



Open Access Publishing for Community Engagement

From the Associate Editor

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“U. of California System Cancels Elsevier Subscriptions, Calling Move a Win for Open Access”
— *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 28, 2019

“UC Drops Elsevier”
— *Inside Higher Ed*, March 1, 2019

These headlines jumped to the top of the higher education news cycle as we turned our calendars from February to March this year. Elsevier is among the most widely known academic publishers, and according to their website, they seek to “help institutions and professionals advance healthcare, open science and improve performance for the benefit of humanity. Combining content with technology, supported by operational efficiency, we turn information into actionable knowledge. Elsevier empowers knowledge, which empowers those who use it” (<https://www.elsevier.com/about>).

According to the *Chronicle*’s story, the University of California (UC) system’s contract with Elsevier cost around \$10 million a year for access to a wide range of academic journals published through Elsevier. Time will tell if this will be a harbinger of things to come and the first in a long line of universities canceling their expensive subscriptions with academic publishers, but this certainly has garnered a great deal of interest, and the academic publishing community is paying very close attention.

We often associate spring with a time for new beginnings, and this move could potentially represent an interesting shift in how we think about academic publishing—a shift at which the field of community engagement is at the forefront. As stated in the *Chronicle* headline, the UC System’s cancellation of their Elsevier subscription is being lauded as a “win” for the open access publishing movement. *JCES* is an open access journal, which is defined by the *Directory of Open Access Journals* as publications that “use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access” (<https://doaj.org/faq#definition>). In fact, a large majority of the highest profile journals in the community engagement field operate on a model of open access, which I think is something of which we can all be proud.

In community engagement, we understand that knowledge and expertise from outside the academy is fundamental to the work we do. *JCES* was founded on the tenet of “authentic community engagement,” which includes purposeful consideration of how the results of our community-engaged scholarship are disseminated. If this is the case, what message would we be sending to our community partners and other stakeholders if the scholarly artifacts of our work end up being hidden behind a subscription or other paywall? We might as well be telling our partners that even though they were essential to the work at every step along the way, they are not allowed to have access to our esoteric academic publications.

Academic journals like *JCES* provide scholars, practitioners, students, and community members the opportunity to share their work with a much broader audience. For faculty members, it is important to have their work recognized through a rigorous peer-review process that legitimizes their community engagement as a scholarly endeavor. For professional staff and administrators, it is valuable to be able to share best practices and lessons learned. Students not only are given a pathway for involvement in the research process, but are also shown ways to think about what they are learning in a broader context.

For community members, publishing in an academic journal validates them as valued contributors to the knowledge enterprise. The articles published in *JCES* are intended to demonstrate that students and community members play a central role in scholarship, and to paraphrase Ernest Boyer (1990), disseminating this work across the world in an openly accessible way goes a long way toward keeping the flame of scholarship alive (p. 24).

Reference

Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.