

# **Task Force on Scholarly Communication**

## **Scholarly Communications Task Force Draft Report to the Faculty Senate**

May 12, 2005

### **Executive Summary**

The Task Force met regularly during the 2004-2005 academic year in order to:

1. Determine current practices that impede an open and sustainable system of scholarly communication, citing data where necessary to substantiate the findings;
2. Determine actions that OSU faculty members, as authors, readers, reviewers, editors, society members, advisory board members and faculty members, who are dependent on scholarly communication for professional advancement, can take to contribute to an open and sustainable system of scholarly communication;
3. Determine a few of these actions that are likely to have the greatest positive impact towards creation of an open and sustainable system of scholarly communication;
4. Propose a framework for communicating these findings to the OSU faculty.

Our findings are documented in the attached report and appendices. Briefly, the practices that impede an open and sustainable system of scholarly communication and threaten the viability of research libraries include:

- the increasing cost of journals;
- the unsecured archival access to electronic publications
- the undue weight given to the "high impact" factor in publishing as well as promotion and tenure processes; and
- the transfer (by author) of ownership, or copyright, of material published in journals.

Actions that faculty members can take to improve the sustainability of scholarly communication include:

- faculty with decision-making authority for professional societies should maintain control of journal pricing and access policies
- faculty as authors should choose outlets for their publications with an awareness of fair pricing and open access
- faculty as participants in the peer review system should support non-profit society publications and open access publications and should refuse to review for high-priced commercial journals.

Framework for communicating findings to OSU Faculty include:

- the continuation of the Scholarly Communication Task Force with an annual rotating membership.
- education of faculty members regarding the library's cost of journals, impact factors and accessibility of journals within their field through the expansion of unit-specific reviews (see Appendices 2-4).
- education of OSU faculty serving as editors and society officers through an annual scholarly communication meeting

- publication of a series of articles in OSU This Week on the cost of journals, open-access issues, creation of an OSU Institutional Repository, and on impact factors.
- organization of an OSU forum on publication practices
- passing of a Senate Resolution supporting open access

## **Scholarly Communication Task Force Members (2004-2005)**

- Bonnie Allen, OSU Libraries
- Gary Beach, Office of Institutional Research
- Michael Boock, OSU Libraries
- Rich Carter, Chemistry
- Alexis Walker, Human Development and Family Sciences
- Pat Wheeler, Chair, Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences
- Ken Winograd, School of Education

## **Scholarly Communications Task Force**

Draft Report to the Faculty Senate

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### **1. Current Practices That Impede An Open and Sustainable System of Scholarly Publication**

Several practices impede the development and maintenance of an open and sustainable system of scholarly communication. These practices, or impediments, collectively threaten the viability and even survival of research libraries around the world. These impediments are :

- the increasing cost of journals;
- the unsecured archival access to electronic publications
- the undue weight given to the "high impact" factor in publishing as well as promotion and tenure processes; and
- the loss of ownership, or copyright, of material published in journals.

Data collected by the Association of Research Libraries indicates that the cost for serials by North American research libraries, such as the OSU Libraries, increased 227% between 1986 and 2002. (In the same period, the consumer price index increased 57%.) These rising prices are driven primarily by journals dedicated to science, medicine, and technology. During the 1990s, such serials had annual price increases of about 12%, on average. The 2002 spending on serials was three times that spent in 1986. The end result is a decline in the number of serial titles purchased and directly available for faculty and student use. These data are representative of the situation faced by OSU Libraries.

Studies have suggested that this rise in journal costs results from the increasing commercialization of science publishing. Commercially published journals are much more expensive than professional society, not-for-profit journals (although there are exceptions). Commercial publishing organizations are publishing seven times more journals than are professional associations (e.g., McCabe, 2000; also see Case, 2002), whereas 20 years ago there were many more society-owned journals than commercially-owned journals.

In the last 20 years, many not-for-profit journals, strapped for money, have been purchased by commercial publishers. Elsevier, the largest commercial publisher, owns approximately 1,400 journals. The OSU Libraries subscribe to approximately 400 Elsevier journals at a total annual cost of \$800,000. This figure represents 20% of the entire materials budget and 25% of the serials budget. The rapidly rising cost of these journals is occurring in an economic context of flat or declining funding for research libraries.

Serial costs are out of control and are outpacing the consumer price index. Library budgets in general, and OSU's in particular, have not had corresponding budget funding increases to match the increases in serial costs. It is unrealistic to expect the OSU Libraries budget to increase significantly in the near future. Although we would like to see more robust funding for the OSU Libraries, the root problem is not library funding. Even if library funding was increased dramatically, the serial crisis would still be with us.

