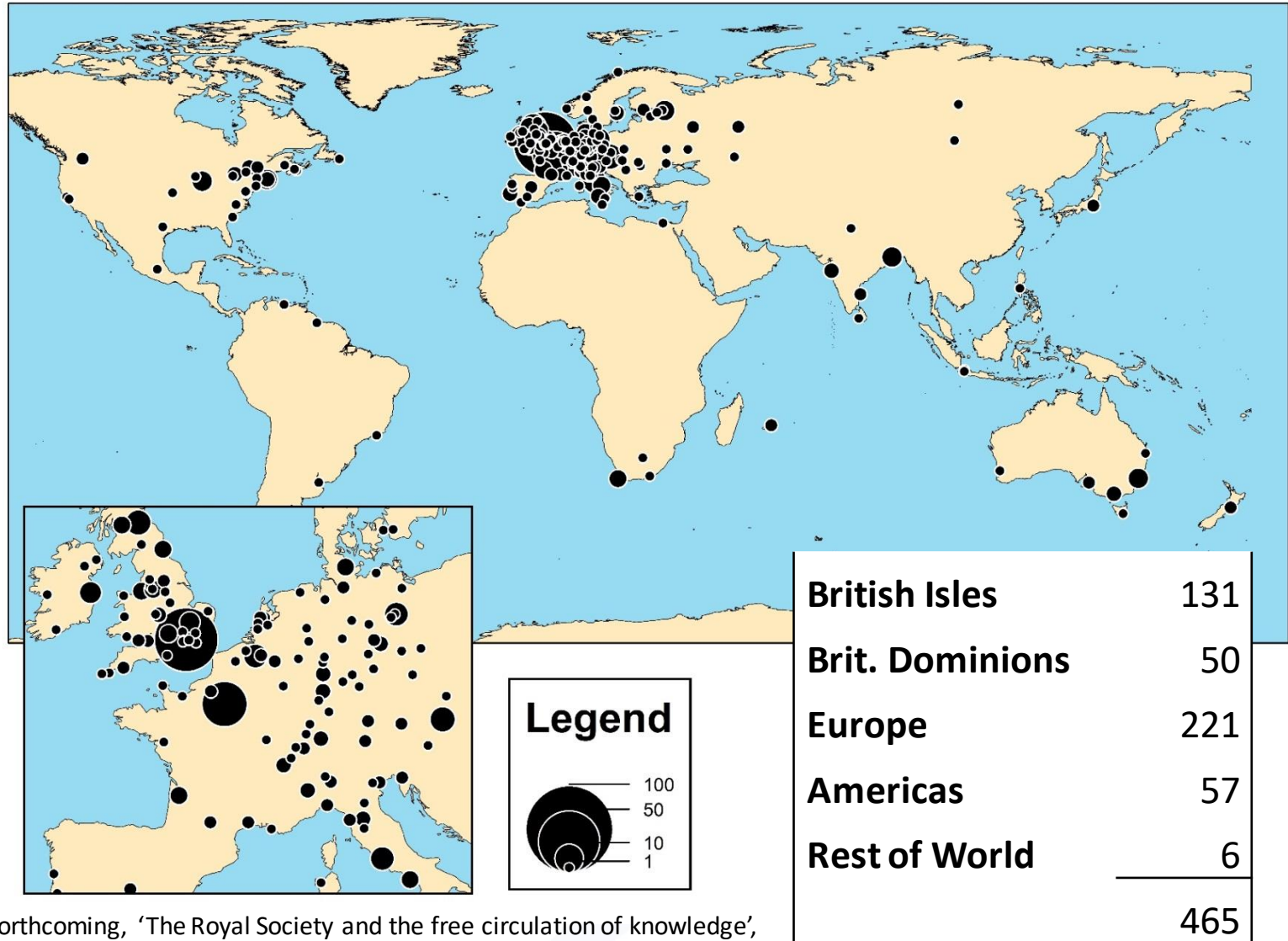


Lord Rayleigh
Secretary to the Royal Society

**'A scientific journal... is not a profitable undertaking...
... even though **the contributors are... paid nothing** for their contributions...;
the **expenses are so great**, the public so small, and the incidental remuneration by advertisements so uncertain and insignificant...
[Hence,] the scientific journals in this country,... are carried on with great difficulty..., and at a loss...'**

Royal Society to UK Treasury,
June 1895

Institutions receiving Royal Society publications by gift or exchange, 1908



From A. Fyfe, forthcoming, 'The Royal Society and the free circulation of knowledge', in M. Eve and J. Gray (eds), *Reassembling Scholarly Communications* (MIT Press)

How was it all financed?



a) mostly society funds



The view from 1895



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How was it all financed?



