

# Cites & Insights

## Crawford at Large

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### Perspective

## Motivation: Monetizing the Zine?

If you find *Cites & Insights* worthwhile and would like to see it continue past January 2005, please read this perspective. What you do with it is entirely up to you.

### *“How do you manage to do so much?”*

For years, I was complimented by that question—particularly when it became clear that my writing and speech preparation are on my own time—and gave a standard answer, one that happens to be true:

“I’m lazy, but I’m efficient.”

More recently, however, I’ve had another reaction. Oh, I’m still complimented, since I’ve never heard an undertone of “*Why* do you churn out so much crap?” And I still start with the same answer.

But beneath that, the question makes me wonder about my motivation for doing so much.

In past ruminations on the future of *Cites & Insights*, I’ve noted that it’s too much fun to stop doing. Sometimes that’s still true, but sometimes, it seems more like work than fun.

With “The Crawford Files,” there’s no question about motivation. I reach the largest audience in the library field, some of the columns seem to make a difference, and I get paid. With “disContent” (in *EContent*) and the infrequent “PC Monitor” (in *Online*), the audience may be smaller and less central to my everyday interests, but both columns do reach fairly large audiences—and I get paid.

As for speaking—well, I don’t do a lot of it, I really do enjoy most conferences where I can speak and also attend other programs, and I’ve recently tightened my usual terms for speaking. And, of course, I get paid.

### *The rest of life*

Believe it or not, I do have some semblance of a life in addition to a full-time job at RLG and library

writing and speaking. We go on one or two major vacations a year. We go for walks on the weekend (and out to lunch twice a week, dinner once a week). There’s still TV that we both enjoy, and a little more that I watch, in addition to our weekly DVD movie.

I wouldn’t mind getting back to my usual book-a-week leisure reading habit (not “usual” for the past few months). I’d love to spend more time messing around with (and maybe expanding) our audio CD collection and preparing still more CD-R mixes. There are still those dozens (scores?) of CD-ROMs I’d like to retry on my fast new computer. (There must be some significance here: I still think of this computer, just under two years old as I write this and not the fastest or most powerful model available when I purchased it, as “my fast new computer.”) I’ve been preparing 8x10 prints from some of my wife’s first-rate photographs, and it might be interesting to do something more with that (or not: her photography is so good that just scanning, cropping to try to get 4x6 closer in ratio to 7.5x10, and printing seems to work best). Occasional contemplation continues to be important, as does regular exercise.

And I do wonder whether the difficulty of getting any books written the last few years is just that I don’t have many book-length ideas, or whether available thinking and writing time is just too full.

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I suspect I’m not the only one in this situation. *Ex Libris* appears on *some* Fridays. *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography Weblog* varies between weekly and fortnightly postings. And, now that I think about it, even *Shifted Librarian* doesn’t have the epic frequency and length that it used to. Almost none of the weblogs I check (mostly via Bloglines these days, but not exclusively) are as frequent or intensive as they used to be.

Sometimes it’s children. Sometimes it’s new job responsibilities. Sometimes it’s fatigue, temporary or as part of getting older. And sometimes it’s lack of motivation along with all those other factors.

I'm not the only one raising a very similar set of questions at this point. The editorial in *Information Research* 9:3 (April 2004), a well-established free ejournal, notes that the journal seems to be successful—but that the editor is having problems finding universities ready to take on the journal as a long-term home. A publisher is interested, but the publisher would start charging for access from institutional IP addresses: You'd still be able to read *Information Research* for free from home, but not in a library or university. The editor asks how concerned readers would be if the journal became only partly open access—and, if they're seriously concerned, will they persuade their institutions to contribute to the journal's survival? Now, there's a huge difference: *Information Research* is an international journal publishing refereed papers (and other material), while *Cites & Insights* is a zine. But the issue of long-term continuation is common.

### *Possible motivators*

Why should I keep doing *Cites & Insights*?

It reaches a fairly large audience. Sometimes it makes a difference. I get more feedback on *C&I* than on my other writing, although that feedback has declined. I suppose it provides me with a reputation of sorts (which may be good or bad).

