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

SCI-HUB

Science

Who's downloading pirated papers? Everyone
By John Bohannon   Apr. 28, 2016

Who's downloading pirated papers?

EVERYONE

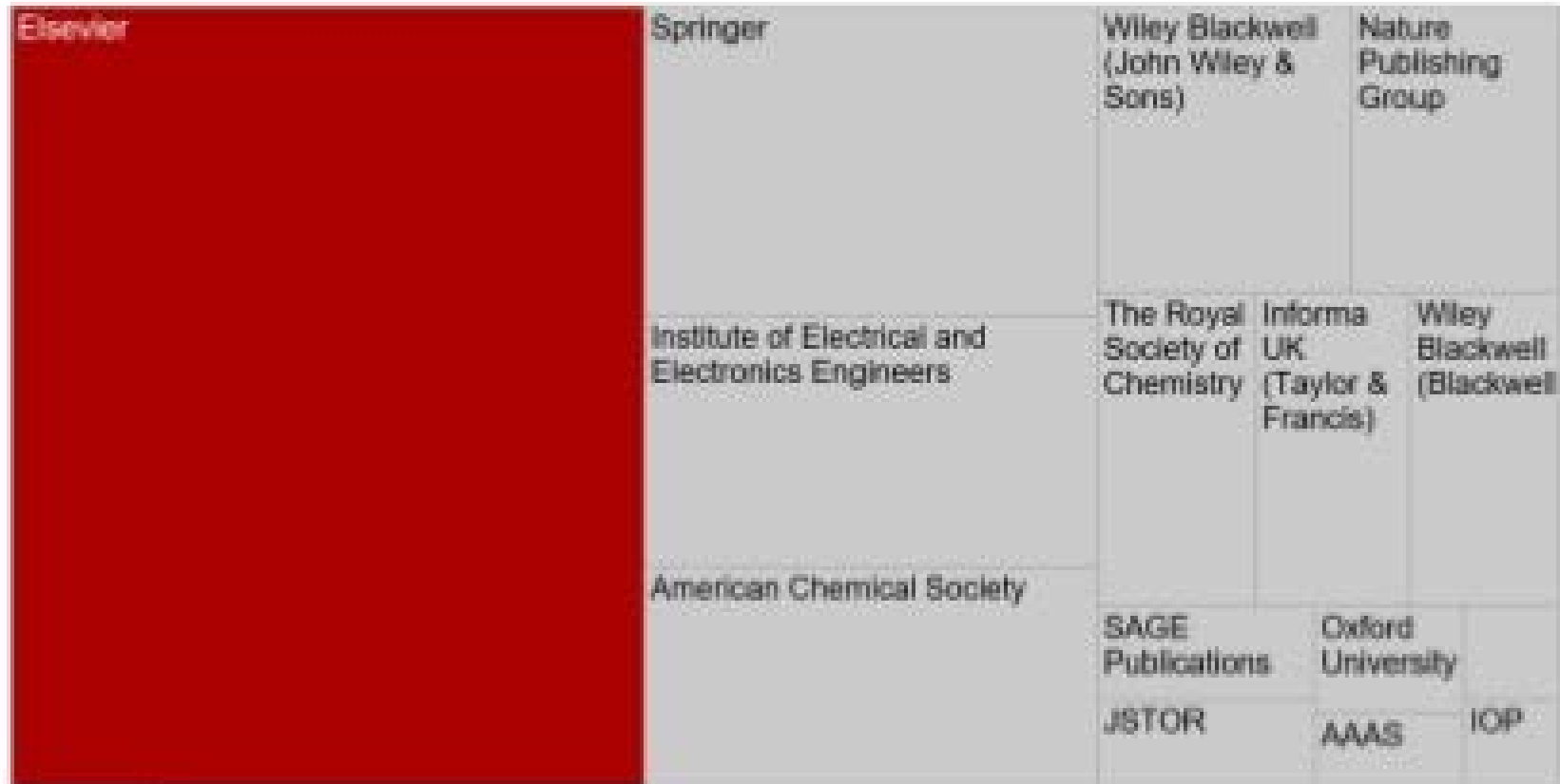In rich and poor countries, researchers turn to the Sci-Hub website.

