

## **OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS ARE IMPORTANT AND USEFUL**

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In this debate we will focus on issues of fairness and quality. First we will address the question of whether the quality of open access journals is acceptable. In the context of this issue we will consider 'green' and 'gold' open access publishing. Predicated on the assumption that peer-review qualifies as the best means of ensuring quality in scientific publication, we propose that green open access publishing represent an important and useful method of scientific publication. However, based on case study examples of spurious publication and expert commentary, we suggest that gold open access publication can represent a serious threat to publication quality. Second, we address the issue of fairness. Here we challenge the proposition that the open access model is fairer than traditional publishing models. Two lines of evidence are considered with respect to the issues of fairness. First, a shift to paying for publication would penalise countries such as the UK, as British authors produce a disproportionately high number (5%) of all articles published. A second challenge to the proposition that open access publication is fairer is the concern for authors from List B developing countries. These authors are offered reduced publication costs, but these rates are not pro rata to standard economic indices such as GDP. Consequently cost to publish as a proportion of GDP is grossly discrepant, undermining the idea that open access is an inherently fairer method of publication. It is presumably these and other issues that have led world respected scientific institutions such as the Royal Society, to express the concern that 'A move towards a system that relies mainly on ability to pay rather than quality would profoundly undermine the exchange of knowledge'.