I can't charge for subscriptions or access while it's hosted by Boise State. For that matter, I don't want to charge for subscriptions or access.

Sponsorship has always been a possibility, but there have been no offers, and I'm not expecting any.

Meanwhile, while I don't think I can or should charge for online access to *C&I* as it stands, I see nothing barring me from adding a link to my own website and accepting money in one way or another at that site, as long as it's not for what's on boises-tate.edu itself.

Here are a few possibilities. There may be others I haven't considered:

- Start a PayPal account and ask readers to donate if they find *Cites & Insights* valuable.
- Offer the value-added service of posting HTML versions of specific stories on a sponsorship basis: That is, if there's a story you would like to see independently available (and hotlinked from the running table of contents), you'd pay a certain charge and (optionally) have a sponsorship note at the end of the HTML version. If I did this, I'd probably set \$200 per page as a price.
- Offer thematic collections of *Cites & Insights* reprints, in book form, through a publish-on-demand service (e.g., Café Press), with each collection consisting of already-published essays with updates, introduc-

tions, closing commentaries, or whatever. Such collections might even extend to include collections of my work from other sources, since I almost always retain copyright. Looking at initial figures, I'd guess that a sensible approach would be to offer 150- to 200-page books for \$25 to \$30 (assuming 5x8" perfect-bound paperbacks with color covers and cream bookstock paper).

- For that matter, if there was a market, I could use the same service to offer perfect-bound print volumes (8.5x11"), probably for a slightly higher price.
- I suppose I could offer Café Press tchotchkes—*Cites & Insights* coffee mugs, t-shirts, and the like—but given my total lack of artistic talent, that doesn't sound too likely.

There are, to be sure, other alternatives:

- Suck it up. Nobody's forcing me to do this. If I'm too much of an egotist to just let it go, then I shouldn't worry about the lack of monetary reward.
- Shut it down—in part or wholly. There are other places to stay informed on libraries and scholarly access, the whole cluster of copyright issues, censorware, and most everything else I write about. Maybe I'm overexposed anyway.

### *Feedback?*

I'm not planning to make major changes in any great hurry. I won't make *any* decisions until after ALA Annual in late June. Other than a possible PayPal account (if there's enough response and if it seems workable), I probably won't do much about this until the fall.

The chances of shutting down *Cites & Insights* before January 2005 are extremely low. From now through August I'll be thinking about the situation.

Just as I was preparing this piece I learned that one of my standing commitments is going away soon. That changes the picture—but possibly in the wrong direction. (It leaves a little more time free—but it significantly reduces my writing income.)

Your feedback is invited. I'm not asking anyone to pledge a donation or say they'd buy a book. I am asking for your comments as to what might work. Other suggestions, including suggestions that I'm missing the point entirely, are welcome. I'll assume that feedback on this particular whine is *not* intended for publication, unless you tell me differently. If you want to offer verbal feedback at Orlando, that's fine too. Otherwise, it's the usual email address: username wcc, domain notes.rlg.org, and you can figure out how to put them together. Mail with

attachments or with “hi” as the subject will typically be deleted without opening.

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## Library Access to Scholarship

Even with self-imposed limitations, there’s a lot to catch up on. I’ve tried to group material into somewhat coherent topical groups, usually providing chronological coverage within each group. In the interests of length, I’ve split out pieces of the OA debate as a LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP PERSPECTIVE, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

### Unraveling the Big Deal

This process continues apace:

#### *University of Maryland*

On February 20, Provost William W. Dostler distributed a memo to the faculty on “Changes in access to journals published by Reed Elsevier.” The College Park campus has gone *entirely* to electronic access for Elsevier journals, and the Baltimore campus has lost its consortial access—in both cases, following “months of unsuccessful negotiations with Reed Elsevier.” Dostler quotes the objectives of the libraries in working with publishers:

1. to maintain and exercise control over library collecting decisions in order to meet the constantly evolving information needs of faculty, researchers, and students; and
2. to manage overall costs in a way that guarantees that no single publisher is exempted from the regular critical review, which ensures that all subscriptions provide reasonable value in relation to their budget impact.