Member fees

Income from endowment

b) Society funds
+ government
+ industrial support
+ some sales



One-off gifts and grants

Government grant

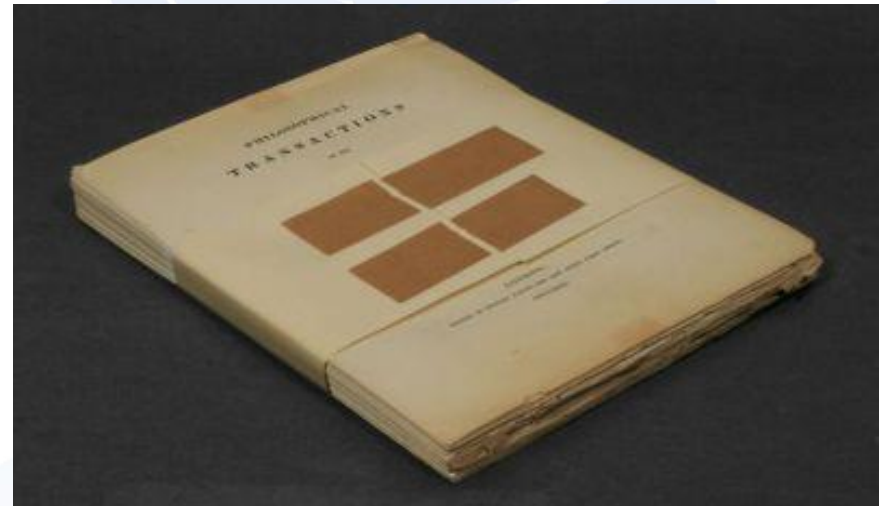
Industrial sponsorship

Sales income

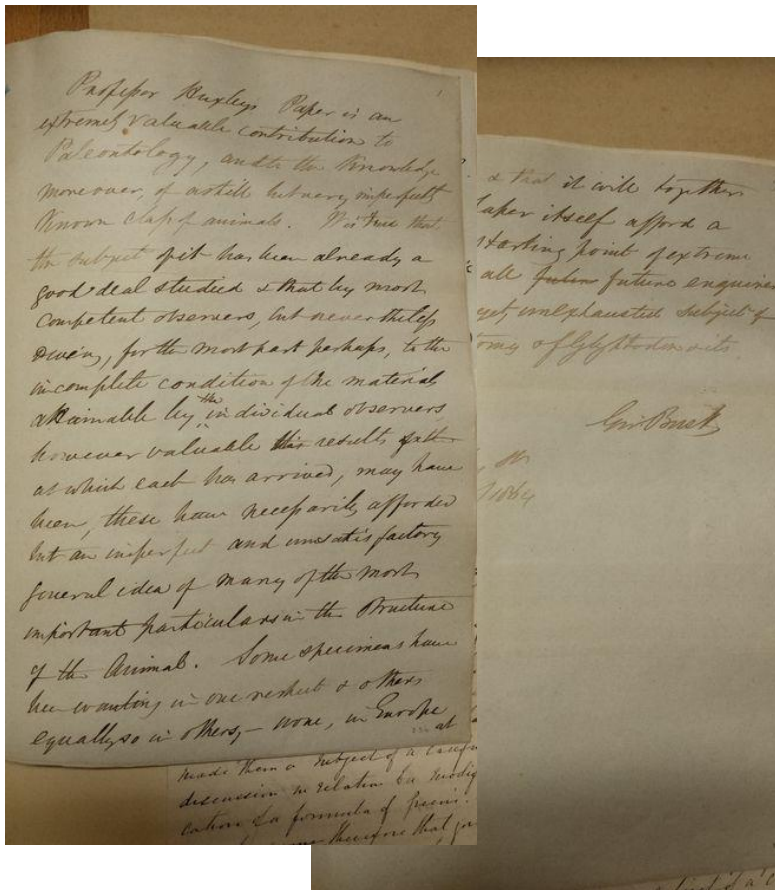
Rewards and Recognition in the 19thC



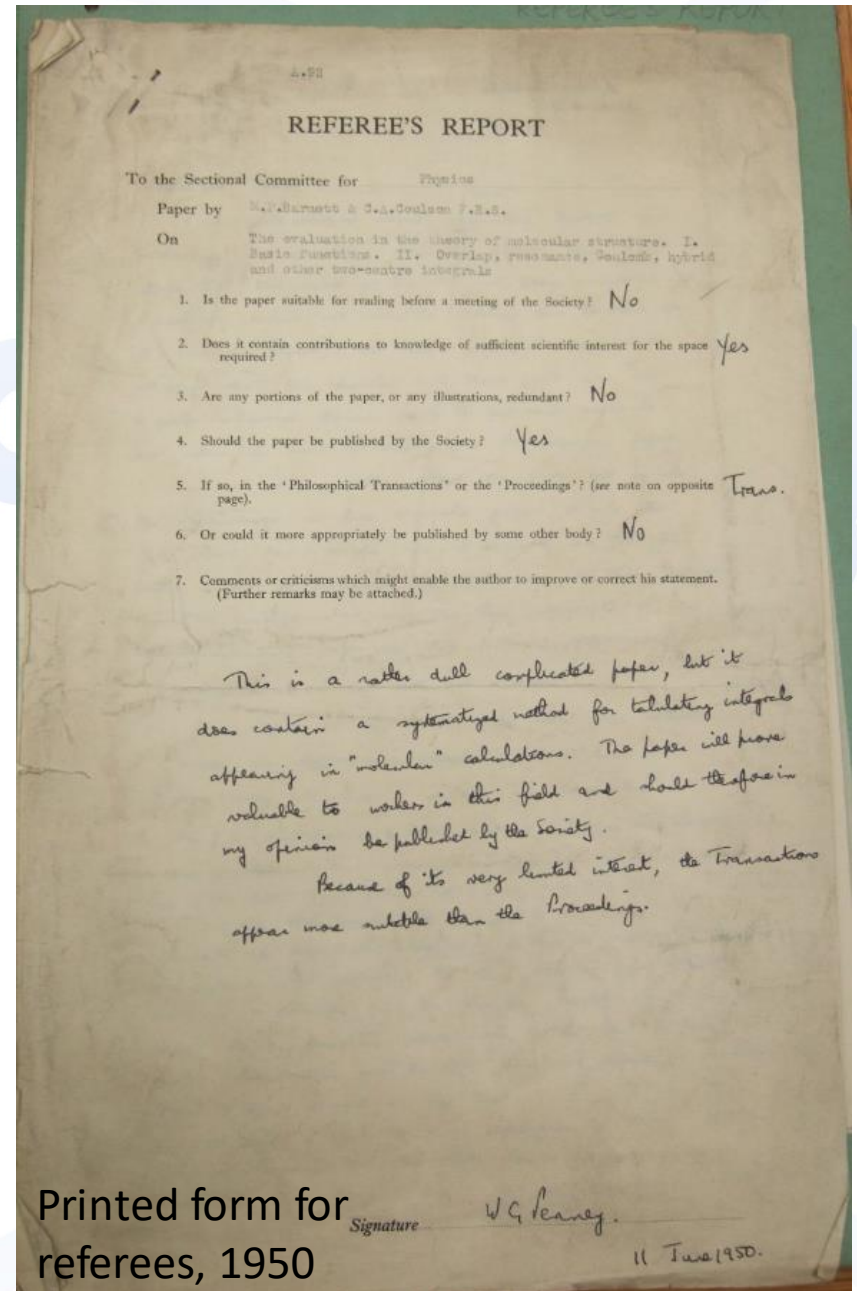
Meeting of the Royal Society, c.1841



Refereeing (peer review)



George Busk took five pages to recommend publication of TH Huxley's 1861 paper on Glyptodon



Printed form for referees, 1950

From Royal Society archives

Independent Journals

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL MAGAZINE,
COMPREHENDING
THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF SCIENCE,
THE LIBERAL AND FINE ARTS,
AGRICULTURE, MANUFACTURES,
AND
COMMERCE.

BY ALEXANDER TILLOCH,
MEMBER OF THE L

"Nec anarum fane textus
vilius quia ex alienis libamus ut

Printed for ALEX. TILLOCH,
Cornhill; CADELL and I
MURRAY and HIGHL
Paternoster Row;
VENNOR and HO
St. James's-stre
St. Giles



Philosophic
(f.1798)

Richard Taylor (1781-1858)

