

How to support Rogue Scholar?

Martin Fenner 

Published August 7, 2023

Citation

Fenner, M. (2023). How to support Rogue Scholar?. *Front Matter*. <https://doi.org/10.53731/c09py-3we11>

Keywords

Feature, Rogue Scholar



Copyright

Copyright © Martin Fenner 2023. Distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Front Matter

The [Rogue Scholar science blog archive](#) adds important functionality to existing science blogs, namely archiving, full-text search, and DOI registration. While a lot of effort has gone into making Rogue Scholar as affordable as possible by using Open Source software, automation, and involving the community, it still costs money to build and run scholarly infrastructure, including scholarly infrastructure for science blogs.

We made a few fundamental decisions even before starting Rogue Scholar:

- Time-limited funds are used only for time-limited activities
- Mission-consistent revenue generation
- Revenue based on services, not data
- Open source
- Open data (within constraints of privacy laws)

These principles of course come from the [Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure](#) (POSI). It is too early for Rogue Scholar for a [formal commitment to POSI](#), because it only launched a few months ago, and has no formal governance structure in place. Rogue Scholar is run by Front Matter, a German organization [started by me in 2021](#). Front Matter is not (yet) a non-profit under German law because the overhead of starting and running a non-profit in Germany is considerable. The topic of Rogue Scholar governance is important, but in this blog post I want to focus on one aspect of POSI.

Mission-consistent revenue generation

Rogue Scholar helps blogs that publish their content under an open license. Creative Commons Attribution ([CC-BY 4.0](#)) is the appropriate license for scholarly publications, [as explained by the Open Access Publishers Association](#) (OASPA). Therefore content is always free to read, share and adapt for users of Rogue Scholar, and I hope to see interesting services and other implementations evolve over time.

Consistent with the POSI principle *revenue based on services, not data*, I could see newsletters as a possible revenue source in the future, as long as content always remains accessible free of charge via webpage or RSS feed. Newsletters are a service that [has become popular with blogs in the past few years](#), either to complement existent access models (good), unfortunately sometimes to restrict access (bad). Last [week I started](#) the *Rogue Scholar Digest* newsletter which sends weekly summaries of the Rogue Scholar posts the last seven days on Wednesdays. The newsletter is generated automatically without any manual curation of either the most interesting posts or posts about a particular topic, so it would not be appropriate to charge for it.

Advertising on science blogs is a revenue model that has been tried for many years but overall has failed to deliver. Maybe science content isn't popular enough unless published by a few very popular bloggers. In addition, it is a very annoying business model that goes with tracking users and clicks, hopefully something that you will never see with the Rogue Scholar.

Front Matter

Article Processing Charges (APC) as a cost model for journal articles are receiving a lot of criticism, for example in [this blog post by Brembs](#). It is critical to keep the costs for publishing scholarly content down and to be transparent about it. A good example is the Journal of Open Source Software (JOSS) which [in 2019 reported](#) a cost of about \$100 per paper, paid for by grant funding. Rogue Scholar is looking at a cost of \$1 per blog post in direct costs (compared to \$2.71 for JOSS), but that does not include the costs of running a blogging platform or staff costs of editing papers (both paid by participating blogs) and developing the software platform (paid by Front Matter).

Many science blogs are written by individuals in their "free" time as academics or science journalists. It wouldn't be appropriate to charge them for participating in Rogue Scholar, which is why Rogue Scholar is free for up to 50 blog posts published a year. If you publish more than 50 posts (or once per week) as an individual or organization, I hope you have a revenue source for the time spent writing and editing those posts and are willing to pay Rogue Scholar a one-time fee of \$1 per post.

What I am seeing with the about 40 blogs participating in Rogue Scholar so far is that most of them will not publish more than 50 posts in 2023, but some blogs have been running for five, 10, or more years, and have published 100s of posts before 2023. Archiving these older posts in Rogue Scholar is particularly important, as the risk of scholarly content disappearing [increases with time](#). Based on the experience of archiving my own blog posts in Rogue Scholar going back until 2007, I am convinced that science blog posts older than two or three years are absolutely worth archiving.

New payment options

To align the Rogue Scholar with the *mission-consistent revenue generation* discussed in the previous paragraph, Rogue Scholar is launching two payment options today:

- Donations (one-time or monthly) of \$3 or more if you want to support the Rogue Scholar as a reader. Follow the new [buy me a coffee](#) link in the navigation bar on top of all Rogue Scholar pages.