Real-world figures: Last year, Elsevier print journals represented 10% of the current journal collection but took 30% of the print journal budget—more than \$1 million in 2003, plus another \$100,000 for electronic access. In order to be able to cancel lesser Elsevier print journals, Maryland had to abandon the Big Deal. There’s more to the memo about the need for change and players in that effort, specifically citing ARL, SPARC, and ICOLC.

#### *Stanford University*

The Committee on Libraries of Stanford University’s Academic Senate passed a motion on January 19 that endorsed four guidelines, including an explicit rejection of the Big Deal:

1. Faculty and libraries are encouraged to support affordable scholarly journals, such as by volunteering articles and labor in the production, review and editing of journal content.

2. Libraries are encouraged to refuse “big deal” or bundled subscription plans that limit the librarian’s traditional responsibility to make collection development decisions on a title-by-title basis in the best interest of the academic community.

3. Libraries are encouraged to scrutinize the pricing of journals and to drop those where pricing decisions have made them disproportionately expensive compared to their educational and research value. Special attention should be paid to for-profit journals in general and to those published by Elsevier in particular.

4. Faculty, especially senior faculty, are strongly encouraged in the future not to contribute articles or editorial or review efforts to publishers and journals that engage in exploitive or exorbitant pricing, and instead look to other and more reasonably-priced vehicles for disseminating their research results.

The full senate passed those (or similar) guidelines on February 19—with one dissenting vote.

#### *Indiana University Bloomington*

On February 27, the Faculty Council passed a resolution on journals, databases, and threats to scholarly publication that includes the following clauses:

The Bloomington Faculty Council

A) calls on all faculty, staff, and students of Indiana University Bloomington to work toward a more open publishing system by increasing their support of existing refereed journals and publishers whose practices are consistent with open access to scholarly communication and to support those who make such choices when considering tenure and promotion;

B) encourages faculty and staff to separate themselves from publishers with a narrow focus on profits at the expense of open scholarly publication;

C) calls on the university Libraries to educate faculty, staff, and students on the business practices of different journals and journal publishers and their impact on the health of scholarly communication and on our Libraries at Indiana University Bloomington

...D) encourages all faculty, staff, students, and university administrators to work closely with our librarians to find effective ways to maintain the excellence of our collections;

E) calls on librarians on all IU campuses to work together to provide the campuses with a rich and coherent array of electronic journals and databases at the most cost effective prices;

F) expects librarians to be aggressive in their negotiations with vendors and even to withdraw from negotiations where excessive price increases are demanded;

G) expects librarians to reduce significantly duplicate print/online subscriptions and to review and cancel subscriptions judiciously.

*Macalester, Carleton, Gustav Adolphus, St. Olaf, and more*

The *SPARC Open Access Newsletter* #72 (April 2, 2004) includes most campuses mentioned here and in previous roundups in a single chronological list, which includes action by Macalester College and “rumblings” from Columbia, San Jose State, University of Iowa, and University of Oregon, and provides loads of citations for more background.

In May 2004, Macalaster, Carleton, Gustavus Adolphus, and St. Olaf College issued a joint press release announcing their independent decisions to decline the Big Deal. All four colleges are private institutions in Minnesota and would have renewed a three-year deal through MINITEX. The press release notes, “We are all convinced that the escalating prices for many scientific journals are unsustainable and that the time has come for change.” They note that the “disproportionate amount spent for a small percentage of scientific journals was negatively affecting our ability to build a balanced liberal arts college collection.” The faculties of the colleges are supporting them “because they understand that it is in the long term interests of our institutions to reassert control over our collections and to encourage new, more sustainable publishing models.” There’s more to the press release, which goes on to encourage college communities to consider five steps:

Avoiding publishing and reviewing for journals that are not moving toward an open access model,

Retaining the right to distribute the results of their research broadly,

Establishing institutional archives,

Engaging in conversation about open access within department, campus-wide, with legislators and policy-makers, and in their scholarly and scientific societies, and

Adopting policies that signal that publication in quality open access journals is acceptable in the institutions’ systems of rewards and recognition.