NATURE

A WEEKLY ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL OF SCIENCE

*"To the mind grand
Of Nature leads the mind which builds for art."*—WATSON

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1869

NATURE: APHORISMS BY GOETHE

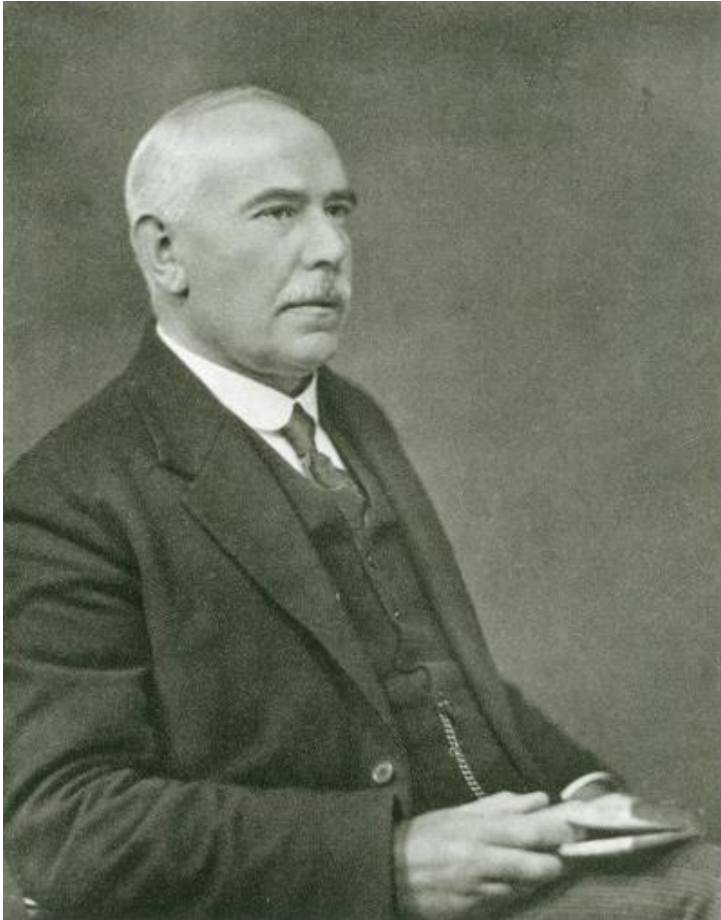
NATURE! We are surrounded and embraced by her; powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her. Without asking, or warning, she snatches us up into her circling dance, and whisks us on until we are tired, and drop from her arms. She is ever shaping new forms: what is, has not yet been; what has been, comes not again. Ever thing is new, and yet nought but the old. We live in her midst and know her not. She incessantly speaking to us, but betrays not her secret. We constantly act upon her, and yet have no power over her. The one thing she seems to aim at is individuality; yet she cares nothing for individuals. She is also building up and destroying; but her workshop is inaccessible. Her life is in her children; but where is the mother? She is the only artist; working up the most unlovely material into utter opposites; arriving, without a trace of effort, at perfection, at the most exact precision; though always veiled under a certain softness. Each of her works has an essence of its own such of her phenomena a special characteristic and yet their diversity is in unity. She performs a play; we know not whether she is it herself, and yet she acts for us, the lookers-on incessant life, development, and movement; in her, but she advances not. She changes for us and ever, and rests not a moment. Quietude is inaccessible to her, and she has laid her cure upon rest. She is firm. Her steps are measured; her exceptions rare, her laws unchangeable. She has always thought and always thinks; she is not as a man, but as Nature. She broods over

all-comprehending ideas, which no searching can find out. Mankind dwell in her and she is them. With all men she plays a game for love, and rejoices the more they win. With many, her moves are so hidden, that the game is over before they know it. That which is most unattainable is still Nature; the



N
Norman Lockyer (1836-1920)

