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# The 2020 Manifesto for Fair Open Access Publishing in South Asian Studies

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**Profiteering and restricted access have led to a crisis in academic publishing. The Fair Open Access movement is best promoted by mobilizing individual disciplines. With this manifesto, we, an open group of scholars of classical and modern South Asian Studies, declare our support for Fair Open Access publishing.**

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**§1 As is well known, the impact of publications is very often contingent on factors independent of the quality of the research or the competence of the authors.** This includes that the research is published in a renowned journal (or other publication medium), by a renowned editor, or – and this has become a major problem – by a prestigious publishing house.

**§2 Most of the prestigious publication media are nowadays controlled by a small number of profiteering international publishers.** These companies often sell their products at unjustifiably high prices. Much of the editorial work, on the other hand, is outsourced to researchers (or their co-workers, assistants, employees, secretaries etc.). Because they depend on the prestige capitalized on by the publishers, they generally do this without payment. This situation has led to a real crisis in academic publishing.

**§3 The Open Access (OA) movement is a reaction to this development:** the advance of digitization has made it easy to make the results of research freely available on the internet. OA publishing offers free access to research, regardless of an individual's financial means or affiliation with a subscribing institution. In the OA model, the individual reader does not pay (except, of course, in the case of printed works). Instead, the publication costs are borne by universities, libraries, scholarly societies, professional associations or other scholarly institutions. While in the wake of this development a number of institutions have founded in-house publishing projects, some commercial publishers have started to offer OA as well.

**§4 In order to compensate for the revenue losses resulting from the free availability of OA publications, however, some profiteering publishers have begun to calculate special fees** – imposed on the authors or their institutions. Most often, these fees are unjustifiably high and overcompensate for the production costs. As a growing number of academic institutions nowadays demand that the publications of their employees be OA, they are willing to pay these fees. They even regularly schedule a special budget to finance the publishers.

**§5 Ultimately, however, it is the tax payers who have to pay,** often several times: funding for research and researchers, library budgets for subscription fees, acquisition of overpriced books, processing costs charged by the publishers for OA publications etc. The only reason this system functions is that researchers and their institutions are dependent on the prestige that profiteering publishers have capitalized on for commercial benefit.

**§6 This business model is contrary to the spirit of the sciences and the humanities,** whose main task is to discover and to create knowledge and to communicate it to the tax paying public – by *publishing* their results in the truest sense of the word. It goes without saying that excellent scholars and institutions should work together with first-rate publishers and *vice versa*. But both excessive profiteering and exploitation through “voluntary” work should come to an end. If researchers and publishers are paid by tax money, then this must be done under fair conditions for all parties.

**§7 We, an open and growing group of concerned scholars, are convinced that Fair Open Access (FOA) publishing is the best way out of this crisis.** What FOA shall encompass is subject to open discussion.

Most important is, in any case, a “separation of powers”: scientific quality and publishing services must be independent of each other. Building on the definition by the [Fair Open Access Alliance \(fairopenaccess.org\)](https://fairopenaccess.org), we suggest the following guiding principles for FOA publishing:

1. Publications must be Open Access, either Gold or Green.
2. Authors must retain the control over their copyright and an explicit Open Access license should be used.
3. The possibility to publish should not depend on the financial situation of the author or on membership fees.
4. All costs and fees that arise in connection to the publication process must be transparent, fair, and in proportion to the work carried out.
5. Publishing houses – whether privately or publicly financed – should only act as service providers and as subcontractors.
6. The publication medium itself (a journal, book series, encyclopedia, etc.) should be controlled and governed by those who are qualified to evaluate its content. In other words, it should be in the hands of scholars alone.
7. The “brand” of the publication medium must not be the property of a profit-oriented organization, but, for instance, of a board of scholars, a non-profit association, a library etc.
8. Effort deserves recognition. The work done by publishers must be duly acknowledged in every publication, in parallel with that of researchers.
9. All those who contributed to the publication process in any substantial way must be credited. If parts of the production process were carried out by different persons, institutions or companies (paid or unpaid), all of them must be named.

**§8 Since profiteering publishers will not give up their business model just because we say they should, we have to take action ourselves.** Scholars (especially early-career scholars without tenure) need to publish in prestigious journals and books in order to build a CV that will impress hiring committees. Editors, on the other hand, may feel that they could betray the publishers they work with and that they could jeopardize their own position. In this way, many of us are compromised. But if we collectively make the effort to take a step forward, that will make a difference.

**§9 As the FOA Alliance has shown with their initiatives in the fields of linguistics, mathematics and psychology, it is best to promote FOA from within the individual disciplines.** In the (relatively speaking) small setting of a single discipline, people know each other and can form networks, spread awareness and join forces in order to implement FOA. When it is possible to assess each other's work, commercially successful publishers are not needed to guarantee the quality of the research. In a community of trusted peers, it is easier to find and recommend FOA publishers and high-quality publishing media.

**§10 As scholars and researchers, we should therefore take the following measures, whenever the circumstances permit:**

1. Depending on our personal situation, we should **avoid or even boycott profiteering publishers** that base their business models on the capitalization of academic prestige (by demanding unjustifiably high Article Processing Charges etc.).
2. As **authors**, we should prefer FOA publishers over others when we have a free choice between several options. If we have no choice, we can at least suggest FOA alternatives.
3. As **editors**, we should think about FOA alternatives for our journals and books when we have the opportunity.
4. As **reviewers**, we shall continue to provide anonymous reviews of FOA publications without demanding compensation. In contrast, we could consider claiming compensation (financial or other) for reviews requested by non-FOA publishers.
5. As **employers** and **financiers**, when assessing the merits of a potential employee or of a project proposal, we shall begin to particularly value FOA publications (for example, when we have to decide between two otherwise equally qualified applications).
6. As potential **founders** of journals, book series or even publishing houses, we should consider realizing our plans according to FOA standards. If possible, we should request the support of one of the many institutions that are committed to implementing the transition to Open Access.



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With the **2020 Manifesto for Fair Open Access Publishing in South Asian Studies**, we, the undersigned scholars, declare our support for Fair Open Access publishing in classical and modern South Asian Studies. We are aware that this project will take time and that the old structures cannot be replaced today, or by tomorrow. We firmly believe, however, that the transition to this form of publishing is the best way forward in the long-term and that the time and effort needed in order to realize it are worth it.

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