

Faculty research pushes for open access to peer reviewed research

Innovation Point – AASHE STARS, 2019

As described in STARS AC-11 - open and free access to new peer-reviewed research helps to stimulate learning and innovation, and facilitates the translation of this knowledge into public benefits that advance sustainability. Prof. Jason Schmitt, Clarkson's Chair of the Communications & Media department is tackling the corporate publishing behemoth head-on to expose the inequities caused by and profits enabled by big publishing house journals that control most peer reviewed publications. Schmitt's application of his communications and media scholarship exposes a system that limits the equitable access of scholarly research and is an excellent example of innovation in academic scholarship and public engagement related to sustainability. Because of the presentation of this work in a highly accessible manner, Paywall has a significant opportunity to transform the corporate and profit-oriented approach to academic publishing, thereby increasing universal access to the state or scholarly knowledge. The film has been screened publicly at the United Nations, NASA Jet Propulsion Lab, British Library, and over 340 locations around the world and has had 140,000 views of our film online (as of 2/9/19). Although campus policies related to open access are included in STARS, this type of scholarly work and public engagement is beyond the standard points, included in research (AC-11) and public engagement.

Information about the documentary "*Paywall: The Business of Scholarship*," is available from a [Clarkson press release](#), the movie's [website](#), and a blog on the subject on [Science](#) (AAAS) web site. Some highlights here:

DOCUMENTARY ON OPEN ACCESS TO PREMIERE ON SEPT. 5, 2018 IN WASHINGTON, DC

Release Date: Monday August 27, 2018

"Paywall: The Business of Scholarship," a documentary about the hidden costs of academic publishing and the need for open access to research and science, will premiere on Sept. 5, 2018, at the Landmark Theater (E-Street) in Washington, DC. Additional screenings are scheduled at over 120 universities and institutions around the globe, including the United Nations, MIT Media Lab, UC- Berkeley and Cornell University.

Academic publishing is a \$25.2 billion a year industry. To put that into context, the publisher Elsevier's journal Biomaterials costs an average of \$10,702 for a yearly digital subscription. That's a lot of money to pay for access to publicly funded research, thereby greatly limiting the global and equitable distribution of scholarly advances.

The film, produced and directed by Jason Schmitt, dives into the need for open access to research and science, questions the rationale behind the \$25.2 billion a year that flows into for-profit academic publishers, and examines the 35-40% profit margin associated with the top academic publisher Elsevier.

The 65-minute film takes the audience on an excursion to where academic publishing began in 1665: The Royal Society of London. Schmitt illuminates how access to research is often limited for those outside prestigious academic institutions—especially within the Global South— and showcases how open access models like arXiv.org have played a strong role in information dissemination in physics, mathematics and computer science. "I was drawn to this documentary topic when I learned that public funds, which come out of taxpayers' pockets, fund important scientific research that is locked behind paywalls and inaccessible to the general public," says Schmitt. "As I learned about these issues, I was struck by the global energy and enthusiasm toward open access and the strong resistance to the movement by many of the world's top publishers."

Schmitt and his film crew traveled over 45,000 miles and interviewed over 70 key leaders in academic scholarship, including professors and librarians at top-tier universities and leaders at Wikipedia, Creative Commons, the Smithsonian, the Royal Society, Open Society Foundations and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Staying true to the open access model: this film will be free to stream and download upon release and maintains the most open CC BY 4.0 Creative Commons designation to ensure anyone regardless of their social, financial or political background will have access to view this film.