

University of California terminates subscriptions to Elsevier

March 4 2019, by Bob Yirka



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Janet Napolitano, President of the University of California (and former Secretary of Homeland Security during the Obama administration), [has published](#) an open letter on the university's official website announcing

that the university will no longer pay subscription fees to Elsevier—the mammoth scholarly paper publisher. In her letter, Napolitano claims that officials with Elsevier were unwilling to meet the two main requests made by the university: full open access to all scholarly articles published by authors at UC and reduced costs. She further notes that approximately 18 percent of research articles produced by UC faculty appear in Elsevier products.

Elsevier is based in the Netherlands and is one of the major publishers of research papers. Its products include *The Lancet* and *Cell* and a host of other platforms. It also publishes *Grey's Anatomy*. The company has developed a reputation for pushing back against clients who demand the removal of paywalls.

Jeffrey MacKie-Mason, UC's University Librarian and part of the negotiating team [spoke to the press](#) after the announcement. He said the university was willing to continue to pay subscription fees, but only if the papers written by people at the university would be open access to everyone else in the world. He claimed that Elsevier would only agree to such terms if the subscription rates for the university were substantially increased. He noted that up until December of last year, the university was paying approximately \$11 million a year for subscriptions to Elsevier products.

Notably, the decision to cease paying [subscription](#) fees to Elsevier does not mean that researchers at the university will not be published by Elsevier—those relationships will continue as before. Nor does it mean that prior work published on products owned by Elsevier by researchers at UC will become unavailable to researchers at the university—agreements in contracts signed at the time allow for continued full access. Only research published since January 1 of this year and moving forward will be impacted. The main difference will be the ability of researchers at the university to [access](#) research results

published by others related to what they are working on—a critical part of research efforts and a necessity when citing other authors.

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