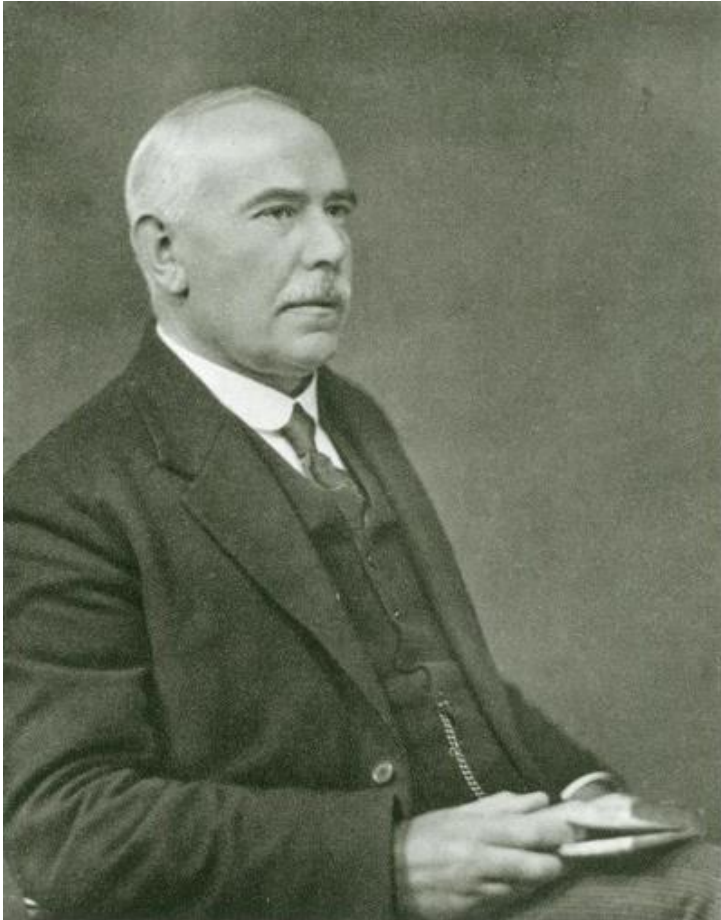
The Prestige of Publication, 1936



Louis Filon
Vice-President of the Royal Society

‘The publications of the Society have always been recognized as of exceptionally high standard, and special significance has been attached to papers published in them.’

The Prestige of Publication, 1936



Louis Filon
Vice-President of the Royal Society

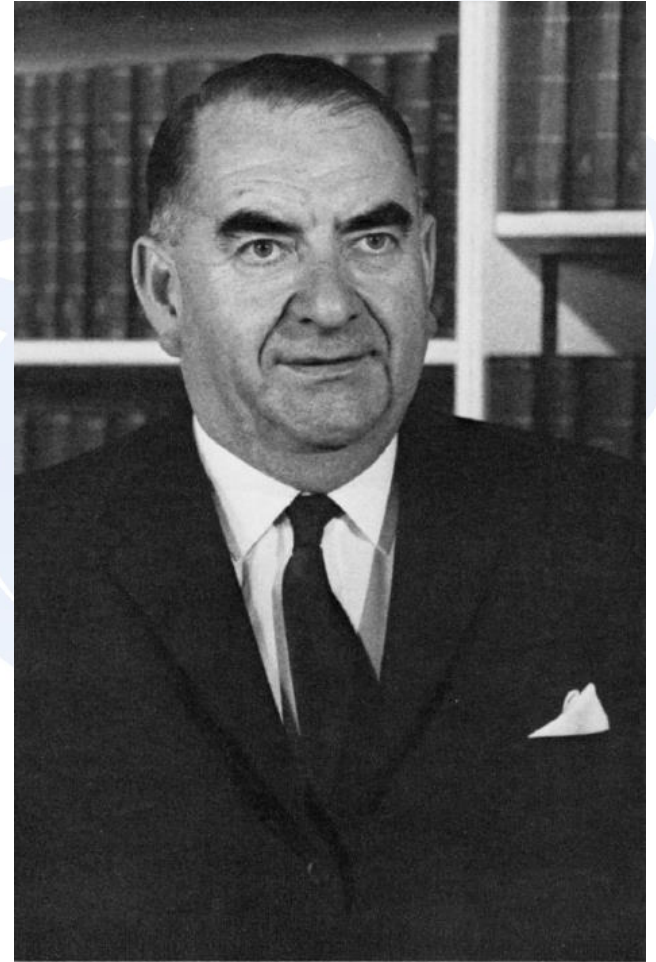
‘For appointments to academic and other posts, appointing bodies have often no means of discriminating between important and trivial research, except the particular medium of publication. ...

... a spate of trivial papers may easily outweigh, in the minds of lay persons [on academic appointing bodies], a few really valuable contributions, with results ultimately detrimental to the best interests of Science.’

The view from 1957

Scientific societies should be the guardians of the quality of scientific publication of original work in learned journals. That was their chief *raison d'être*.

