

# The Evolution and Implications of the Elsevier Logo: An Examination of Logo Modifications and their Impact on Scholarly Perception and Transparency

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| Received: 11.08.2023 | Accepted: 17.09.2023 | Published: 22.09.2023 |

**Abstract:** Scholars often face pressure from their institutions to publish their research papers in journals published by Elsevier Group. However, there have been concerns raised by some scholars regarding alleged irregularities committed by Elsevier. This study aims to investigate the true nature of Elsevier and the authority it claims to exert over the world's scholarly knowledge. It is important to note that this study does not rely on scholarly criticisms of Elsevier. Instead, we adopt a historical inquiry approach to understand Elsevier's identity. The research employs the principles of connecting the dots and following the evidence, and is conducted with an open mind, outside the confines of traditional frameworks. During the investigation, it was discovered that Elsevier had tampered with their original logo, contradicting their claim of using the authentic version. This revelation suggests that they may have been attempting to conceal certain aspects of their organization from scholars. Therefore, this study invites scholars to reexamine Elsevier, irrespective of public opinion and perceived authority.

**Keywords:** Elsevier, Reed International, Reed Elsevier, RELX, scholarly publishing.

## INTRODUCTION

Elsevier, a prominent publishing business, was established in the 1880s and has been supporting research and healthcare partners for over 140 years. As a leading provider of information and analytics in global research and health ecosystems, Elsevier's mission is to facilitate scientific advancement and enhance health outcomes for the betterment of society. Their customer base spans researchers, research leaders, librarians, funders, healthcare professionals, and educators worldwide (elsevier.com/about). In 2018, researchers submitted over 1.8 million research papers to Elsevier publications, with a network of over 20,000 editors overseeing peer review and paper selection. This has resulted in the publication of more than 470,000 articles across 2,500 journals (RELX Group Annual Report, 2021). Elsevier operates a range of platforms such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, Mendeley, Evolve, Knovel, Reaxys, ClinicalKey, among others, solidifying their authority in the global research landscape (elsevier.com/research-platforms). Furthermore, numerous public and private higher education institutions worldwide, including the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, have embraced Elsevier family journals, underscoring their widespread acceptance. Meanwhile, the Elsevier journal family has

faced numerous criticisms, particularly regarding its subscription fees. One notable example is the "knowledge cost" movement initiated by Gowers (2012), which specifically targeted Elsevier Publishing. The campaign denounced restrictions on the free exchange of information, high subscription prices, and the practice of mass-selling journals. Consequently, thousands of scientists in Germany, Peru, and Taiwan have chosen to sever their ties with Elsevier due to its exorbitant subscription fees (Schiermeier, Q., Mega, E., 2017).

Considering the significant annual profits generated by the Elsevier Group, these criticisms appear justified. The annual revenue of Elsevier from 2016 to 2020 was £2318, £2473, £2538, £2637, and £2692 respectively (RELX Annual Report and Financial Statements, 2020). This translates to a profit margin of approximately 36%, surpassing the profit percentages of companies like Apple, Google, or Amazon (Buranyi, 2017). Elsevier has also faced substantial criticism from Talyarkoni (2016), who extensively scrutinized their practices. His critiques include: 1) the creation of several deceptive journals in 2009, subsequently sold to pharmaceutical companies; 2) the implementation of their "Big Deal" pricing model; and 3) the alleged

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**Citation:** Jayantha Kalansooriya (2023). The Evolution and Implications of the Elsevier Logo: An Examination of Logo Modifications and their Impact on Scholarly Perception and Transparency. *Cross Current Int Peer Reviewed J Human Soc Sci*, 9(8), 145-154.

