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Electronic publishing in academic environments: The FIGARO project

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The traditional scientific journal

- Growing emphasis on quality assessment
- Growing importance of branding
- Present situation: peer review and quality assessment are the central aspects
- The journal's essential role is to enable managers to judge the quality of individual scientists

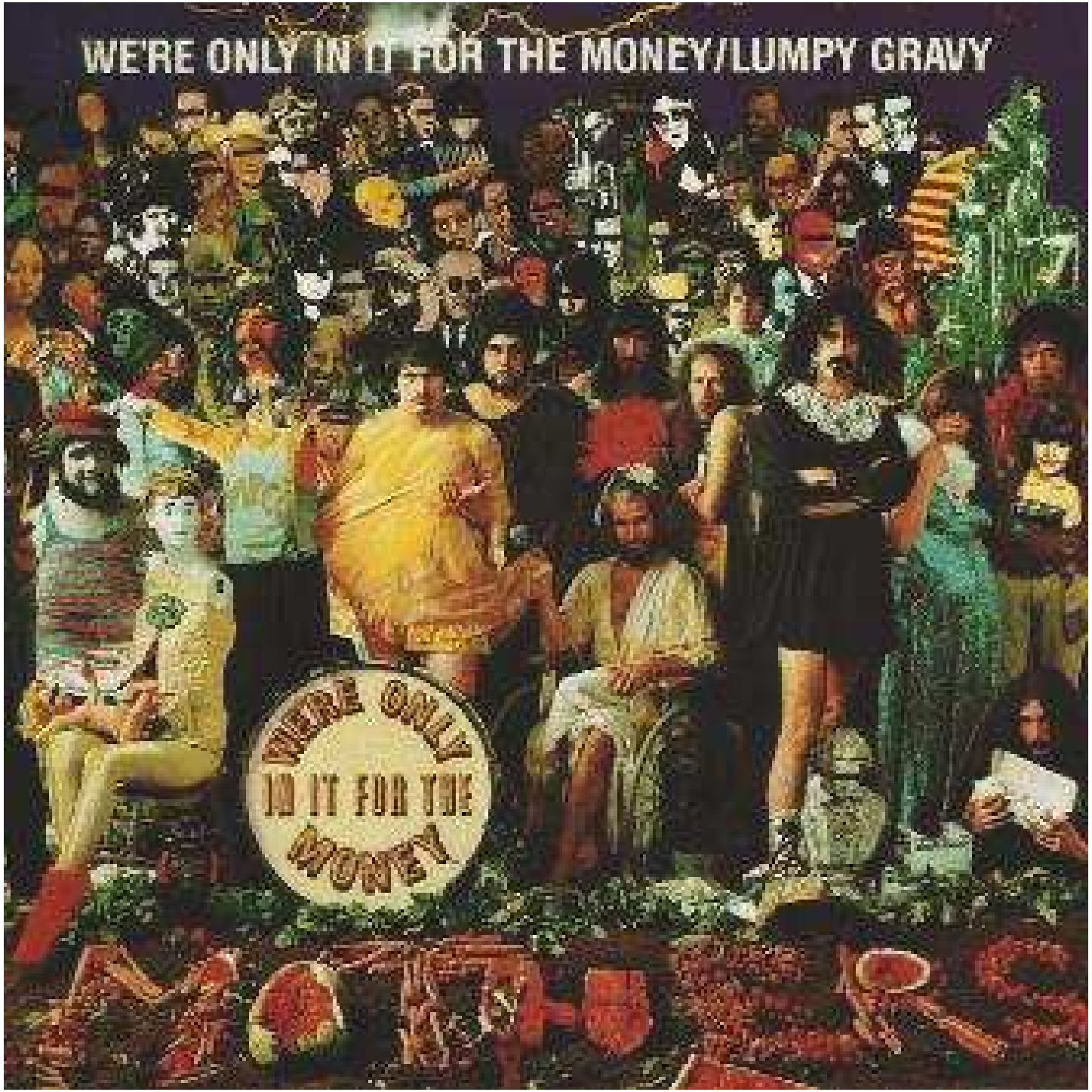
Point of departure

The traditional scientific journal is:

- sluggish,
- financially unaffordable.

It has become an obstacle for communication among scolars and, thus, denies its original raison d'être.

Innovation?


WE'RE ONLY IN IT FOR THE MONEY/LUMPY GRAVY
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Innovation?

