Open Access – a battle of words
Jean-Claude Guédon

Janus-Bifrons – the typical scientist
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The researcher-bifrons

➢ Seeks information

➢ Produces information
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Searching leads (almost) anywhere
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However, producing knowledge is also associated with showing oneself
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Our researcher-Janus is not symmetrical
The researcher needs:

- **Access** to information
- **Access** to means of communication
- **Means** to make one’s work
- Visible, accessible, retrievable, usable,
- But also **trusted**, authoritative, perhaps **prestigious**
At this **stage**, new **players** are clearly needed:

- Librarians
- Editors
- Publishers
Until the Second World War, the situation was relatively clear:

- Librarians collected the kind of information their researchers needed most;
- Editors were researchers selecting the best works in their field;
- Publishers took care of the mechanics of dissemination.
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Thanks to librarians, research was:

- Accessible for a very long time
- Retrievable because well ordered
- Usable

Thanks to editors, their research was

- Trusted
- Authoritative
- Perhaps even prestigious
After the **Second World War**, the whole situation changed:

**Commercial publishers** became dominant

Many **scientific societies** lost their importance (but **some very large ones** did not)

The **Science Citation Index** (Eugene Garfield) helps create an **inelastic market** for some journals
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Commercial publishers compete for market share

They compete to sell journal subscriptions, not to individuals, but to libraries

As a result, they need to reorganize the production of knowledge to align it on their commercial objectives

To this end, they need to create a form of competition among researchers that is governed by journals, not fellow researchers
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The solution? The Impact Factor

Journals can be ranked

The ranking is wrongly assimilated to quality

Researchers are being judged by where they publish (not what they publish)
The new situation means:

- **Access to information** (now publishers dominate librarians and access is limited)
- **Access to means of communication** (now publishers monopolize them)
- **Means to make one’s work:**
  - Visible, accessible, retrievable, usable (all defined and constrained by publishers)
  - But also trusted, authoritative, perhaps prestigious (and publishers emphasize prestige and create it with journals)
  - Publishers even have a say in the choice of editors.
Then came digitization, networks and, with it, Open Access
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Open Access signalled a desire among researchers to recover some control over their communication system.
From this point on, a contest has developed between researchers, librarians and publishers (particularly the large, commercial, publishers)
Recently, this contest has been fought around a few words:

- Markets
- Sustainability
- Competitive
- OA itself
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Let us go back to these terms:

- Markets
- Sustainability
- Competitive
- OA itself
The scholarly publishing market is an ‘intermediated market’
“...market forces are unlikely to deliver either widespread open access, or a competitive and sustainable market.” (p. 53)
Finally:

Sustainable...

What does it mean?

For whom?
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MOLTE
GRAZIE!