profits. For example, 22 percent of titles from nonprofit professional and academic associations and 8 percent of titles owned by universities were purchased by commercial publishers. This surge toward commercial publishers continued relatively uninterrupted from 1994 to 2008, leaving only 12 percent of the titles published by noncommercial entities. As Richard Edwards, senior vice chancellor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and David Shulenburger, executive vice chancellor at the University of Kansas, detail in their article in *Change*, “The High Cost of Scholarly Journals,” commercial publishers seek to acquire top-quality journals (published by universities and professional and scholarly associations) and dramatically increase subscriptions to solidify future revenues. So it is no surprise to learn from the OneSource Global Business Browser database that in 2008, the larger commercial publishers boasted hefty revenues: Reed Elsevier, more than $5 billion; Taylor and Francis, more than $48 million; Routledge, more than $45 million; and Wiley-Blackwell, more than $87 million. In fact, Reed Elsevier’s operating profit margin for 2008 was 17.28 percent (the overall operating profit margin for the industry was 14.04 percent).

**FIGURE 2**
Title Growth by Type of Publisher, 1994–2008

---

**What Academia Can Learn from Health-Care Reform**

Organizations with a commanding presence in an industry naturally seek to institutionalize their indispensability. They finance strategies that strengthen their position and challenge efforts to contain their power and influence. The insurance and pharmaceutical industries had great success in marshalling opposition to the Clinton health initiative. We see the same situation today in academic publishing, with nonprofit publishers and distributors yielding leverage to commercial entities. If it is to reverse trends of rising costs and limited access to journal content, academia would benefit from studying health-care reform in a quest to fulfill its purpose of advancing knowledge by making scholarship widely available. We posit that there are five questions central to the health-care debate that could be adapted to the scholarly periodical industry. The answers to these questions can help begin a reform of this industry.

**Should health care be available to all?**
Is access to health care a right or a privilege? Although the health-care debate underscored the complexity of this question, public sentiment during the debate leaned toward universal coverage. A principal goal of health-care reform was to expand access. At the very least this meant not permitting the economic interests of those who manage access to supersede the welfare of consumers.

Should the principle of universality apply to publishing and distributing scholarship? How should we balance such a goal against the rights of publishers and distributors to determine fees and sell their products and services in an open market? There are risks to blocking economic opportunity, not the least of which is the inconsistency with a capitalist ethic and its propensity to stimulate innovation. However, society progresses to the extent we can conduct, engage, and learn from research that is designed to help us understand and improve the human condition.

*Lesson 1: Just as restricting access to health-care weakens our national health, restricting access to scholarship jeopardizes the scholar’s ability to advance our society. Therefore, we must...*