### *Feedback*

Randy Reichardt (University of Alberta) of the first-rate *STLQ* weblog ([stlq.info](http://stlq.info)) sent email to four listservs asking for reactions to cancellation of Elsevier’s big deals at various institutions. You might want to read the whole set of comments at [stlq.info/archives/001357.html](http://stlq.info/archives/001357.html).

Excerpts from a few of the responses:

“I am not so sure that many of the Elsevier titles still publish ‘cutting edge’ research, or at least enough to justify the prices...”

“So far, faculty [at four eastern-US universities] have been satisfied with canceling lower use titles, maintaining a fairly substantial core of titles print +

online, and using delivery services to cover the rest. Part of their satisfaction is that we have been able to invest in other priority areas...”

“Those top universities walking away from the ‘big deal’ have had a definite impact on our research faculty and library administration... Being able to point to MIT, Harvard, & Cornell is a huge reassurance [as this libraries considers walking away]”

“It is difficult to find anyone here with a good word for Elsevier... What interests me are that both long tenured faculty and brand new untenured faculty are equally unhappy with high priced publishers and have in fact made journal affordability an important factor in their publishing and editorial activities... The pioneering ‘just say no’ actions of these major research institutions is only the start. If I had one word to describe the situation, it is momentum. It is building and bursting forth.”

“We found [the Big Deal] unsustainable and pulled the plug last August... When we dropped back to just subscribed titles there was very little outcry, we like to think because we had carefully chosen and refined the list of subscribed titles over the years...”

“We are also canceling many Elsevier titles this year. Some professors are upset, but many are very supportive and are encouraging their fellow faculty members to publish in the less expensive titles...”

One institution offered ScienceDirect thought the cost was outrageous, and after meeting with the faculty library committee concluded that the “price was ridiculous for the content” and the faculty were “happy to get anything they needed through our excellent (their word) interlibrary loan system.” When faculty ask why the library doesn’t subscribe, the library says how much it would cost: “They immediately understand our decision. We usually do add something like ‘But if you really want an Elsevier journal we can see about subscribing to that title alone.’ Haven’t had any takers on that one.”

“We dropped ScienceDirect this year... Results: much pissing and moaning from faculty and students alike. I smile sweetly at them and ask what they would prefer to see cut instead, givent hat we were quoted a CY2004 price between \$200,000 and \$300,000.” (This from a smaller university.) “Most seem surprised but understanding or resigned, when they hear what it would have cost. A few have wondered aloud how Elsevier manages to sell its product at all.”

There’s more, but that’s the overall tone.

### **PLoS and the Sabo Bill**

In January 2004, the Association of American Publishers issued a three-page statement, *Copyright and*

*public access to Federally-funded scientific research: The erroneous premise of open-access advocates and H.R. 2613.* After summarizing the argument in favor of H.R. 2613 (the Sabo bill, which would exclude copyright for results of federally-funded research), the document says, in bold face:

The key points to understand, however, are that copyright *promotes* public access to the results of federally-funded scientific research, and that H.R.2613 would overturn federal laws and policies that (1) trust copyright to provide the incentives for public dissemination and access while (2) reserving a fallback right for government intervention in the extraordinary event that copyright in a journal article actually prevents such research results from being publicly disseminated and accessed.

That's followed by seven bullet paragraphs asserted as "facts" and a two-paragraph conclusion. The facts, paraphrased for brevity, with some comments:

- Copyright protection does not extend to any fact, idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery...copyright in an article protects only the author's original expression. That's true. It's also beside the point: If the articles are not readily accessible, the facts in them are not readily accessible.
- Federal law explicitly prohibits copyright for any work of the Federal government, but that prohibition does not extend to works *funded by* the U.S. government but authored by non-government personnel. Also true—which is why the Sabo bill was proposed. (Note that I don't believe the Sabo bill is a good idea, at least as presently written, and that I also think it's a red herring in the whole open-access discussion.)
- General policy allows recipients of Federal funding awards to copyright works developed under such awards, *provided* that the awarding agencies reserve a royalty-free, nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes and to authorize others to do so. Also true, and one wonders whether the copyright transfers signed by authors include that provision.
- The Federal Acquisition Regulation includes a similar "balance."
- "The fact that publication in a reputable scientific journal is effectively equivalent to official government dissemination of research results is explicitly acknowledged in federal regulations." That may be true and provides a loophole for copyright transfer but doesn't speak to the point of wide access.