The immediate and obvious strategy for this serials crisis is to cancel journals, perhaps beginning with the most expensive and lowest use journals. Research libraries everywhere are engaging in the painful process of terminating subscriptions to large numbers of serials. In the 1990s, the University of Wisconsin library cut more than 7,000 subscriptions to academic journals. In the last five years, the OSU Libraries, which has a much smaller collection than Wisconsin, has cut approximately 1,500 journals. No end to these cuts is in sight. Higher costs, increasing publications numbers and shrinking library budgets have constrained access to published information among research libraries.

A steady increase in the number of serials being published, both in traditional paper and on-line, compounds the problem. Some new journals are now being published exclusively on-line. Questions regarding emerging systems for the storage and retrieval of on-line serial archives remain unresolved.

New on-line and low cost journals and other outlets for scholarly communication face challenges because of the "high impact" factor. In the culture of academe, especially as it relates to the promotion and tenure process, more weight is given to journals that have been deemed "high impact". Most high impact journals are older and well established, and are often owned by commercial interests. Newly emerging on-line and open access journals, given their recency, will inevitably be rated "low impact". Therefore, the use of the high-impact factor index tends to inhibit scholars, especially junior scholars, from publishing their work in alternative, less expensive publications. Although many (less expensive) society journals have high impact ratings, the preponderance of commercial high impact publications tends to impede the development of open and sustainable systems for scholarly communication.

Finally, a central question (actually, a paradox) relates to the control, ownership, and sharing of information. In the current system, researchers are usually supported by their universities or through public money of some kind, such as federal grants. With taxpayer support, faculty conduct research and write their results for publication. Researchers submit their work to publishers, who accept, edit, package and disseminate the articles in their journals. Most publishers require that authors give them copyright ownership. Publishers then turn around and sell back to researchers and universities the research paid for by public sector funding agencies. Publishers,

especially commercial companies, are "in control ... with the ownership of scholarship and with the right to sell it as a commodity" (Branin & Case, 1998). The current system of copyright practiced by most commercial publishers impedes an open flow of information generated by scholarly work.

## **2. Possible Solutions Via Actions By OSU Faculty**

### **a. Editors, editorial board advisors and society executive committee members:**

Editors, editorial board advisors and society executive committee members may have influence or even decision-making authority on their journal's pricing and access policies. Editors and editorial board advisors for publishers who engage in unfair and unsustainable pricing practices can threaten to step down if pricing practices persist. OSU faculty who serve on executive committees can help societies to continue to self-publish journals, to publish them through open-access vehicles, or to publish them in association with for-profit publishers with reasonable pricing and copyright practices. They can help to persuade societies to keep control over their journals and their journal pricing and access policies. Even without decision-making authority, they can draw the attention of other executive committee members to society practices regarding pricing and access.

Editors can encourage publishers to make issues freely available for a limited time after publication. HighWire Press, out of Stanford University, publishes journals online for societies and publishers, making online content freely available immediately after publication or after a limited amount of time (6-12 months) designated by the publisher or society.

Editors can also encourage publishers and societies to allow authors to retain copyright permissions and/or to self-archive copies of their articles in institutional repositories or on pre-print servers such as arXiv or PubMed. The self-archiving of articles makes the research freely available and accessible to the world through search engines. OSU Libraries is piloting an Institutional Repository that allows authors to submit articles, technical reports and other university research that will be permanently archived and accessible. See Appendix 1.

### **b. Authors:**

Before deciding on an outlet, authors should learn about the publisher, its pricing practices, and its for-profit status. Whenever possible, authors should publish in journals that are reasonably priced, that allow authors to retain copyright, that have transparent pricing, and that do not bundle high- and lesser-impact journals. Authors are encouraged to choose open access options for their published work or to publish in journals that make back issues freely available after a limited amount of time (usually 6-12 months). Information on journal ratings for copyright issues and level of electronic access available to authors and readers can be found at [SHERPA](#). Authors should also retain copyright of their work for personal and institutional use, such as the soon-to-be-established Institutional Repository at OSU.

### **c. Reviewers:**

Faculty members should support non-profit scholarly societies by volunteering to review for them and by refusing to review papers for high-priced commercial journals.

