

Keynote: Access to scholarly knowledge for common causes: a Latin American context

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Some fields of knowledge or disciplines are (or should be) of global interest, since these are necessary to ensure human well-being. For example, fields such as biomedical, environmental, and climate sciences, and conservation biology among others. I will refer to these as common causes. Despite the importance of these fields, a high proportion of knowledge, related with these issues, is monopolized by publishers such as Elsevier, Springer Nature, etc. However, knowledge in these topics should not have barriers that slow down important actions such as conservation action in climate change scenarios or the actual sixth mass extinction of plants and animals. In this context, Sci-hub is gaining popularity maybe because it is a fast and intuitive tool to unlock a high number of papers, and also due to the impossibility to pay elevated prices for journals' subscription, mainly in developing countries. Sci-hub is not only an effort to democratize knowledge (in terms of access), but also reveals the poor democratization of science in the world (in terms of a research practice deeply centralized, especially in developed countries and their capital cities) and the consequences of underfunded science councils in developing regions like Latin America. Nonetheless, Sci-hub (and other tools: RG, Unpaywall, etc.) are not a sustainable solution to eliminate barriers of knowledge access, because publishing corporations will bring these tools down, since these threaten their millionaire profits. Also, these tools only mask the problem of knowledge access, because authors are not concerned with the diffusion of their papers published in paywall journals since they just wait for Sci-hub (or other tool) to unlock it. In this scenario, I will suggest potential actions to boost the open access system according to the regional context, taking into account my experience with the criminal process of copy right and things I have learned from it.