



Scientific and philosophical publication: the current state of affairs

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There seems to be increasing interest in publication practices amongst philosophers of science, as they recognize the important role that publication plays in their professional lives and the responsibilities they have for maintaining some control over the process and practices. The increase in interest is manifested in two ways.

First, philosophers of science are talking about publication practices more—practices such as open access, transformative journals, and predatory publishing—and they are talking about how these practices impact on our community, authors and readers. Recently, for example, David Teira, Chiara Lisiciandra, and Sophia Cruwell organized an online conference on open access and transformative journals. The session included a roundtable discussion involving four editors of journals who serve the history and philosophy of science community, broadly conceived. The discussion made it clear that there are at least two ways of approaching this issue. On the one hand, the publishers have their plans about where journal publishing is going. And open access fits into their vision in a certain way. On the other hand, the various editors have their own ideas about the role of open access in the future of our profession. To be clear, the various editors involved were not all of one mind, nor did they share the same concerns and hopes. But concerns were expressed that the interests of the publishers may not always align with the interests of the community of researchers whose work is being published in these journals.

A recent development that was not discussed at the conference, but one deserving the attention of philosophers of science, is the marked rise in predatory publishers. I will not name names, but each week I receive numerous invitations to publish in journals that promise very quick review times, and equally quick production times. So, if I were a scholar in need of a quick publication, say, in one month from now, the opportunities appear to be almost endless. How do I know these are predatory journals? The invitation letters often begin with something like “Dear Esteemed Scholar”, or they express an urgency that is quite foreign to the slow pace of the publication norms in philosophy. For example, an invitation I received, dated December

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8, said: “We have very limited time, so please consider my humble request and try to provide your article submission by **December 15th**” (emphasis in the original). And this invitation was to make a contribution to a field where I have not yet published. Some of these invitations mention a publication of mine, presumably to show that they know my work, but the choice of publication often strikes me as odd, and I find that one of the editorials that I have published in *Metascience* will be mentioned just as often as one of my substantive academic articles.

Second, more and more philosophers of science are studying publication practices in the sciences. This has been an exciting development in our field, and I have been able to witness much of the change firsthand. The first paper I published on the publication practices in the sciences was on collaboration and co-authorship in science in 2002 (see Wray 2002). Not many philosophers of science were working on scientific publication at that time, but there were a few. Thagard (1997), Hardwig (1991), and Hull (1996/2001) had been investigating publication practices in science since the 1990s, and all three of these philosophers had an influence on my work.

Today there is a vast philosophical literature on publication practices in science. In particular, there have been insightful contributions to our understanding of scientific authorship and collaboration in science by many, including, Kevin Zollman, Ryan Muldoon, Bryce Huebner, Quill Kukla, Eric Winsberg, Cailin O’Connor, Thomas Boyer-Kassem, Cyrille Imbert, Remco Heesen, Liam Kofi Bright, Joshua Habgood-Coote, Haixin Dang, and Hanne Andersen (see, for example, the various essays in Boyer-Kassem et al. 2018; Heesen and Kofi Bright 2021; Habgood-Coote forthcoming; Dang 2019; Andersen 2016). Authorship and collaboration are not the only aspects of the culture of scientific publication that are under scrutiny. There have been studies of refereeing norms and practices, misconduct and retraction, and the special challenges posed by interdisciplinary research, to name just a few.

Philosophers of science, it seems, are relatively late to the study of scientific publication, as there is a long tradition of studying publishing practices both in the history of science and the sociology of science. Recent contributions by Baldwin (2015) and Csiszar (2018) stand out as especially important. I try to keep abreast of developments in these areas, and I am hopeful that philosophers of science can work across disciplinary lines and benefit from the vast store of information and insights that historians and sociologists have about scientific publication. Indeed, with this vision in mind, I will be organizing a conference with David Teira that aims to look at scientific publication from philosophical, historical, and sociological perspectives.

Despite the concerns philosophers are expressing as they reflect on the current publication practices in their own discipline and in the sciences, this is a healthy development. We are finding a place where working across disciplinary lines is essential. Such research is bound to lead to fruitful insights.

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