

## ***Opportunities for UC Response to the Challenges facing Scholarly Communication***

### **The Case of Supporting Transformative Models for Scholarly Publishing**

#### **Discussion Statement**

The scholarly communication crisis – a crisis that threatens to decrease access to and impact of scholarship and thereby affects the education and research missions of the university – can be addressed, in part, through alternative means for disseminating the results of scholarship. Experimental reconfigurations of the traditional roles, responsibilities, and business models of scholarly publishing may allow timely dissemination of traditional and new forms of scholarship while reducing or eliminating the access tolls that otherwise limit their reach and impact. The university has a small range of ongoing activities that are only indicative of a broad range of opportunities to develop or support these transformative models of scholarly publishing. In combination with other responses to the scholarly communication crisis, seizing the most promising of these opportunities is an important way for the university to affect scholarly communication in support of its own mission and to provide leadership on these issues to the academy. However, fully seizing opportunities for new forms of scholarly communication requires assessment of their potential followed by investments in the most promising. Assessments and investments can best be made with a relevant set of criteria and a framework for discussion and analysis, neither of which currently exist in a way that supports institutional decision making.

#### **Background**

At their core most calls for change in scholarly communication processes seek to a) create a more sustainable set of economic transactions among the stakeholders, especially of payments from consumers to publishers for access to content; or b) remove or reduce impediments to the flow of knowledge by experimenting with new forms of communication of scholarly research and results, especially of quality-filtered (peer-reviewed) material.

While UC's libraries have established a multi-faceted program to influence and create change in scholarly communication, they are necessarily focused on influencing the economics of publishing and on modest experiments in one or more alternative "publishing" models. The potential opportunities to develop and/or support alternative forms of scholarly communication go beyond those currently employed by or available to the libraries. Some are being developed in other UC arenas, notably the UC Press. In addition, UC's sister and related institutions in the academic and publishing world are creating many experimental and production level alternatives.

These models are characterized by their use of network technologies that often reduce first copy costs and virtually eliminate the marginal cost of dissemination to an additional reader, and by their home with a stakeholder that has experience in publishing, providing access, or long-term maintenance of materials. A representative list of alternative publishing business models includes:

- Traditional scholarly journals that eliminate subscription charges and are instead supported by submission or publication charges. Examples include *PLoS Biology*, *PLoS Medicine*, BioMed Central journals, and a host of other "open access" publishing experiments.

- Traditional scholarly journals subsidized in whole or in part by host institutions.
- Monographs made available online and, in physical form, through print-on-demand.
- Institutional or disciplinary “repositories” for working papers, reprints, and other forms of scholarship. Examples include UC’s *eScholarship repository*, NLM’s *PubMed Central*, and Cornell’s *Physics arXiv*.
- Community-created “endowments” to create interest income that supports ongoing operations. An example is the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’s* campaign to raise a \$4 million endowment through philosophy departments and libraries.
- Community-based start-up funding for non-profit competitors to expensive for-profit journal titles. The prime examples are new journals supported by the Association of Research Libraries’ SPARC program, several of which include editorial boards that “revolted” from for-profit counterparts.

Another list can be created of innovative ways to support publication efforts and workflows:

- Institutional “dowries” made available to new faculty to support first publications. Examples include Ohio State University’s humanities “Publication Subvention Program” and the Australian Academy of the Humanities “Publication Subsidy.”
- Community-based quality review processes. An example is the distributed editorial review that the UK’s Open University engages for its publications.

### **The Need for a University Framework and Criteria for Support**

The models above are illustrative of opportunities for: direct financial support; indirect support in the form of encouraging policies or declarations; model emulation; or experimental variation. In many cases the efficacy of the model is still uncertain and enlightened proponents admit that investment is a matter of supporting experimentation rather than choosing a long-term strategy. In other cases, such as the 13 year old physics *arXiv*, there is evidence of growth and success that is likely to continue. There is also evidence of political and community will to fully test some models, as demonstrated by the UK’s parliamentary call to support open access to research results and the U.S. congressional request to NIH that it create a strategy for providing public access to research results that receive NIH funding. In any case, the recognized role that alternative forms of publication are already playing in the transformation of scholarly communication suggests that they will proliferate. Organizations with serious need and intent to influence scholarly communication systems need thoughtful decision processes and criteria with which to make choices about their role in and contribution toward these and other ways to transform scholarly communication systems.

We suggest that the appropriate groups and principals within UC discuss and recommend a process to create a university strategy, including criteria and a framework for decisions about supporting transformative publishing models, as an essential component of the university’s multi-faceted response to the challenges and opportunities to affect positive change in scholarly communication.