

The cost of knowledge – in 2003?

Björn Brembs 

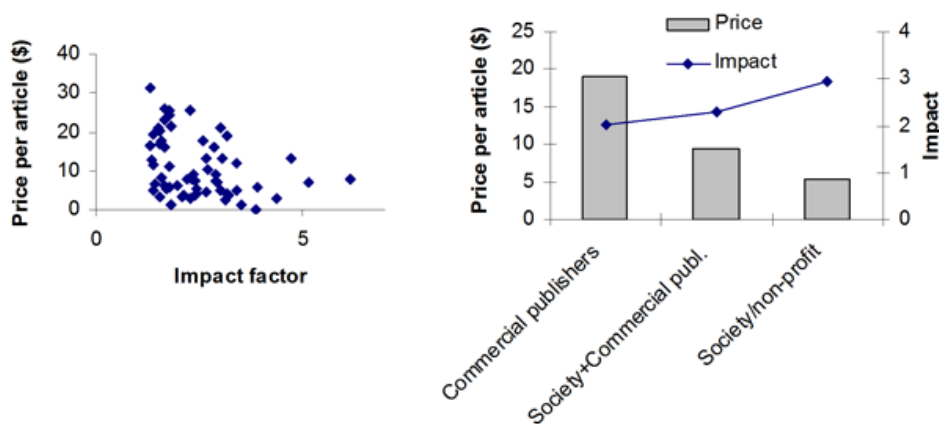
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*During my [flyfishing vacation last year](#), pretty much nothing was happening on this blog. Now that I've migrated the blog to WordPress, I can actually schedule posts to appear when in fact I'm not even at the computer. I'm using this functionality to re-blog a few posts from the [archives](#) during the month of august while I'm away. This post is from [March 29, 2012](#):

*

My former supervisor (in 1993!) [Göran Englund](#) may not be a [Field's Medalist](#) (he's an ecologist!), but already in 2003, he saw corporate publishers behaving in the same way which gave rise to the [Elsevier boycott this year](#), almost ten years later: extorting university libraries with overpriced journals. Back then, he calculated a "blacklist" of journals, ranked by subscription price per article in his field of ecology. Interestingly, the bottom of this list is populated by the high-ranking society and non-profit journals, while the expensive spots are occupied by the lower-ranking, overpriced journals of corporate publishers. Unfortunately, he never published his analysis, but after a phone-conversation initiated for an entirely different reason today, he sent me his blacklist. Here's what he said about it nine years ago:

The crisis in academic publishing

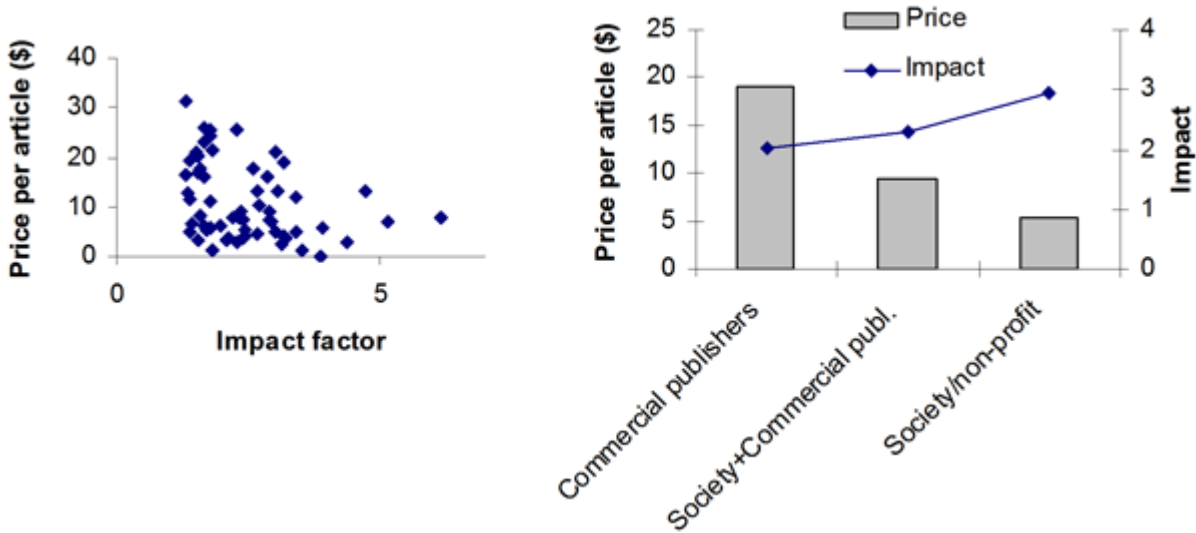
- *The market is dysfunctional – there is no mechanism regulating journal prices.*
- *Prices of commercially published journals often increase by 10-20% per year*
- *In ecology the average prices of commercially published journals are four times higher than those published by non-profit organizations.*
- *Libraries cancel subscriptions – Our research is not efficiently disseminated.*
- *We pay more and get less.*

What can be done?

- *Examine the pricing policy of any commercially published journal before you contribute as an author, reviewer, or editor. If possible, refuse to do business with publishers who practice "predatory pricing."*
- *Submit papers to journals that have reasonable prices.*
- *As a member of a scholarly association, encourage the creation of competitors to expensive commercial journals.*
- *Inform your colleagues.*

More information on the crisis at: www.createchange.org.

The document also contains one small figure at the end that I thought I should paste in here:



I've converted the [entire document to PDF](#) for everyone to enjoy. It almost goes without saying: after 2003, Göran never published, reviewed or edited for any of the commercial journals any more.