misuse of the SSRN preprint repository, which Elsevier acquired. Considering the Elsevier Group's significant contribution to the global dissemination of scholarly publications, there are individuals who appreciate and argue in favor of their profitability as a business. Simultaneously, there is a group of scholars who criticize them for exploiting knowledge and engaging in fraudulent actions. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the true nature of Elsevier, and they continue to maintain a positive reputation within the academic community as a whole. Given that the Elsevier Group holds substantial influence over contemporary global knowledge, shaping research frameworks and directing decisions, it is imperative to thoroughly examine their identity. Therefore, the objective of this study is to conduct a historical analysis that uncovers the true essence of the Elsevier Group, taking into account the contextual needs of the present era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of the history and current standing of the Elsevier Group. It examines key entities that played a role in the formation of the Elsevier Group, including Albert E. Reed Company Limited, Elsevier Publishing Company, Scopus Company, ScienceDirect, Mendeley, Knovel, Reaxys, SCImago Journal Ranking (SJR), and BlackRock. The review aims to explore the contributions and influence of these entities in shaping the Elsevier Group.

### Albert E. Reed Company Limited

Albert Edwin Reed (1846-1920) established a newsprint paper manufacturing factory in Kent, England, in 1893. The company was officially registered as Albert E. Reed Company Limited in 1903 (subjects/albert-e-reed). Over time, the Reed Company embarked on an aggressive business journey, acquiring various concurrent institutions such as Moll the Horton Kabari Mills, South Darrenth, Wycombe Marsh Mills, and Merton Abbey Mills (Stock Exchange, London, England, 1908). Originally a paper manufacturer, the Reed Company later transformed into a conglomerate known as Reed International, which is now a publishing, information gathering, and distribution group. This transformation was completed in 1988 when the company's manufacturing interests were balanced by the acquisition of several publishing businesses. Since 1970, the Reed Company has expanded its publishing authority by absorbing magazines, newspapers, books, and electronic information systems, making it the largest publishing group in the United Kingdom and the United States (encyclopedia.com/books). In 1970, after acquiring the International Publishing Corporation-PLC, the company changed its name to Reed International PLC (Reed Paper Group). In 1993, Reed International PLC merged with Elsevier NV, leading to the rebranding of the merged entity as Reed Elsevier. The publishing and

information businesses operated as Elsevier Group plc, while the finance arm became Elsevier Reed Finance BV (Ibid). In February 2015, Reed Elsevier further changed its company name to RELX and became a multinational company headquartered in London. RELX's main operational functions encompass scientific, legal, technical, medical, risk, and business analysis fields (RELX Annual report and financial statements, 2019). Within the RELX multinational company, Elsevier maintains various research databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, SciVal, ClinicalKey, and Sherpath, providing solutions for research management, development, and clinical support (Elsevier/RELX). Meanwhile, BlackRock Inc. filed a Form SC 13G/A with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on January 27, 2022, disclosing its ownership of 19,492,3548 shares of the multinational RELX PLC (US: RELX). They declare ownership of 10% of the total shares in RELX PLC (BlackRock Inc.).

### Elsevier Publishing Company

The Elsevier Publishing Company was founded in 1880 by Jacobus Geurge Robbers with the initial goal of publishing popular literature and encyclopedias. However, the company later expanded its scope to include the publication of the works of Erasmus (1532-1587) ("Timeline," Reed Elsevier). Originally a small family business, Elsevier experienced significant growth after World War II when it launched a highly profitable weekly magazine. In 1951, Elsevier Press Inc. was established in Houston, Texas, USA, and in 1962, publishing offices were opened in London and New York. In the 1970s, due to various mergers, the company underwent a name change and was registered as Elsevier Scientific-Publishers in 1979. In 1991, Elsevier acquired Pergamon Press in the UK, two years prior to its merger with Reed International PLC (Maxwell Selling Pergamon). Cahners Publishing, founded by Norman Cahners, was the largest US publisher of trade or business magazines at the time of his death in 1986. Reed Elsevier acquired Cahners Publishing in 1977 (AdWeek, 2016). In general, Elsevier is a Netherlands-based publishing company specializing in scientific, technical, and medical content. It was known as Reed Elsevier until it became part of the RELX Group in 2015 (Carpenter, Todd, 2017).