- The "Grants Policy Statement" of the National Institutes for Health follows similar guidelines.
- The model advocated by the PLoS recognizes that copyright adheres in scientific research articles, and requires an open-access license (a Creative Commons license or something fairly similar) as part of publication. Again, so what?

The conclusion begins, "Current Federal laws and policies recognize that copyright provides strong incentives for the creation and dissemination of scientific papers based on the results of federally-funded research." But there's nothing in the bullet points (at least that I can see) that makes any such claim. Federal laws and policy may allow for the odd situation in which, if you do your work in a U.S. Government lab, the resulting papers are in the public domain while, if you do the same work, *with the same funding*, in a university or private lab, the papers are covered by copyright. Where is the evidence that that peculiarity is a deliberate recognition that copyright provides incentives for creation and dissemination?

The next sentence makes a claim that is also not in evidence: "They establish workable arrangements that facilitate both public access to scientific literature *and* the right of researchers to assert copyright in the articles they write to publish such results in scientific journals." Workable? It's increasingly clear that even scholarly access to scientific literature is breaking down, and the forced assignment of copyright to publishers is part of that breakdown. Is copyright required in order to publish articles? I'm guessing that researchers in government labs also produce publishable research.

As far as I can see, the AAP statement has an odd disconnect between the evidence and the conclusions. I would regard it as an unsatisfactory research paper—but then, I'm no scientist. I don't believe it's particularly satisfactory as argumentation against the Sabo bill, either, even though I'm on the same side.

### *More members and grants*

On March 15, a press release announced that 51 members of the Oberlin Group of Liberal Arts College Libraries have become institutional members of the Public Library of Science. That's not all of the Oberlin Group members, but it does include institutions such as Amherst, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Kenyon, Swarthmore, both Trinity College of Hartford, Connecticut and Trinity University of San Antonio, Texas, Wellesley, Whittier—and, of course, Oberlin.

Two weeks later, the University of California libraries announced their membership.

Both press releases included an interesting paragraph (with trivial changes) that relate to some attacks on open access (see related perspective):

PLoS provides a partial or complete publication-charge waiver for any author who requests it, *no questions asked*, regardless of whether the author is affiliated with an institution that is a PLoS member. Any such request is shielded from all PLoS editors and reviewers. [Emphasis added.]

In late March, the Open Society Institute and PLoS announced a new grants program to support OA publishing in developing and transition countries. These grants will reduce the cost of institutional membership in these developing nations (from Albania to Zimbabwe, with states as advanced as Turkey, South Africa, and Hungary included); all institutional memberships cover publication charges for all researchers within the institution.

### Miscellany

An editorial in the April 2004 *PLoS Biology* deals with the question, “Who pays for open access?” The editorial points out that publication charges are not a phenomenon unique to open access: “Many authors regularly pay several thousands of dollars in page charges, color charges, correction costs, reprint costs, and other fees to their publisher, even when such costs are entirely voluntary.” For example, most authors with articles in *EMBO Journal* pay more than \$800 in excess page fees. A survey of authors in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which already opens papers to free access after six months, found that almost half of the authors would be willing to pay \$500 or more to make their papers freely available *immediately* on publication—and this is in a journal where, on average, the author pays around \$1,700 in page charges.

So far, *PLoS Biology* is finding that roughly 10% of authors request fee waivers—and most of those offer to pay part of the fee. (The editorial also repeats key points—that there’s an absolute firewall between waivers and peer review, and that waivers are granted upon request, no questions asked.)