Innovation is complicated because

- commercial publishers are mainly in it for the money
- many academics want to stick to the traditional quality measures

SPARC ALTERNATIVE JOURNALS CAN SAVE LIBRARIES MONEY WITHOUT SACRIFICING QUALITY

Title	Price	Title	Price	
Topology & Its Applications	$2,672	*Algebraic and Geometric Topology*	Free	**$2,672**
Journal of Crystal Growth	$9,220	*Crystal Growth & Design*	$1,781	**$7,439**
Evolutionary Ecology *(price reduced in 2001)*	$467	*Evolutionary Ecology Research*	$340	**$127**
Topology	$1,303	*Geometry & Topology*	Free	**$1,303**
Organic Geochemistry	$2,513	*Geochemical Transactions*	$100	**$2,413**
Sensors & Actuators, A & B	$5,313	*IEEE Sensors Journal*	$395	**$4,918**
Machine Learning	$1,050	*Jnl of Machine Learning Research*	Free	**$1,050**
Plant Ecology (formerly Vegetatio)	$2,861	*Jnl of Vegetation Science*	$450	**$2,411**
Tetrahedron Letters	$9,624	*Organic Letters*	$2,609	**$7,015**
Chemical Physics Letters	$10,264	*PhysChemComm*	$100	**$10,164**
Jnl of Logic & Algebraic Programming	$747	*Theory & Practice of Logic Programming*	$300	**$447**
	$46,034		**$6,075**	**$39,959**

SPARC

Present trends

- Incremental changes: print → electronic
  - by publishers themselves
  - co-publishing (HighWire)
  - new e-journals (academic community)
- Innovations: emphasis on communication
  - discipline oriented: archives, publication sites, portals
  - institution oriented: repositories
- A worldwide movement towards Open Access:

  PLoS, BOAI, Open Archive Initiative, SPARC

Possible trend #1

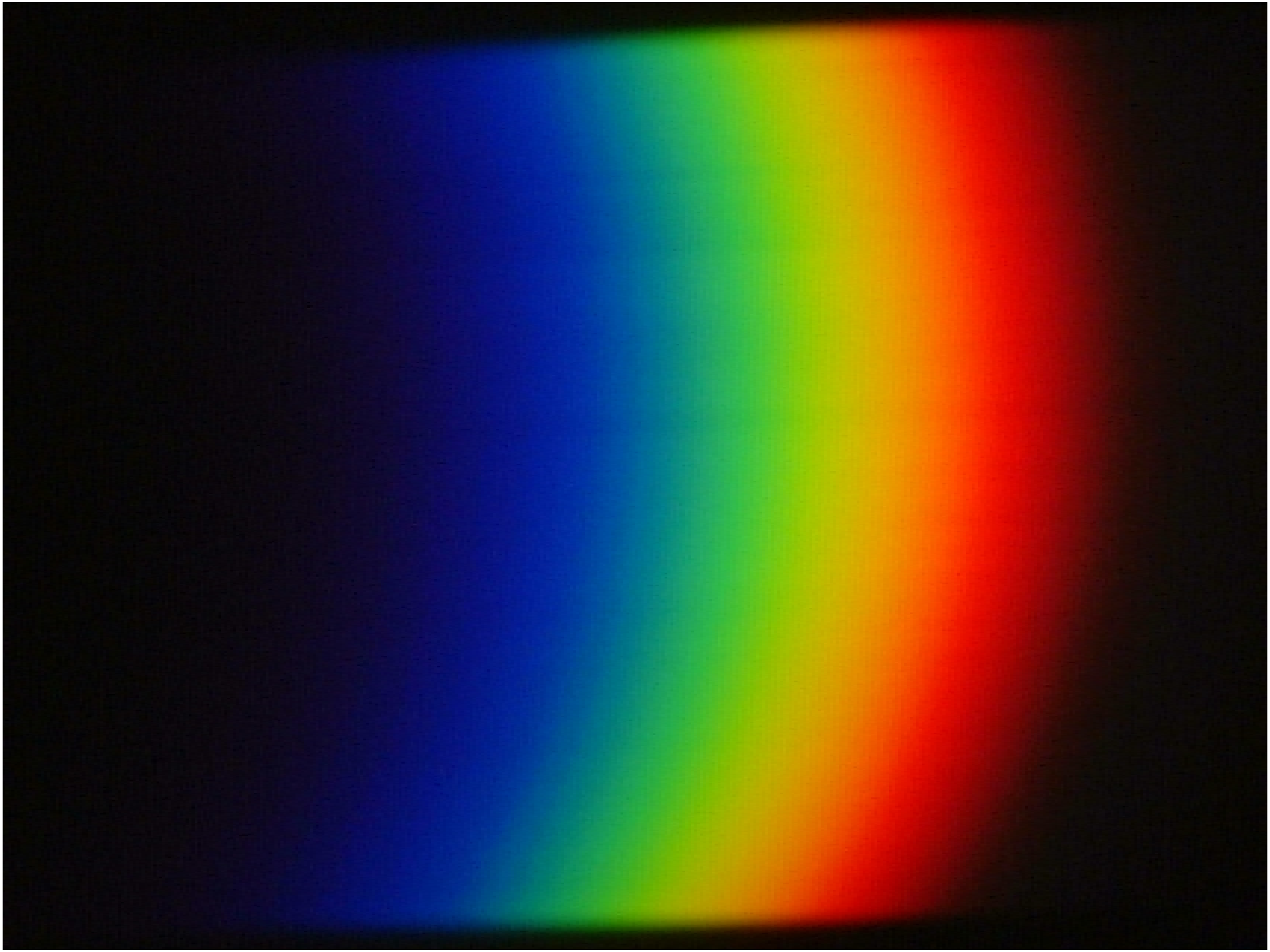
A gradual revolution:

