

June 1st, 2021

Publishers champion academic freedom through leading-edge data practices

While the recently published DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) AWBI (Subcommittee on Scientific Library Services and Information Systems) briefing paper "[Data tracking in research: aggregation and use or sale of usage data by academic publishers](#)" highlights the growing importance of data as a fundamental facet of contemporary research publishing, it includes falsehoods, inaccuracies and misinterpretations.

Understanding data is crucial to advancing science and research. Data provides additional opportunities for enhancing discovery and collaboration and its comprehension lies at the very heart of publishers' missions to connect researchers, their research and the wider world. Publishers have used data to add value in an increasingly digital and interconnected environment. They have done this in a manner which actively defends academic freedom and ensures the protection of a robust and secure global research ecosystem.

Contrary to the article, publishers are committed to promoting data best practices to help ensure a healthy and technologically advanced environment. They enhance the ability of researchers to access, read, share, link, connect and cite the world's ever-growing body of knowledge. Similarly, using data to achieve these positive outcomes is far from a new development in academic publishing. Over the years, STM's members have worked in partnership and founded a variety of crucial infrastructure initiatives such as [Crossref](#), and have actively championed the important role which data plays across many projects. This is demonstrated most recently by [STM Research Data](#) – a program which has doubled the number of articles containing data availability statements (DASs) over the course of just one year and strongly supports the ongoing development of Open Science.

The allegations within the article that publishers support the use of spyware are categorically false. There is no such thing as "publisher spyware". STM publishers have long-standing commitments to legal and ethical precepts which underpin the collection, storage and usage of all data. They operate with the highest standards of transparency and traceability and are fully GDPR compliant. As such, researchers have full control over their personal data, in the same way as they would when they visit any other legal business's website.

The use of identification and authentication tools are essential for maintaining the security and integrity of research systems. Whilst we agree that convenience is a fundamental requirement for researchers – tools and services can only be delivered when coupled with identification systems which provide robust and transparent protection to users.

The suggestion that [Seamless Access](#) and [GetFTR](#) are one and the same entity is incorrect. As is the assertion about the foundation of [SNSI](#) (The Scholarly Networks Security Initiative) which was joined together by a number of academic publishers rather than just the two stated.

STM is therefore deeply concerned that publisher motivations and practices should be so incorrectly represented within this article when its members are and have been fully committed to championing academic freedom through leading-edge data practices. We request that this article is revisited so that its inaccuracies can be swiftly corrected. To that end, publishers stand ready to assist with providing factually accurate and up-to-date information.