3. Promotion and Tenure

4. OSU guidelines for publication in support of promotion and tenure emphasize scholarship and creative activity that is validated by peers and then is communicated. OSU already acknowledges that scholarship takes many forms. Similarly, scholarly publication can meet the two key criteria (peer review and communication beyond the University) in electronic journals that are produced by entities following a number of business models. Society presses, open access journals, and electronic archives are publication models that meet these key criteria. Because standards for promotion and tenure are set within colleges, the Scholarly Communication Task Force urges college faculties and administrators to look beyond commercially produced journals whose inflating costs are limiting accessibility and scholarly communication. Academic units should consider publication models in which scholarship is broadly circulated in a way that is consistent with standards of peer review and scholarly excellence.

**5. Specific Actions for Improving Scholarly Communication**

We propose specific actions to address current problems with scholarly communication. Because many faculty are unaware of the extent of the existing problems, a critical component of any solution involves the education of the faculty . Our recommendations are:

0. Task Force members should give focused presentations at the department and / or college level showing the cost differential between society-based and for-profit journals. The presentations should also address the effects of rising journal costs on the ability of OSU Libraries to support the educational and research missions of the University. One intended outcome from these seminars is to encourage faculty to support peer-reviewed, society-based or open-access publication mechanisms. Three trial runs were performed (Chemistry, COAS and Human Development & Family Sciences) with quite positive feedback. See Appendices 2,3, and 4 for slides and feedback from these departmental presentations given in 2005. The Task Force recommends expanding these seminar presentations over the next five years in order to reach all faculty.
1. Beginning Fall Term 2005, a series of articles should be published in OSU This Week [Note: Articles would be published in OSU This Week, with a reference or link mentioned in the OSU Today] describing the changes in academic publishing. These articles would be made available to the general public through OSU press releases. Specific subjects to be covered in this series should be:
- a. The effect of the rising cost of journals on the OSU Libraries' ability to support the educational and research missions of the University (include link to OSU Libraries website on the subject);
  - b. What does open-access mean? What levels of access are available? Who should pay for the cost of publications? (include link to OSU Libraries website on the subject);
  - c. The creation of an OSU Institutional Repository and information on electronic databases (include link to OSU Libraries website on the subject);
  - d. What is a journal's impact factor, how is it calculated, and what does it really mean?

2. The Faculty Senate should strongly support the creation and development of the Oregon State University Institutional Repository for electronic forms of publications. In addition, NIH-funded faculty should be encouraged to submit electronic copies of their publications to PubMed. Both of these mechanisms will increase the public's access to scientific discoveries and their original work. (See Appendix 1 for a description of the repository.)
3. The faculty should be encouraged to serve as editors and reviewers for society journals and discouraged from serving as editors or reviewers for high cost, commercially-owned journals. In addition, the University should support the development of open-access, peer-reviewed publication mechanisms.
4. An annual meeting of OSU faculty members serving as editors and society officers should be organized to discuss issues related to supporting affordable and sustainable publication models. This could be done in conjunction with the annual OSU Reception for Authors, Editors, and Patent Recipients.
5. A continuing Faculty Senate Task Force on Scholar Communication with rotating membership should be established for a five-year period. The formation of this Task Force is critical to the implementation of any recommendations made in this document. The Task Force should also address any ongoing and future changes in scholarly communication.
6. The OSU Faculty Senate should endorse a resolution on "Open Access and Scholarly Communication" by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year. See Appendix 6 for a sample resolution (that was passed unanimously by Columbia University in April 2005).

## **6. FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATING THESE FINDINGS TO OSU FACULTY**

### **Progress during 2004-2005:**

Presentations on the library's cost of discipline specific journals for Chemistry (Carter), COAS (Wheeler), and HDFS (Walker) (Completed Spring Term 2005)

- Report to the Executive Committee of Faculty Senate (May 16, 2005)
- Report to Faculty Senate (June 9, 2005)
- Faculty Senate to approve continuation of Task Force and appoint new members.

### **Proposals for 2005-2006**

Publish a series of articles in OSU This Week on the work of the Scholarly Communication Task Force. Topics should include: cost of journals, open access, institutional repository, impact factors, and electronic access to back issues.

- Continuation of presentations on the library's cost of discipline specific journals as part of scheduled Program Reviews (See appendix 5). Specific academic units assemble information on scholarly journals in which their faculty publish articles. These lists can be sent each year to library staff for tabulation of cost of journals and impact factors in that particular field. The assembled information can then be used as the basis for a presentation to specific units regarding the relative cost of journals in their fields.
- Organize an OSU forum on the crisis in scholarly publication.
- Pass an OSU Faculty Senate Resolution on "Open Access"

### **Proposals for 2006-:**

- Monitor progress in changing publication patterns.
- Monitor pricing of journals (library subscription cost and author page charges).
- Advise faculty on publication practices.

### **References**

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