

More German Universities Cancel Elsevier Contracts

Author

Enago Academy

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Lately, there has been some dissatisfaction with major academic publishers. This has led to boycotts and subscription cancellations. At the heart of the matter is a push by scientists for access publishing. The current business model requires universities/institutions to pay subscription fee to get access to published research. In the opinion of many, [including Christian Thomsen](#), President of the Technical University of Berlin, this is too much pay. Dissatisfaction with Elsevier has affected [German, Peruvian, and Taiwanese institutions](#). They all have lost access to Elsevier journals, as negotiations between these institutions and the publisher have been unsuccessful. In May 2016, European leaders announced plans for promoting and implementing open access publishing across the region. In negotiations with Elsevier, German research institutions were [represented by Projekt DEAL](#), a consortium seeking a national licensing agreement with Elsevier.

In June 2017, four major academic institutions in Berlin also [announced](#) that they would not be renewing their contracts with Elsevier. These were Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. These cancellations were in support of Projekt DEAL's efforts to get Elsevier to agree to fair publishing charges, that all publications from German institutions be automatically switched to open access, and that all institutions

represented by DEAL have permanent full-text access to Elsevier's electronic journals.

Projekt DEAL is also in negotiations with Springer Nature and Wiley. Together these three publishers account for 50-60% of many German libraries' budgets. Elsevier is the largest of the three. The price of journal subscriptions across all publishers has been increasing by about five per cent every year. These increasing publication fees and a desire to implement open access policies are behind the push for better contracts with the [academic publishing](#) industry. Elsevier's high subscription fees may have inspired requests to abandon subscriptions in favor of a new business model. Springer Nature has already agreed to a *publish and read model* in which one fee allows researchers to access published data and covers for their own publication costs.

At the moment, access to Elsevier's academic content in Germany is in jeopardy. The scientific community is at odds with scientific publishers as they feel the current business model is unfair. This is because public funds largely pay for the research, the journal subscriptions, and the peer review is performed free of cost by researchers who are usually publicly funded. Increasingly, the scientific community is also pushing for open access in academic publishing. Projekt DEAL is insisting on a different business model before it will agree to a new national licensing agreement with Elsevier. These are [indeed interesting times](#).

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