

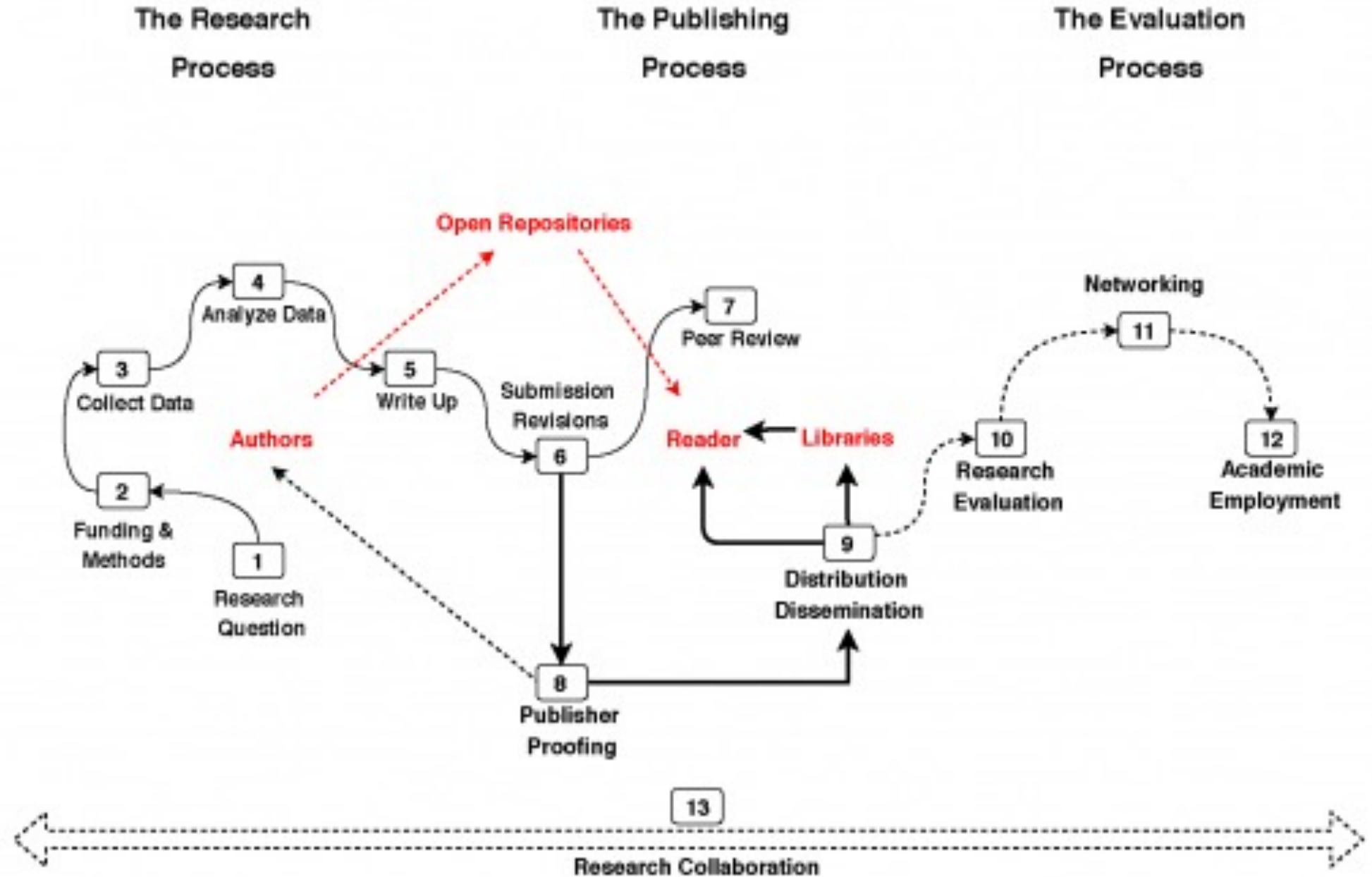
# University – Big Tech/ Industry Relationships and Roles

- Future employers of graduates
  - Partners in education
  - Partners in research
  - Research object, e.g. strategies, business models, data
  - Suppliers of technology/ infrastructures and services
  - Suppliers of research infrastructures
  - Sponsors and suppliers of funding
- 
- The relationship is becoming increasingly asymmetric, if not dominating and exploitative, shaped by the values, goals and ideologies of the commercial players.
  - Remember: Facebook's social contagion study with Cornell  
Kramer, A. D. I., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 111(24), 8788–8790, from <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/24/8788.full>. (with editorial expression of concern)

# The Academic Knowledge Research Production Process

Illustration of the problem

Academic knowledge production workflow & lifecycle



Chen, G., Posada, A., & Chan, L. (2019).