### Scopus Company

Scopus is an abstract and citation database that was launched in 2004 (Kulkarni, A. V. et al., 2009). It is the outcome of a two-year collaboration between librarians and researchers from around the world (Boyle, Frances & Sherman, Damien, 2006). In a discussion held in 2004, Jaco Zijlstra, the director of Scopus, agreed that librarians would be compensated for the services they provide (Paula J. Hane, 2004). Table No. 01 provides an overview of the subjects and categories covered by these databases.

**Table 1: Subjects and categories covered by Scopus databases**

The Subject	Number of Titles
Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Engineering	4500
Life and Health Sciences	5900 (100% Medicine)
Sociology, Psychology, Economics	2700
Biology, Agriculture, Ecology	2500
General Science	50

Howard M. Dess (2006) Database Reviews and Reports; Scopus, Science and Technology Librarianship, DOI:10.5062/F4X0650T, <http://www.istl.org/06-winter/databases4.html>

These statistics provide an overview of the number of records in various subject areas: health records (13.3 million), biology (11.0 million), engineering (8.5 million), agriculture and life sciences (3.6 million), earth and environmental science (1.9 million), chemistry (1.3 million), physics (0.59 million), social science (0.29 million), mathematics (0.26 million), psychology (0.23 million), and economics and business management (0.22 million) (Howard M. Dess, 2006).

### ScienceDirect

Established in March 1997, ScienceDirect operates as a subsidiary of Elsevier, an Anglo-Dutch institute. This website offers an electronic collection of science, technology, and medicine articles (An Introduction to ScienceDirect).

### Mendeley

Mendeley is a reference manager based in London, UK, that helps users store, organize, share notes, and cite research data (elsevier.com) (Jason Fitzpatrick, 2009). Named after pioneers in their respective fields, biologist Gregor Mendel and chemist Dmitri Mendeleev, Mendeley was founded in 2007 by three German PhD students (Victor Henning, 2008). In 2013, Elsevier acquired the rights to Mendeley for €50 million (US\$65 million) (Peter Suber, 2013). The acquisition sparked debate in the media and scientific community regarding scientific networking and open access, with some expressing disapproval of the acquisition, arguing that it contradicted Mendeley's open distribution model (Elsevier takes over Mendeley) (The New Yorker, 2013).

### Knovel

Knovel is an engineering decision-support tool that provides engineers with trusted data from over 120 providers, allowing them to confidently answer technical questions. It operates through a cloud-based platform with powerful search and interactive analysis tools. Founded in 2000 and headquartered in New York, Knovel was acquired by Elsevier in 2013 (linkedin.com).

### Reaxys

Reaxys was founded in 2009 as the successor to the CrossFire database. It was developed to provide research chemists with access to current and historical organic, inorganic, and organometallic chemistry

information from reliable sources through an easy-to-use interface (White, 2014). Reaxys is a web-based tool that allows users to retrieve chemistry information and data from published literature, including journals and patents. The information available on Reaxys includes chemical compounds, chemical reactions, related bibliographies, catalog data, synthesis plans, informative materials data, and experimental procedures from selected journals and patents. The company was acquired by Elsevier (Baykoucheva, Svetla, 2015).

### SCImago Journal Ranking (SJR)

The SCImago Journal Ranking (SJR) index is a journal ranking system that originated from the University of Granada in Granada, Spain. It is not related to Emperor Charles V or the university's founding. The SJR index is based on data from the Scopus and Web of Science databases and provides a measure of a journal's impact and influence within its field (SCImago Journal & Country Rank, n.d.).

### BlackRock

BlackRock, Inc. is an American multinational company founded in 1988 and headquartered in New York City. It is currently the world's largest asset manager, overseeing assets worth over US\$10 trillion as of January 2022 (BlackRock, n.d.). While BlackRock is a major player in the global financial industry and manages investments in various companies, it is not accurate to claim that it controls the world economy and politics or engages in long-term political conspiracies, conflicts, revolutions, and wars. Such claims are often associated with conspiracy theories and do not reflect the company's actual operations and role in the financial sector (twistedeconomix.wordpress.com).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Data Analysis

Two methods will be used for data analysis in this study: the dot connector method and image analysis.

