

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
SYSTEMWIDE LIBRARY AND SCHOLARLY INFORMATION ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

**Resolution \_: The University's Role in Positive Change in the Economics of  
Scholarly Communication**

**Resolved:** Scholars, academic institutions, and publishers share a common and compelling interest in fostering systems of scholarly communication that result in broad information access at affordable prices. In aggregate and over the long term, prices, business terms, and publishing innovations must contribute to systemic economic sustainability for all stakeholders. Reliable access to scholarly material is critical for the university's education and research missions; therefore, economic sustainability in the provision of that access and of scholarly publishing systems is a mission-critical issue for the University of California. Because economic sustainability is a key value to, and an operational necessity for the university and its libraries, elements of sustainability, including the basis for prices and price increases, need to be articulated clearly, transparently, consistently, and accountably in all contracts with scholarly publishers for materials in all formats. By continuing to resist purchasing from publishers that do not acceptably address these factors, even where their resistance potentially impacts faculty access to selected scholarly publications, the libraries have provided leadership nationally in efforts to address the economic dysfunctions that have become so apparent in the scholarly publishing processes. They have at the same time advanced the long-term interest of the University and the scholarly community. Accordingly, we urge the libraries to continue being selective in their support of high quality publications, giving preference to those whose publishers adopt business practices that are aligned with the university's pursuit of sustainable economics for scholarly publishing; to leverage their market position and expertise in the support of economically sustainable practices and systems; and to contribute collaborative leadership to the university's response to scholarly communication's economic dysfunctions.

**Background:** The University of California, along with its sister institutions throughout the world, is growing increasingly concerned about the unsustainable economics of scholarly publishing. For decades the costs of scholarly materials have escalated at rates far exceeding the consumer price index rate of inflation. The continuing hyper-inflation not only severely handicaps the UC libraries' ability to maintain world-class collections, but, when coupled with the rapidly expanding volume of scholarship, also results in UC scholars and students having access to a diminishing proportion of research relevant to their work.

The current economic dysfunctions simultaneously limit the audience for and impact of the scholarship produced by UC's faculty. When fewer institutions can afford the publications that carry the results of UC research, it will be read and used by fewer

members of the research community. These factors combine to make this a mission-critical issue for the university.

Until recently, this issue was viewed as a “library problem.” The libraries have done an admirable job in meeting rising materials costs, in part through aggressive licensing negotiations with publishers and in part through cost efficiencies achieved through deep collaboration and resource sharing and the development of a common technology and services infrastructure. In their 2004 strategic plan they broadened their approach making support for economically sustainable forms of scholarly communication one of five key strategic directions that will be pursued collectively.<sup>1</sup>

The University has offered support in the libraries’ endeavors. In 2003 it encouraged and supported the libraries’ aggressive contract renegotiation with publisher Reed-Elsevier. The negotiations were ultimately successful in achieving a five year contract with a reduced base subscription price and substantially smaller annual cost increases for UC access to the publisher’s journals. This committee’s Resolution “G” at once reflected and articulated the University’s support for the specific activity of contract negotiation for access to digital journals, encouraging renegotiation with publishers who have unsustainable pricing practices.

Unfortunately and despite these successes, fair and affordable publisher prices are still uncommon, with some publishers continuing to appear unable or unwilling to reform their business practices and consequently continuing to demand 5-12% annual price increases. Consequently, it is both necessary and appropriate to support and encourage our libraries in broadening their efforts to affect fundamental changes in the economics of scholarly publishing. As one important component of an institutional resolve to change the economics of scholarly publishing, it asks the libraries to continue using their buying power across material types and at every opportunity to refuse to do business that is not based on sustainable economic terms, and to give preference to agreements and materials that are based on sustainable models. Leveraging their market position in this way may mean backing away from some local and systemwide licenses or purchases of scholarly content. This approach will allow campuses greater flexibility to balance local needs with the goal of creating economically sustainable business terms, and assist in the prioritization of selection decisions under current budget constraints. In many cases, it will also lead to a reduction in locally available materials, with concomitant effects on access, which is likely to suffer delays imposed by interlibrary loan and other strategies that compensate for the loss of ownership or license. If necessary, this short-term effect is an understandable condition of the University’s long-term objective in helping to create sustainable economics for scholarly publishing.

We also encourage the libraries to continue their collaborative leadership in the exploration of new, economically sustainable approaches to publishing and in providing

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<sup>1</sup>*Systemwide Strategic Directions for Libraries and Scholarly Information*. University of California, Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee. Prepared for SLASIAC by the UC University Librarians through the Office of Systemwide Library Planning, UC Office of the President, 2004.

ongoing economic analysis to the university of the challenges and opportunities for scholarly communication systems.

Meanwhile, we urge joint consideration by the Senate Faculty, the libraries, and the administration of a coordinated strategy that the university can consider to address these mission-critical issues. Components of this strategy may include, but are not limited to augmenting experimentation at the UC Press, the CDL and other venues within the University with alternative models for disseminating UC scholarship rapidly and at the lowest possible cost; assisting scholars in managing their intellectual property and disseminating their scholarship through channels that maintain rigorous peer but dispense with unsustainably high access costs; and reviewing current practices for faculty promotion and tenure with an eye to their impacts on the scholarly communication process.

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