

Start the New Year with the Best Gift

Editorial

What does a scientist wish for a holiday gift? Of course not a Teddy bear, not a toy train, not even a model airplane that can fly. A grant? A raise? A promotion? They are out of Santa's magic power.

What can be the best and affordable gift for a great scientist?

The Freedom of Scientific Publishing

Science is about creation and discovery. Which is more important for science, promoting the new creation and new discovery, or minimizing the low quality papers? The answer is obvious. But so far how much money and efforts did we spend on the latter? In order to limit the publication of so called low quality papers, we sometimes even sacrifice the promotion of new creation and discovery. Creation by definition is the first. It has no peer. Why does a creation need to have peer review even before its publication? If the peer is real peer who understands everything and does the similar things, the conflict of interest is almost inevitable. The protection to the creator is impaired. If the peer is working in another field, then it is not real peer. Do we really need a so called peer to go through only the formality and misspellings? To avoid revolution to the existing system, archive and preprint were used as the compromise. Frankly speaking, published means everybody can see. If everybody can see it, it is published. We do not need the Emperor's new clothes any more. Those small steps have accumulated enough energy, it is time to shout it out:

Freedom of publication with no peer review

Some people believe that when there is no editors for the quality control, the papers will all be trash.

People had similar worry when Wikipedia idea was first proposed. In contrary, Wikipedia is about as good a source of accurate information as Britannica and it was the Encyclopaedia Britannica which stopped the printed version. We should not think of using editors' judgment to replace other scientists' own judgment. It will be better off if there is no editors' prejudgment so that readers can make their own judgments by themselves. The more people making the judgments by themselves the better off for more accurate science evaluation.

Research evaluation in some institutes relies on counting the number of publications and impact factors. Is it possible there are many copies of same paper in the journal if without peer review? Duplicate publishing has been considered a serious crime since it self-plagiarizes and interferes the old evaluation system. Actually who else does it harm? If a product can be advertised on TV for hundreds of times. Why can't the authors be allowed to advertise their work more than once? As long as they do not fabricate the data, they do not harm the science, as long as they do not claim other people's works, they do not harm other people. Of course, with current search engines, it is not necessary either. It actually forces us to check if the old evaluation system of counting papers is

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Youhe Gao*

Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Beijing Normal University, China

*Corresponding author: Youhe Gao, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Beijing Normal University, Gene Engineering and Biotechnology Beijing Key Laboratory, Beijing, 100875, P. R. of China, Tel: 86-10-58804382; Email: gaoyouhe@bnu.edu.cn; ORCID Id: orcid.org/0000-0001-7159-2558

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good or not in some institutions. Some evaluation system relies on the judgment of journal editors. The result is the most influential journal editors are directing the scientists to work in the fields they believe are the most important and most promising. Without the reviewing process, the new ideas the new discoveries can be spread out much faster and easier. Is this better for science? People may argue there must be many language problems and misspellings in the paper. Are those really bad enough for us to sacrifice the protection of authors' originality? If the originality can be fully protected, I would rather tolerate these errors. What if some people use computer generated papers to fool our readers? The real name identification system and publication fee will stop them from abusing the system. Can a gem be found with current search engine? It is the search engine programmer's job instead of the journals job to find every related papers. Is creating a no peer review journal too big a step for science now? We will eventually take this big step. The community has made so many small steps already. We human being are smart enough to walk with two legs. With two systems (peer review vs no peer review), the science will be better than with only one. If one day we find out that the new leg is better and stronger, we may leap with only the new one to the complete freedom of scientific publishing.

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