### Dot Connector Method

The dot connector method is a way of looking at a problem from different angles and scopes to gain a comprehensive understanding. In this study, it will be used to examine the popular scholarly journal system. However, it is important to note that scholarly journals are already recognized among scholars, so it is necessary to study their historical background,

behavior, goals, and any hidden aspects (LinkedIn, n.d.).

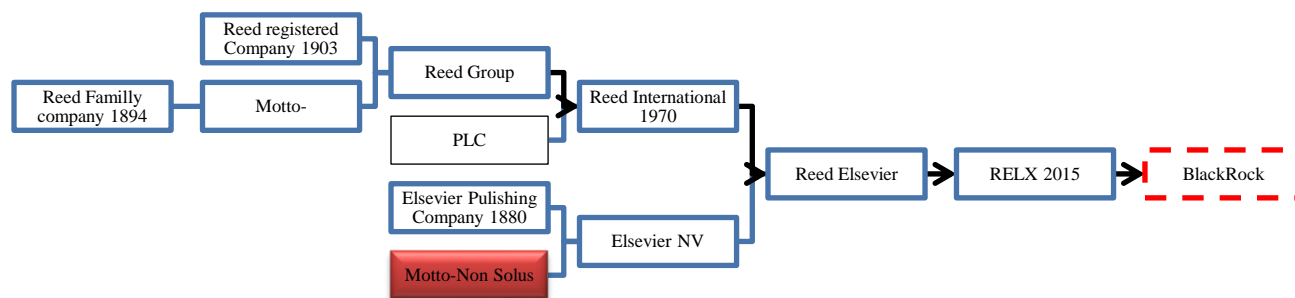
### Image Analysis

Image analysis will also be used for data analysis in this study. It draws upon the Sri Lankan tradition that interprets the moon as a source of evidence.

### Analysis

In the late 1800s, two major companies were established in Europe: Reed, a newsprint manufacturing company founded by Albert E. Reed in Kent in 1894/5, and Elsevier, an academic publishing company based in the Netherlands founded in 1880 (Carpenter, 2017). These companies have progressed separately over the years. Reed Group went through several name changes, including Reed International Limited in 1970 and eventually becoming RELX (Sykes, 1980). Similarly, Elsevier expanded through various acquisitions and

partnerships, such as Excerpta Media in 1946 and the acquisition of Pergamon Press in 1991 (Company-Histories.com). The analysis highlights the pattern of these companies absorbing and integrating smaller entities within their respective fields. The text then discusses the merger of Reed Group and Elsevier in 1992, resulting in the formation of Reed Elsevier, which later rebranded as RELX in 2015 (Edward A. Gargan, 1994; Robert Cookson). The merging of these two companies led to the creation of a new brand name, representing the combined strength and practices of both entities. It is suggested that the emerging RELX may exhibit traits similar to its predecessors, characterized by a tendency to absorb and consume other entities. The text mentions BlackRock's ownership of shares in RELX PLC, hinting at a possible future acquisition (fintel.io/so/us/relx/blackrock). However, the details on how BlackRock becomes the "eagle" to swallow RELX PLC are mentioned as a future point of discussion.



**Figure 1: The RELX story in brief**

Source: Created by the researcher based on the information in the report

The story presented here is now ready to be evaluated from a different perspective. Both the Reed Group and Elsevier have demonstrated a consistent pattern of assimilating other entities since their inception. However, the choice of the term "swallowing" to describe this behavior may raise certain

concerns. It is important to consider the reasons behind this assertion. As mentioned earlier in this article, the moon is regarded as evidence. The following illustration will provide a visual representation that further supports this claim.



