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Gina Psaki, Chair, ULC  
Crisis in commercial scholarly publishing and serials costs

The University Library Committee has identified the crisis in commercial scholarly publishing as a top priority for consideration in AY 2000-2001. We've put a memo on the Senate web site which describes this crisis, lays out some possible local and national approaches to it, and requests that the UO Senate address and either endorse or modify the recommendations we make, below.

The problem is huge and complex, and extensive research and discussion have already been dedicated to it by the research library community and university faculties. Initiatives such as Open Archives, SPARC and Create Change are aimed at reconfiguring the way scholarly research is disseminated and acknowledged. An appendix to this memo contains links to URLs and bibliography containing documentation and further information on this pressing issue.

## **I. Background**

During the past decade, due largely to the commercialization of scholarly publishing, journal subscription costs have increased at an average of 9-11% per year. The UO faculty has been forced to identify journal titles to cancel, with the result that we have cut 14% of our titles (\$850,000 or 2400 titles since 1992). This amount represents two-and-a-half times the average of research libraries nationwide, showing that the crisis is acute at the UO and must be addressed now.

In addition, according to Acting University Librarian Deb Carver, "the new funding model does not dedicate an increase to cover the costs of inflation in books and journals;" calculating an 8.5% annual increase in journals costs, "another cancellation project of approximately \$400,000 will be necessary in 2003/2004" *even assuming an annual 4-5% increase in our budget.*

So far we've reacted by simply cutting journal titles across all disciplines. We can't keep doing this, and it hasn't helped so far. First, the commercial publishers show no signs of moderating their journal price increases, and the result of continuing to cut some serials in order to continue purchasing others whose prices are predicted to increase by 8 – 8 ½% per year, would be to concentrate the library acquisitions budget in fewer and fewer journals. Second, in some cases the cancellation of titles seems to have accelerated the price increases. Finally, the journals most drastically affected are in the sciences (\$1.7 million of our annual \$3 million annual serials budget), yet all the disciplines have seen their journal titles cut (the arts and humanities account for c. \$280,000 of that \$3 million).

The reason that commercial publishers have increased subscription prices so

dramatically is simple: they can. Certain journals have been considered so essential – for keeping up with the field, for tenure and promotion credentials, etc. – that the publishers have felt confident that no matter what their cost, research libraries would be forced to buy them. Academic institutions subsidize research, and then must purchase the very same research at absurdly inflated prices. We have to address this problem not only at the point of purchase, but also at the point of generation, of this research.

The research library and academic community are beginning to respond to this dynamic with a variety of approaches aimed at reforming the entire system of scholarly publishing. Many of these approaches are listed and endorsed below. The UO should be considering formal adoption of the Tempe principles (see II.D for URL) which endorse alternatives to the current scenario of scholarly publishing.

## II. Recommendations

In consultation with the library administrators and subject specialists, and library representatives from several UO departments, the ULC makes the following recommendations to the university community:

A. Adopt a university-wide policy that all UO authors try, to the best of their ability, to retain copyright on their own work, including at the very minimum the right to

1. distribute copies of their work to classes and to individual scientists
2. publish their work on their own web sites
3. post their work on a local UO archive

B. Immediately identify high-cost duplicate titles among the three research libraries in OUS and establish target amounts for cancellation, in areas in which cancellation would not harm present faculty research, with the ultimate goal of substantially reducing duplication.

C. Educate individual faculty and graduate students to

1. retain copyright on scholarly articles
2. discover the pricing practices of the journals with whom they collaborate (as reviewer, as editorial board member, as author)
3. disassociate from those with unethical pricing structures
4. lobby professional societies to both put pressure on Elsevier and other publishers of inordinately costly publications, and work collaboratively with efforts such as SPARC in the development of lower-cost alternative publications
5. encourage professional societies, where applicable, to assume more responsibility for publishing in their field

D. Begin a campus discussion about adopting the “Tempe Principles,” the *Emerging Principles of Scholarly Publishing* (<http://www.arl.org/scomm/tempe.html>) recently developed with the support of the AAU and the Association of Research Libraries. The principles provide a foundation for specific actions, such as those outlined above.<sup>i</sup> By

adopting these guiding principles, the UO would become part of a national effort to define new systems of scholarly publishing.

E. Ensure that promotion-and-tenure evaluation criteria favor this effort, by holding faculty harmless for declining to publish in journals with pricing structures detrimental to the free circulation of ideas.

### **III. Request to the UO Senate**

The ULC invites the UO Senate to consult the extensive documentation on this urgent problem, to discuss the ULC recommendations at its earliest convenience, and to either endorse or modify the recommendations for referral to the university administration.

2000-2001 ULC members: Gina Psaki (Chair), Romance Languages; Zena Ariola, CIS; Rebecca Dorsey, Geological Sciences; Martha Bayless, English; Esther Jacobson-Tepfer, Art History; Daniel Pope, History; Richard Sundt, Art History; Michael Raymer, Physics; Paul Dassonville, Psychology; Marc Vanscheeuwijck, Music History; Jennifer Greenough, student representative; Eric Bailey, student representative; Deborah Carver (ex officio), Library; Sheila Gray (Support Staff), Library

Appendix:

ULC Minutes 2000-2001  
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/ulc/>

These minutes will link you to many of the following URLs and sources:

NY Times article: a user-friendly overview of the problem  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/03/business/03PUBL.html>

Association of Research Libraries overview:  
<http://www.arl.org/sparc/rosenzweig.html>

SPARC: proposal for alternatives to high-priced scholarly publications:  
<http://www.arl.org/sparc/home/index.asp?page=0>

*Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing* (the "Tempe Principles")  
<http://www.arl.org/scomm/tempe.html>

summary of publishers with whom the UO has its highest expenditures  
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/colldev/pubstats.html>

description of "open archives initiative," which promotes the development of university-based servers for the distribution of faculty research:  
<http://www.openarchives.org/>

Create Change: educating faculty on the crisis in scholarly publishing  
<http://www.createchange.org/resources/conferences.html>

actions by other faculties:  
<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/library/facsen.pdf>  
*Annual Report of the 1998-1999 University Library Committee*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, at  
[http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/News/ULC/reports/98\\_99.pdf](http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/News/ULC/reports/98_99.pdf) )

Steve Marquardt, "Serials Wars: The Academy Strikes Back." *Library Issues: Briefings for Faculty and Administrators*, 19,4 (March 1999), 1-4.