Sci-Hub and other pirate academic databases: the right to access to information or a justified act of civil disobedience?

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Introduction
SCI-HUB
...to remove all barriers in the way of science
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...to remove all barriers in the way of science

enter URL, PMID / DOI or search

open
In increasing numbers, researchers around the world are turning to Sci-Hub, which hosts 50 million papers and counting. ... [Over] 6 months ... Sci-Hub served up 28 million documents. ... The papers cover every scientific topic ... The publisher with the most requested Sci-Hub articles? ... Elsevier [for which] Sci-Hub provided half-a-million downloads ... in one recent week.
Sci-Hub’s most downloaded publishers

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<th>Publisher</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>Springer</td>
<td>Wiley Blackwell (John Wiley &amp; Sons)</td>
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<td>Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers</td>
<td>The Royal Society of Chemistry</td>
<td>Nature Publishing Group</td>
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<td>American Chemical Society</td>
<td>Informa UK (Taylor &amp; Francis)</td>
<td>Wiley Blackwell (Blackwell)</td>
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<td>SAGE Publications</td>
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IT'S A SCI-HUB WORLD

Server log data for the website Sci-Hub from September 2015 through February paint a revealing portrait of its users and their diverse interests. Sci-Hub had 28 million download requests, from all regions of the world and covering most scientific disciplines. An interactive version of this map is available at bit.ly/Sci-Hub.

5. UNITED STATES
714,082
Six of the top U.S. cities are from San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley.

8. TUNISIA
487,720

4. RUSSIA
945,588
Moscow has 48% of Russia’s total downloads.

10. MOROCCO
346,460

2. CHINA
2,349,385
Beijing has 17% of China’s total downloads.

6. BRAZIL
562,056

7. EGYPT
515,190

9. INDONESIA
461,345

1. IRAN
2,629,115
Downloaded eight times more Sci-Hub articles than its neighbor and rival Pakistan.
Legal and ethical issues
Legal and ethical issues

- High profit margins of mega-publishers
- Smaller publishers?
- No alternative for current publishing model
Other reasons why researchers use Sci-Hub

- Solve access problems
- Ease of use
- Immediate needs of users
What should librarians do?
“Librarians can do little to stop patrons from using Sci-Hub, but there is always room for education and explanation of why other sources may be a better choice. Actively banning the use of pirate sites is ineffective. It alerts more patrons to their existence and creates a negative power dynamic between librarians and their patrons. Blocking pirate sites with Internet filters does not work either, as determined users can always find a way around filters, and domain names change frequently …” (Hoy, 2017:77)
Discussion:

What is your opinion on the use of pirate article databases, such as Sci-Hub?
Think in terms of the following:

- Ethics
- Role of the library in resource sharing and document supply
  - How will this impact on the future of ILL?
  - How will this impact on the quality of service delivery?
- How will the library educate users?
- Isn’t this an indication that it is time for an alternative to traditional publishing?
- Isn’t open access the proper road to end piracy?
- Shouldn’t publishers and librarians view Sci-Hub as a wake-up call?
  - Users need immediate access
  - Expanding research impact
  - Application of research
Thank you