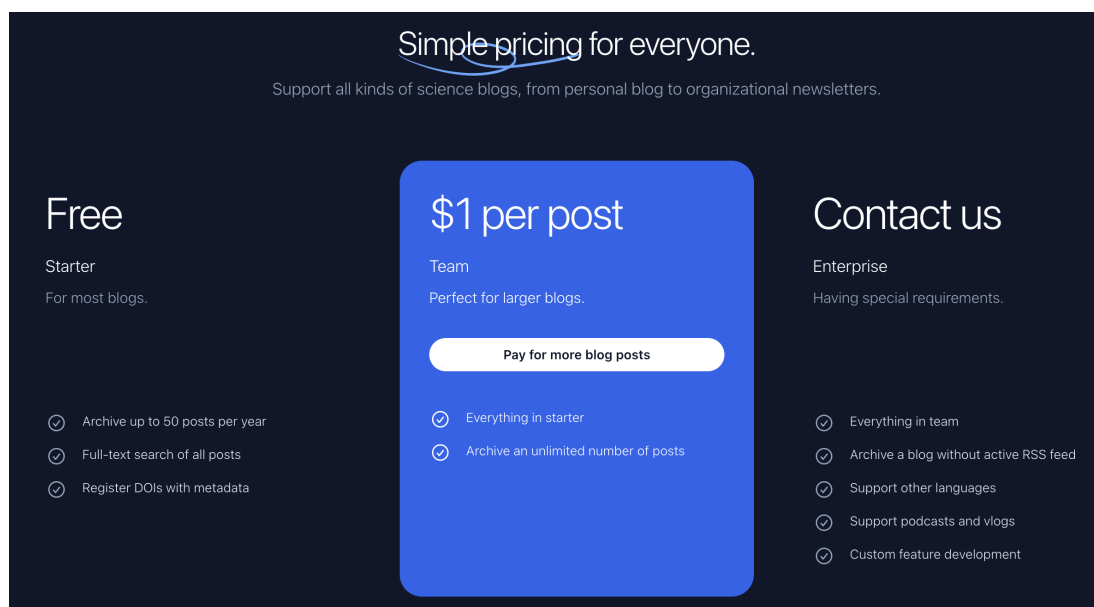


Science blogging [on steroids.](#)

The Rogue Scholar improves your science blog in important ways, including full-text search, long-term archiving, DOIs and metadata.

- Follow the [pay for more blog posts](#) link in the [Rogue Scholar pricing section](#) to pay for archiving additional blog posts. Pay a one-time fee of \$25 to archive 25 blog posts (including full-text search and DOI registration). This can be for your own blog or any other blog included in the Rogue Scholar, and can of course be multiples of 25 to archive more blog posts.

Front Matter



The payments are handled by the [Ko-fi](#) service (using Stripe and Paypal for payment processing). These new payment options make two important assumptions:

- Users are willing to donate money for something they feel is important, even if it adds no direct value. I hope that some individuals are willing to donate to Rogue Scholar, but realistically organizations involved in scholarly communication are more likely to give one-time or regular donations.
- Separating the payment for archiving blog posts from blog owners allows more flexible funding sources, e.g. crowdfunding campaigns to preserve the content of a blog important in a particular community, or funders willing to support scholar infrastructure for science blogs.

Please reach out in the comments or [via email](#) if you have questions or feedback, or if you want to discuss funding the Rogue Scholar in other ways.

References

Bilder G, Lin J, Neylon C. The Principles of Open Scholarly Infrastructure. Published online 2020. doi:[10.24343/C34W2H](#)

Fenner M. Front Matter officially launches today. Published online August 2, 2021. doi:[10.53731/r87krmh-97aq74v-ag5x0](#)

Redhead C. Why CC-BY? OASPA. Published online October 23, 2012. Accessed August 7, 2023. <https://oaspa.org/why-cc-by/>

Fenner M. The Rogue Scholar weekly newsletter launches on Wednesday. Published online July 31, 2023. doi:[10.53731/9cdnt-2k006](#)

How to reach \$4.2M ARR while pursuing a mission | Ghost . *Listen Up IH*. Published online February 4, 2022. Accessed August 7, 2023. <https://www.listenupih.com/ghost-post/>

Front Matter

Brembs B. Is Open Access headed for a cost explosion? Published online October 2, 2019. doi:
[10.59350/d1zfv-8cs77](https://doi.org/10.59350/d1zfv-8cs77)

Katz DS, Barba LA, Niemeyer K, Smith AM. Cost models for running an online open journal.
Published online June 4, 2019. doi:[10.59349/g4fz2-1cr36](https://doi.org/10.59349/g4fz2-1cr36)

Klein M, Sompel HV de, Sanderson R, et al. Scholarly Context Not Found: One in Five Articles
Suffers from Reference Rot. *PLOS ONE*. 2014;9(12):e115253. doi:[10.1371/journal.pone.0115253](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0115253)