**Figure 2: The original nature of the Elsevier logo**

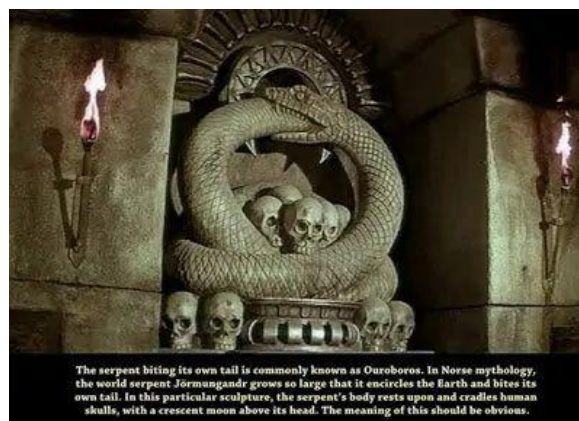
Source: Elsevier logo Library of Congress; <https://blog.scielo.org/en/2015/04/09/the-elsevier-you-know-is-not-the-only-elsevier/#.YwL9e3ZBw2w>

Upon careful examination of the depicted artwork, it becomes evident that it consists of three distinct elements: a tree, a man, and a snake. However, in their contemporary logo, these elements have undergone modifications, with the snake being transformed into a grape vine adorned with leaves and clusters of grapes, thereby distorting the original image. This substitution aligns with the concept of "The Moon Will Tell Evidence" discussed in our research methodology, which asserts that despite attempts to conceal information, at least one trace of evidence will invariably remain. Consequently, the term "non-Solus" (not alone) gains significant relevance when applied to the fundamental depiction of the logo. It is crucial to question with whom the writer is associated. The answer should encompass both the tree and the snake, without dismissing either. However, a more plausible interpretation suggests that the man is intertwined with the snake, coiled around the tree. Hence, it is imperative to reevaluate the underlying concept and the relationship therein. The snake holds substantial significance in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, where it is often symbolized in a negative and destructive manner. For instance, the book of Revelation in the New Testament repeatedly employs the ancient serpent and dragon as representations of Satan or the devil. This aligns with the portrayal of the serpent in the initial book of the Torah, where it is depicted as a deceptive creature or trickster. The symbol of the serpent holds significant prominence in

religious literature, appearing prominently in the religious traditions and cultural practices of ancient civilizations such as Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan. It is recognized as a symbol representing both malevolent power and chaos stemming from the underworld, as well as fertility, life, healing, and rebirth (Graf, 2018; Olson, 1996). Upon careful examination, it becomes apparent to an impartial reviewer that the original nature of the Elsevier logo aligns well with these connotations. This observation supports the previous assertion that the actions undertaken by Elsevier, including tactics such as acquisitions, mergers, purchases, and joint ventures, can be likened to the act of swallowing, which mirrors the feeding pattern of snakes.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis conducted thus far, it is evident that the behaviors exhibited by the Reed Group and the Elsevier Company bear resemblance to the predatory nature of snakes. Until 1992, both Reed and Elsevier engaged in the consumption of smaller businesses within their respective fields, nourishing their own growth independently. Symbolically, two snakes emerged from opposing sides, steadily expanding in size. Over the course of a century, these two entities transformed into colossal snakes, eventually engaging in a process of mutual consumption.

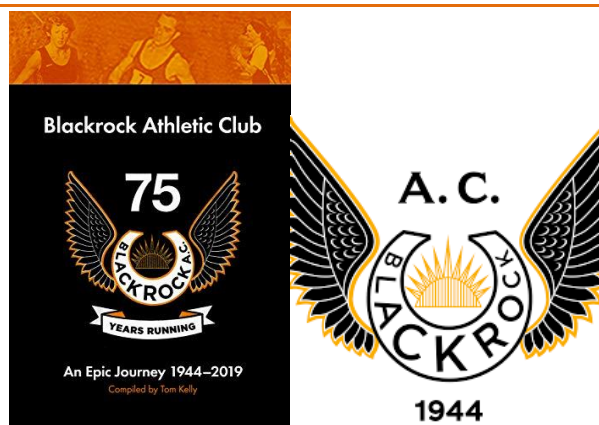


**Figure 3: Historical symbols of snakes devouring each other**

Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/illuminati-paint-in-leon-cathedrals-nicaragua-gm496444033-41418624>

