



UC BERKELEY * FACULTY CONFERENCE ON SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

Working with Societies

Societies are the original scholarly publishers and crucial stakeholders in building sustainable, effective, healthy scholarly communication. Over time, some societies have contracted with commercial publishers, and in some cases have come to consider their journals to be a primary source of revenue. The introduction of profit into the scheme of scholarly communication is having, perhaps unintended, and unwanted consequences. Scholars may want to engage their societies on the issue of how best to weigh profit against timely and world-wide dissemination of research.

Societies Make Choices:

Some societies have opted for maximizing publishing revenues.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), for example, netted \$34,520,893 in 2002, a whopping return on their investment of almost 17%. In that year, membership dues provided 26% of total income, while the other 74% came from revenues associated with the journals they published (subscriptions, advertising, and reprint & licensing fees).

Other societies dedicate themselves to cost-recovery.

For 2005, The American Physical Society (APS) will cut rather than increase prices to libraries. "APS will begin to reverse the trend of increasing prices by taking advantage of the cost reductions made possible by technology. For example, said McIlrath, software that automatically copyedits and formats manuscripts greatly reduces the manpower needed. Also, almost all manuscripts are now submitted on-line, saving the cost of having to reenter them." Price cuts will be tiered to the size of the subscribing institution, with cuts ranging from .5% to 3%. (<http://www.aps.org/apsnews/0704/070402.cfm>)

And others experiment with new business models.

The Optical Society of America's *Optics Express* was founded in 1997 as an open access journal. "From the beginning, OSA designed *Optics Express* to be an 'author-centric' journal. Its online peer-review process and rapid turnaround from submission to publication – averaging 47 days – were groundbreaking steps. Free publication of color figures and acceptance of all kinds of multimedia also helped boost the journal's standing among authors...OSA elected to make access to articles free and recover costs through a publication fee (\$500). This has proven not to be a barrier to submission, and the journal never refuses a worthy article because the author cannot afford the fees. By 2002, *Optics Express* broke even, with a revenue covering staffing, overhead and development costs, and this year, OSA will generate a modest net surplus."

(from OSA NEWS, December 7, 2004, <http://www.osa.org/news/release/12.2004/sparc.asp>)

A Few Background Facts

Price per page, for-profit vs. non-profit*

Field	PRICE per PAGE	
	For-profit	Non-profit
Ecology	\$1.19	\$0.19
Economics	\$0.81	\$0.16
Atmos. Sci.	\$0.95	\$0.15
Mathematics	\$0.70	\$0.27
Neuroscience	\$0.89	\$0.10
Physics	\$0.63	\$0.19

Historically, journals from non-profit publishers, including societies, are significantly less expensive than journals from commercial publishers.

*Source: Carl T. Bergstrom and Ted C. Bergstrom. *The economics of scholarly journal publishing*. September 2002. <http://octavia.zoology.washington.edu/publishing/intro.html>

Society journals: average price increases (1998-2003)**

Year	CPI	US society journals
1998	1.6%	8.6%
1999	2.2%	11.3%
2000	3.4%	8.8%
2001	2.8%	6.9%
2002	1.6%	7.2%
2003	2.3%	6.8%
Average	2.5%	7.7%

While generally less expensive than for-profit journals, society journals have average yearly price increases that are much higher than inflation.

**Sources: The annual average price changes for U.S. society journals were from the Allen Press annual studies. Consumer Price Index is from the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Societies Make Choices (continued)

Some societies provide free access after a delay.

Some societies choose to make their material freely available three to 24 months after an initial subscription-only access period.

Currently, 195 society journals published by HighWire Press follow this practice creating a large archive of free full-text science. As of 3/28/05, HighWire is assisting in the online publication of 842,357 free full-text articles for a list of free HighWire journals, see <http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freart.dtl>

Some societies have chosen cost-effective publishers.

BioOne provides integrated, cost-effective access to a thoroughly linked information resource of interrelated journals. Focusing on the biological, ecological and environmental sciences, BioOne covers 73 journals from 58 publishers. BioOne is the product of innovative collaboration between scientific societies, libraries, academe and the private sector. Visit BioOne at <http://www.bioone.org>

A Few Background Facts: (continued)

Society journals published by commercial publishers: average price increases***

Discipline	Average price increases (2003/2004)	Number of titles
Hum/SS	15.7%	30
STM	19.4%	30
All	17.6%	60

Societies often partner with commercial publishers. The effect can be dramatic price increases as demonstrated above in the list of price increases for a sample of society titles now published by Blackwell.

***Source: compiled by the UC Office of Scholarly Communication using data from Ulrich's Guide to Periodicals.

Society Members Can Make a Difference

- encourage your association to explore alternatives to contracting or selling publications to commercial publishers
- encourage your association to maintain reasonable prices for its published products and to establish access terms that are friendly to faculty and other users
- encourage your scholarly society to consider creating enhanced competitors to expensive commercial publications

from "Putting You Back in Control," Create Change website, <http://www.createchange.org/faculty/issues/putting.html>