

American Committee on Asian Economic Studies

September 2023

Greetings from the American Committee on Asian Economic Studies.

This newsletter begins with the usual reporting on our ASSA session and the Asia Economics Blog, then turns to a more occasional theme of the past few years -- the publishing environment for academic journals -- to solicit information on open-access journals under academic ownership.

ASSA 2024. The topic of our session at the Allied Social Science Association Annual Meeting in January 2024 is "Demographics in Asian Economies", details [here](#). We are bouncing back from the isolation of recent years with a full slate of Asian paper presenters.

Asia Economics Blog. Over the coming months, the [Asia Economics Blog](#) will carry posts on our ASSA topic, and indeed the first of these is already online: ["Does Population Ageing Pose an Imminent Threat to China's Growth?"](#) by Robert McNown, Wong Koi Nyen, and Goh Soo Khoon. Last year's ASSA session generated a series of posts on "Asian Economies in Global Supply Chains". More generally, we welcome proposals for posts, especially from younger scholars seeking to gain visibility for their research.

Survey on Open-Access Journals under Academic Ownership. The model of academic journal publishing is in transition. The old model of corporate publishers marketing print subscriptions to libraries has given way to online dissemination at far lower production cost. Yet entrenched concentration within the journal publishing industry and the differentiated nature of the product on

the supply side against the inelastic demand of institutional buyers has kept prices high and the business model, especially for dominant player Elsevier, "[staggeringly profitable](#)".

Academics are fighting back by taking ownership of journals through membership societies, universities, or non-profit organizations and publishing under open access.

To aid in promotion of academically-owned economics journals on Asia, ACAES is conducting a survey with findings to be shared on the Asia Economics Blog. Responses may be entered at the link below.

JOURNAL SURVEY

If you know of owners or editors of journals that fit this bill, please encourage them to take advantage of this promotional opportunity.

The backstory behind our dedication to this cause is that ACAES lost the journal it founded in 1990 and ran for 30 years to a takeover by Elsevier in 2020. Originally, the journal was owned by a small academic publisher that Elsevier then swallowed up, along with many other such publishers. With its business model under pressure at the rise of the internet, Elsevier became ever more intrusive in our editorial process, pushing us to publish more articles and especially more articles on China; to share rejected articles with other Elsevier journals and consider articles rejected by other Elsevier journals; and to reduce time for editorial engagement with authors. Ultimately, Elsevier transferred management of the journal to its Beijing subsidiary and severed the journal's association with ACAES. Three years on, the journal's content is dominated by papers on China whereas ACAES had always maintained geographical

balance. And the journal's ranking has sunk from the 160s range by the [RePEc 10-year simple impact factor](#) to below 350. Yet for Elsevier shareholders, the returns to more advantageous marketing of the journal in China presumably outweigh the loss of its prestige.

Moving on, we've come to view the dissolution of a once respected journal against the broader context of an industry in flux and to recognize the opportunities created for new models of research dissemination. Especially in a growth area like the economics of Asia, the momentum ought to lie with open-access, academically-owned journals competing away the outsized economic rents of corporate publishers. So please, do let us know about such journals and we will spread the word.

This effort builds on a series of previous blog posts on the journal publishing environment that begins [here](#).

All best,

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