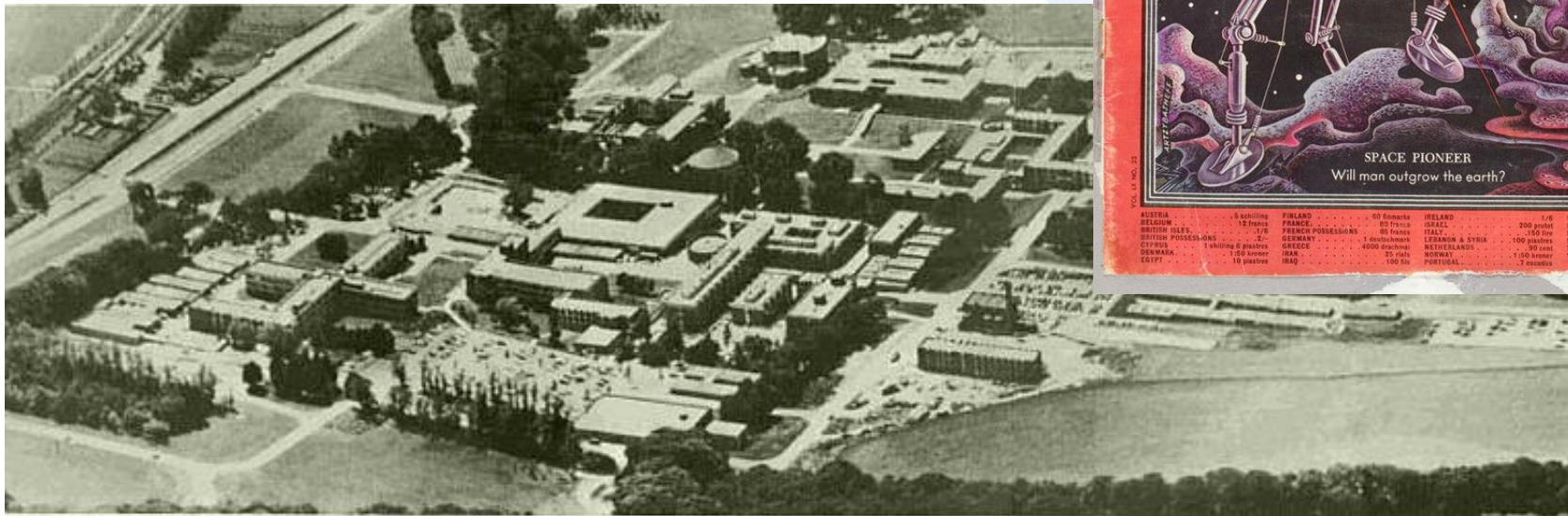
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[through] **high-class refereeing.**



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A Post-War Transition

From a circulation-oriented, mission-driven service to scholarship, funded by learned societies, universities and governments...
...to a commercially-viable enterprise in the early Cold War



New Players, New Strategies



Pergamon Press

OXFORD · LONDON · NEW YORK · PARIS



ELSEVIER

- International markets, especially the USA
- English as a shared language
- Targeting institutional sales (not individuals)

