

## **Publish - or perish? What has paper to do with it?**

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Scientific publication - that is, the dissemination of our research in all possible forms - has always involved ink on paper. When papers were 'read' or 'communicated' at learned societies such as the meeting at which Darwin's and Wallace's papers were presented to the Linnean, the proceedings were reported and published in the Society's journal. Dissemination to the fellows (rather few of whom attended meetings) and to the interested public was through reprints and combined volumes of papers were deposited in selected national and international repositories. Ever since, society publishing has been a major force in sustaining specialist journals to promote and disseminate their fields of endeavour. Specialisation and expanding research in traditional and new fields has led to ever increasing numbers of journals, with more pages allocated to each. And all-the-while publication has become more commercial including as a source of revenue raising for societies, with professionals in many roles previously undertaken by volunteers. Commercialism raises questions concerning why we continue to disseminate on (costly, mailed) paper when all processing to dissemination is totally electronic. Fewer society members want to store paper copy, libraries purchase bundled e-journals and even editors and advisory boards prefer e-access. Reprints are available by pdf, and 'early view' of accepted manuscripts also is electronic. Paper will perish - the move away is inexorable, whether we like it or not. Perhaps only in taxonomy, constrained by a code, will paper copies persist but changes are happening here too, exemplified by Zootaxa.

