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3-15-2023

## None of Our Business: Critically Examining Power Dynamics and the Role of Libraries in the Information Industry

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### Recommended Citation

Finch, E., Sundt, A., Thoms, B., & Western, S. None of our Business: Critically examining power dynamics and the role of libraries in the information industry. Poster presentation at Association of College & Research Libraries National Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. March 15-17, 2023.

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# NONE OF OUR BUSINESS

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## Critically Examining Power Dynamics and the Role of Libraries in the Information Industry

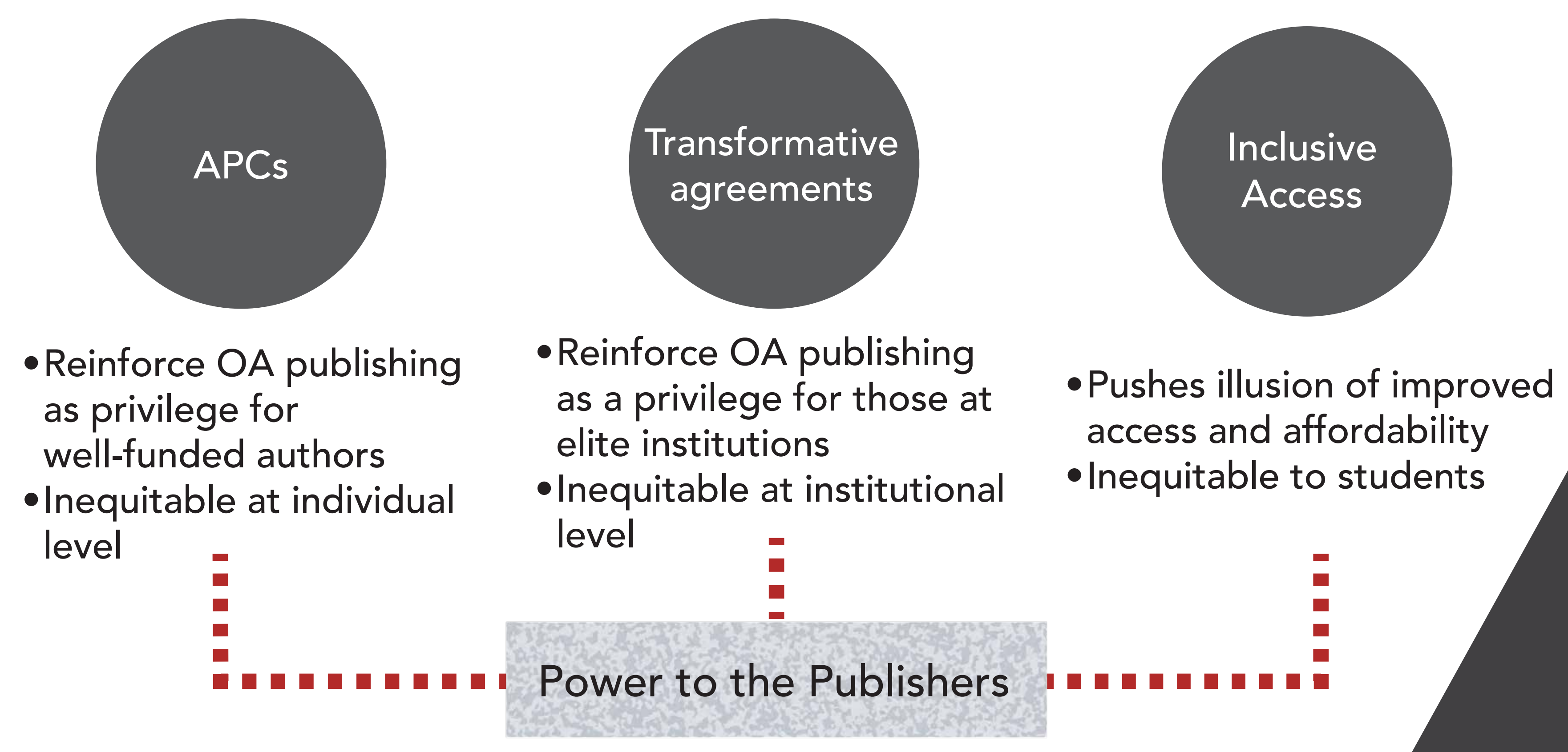
### Academic Production as Marxist Superstructure

Talk of the prestige economy is cheap, while open access and APCs are big business. Librarians dream of bolder action but are fearful of institutional backlash. How do we find a new path forward?

Superstructure (Institutions, Ideologies)	Tenure & Promotion	Science as Commodity	Education as Private Pursuit
Base (Economic Systems)	Impact Factor, Prestige Economy	Journal Packages	Textbook Costs

The Marxist concept of superstructure—the institutional and ideological systems that exist alongside the economic means of production, can help explain this inertia. It's not enough to question the commoditized model of academic publishing without also interrogating the ideas and social systems that make this model appear inevitable.

Elsevier/RELX acquisitions since 2013.



### Late-Stage Academic Publishing

#### Colonizing Academic Infrastructure

Companies like Elsevier and Clarivate are rapidly transforming into end-to-end academic data brokers.



#### Digital First, Students Last

The big three textbook publishers use digital-only to combat reselling and lock students into more restrictive access.

- Pearson** --- 33% jump in profits in 2021 after going digital first.
- McGraw Hill** --- Digital sales grew 10%. Inclusive Access billings rose 58%.
- CENGAGE** --- 40% increase in sales. U.S. Higher Ed business is 83% digital and over 85% are recurring sales.

Elsevier/RELX acquisitions since 2013.

## OPEN FOR ANTI-CAPITALISM

The Gatekeeper P1  
 The Reinforcer P2

**What roles do libraries play in reinforcing the commoditized model of academic production?**

The Widget P3  
 The Enforcer P4

Open Everything

- Values and policies around open
- Open Science and Infrastructure
- Creators as publishers

Advocate & Educate

- Separate quality from prestige
- Be transparent about crisis
- Participate in communities of practice

Challenge

- Interrogate academic products and containers
- Problematize publishing and data practices
- Be change agents

SOURCES



Poster design inspired by "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" by El Lissitzky and other Soviet art