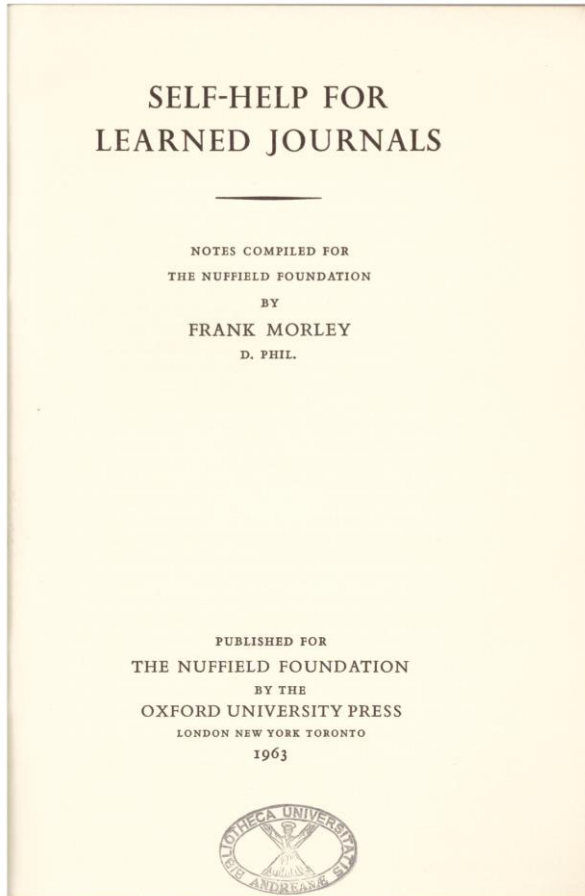


Robert Maxwell, of Pergamon Press

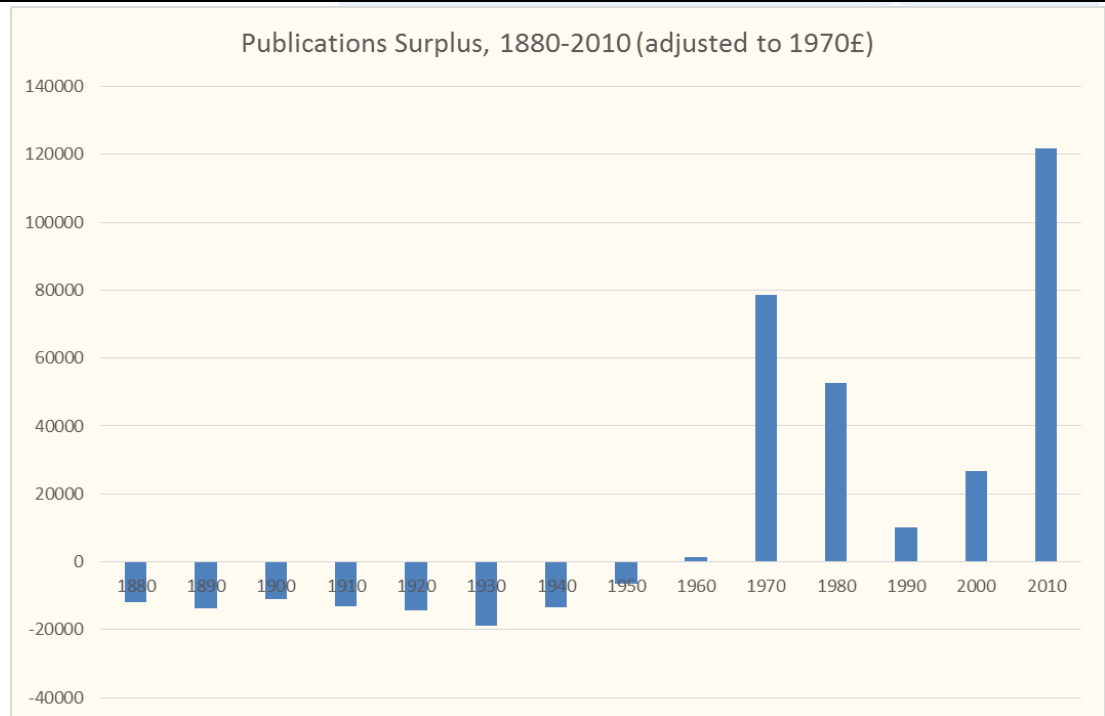
Mission-based publishers too!

- e.g. Cambridge University Press opened its New York office in 1949
- e.g. Royal Society slashed its free list in 1954, and took control of its own sales and marketing (especially for the USA)

Self-Help for Learned Journals (1963)



‘By 1955 it was obviously desirable to examine... **the general problem of production and distribution** of [journals for...] original research, which nobody wished to go out of existence, but which **without some kind of help were on the way to extinction.**’



Royal Society deficit/surplus on publications, 1880-2010
(from A. Fyfe, work in progress)

How was it all financed?



c) Mostly sales income

Golden Years of Commercial Academic Publishing, 1950s-1960s

- Capacity for growth in research
- Increased circulation globally
- Learned societies finances became less strained
- Refereeing *can* be done by commercial firms...

98HF.160.2.8

98HF 160 .2.7

THE ROYAL SOCIETY

Code for the publication of new scientific journals

The present tendency for commercial publishers to initiate new scientific journals in great numbers is causing concern to many people. With the expansion of established sciences and advances into new fields and disciplines it is evident that new journals are necessary. Ideally, the best body to start and to run a journal is a scientific society, but if this is impossible, a journal should only be put in the hands of a commercial publisher with the following safeguards:

1. scientific and editorial policy should be in the hands of a board of responsible scientific editors;
2. financial policy should be formulated, and altered, only in agreement with the scientific editorial board;
3. nomination to the editorial board should be in the hands of the scientific editors and not the publishers;
4. copyright should remain with the authors or be assigned to the scientific editorial board;
5. no agreement should be signed until competent legal advice had been sought.

12 June 1963

1963 'Code for new scientific journals'

'Ideally, the best body to start and to run a journal is a scientific society, but if this is impossible, a journal should only be put in the hands of a commercial publisher with the following safeguards:'

- A board of *scientific* [i.e. academic] editors should determine editorial and financial policy, as well as nominations to the board
- Copyright should remain with the authors
- Get competent legal advice

The End of the Golden Years

- The 1970s: inflation, oil crisis, industrial relations
 - Acquisitions and mergers in commercial book publishing; difficult times (and new management) at CUP and OUP.
- The 1980s: reduced university funding...
 - Since the 1980s, university libraries have faced steady or falling budgets.
 - Where then, are the customers that the commercial model needs?
 - Serials crisis. Monograph crisis...
- Academic culture, and the prioritization of research
 - Since the 1980s, increasing expectations of research outputs and excellence

Survival Strategies

Commercial Firms

- Acquisitions, mergers and international media conglomerates
- Economies of scale
- Diversification
- Higher book prices or journal subscriptions
- Monetisation of secondary rights (from photocopying to digital sales)

Mission-driven publishers:

- University Presses
- Learned Societies

Why are we stuck with a model of academic publishing that is past its use-by date?