The provided figure, numbered 03, evokes the emergence of the new entity known as Reed Elsevier, resulting from the merger between Reed International and Elsevier. This situation cannot be sustained, as one entity cannot simply consume the other due to their equal capabilities. The only viable solution is for both entities to unify and become one. This notion is akin to the formation of RELX, where it is expected to embody the characteristics of both Reed and Elsevier. As a symbolic representation, RELX can be seen as a

colossal snake. However, the snake has concealed itself, as both Reed and Elsevier have consumed each other entirely, leaving no visible remnants of a snake. Therefore, the notion of a snake is no longer associated with RELX. Nevertheless, this concealment cannot escape the scrutiny of an eagle. Consequently, the eagle targets its prey, as it requires a mighty eagle to devour a large snake. BlackRock's focus on RELX is evident since January 2022.



**Figure 4: The eagle symbol of Blackrock**

Hence, it can be inferred that BlackRock can be likened to an eagle for two primary reasons. Symbolically, one of their logos visually represents this analogy. The logo, which has been in use for 78 years, incorporates eagle feathers, signifying a hidden meaning. In this context, the sun within the logo represents vigilant observation, overseeing everything. Metaphorically, the sun acts as a singular eye that

watches over all. Moving beyond symbolism, BlackRock's position at the pinnacle of the business world solidifies this association, considering the realities of the corporate landscape. Wigglesworth, Robin; Agnew, Harriet (2022). Among all these, some other symbols are added to this discussion. Below is a symbol used by the Illuminati (britannica.com), a world banned organization.



**Figure 5: Symbols of the Illuminati organization: a single eye and wings**

Figure 05 shows the single eye and wings symbols used by the Illuminati organization. It can be

seen that there are many similarities between this image and the previously mentioned Blackrock logo.

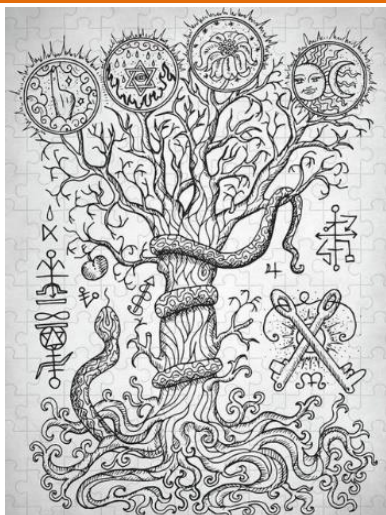


**Figure 6: The two serpents that devour each other**

Source: <https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/illuminati-symbol>

Figure 06 is the symbol of the two serpents devouring each other used by the Illuminati. It can be assumed that there is a good relationship between this

symbol and the emergence of the Reed Elsevier organization.

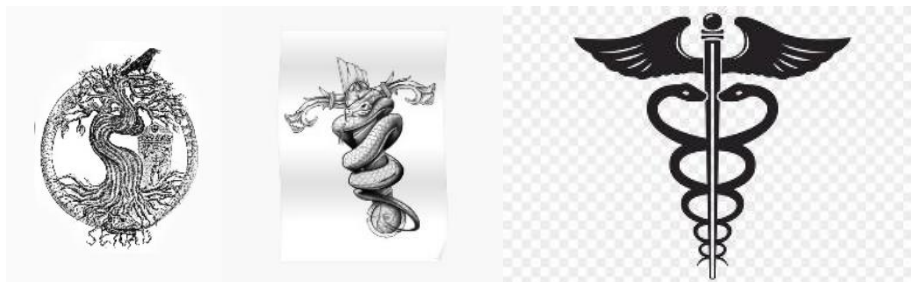


**Figure 7: The snake wrapped in the tree**

Source: <https://www.123rf.com/stock-photo/illuminati.html>

Image of the snake wrapped around the tree in the original logo of Elsevier can be clearly identified to

