

Preprints are all you need?

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Current methods by which academics communicate with each other—“Journal articles”—are wildly out of date and potentially counterproductive toward their supposed goals: To inform researchers about each others’ work in ways that are valid, reliable, and reproducible. Preprints—scholarly manuscripts not yet captured by the publication industry—have long promised to greatly improve scientists’ communications landscape, yet this “intellectual perestroika” (Harnad 1990) has not been realized in practice: Preprints continue to be treated as less authoritative versions of their “published” counterparts, and the services that underlie this gap in perceived authoritativeness—editorship, peer-review, discovery, etc.—can be provided for preprints but commonly aren’t, and are provided by academics but incorrectly credited to the publishing industry. I encourage scholars to recognize this state of captivity of their communications infrastructure and to work together toward Harnad’s (Harnad 1998) vision of the “final state toward which the learned journal literature is evolving”: Preprints are all we need.

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[Blog post and Univers column (<https://universonline.nl/nieuws-categorie/columns-opinie/>) on scientific communication and publication and preprints.]

The ways in which we scholars communicate with each other is the stupidest thing in science today.

“if I can get a preprint of a published paper for free, why should I (or my library) pay for the journal?” (p. 9) The answer isn’t “I shouldn’t” only if we let our imaginations be constrained by the shackles imposed on it by tradition, inertia, and the lobbying efforts of the ridiculously profitable publication industry.

- What is the current state of communications in science (publishing industry)
- What is wrong with the current mode of relying on the publishing industry
 - Financial
 - Warping incentives via impact factor & prestige shopping
 - Clunky workflows
 - Misattribute genuine service to profession to industry (editors, peer review)
 - Industry moving toward a common internet platform model where users are the product (data harvesting and selling platforms)
- What are preprints
- How can preprints help
 - The term ‘preprint’ is obsolete and potentially counterproductive
- Moving beyond “publications” or “articles”? Seems fraught since a communication, whatever called, represents the findings of the research or current state
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