Mission-led Institutions

- Learned society publishers
- University presses
- Represent the interests of scholarly communities
- Have the moral authority to award scholarly prestige
- As organisations, are more powerful than any individual researcher



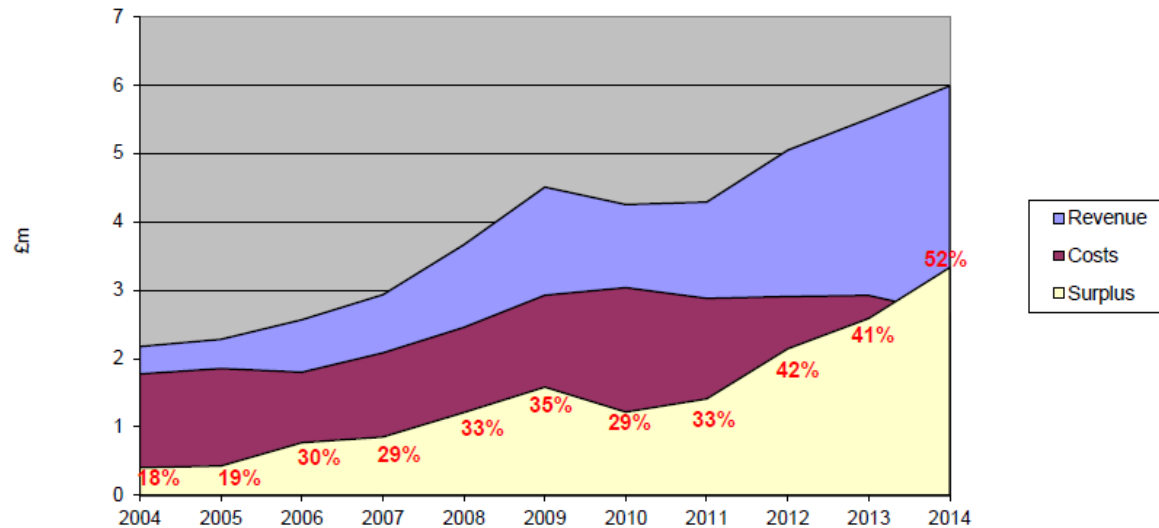
Being 'business-like'

- Not running at a loss?
- Actively making a profit?

A Royal Society policy review in 1995 set twin objectives for the publishing division:

- To disseminate research
- To generate income for the Society

Calendar Year - Actual Results



Royal Society Publishing in the 21stC

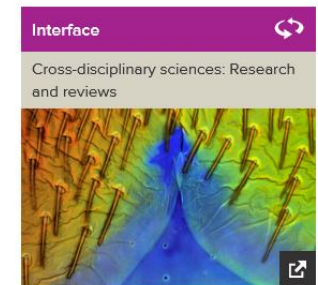
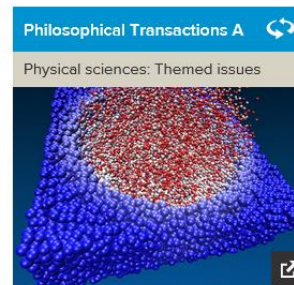
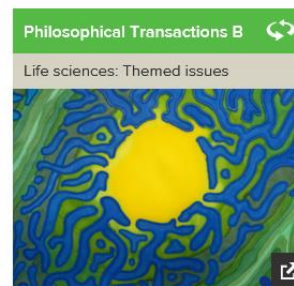
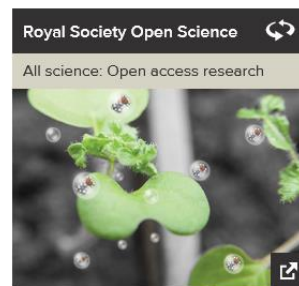
Two fully-OA journals

Some content of subscription journals is freely available:

- Historic content (for everyone)
- Current content for institutions in the developing world (via UN, WHO, INASP schemes)

Our journals

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[Over 350 years of scientific publishing](#)

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Closing Reflections

- The sales-based, commercial model of academic publishing is neither inevitable nor eternal
- Prestige culture matters, as well as technology and economics
- Scholarly communities should
 - Reclaim leadership
 - Rediscover mission
 - And find ways to work together

KE
Knowledge Exchange



“

Adoption of Open Scholarship requires awareness of non-monetary economies that affect researcher behaviour

Find out more in the latest KE report:
[Open Scholarship & the need for collective action](#)

”

“

Academic communities will need to act together if we want control over our processes and systems

Find out more in the latest KE report:
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Open Scholarship and the need for collective action

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