PLoS also produced a fascinating “brief overview,” *Publishing Open-Access Journals*, in February 2004. It should be available at [www.plos.org](http://www.plos.org). It includes a breakdown of PLoS’s production costs for published articles (which seem on the high side, but then so is their publication charge). There’s also extensive discussion of how to go about running an open-access journal. **Worth reading.**

### Stuff

Begin with an article I probably don’t have access to, but would dearly love to read: Mohamed Gad-el Hak’s “Publish or perish—an ailing enterprise” in

*Physics Today* 57:3. According to the February 22 note in the Open Access News weblog, Gad-el-Hak “pens a scathing critique of the scholarly publishing enterprise, citing familiar maladies such as excessive publication, cut-and-paste or recycled publications...and shoddily-edited manuscripts.” Gad-el-Hak looks at his own small segment of science, fluid mechanics, and finds “more than 200 periodicals and perhaps half a dozen worth reading.” He believes that researchers should publish less often and that libraries and buyers should be more discriminating. Six out of 200? That’s even less than the “5-10%” estimate for first-rank journals that I used in the May 2004 “Crawford Files.”

Philip M. Davis proposed a worthwhile initiative at last year’s Charleston Conference: an eResources Value Site, where those libraries and consortia able (and willing) to do so could provide cost data, usage data, relevant access details, and appropriate size/classification information about an institution—all in the interest of developing awareness of actual pricing within STM journal access. His first-rate speech turns into an excellent brief article in *D-Lib Magazine* 10:2 (February 2004), “Fair publisher pricing, confidentiality clauses and a proposal to even the economic playing field.” The article is **highly recommended** and I hope Davis finds a way to bring this model for price awareness to fruition. ([www.dlib.org/dlib/february04/davis/02davis.html](http://www.dlib.org/dlib/february04/davis/02davis.html))

Finally, Elaine Nowick (Nebraska) and Claudine Arnold Jenda (Auburn) offer a first-rate overview of the library STM crisis, some steps toward solutions, and the need for libraries to be more active in a *refereed* article in *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship*, Winter 2004: “Libraries stuck in the middle: Reactive vs. proactive responses to the science journal crisis.” You’ll find it at [www.istl.org/04-winter/article4.html](http://www.istl.org/04-winter/article4.html); it’s **highly recommended**. The authors write well, know their stuff, are willing to say the hard things, and offer some real examples of (small) partial solutions. This one’s a keeper: **Go read it.** (I’m not offering an extensive summary both because there’s so much material in this 14-page paper and because I want you to read the original—which is also true for Philip Davis’ piece.)

### Bibs & Blather

## You Call This a Gold Edition?

Of course I had a plan for something out of the ordinary this time around, another gimmick for another milestone. Not a repeat of the silver (25<sup>th</sup>) edition, to be sure. My take on the major issues

hasn't changed much since then. I don't have chunks of speeches that I've repeated several times and feel belong in print, at least not at the moment. A set of long-term perspectives would require that I feel confident I *have* long-term views.

But there was a natural out: Fifty little essays, each taking text from a previous issue and commenting on it. One essay for each issue, fudging for the presence of a mere 49 previous issues.

Better yet: Fifty *pairs* of mini-essays, starting with #1 from the December 2000 (no volume, no issue) issue and #-1 from the December 2000 (final) issue of *Crawford's Corner*, and ending with a fudge of some sort covering this issue and #-50 from the *Crawford's Corner* (or *Trailing Edge Notes*) in the January-February 1996 *Library Hi Tech News*.

Wowzer.

What a spectacular retrospective. There's a fat issue all by itself. Based on the first steps I took, I'd guess 20-25 pages for those mini-essays.

Meanwhile, there was an inch-thick *organized* folder for LIBRARIES AND SCHOLARLY ACCESS, close to 1.5 inches (not yet organized) for COPYRIGHT CURRENTS, a growing stack of perspective fodder—and enough on Censorware and Ebooks/Etext to prepare small roundups. Miscellaneous departments already have more than 2,000 words, not including the 3,000 words (or so) in PC PROGRESS. (OK, so the access folder's empty now, but that yielded more than 13,000 words after the first editing pass.)

Then there are all those other special issues since #25, not counting long theme essays:

- *C&I* 3:4 (April 2003) might as well have been a CIPA special, with 11 of 20 pages devoted to that issue.
- *C&I* 3:9 (Midsummer 2003) *was* a CIPA special and has been downloaded by at least twice as many people as any other issue.
- *C&I* 3:12 (October 2003), the 41<sup>st</sup> issue and 100<sup>th</sup> issue of “this stuff” (including *Crawford's Corner* and *Trailing Edge Notes*), was a latté-sipping liberal's special issue (half-special, half-normal).
- *C&I* 4:2 (Midwinter 2004) was the glossary issue—a keeper, if I do say so myself, as long as you realize the limited scope of the issue.
- *C&I* 4:5 (April 2004) was almost entirely devoted to the Broadcast Flag.