Article: Bohannon J (2016) "Who's downloading pirated papers? Everyone." *Science* 352(6285): 508-512. http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.352.6285.508.   Dryad data package: Elbakyan A, Bohannon J (2016) Data from: *Who's downloading pirated papers? Everyone. Dryad Digital Repository.* http://dx.doi.org/10.5061/dryad.q447c
http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/04/whos-downloading-pirated-papers-everyone

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.
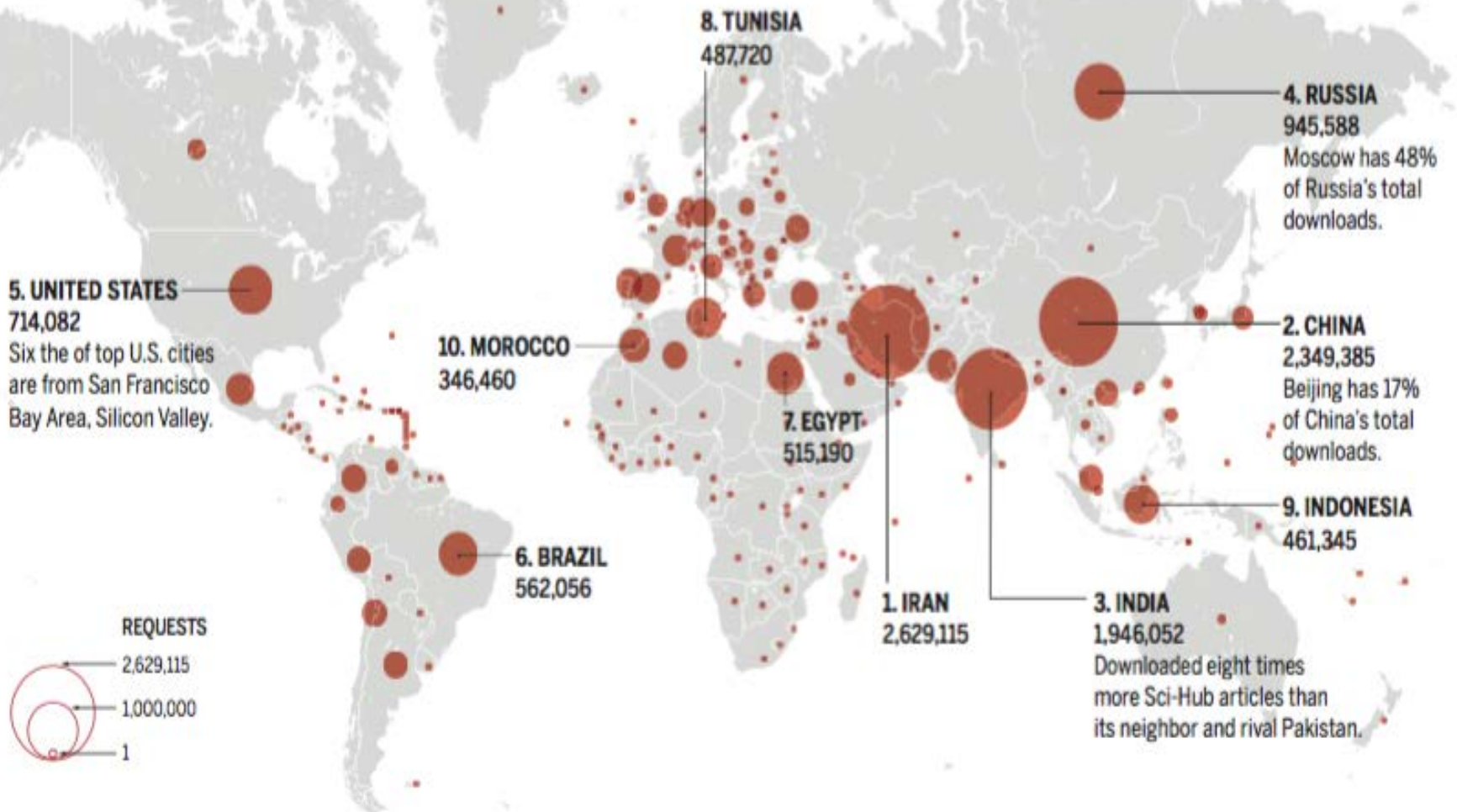
SCI-HUB

Sci-Hub's most downloaded publishers

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.

8. TUNISIA
487,720

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

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

10. MOROCCO
346,460

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

7. EGYPT
515,190

9. INDONESIA
461,345

6. BRAZIL
562,056

1. IRAN
2,629,115

3. INDIA
1,946,052
Downloaded eight times more Sci-Hub articles than its neighbor and rival Pakistan.

REQUESTS

2,629,115

1,000,000

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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