In our group, we agreed that providing open access to research articles would foster research and tackle current challenges, however we were debating if this cause justifies the means of illegal acts and if open access would annihilate the quality assurance of research papers.

SciHub is a website providing academic articles and research papers freely. The goal is democratizing access to knowledge for researchers by bypassing research publishers' subscriptions. It is controversial because it challenges the traditional academic publishing model and raises significant legal, ethical, and economic concerns. It claims itself as “civil disobedience against a profit-driven publishing industry”.

During our debate, we agreed on a variety of arguments in favor of SciHub for open-access to research papers.
→ Maintaining paywalls is more expensive than open access (even considering APC : *article processing charges*). The average cost for publishing a paper is 400$.
→ Publishers offer quality assurance, which represents a key advantage of scientific publishing. However, the peer review is done by researchers, who typically receive no compensation for their work.
→ SciHub pressures to transform the publishing system. Publishers claim that SciHub is undermining the current publishing system, but the website’s rapid growth (“growing at 80% a year, measured both by Google search interest and download logs”) highlights the demand for a system where research papers & resources are more accessible.
→ The platform is a convenient way for researchers from developing countries (e.g China, India, Iran) to have access to resources that they could not have paid for otherwise (even if these countries represent only a small part of the platform’s downloads).
→ In our digital societies, it is necessary to have open access to full research texts to allow text & data mining by AI tools, which are helpful for many subjects such as healthcare.

However, a couple of arguments remain against the way SciHub fills its database.
→ By bypassing paywalls of major academic publishers, SciHub commits copyright infringement.
→ The use of stolen credentials (phishing, hacking, alterations of personal profiles, and password theft) raises privacy and ethical concerns.
→ These criminal acts could be avoided as legal alternatives to access research papers exist (e.g ShareLink, Research for life R4L), but they are quite difficult to put in place in practice.
→ In the event of a complete collapse of the publishing system, there would be no mechanism to guarantee the quality of research papers, as unrestricted self-publication would eliminate any distinction between scholarly and unreviewed contributions. SciHub itself offers no such mechanism, as it only aggregates papers that have been published elsewhere.
→ Established publishers provide a framework for quality assurance, even though they do not perform the peer review process. Without this structure, it would be challenging for researchers to organize and manage this independently.

In conclusion, we thought that SciHub helped the progress of science by pushing for open-access to papers, and that this might force the established publishers to rethink their business model and expensive pay-walls if they are to compete in the future. Although we had some objections regarding the methods of SciHub, and some positive views on the quality assurance which established publishers provide and which SciHub can't replace with their current model.

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