By my count, that's five special or half-special issues out of the last 24. I'm proud of all of them and feel that 3:4, 3:9, 4:2 and 4:5 in particular are excellent arguments for the COWLZ assertion that gray literature matters.

Remember COWLZ?

## Getting to the Point

I don't much feel like 50 or 100 pieces of nostalgia. There's a lot happening today that's worth discussing. Metasearch may be emerging as a new occasional theme (with difficulty, given a set of inherent conflicts with my day job). Most existing themes still matter to me and to the field. I continue to experiment with “off-topic” ideas and selective republication of older material—but on an occasional basis, not dominating an entire issue.

So that's the gimmick for this milestone: This issue is the gold edition simply because it's the 50<sup>th</sup>. I started writing this May 4, *before* turning my attention to those stacks of thematic material (but after keying in notes from half a dozen magazines). My expectation was that this would be a typical theme-heavy issue. My expectation is that there will be another issue out just before ALA (given that ALA Annual is in late June this year). I don't have a plan for the next special issue, although the first issue of 2005 will be another specific milestone.

An update on issue composition (which surely hasn't turned out as I expected...and I should have expected that) appears below. As to the nature of readership: The Topica list (ads and all) hasn't grown much in the last two years, and I'm not surprised. I'm not planning to study 400-odd email addresses and draw conclusions. As far as I can tell (web reporting from the host site is down as I write this, so these numbers are from February 26, 2004), recent issues are running more than 2,000 unique downloads, with visitors from 140+ countries and ten or more visits from 69 different nations. Based on what I've heard about the number of people who use *Cites & Insights* as I'd ideally like to see it used—downloading, printing, stapling, reading, then circulating around the library or office—I'm guesstimating around 3,000 actual readership for the average issue. My guess is that means something like six times the actual readership I had in *Library Hi Tech News*—and one of the higher actual readerships in the library field.

Who knows? I might resurrect the “looking back” feature at the end of BIBS & BLATHER...and maybe even resume reprinting the most interesting “disContent” columns.

## Changing Coverage Revisited

In the silver edition, I engaged in a bit of “bibliometrics for dummies,” crude measures of how space has been used in *Cites & Insights* over time. I clustered items into six groups—PC, technology, citations, themes, perspectives, and miscellany

(including Trends & Quick Takes)—and clustered issues into four-issue groups.

To quote directly:

Here's how the six four-issue groups come out:

**Pre & 1:1-3:** PC: 30%. Technology: 27%. Citations: 22%. Themes: 5%. Perspectives: 6%. Miscellany: 13%.

**1:4-7:** PC: 9%. Technology: 9%. Citations: 23%. Themes: 22%. Perspectives: 15%. Miscellany: 21%.

**1:8-11:** PC: 15%. Technology: 6%. Citations: 23%. Themes: 19%. Perspectives: 16%. Miscellany: 21%.

**1:12-13, 2:1-2:** PC: 13%. Technology: 7%. Citations: 30%. Themes: 32%. Perspectives: 3%. Miscellany: 15%.

**2:3-6:** PC: 12%. Technology: 6%. Citations: 34%. Themes: 28%. Perspectives: 6%. Miscellany: 16%.

**2:7-10:** PC: 14%. Technology: 7%. Citations: 14%. Themes: 36%. Perspectives: 14%. Miscellany: 16%.

and, a little later, predicting “from here to gold?”:

Your guess is as good as mine. I believe there will be more thematic coverage of access issues (access to scholarship, that is) and copyright, less filtering and ebooks, very little on adult literacy, and probably new themes I haven't thought of. I intend to do some “CD-ROMs revisited” pieces if time and space permit, in part seeing how older CD-ROMs—mostly tested on a Pentium-166 with 1x CD-ROM—work on a new Pentium 4-2.26GHz PC with 40x CD-ROM. I wouldn't be surprised if PC coverage declined a little more.