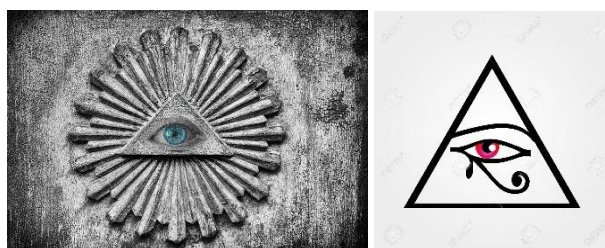
what extent it corresponds to this logo of the Illuminati organization.



Source: <https://pixels.com/shop/puzzles/illuminati>

The serpent wrapped around the tree is represented by the illuminati in many ways. Sometimes only a stick of wood is used to symbolize the tree. The snake can be seen wrapped in that wooden stick. In addition, many other symbols are used by the

Illuminati. Accordingly, the most commonly seen symbols are single eye, triangle, eagle wings, pyramid, etc. Many things can be pointed out. Often, they also present a combination of these symbols. The following images can be presented as examples.



**Figure 8: Single eye and triangle**

This symbolizes the all-seeing eye. That is the meaning seen from the top of the pyramid. It reminded the highest business institution. It is evident that the original Elsevier logo encapsulates these elements. The logo features a white circle positioned within a triangle, accompanied by a snake entwined around a tree. The circle within the triangle serves as a representation of a singular eye, symbolizing comprehensive observation of the world. Its central placement within the triangle signifies that this scrutiny emanates from a higher

authority. The tree serves as a symbol of knowledge, while the serpent represents the devil, implying that they have divulged all things through this composite image. It encompasses various aspects associated with the Illuminati. Escaping the influence of the devil is the duty of scholars. Through research conducted within the framework of the devil's criteria, academia may eventually face destruction. Scholars should approach the world with an open mind and a fresh perspective, fostering a sense of curiosity and vigilance.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was guided by two principles: connecting the dots and the notion that the moon provides evidence. The aim was to gather information from various dimensions and integrate them into a coherent framework. The findings revealed that both Elsevier and Reed Group have grown by assimilating similar institutions in their field, reminiscent of the behavior of a snake that preys on and swallows its prey. The old logo of Elsevier, which features a snake, aligns with the principle that the moon provides evidence, suggesting the presence of hidden proof. In the new logo, the snake has been transformed into a vine, concealing the truth. Although there is no explicit evidence of a snake symbol associated with the Reed Institute, their predatory behavior and merger with Elsevier Institute lead to a similar interpretation. The merger between Reed and Elsevier resulted in the formation of a new company, Reed Elsevier, evoking the image of two snakes partially swallowing each other. Subsequently, the company changed its name to RELX, symbolizing a powerful snake that cannot be swallowed by any other entity.

This notion finds support in the presence of an eagle symbol on one of BlackRock's sports club logos, providing evidence in accordance with the principle that the moon reveals hidden truths. The use of snake and tree symbols may draw inspiration from the story of Adam and Eve, where the snake represents destructive forces. Additionally, the snake, tree, and eagle symbols are associated with the banned organization known as the Illuminati. These interconnected symbols create a complex and enigmatic image of the world. As a result, I invite social scientists to approach this topic with an open mind and engage in further studies. Furthermore, I urge education authorities to examine this matter scientifically and make informed decisions based on a social scientific perspective. In conclusion, this study highlights the presence of symbolic elements and behavioral patterns within the context of Elsevier, Reed Group, and their industry. It emphasizes the need for continued research and analysis from social scientists to deepen our understanding of these phenomena. By approaching this subject with an open mind and employing rigorous methodologies, we can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics in the field of academic publishing. Such insights can inform decision-making processes and facilitate the advancement of an inclusive and transparent scholarly communication ecosystem.

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