Figure 4. The Academic Research Knowledge Production Lifecycle

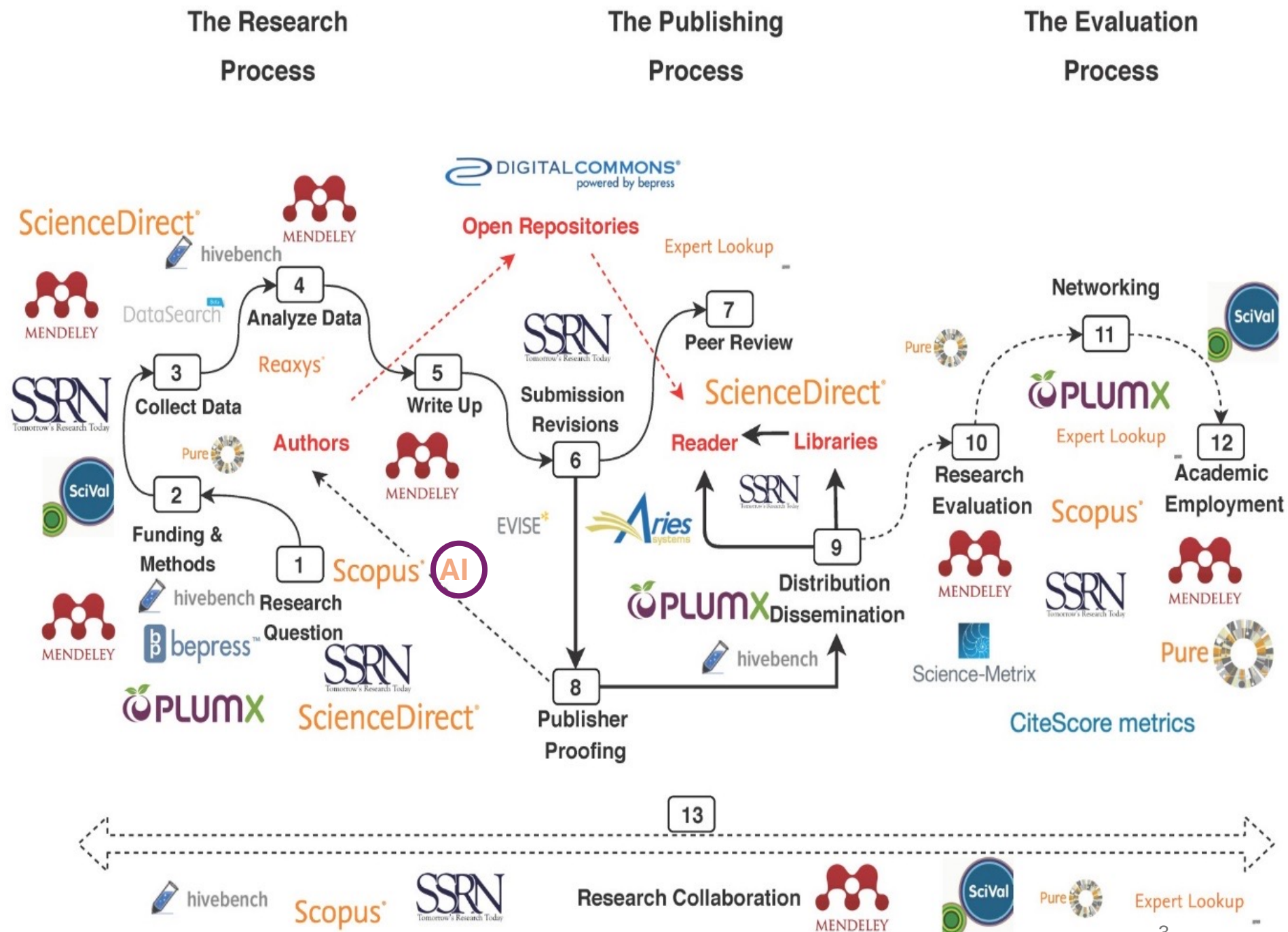
# Academic workflow transformed and infrastructured: Elsevier's workflow tools and services as critical research infrastructure

Chen, G., Posada, A., & Chan, L. (2019), 20.

> **60 digital solutions**

“Elsevier BV has **acquired 29** companies, including 6 in the last 5 years.”