- Print journals
- Full text e-versions of print journals
- E-journals
- Multimedia
- Dropping the concept of issues
- Publication sites
- Peer review after publication
- Additional services
- Portals
- Virtual communities

Possible trend #2

The increasing importance of Archives:

- Personal archives
- Institutional archives
- Aggregated by discipline
- Peer review organised by research communities
- Additional services
- Made accessible by portals
- Virtual communities
- New quality measures, relating not to the brand but to the quality of the work itself
- Resulting in a global mapping of science



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To fully understand our position and our purpose, a basic understanding of the current state of scholarly communications is beneficial. Here you will find a short history of academic publishing and the scientific journal, as well as some insight into the situation that sparked the formation of GAP and Roquade, the two initiatives that ultimately combined to create FIGARO. The name FIGARO is an acronym partially taken from the names of these previous projects: Federated Initiative of GAP and Roquade.
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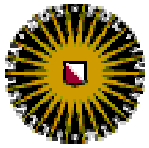

“FIGARO”?

F ederated

I nfrastructure

GA P and

RO quade

FIGARO's participants

- University of Utrecht (co-ordinator)
- Core consortium members: Universities of Delft, Hamburg, Oldenburg, Firenze; Daidalos
- Content providers:
  - –Academic: Leuven, Lund, Delft, Firenze
  - –SME's: DiG (Poland), Lemma (Netherlands)
- Dissemination: SPARC
- 1,4 million euro provided by EC
- Started May 2002

Main features of FIGARO

- Providing an infrastructure for academic e-publishing that allows for modular use
- Facilitating a gradual transition from rather traditional to innovative models
- Not a publisher, in the traditional sense of the word, but assistance to scientists, research groups, institutes to become publishers themselves
- Decentralised structure
- Not for profit

FIGARO's mission

As a partner organisation within the European academic community, our mission is to enhance scientific communication by improving the speed, simplicity and cost, which we aim to do through innovations in scholarly publishing.

We strive to provide effective and efficient e-publishing services to individual scientists and scientific organisations through the use of a shared organizational structure and the utilization of open source and standard base software tools wherever possible.

We are committed to supporting our customers by facilitating scientific communication and the publishing process in a way that allows them to retain ownership of their work as well as present their own profile or identity.

Publishing services

FIGARO's business model

- Organisation
  - Network, not hierarchical
  - Strong input from customers
  - No central branding
- Economics
  - Not for profit
  - Preferably open access

FIGARO's network organisation

Service providers

- back office of the publishing process
- maybe also other service providers

Front offices (university press, publishing company, library)

- intermediate to academic community (scientists, editorial boards, academic organisations, etc): franchisees

Co-ordinator:

- recruiting new front offices
- stimulating synergy between front offices
- regulating the dynamics within the network

Academic community
FIGARO

FIGARO's financial model

The back office is a financially independent entity, working on a cost recovery base

- the costs for maintenance and innovation of the back office are paid by the front offices
- the higher the use of the back office, the lower the price

A front office needs money to pay the back office

- structural funding from its parent institution
- traditional model: subscription fees
- new models: towards open access

Open access: about costs

- “Open Access” does not mean that there are no costs involved
- “Open Access” does mean that the costs are not paid by the reader
- This is fair: actually, every scientific journal has some kind of monopoly from the viewpoint of the reader: the reader has no alternative

Open Access models: who pays?

- authors, paying for publication
- authors, paying for peer review
- institutions or societies supporting a journal or site
- institutions or societies buying the right for their members to publish in a certain medium
- grants, donations, sponsorships

A dilemma

- It is rather easy to construct a completely new economical model for academic publishing, in accordance with the interests of the academic community
- Its is rather difficult to imagine how the present economical model may evolve into this new model

When everything is under control,
you are going too slowly.

Mario Andretti

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