

CURRENT ISSUES IN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

RESOLVED AB02/84 ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 4 NOVEMBER 2003

That the Academic Board notes the briefing paper from the University Librarian on Current Issues in Scholarly Communication, as detailed in the documents presented.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOLARLY INFORMATION

1. Commercial Publishing

The scholarly journal market continues to grow and deliver strong returns to shareholders. The market is dominated by Elsevier (30%). The recently announced merger of Springer and Kluwer will create another dominant company. Prices continue to increase: an average 14% price increase has been predicted for serials from 2003 to 2004.

UNSW Library is managing these conditions through:

- Negotiating multi-year contracts with large publishers which limit price increases over the period of the contract
- Negotiating contracts with other university libraries through the Council of Australian University Librarians and the Go8 libraries which deliver lower prices and caps on price increases
- Taking a conservative approach to planning serials expenditure by assuming the Australian dollar will remain in the US 60 cents range.

The UK Office of Fair Trading investigated the market for scientific, technical and medical journals last year. Its report in September 2002 concluded that:

- There is evidence suggesting the market is not working well
- Prices appear high, at the expense of education and research institutions
- It remained to be seen whether market forces and new technologies would remedy existing problems

The Office declined to intervene in the market for the time being, but has not ruled out further action.

The scholarly monograph market exhibits smaller print runs and many university presses are cutting their lists. Several major publishers are developing online monograph services (eg, Oxford) and some monographs are now appearing in electronic form only. UNSW Library is taking subscriptions to online monograph and textbook services (eg Safari computer science titles).

2. Open Access and Alternative Movements

Efforts continue to find alternatives and complementary services to the commercial publishing model. They include:

- **SPARC** (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, <http://www.arl.org/sparc>). SPARC's mission is to encourage competition in the scholarly communications market. This international organisation supports alternative low cost journals (eg, *Economics bulletin* as an alternative to *Economics letters*) and advocates changes to the scholarly communications system. The Council of Australian University Librarians is a member of SPARC.
- **BioMedCentral** (<http://www.biomedcentral.com>) is committed to providing immediate free access to peer-reviewed biomedical research. Authors retain copyright. The service is funded through institutional charges, article processing fees paid by authors, advertising and value-added services (eg, literature reviews). UNSW Library paid the institutional fee last year to encourage participation in this service and UNSW research has already appeared in BioMedCentral. There are no article processing fees for UNSW authors because the Library has paid institutional membership (\$US5,000 in 2002). This also provides access to over 50 online peer reviewed journals. The BioMedCentral journals are recording high impact factors. UNSW faculty using the service comment favourably on the article submission facilities and peer reviewing quality. In the UK, government funding has enabled all UK universities to become members. The Council of Australian University Librarians has been approached about a national membership for Australia (currently six Australian universities are members)

- ***Electronic Theses and Dissertations.*** This international movement continues to grow. Its vision is to create a networked digital library of theses and dissertations. The Australian Digital Theses Program, managed by UNSW Library for the Council of Australian University Librarians, now has over 1300 theses online from 20 Australian universities. Usage is high, particularly from overseas sites. The international Electronic Theses and Dissertations conference will be held at UNSW in September 2005.
- ***Institutional and discipline-based repositories.*** This involves universities or societies building online repositories. Discipline-based repositories generally contain pre-prints and post-prints: successful examples include mathematics and physics. Institutional repositories are becoming wider in scope, covering research (pre-prints, post-prints, published articles), teaching materials, theses, local publications (eg, online journals) and commercial publications. The movement is strong in the US, with MIT's D-Space software, UCLA's e-Scholarship repository, Ohio State University's Knowledge Bank and the Fedora project involving Cornell University and the University of Virginia. SPARC recently issued a position paper on institutional repositories, noting that they provide a "response to key strategic issues facing academic institutions. Such repositories:
 - Provide a critical component in reforming the system of scholarly communication – a component that expands access to research, reasserts control over scholarship by the academy, increases competition and reduces the monopoly power of journals, and brings economic relief and heightened relevance to the institutions and libraries that support them; and
 - Have the potential to serve as tangible indicators of a university's quality and to demonstrate the scientific, societal and economic relevance of its research activities, thus increasing the institution's visibility, status and public value".¹

DEST will soon call for expressions of interest from institutions interested in projects which demonstrate uses of institutional repositories. UNSW Library is discussing participation with another Go8 university. Our experience with digital theses is highly relevant. If funding is received, the Library will need to work with faculties and schools to identify online materials which can populate the repository: this could include theses, pre-prints, conference papers and online journals.

3. Copyright and authors

The development of alternative and open access systems will require changes in the ways authors assign copyright. Many publishers do allow authors to place their research in institutional or personal web-sites and provide free access to them. The Romeo Project in the UK monitors publishers' policies and results are available at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ls/disresearch/romeo/index.html>. This survey reveals that around 40% of publishers will allow archiving of research on personal and/or institutional web sites. Several large publishers are permitting other uses of research, including Elsevier and Cambridge University Press. Several US universities are encouraging faculty members to retain certain rights when negotiating copyright with publishers. The situation in this area is changing. Building critical mass in an institutional repository will require authors to reconsider their copyright agreements with publishers and rights they wish to retain.