<https://mergr.com/elsevier-bv-acquisitions#cma-tab> [2024]



# The outcome

“The **commercial control of academic publishing and research infrastructure** by a few oligopolistic companies **has crippled the development of the open access movement and interfered with the ethical principles of information access and privacy.**

In recent years, **vertical integration of publishers and other service providers throughout the research cycle has led to platformisation**, characterised by **datafication and commodification similar to the practices on social media platforms.**

**Scholarly publications [and all users’ activities on any of Elsevier’s platforms] are treated as user-generated contents for data tracking and surveillance, resulting in profitable data products and services for research assessment, benchmarking and reporting.”**

Ma, L. (2023). The Platformisation of Scholarly Information and How to Fight It. *LIBER Quarterly: The Journal of the Association of European Research Libraries*, 33(1), 1–20. (p. 1)

# Questions

- What should we do?
  - > Norms and ethics
  - > Institutional rationale vs. individual rights and freedoms
- What can we do and how can we shape the relationship?
  - > Governance, e.g.
    - European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC)
    - (interoperable) European infrastructures
    - Sciebo NRW
  - > Relational contracts: “contain relationship-building elements such as a shared vision, guiding principles, and robust governance structures to keep the parties’ expectations and interests aligned” Frydlinger, D., Hart, O., & Vitasek, K. (2019). A New Approach to Contracts. *Harvard Business Review*, Sept-Oct.



# Magna Charta Universitatum 2020

## Preamble

The Magna Charta Universitatum, a declaration and affirmation of the fundamental principles upon which the mission of universities should be based, was signed in 1988 on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna.

The first principle was **independence**: research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests.

The second was that **teaching and research should be inseparable**, with students engaged in the search for knowledge and greater understanding.

The third principle identified the university as a site for **free enquiry and debate**, distinguished by its **openness to dialogue and rejection of intolerance**.



# Principles, Values and Responsibilities

Universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability.

Intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society. That independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves.

To fulfil their potential, universities require a reliable social contract with civil society, one which supports pursuit of the highest possible quality of academic work, with full respect for institutional autonomy.

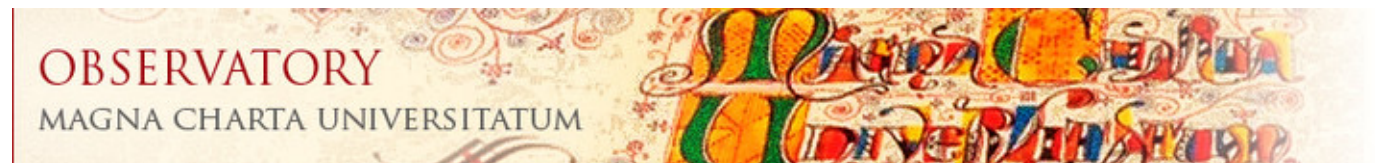
As they create and disseminate knowledge, universities question dogmas and established doctrines and encourage critical thinking in all students and scholars. Academic freedom is their lifeblood; open enquiry and dialogue their nourishment. Universities embrace their duty to teach and undertake research ethically and with integrity, producing reliable, trustworthy and accessible results.

Universities have a civic role and responsibility. They are part of global, collegial networks of scientific enquiry and scholarship, building on shared bodies of knowledge and contributing to their further development. They also are embedded in local cultures and crucially relevant to their future and enrichment. While they are immersed in and connected with global developments, they engage fully with and assume leading roles in local communities and ecosystems.

Universities are non-discriminatory spaces of tolerance and respect where diversity of perspectives flourishes and where inclusivity, anchored in principles of equity and fairness, prevails. They therefore commit themselves to advance equity and fairness in all aspects of academic life including admissions, hiring and promotion practices. Education is a human right, a public good, and should be available to all. Universities recognise that learning is a lifelong activity with tertiary education as one part of a continuum. Within that one part, universities serve diverse learners at all stages of their lives.

Universities acknowledge that individuals and communities, often due to inequitable circumstances, have difficulty gaining access to higher education or influencing the modes and matter of academic study. To realise human potential everywhere, universities deliberately seek ways to welcome and engage with diverse voices and perspectives.

Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum (2020). Magna Charta Universitatum.



“It is possible to have surveillance capitalism, and it is possible to have a democracy.  
**It is not possible to have both.**” (Zuboff 2022).

Relatedly, my claim is:

It is possible to have **research information analytics capitalism**, and it is possible to have a **scholarly communication system shaped by academic values** (research that matters, infrastructures that foster innovation, equitable access to knowledge for all).

**It is not possible to have both.**