

PHILOSOPHY

HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER CALLS THE TUNE

8.12.2007

or in German “wes Brot ich ess, des Lied ich sing” – the recent [PLoS blog](#) is about

the financial pros and cons of publishing Open Access and the danger of an “author pays” model leading to “vanity publishing” – the idea that paying for publication can compromise editorial standards. Of course, here at PLoS, the editors do not see the financial disclosure information of authors, and thus it can have no effect on their editorial integrity. It is nonetheless an interesting question, and one which also led Stuart Shieber of Harvard to ask the question “if all journals did go Open Access, would new barriers to publication be created in the form of higher-quality journals charging higher publication fees?”

This is a simple answer – yes – followed by – why not? Most of the current system works by paying some somebody else working for you while still being on the author list (otherwise nobody could author more than 100 generic papers). So what is being unethical for paying a “journal” or “web 2.0 service” for promoting your work?

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