I'd like to see 20%-25% citations, 25%-30% major themes, and at least 25% “small stuff” to make it interesting. Beyond that, we shall see.

I was right on one count: “very little on adult literacy.” New themes? Only access to scholarship. There's certainly been less on ebooks, but with the CIPA special(s), I'm not sure censorware took up much less of the total space—but the total space increased. The four-issue groups above totaled 68 to 74 pages for each four issues, with most clusters running 72 pages. This time around, with one five-issue cluster (including the 25<sup>th</sup> edition) and five four-issue clusters, only one cluster had less than 80 pages (on a per-issue basis, the first cluster was shortest). The most recent two clusters have 86 and 84 pages. As for CD-ROMs revisited—well, there's still hope, but I haven't had time to revisit any of those old gems just yet. But hey, I've only had the new PC for two years so far; give me time to break it in. (There's an interesting point: I still think of this as “the new PC.” You can guess how much attention I'm giving to possible replacements. See the PC percentage in issues 38-45 below.)

Here are comparable breakdowns for the last 25 issues, using the same divisions and including “dis-Content” in Perspectives:

- **2:11-15 (issues 25-29):** PC: 8%. Technology: 4%. Citations: 18%. Themes: 29%. Perspectives: 12%. Miscellany: 30%.
- **3:1-4 (issues 30-33):** PC: 0%. Technology: 4%. Citations: 12%. Themes: 38%. Perspectives: 26%. Miscellany: 19%.
- **3:5-8 (issues 34-37):** PC: 3%. Technology: 4%. Citations: 13%. Themes: 38%. Perspectives: 26%. Miscellany: 15%.
- **3:9-12 (issues 38-41):** PC: 0%. Technology: 0%. Citations: 14%. Themes: 52%. Perspectives: 24%. Miscellany: 10%.
- **3:13-14 and 4:1-2 (issues 42-45):** PC: 0%. Technology: 1%. Citations: 13%. Themes: 29%. Perspectives: 38%. Miscellany: 19%.
- **4:3-6 (issues 46-49):** PC: 5%. Technology: 6%. Citations: 19%. Themes: 29%. Perspectives: 21%. Miscellany: 19%.

If I total all 25 issues (by column inches, not by averaging), I get:

- PC: 3%. Technology: 3%. Citations: 15%. Themes: 36%. Perspectives: 24%. Miscellany: 19%.

Have I fallen down on the “20%-25% citations” goal? I'm not sure. A *lot* of citations are included in perspectives and thematic essays these days; I wouldn't be surprised if annotated citations still make up 20% of the total space. (For that matter, I had to make lots of judgment calls as to whether given essays were Perspectives or Themes.) I've essentially dropped CHEAP SHOTS & COMMENTARY (life is too short), which reduces the scope of citations slightly but, I would argue, is a good change.

I wanted “at least 25% small stuff to make it interesting.” Since almost all Technology coverage is “small stuff” (INTERESTING & PECULIAR PRODUCTS) and most Miscellany falls in that category, it looks as though I'm running 22%: Close enough for zines.

Themes and perspectives make up about 60% of *Cites & Insights*. I'm comfortable with that percentage. As for the next 25 issues—if there are 25 more issues? We shall see.

## It May Not Be My Fight, But...

Boy, do I not want to write this section in some ways. I stand to lose readers as a result and I can't imagine that I'll gain any readers or friends (my few close friends already know where I stand). I could lose speaking opportunities. I should just let it be.

After all, it may not be my fight. I'm a middle-aged white man, straight, politically moderate, married to a wonderful woman for more than 26 years, with no intention of changing that status.

But here it is. And, come to think of it, maybe it is my fight.



I'm happily married. I'm heterosexual. We were married in a church.

And for the life of me, I cannot see any way to interpret the marriage of two adults who love one another as doing anything other than *strengthening* marriage, as long as the two adults are both competent to make that commitment. Those marriages do nothing to weaken my marriage in particular, and (I believe) a lot to strengthen marriage in general.

Before you blow your stack, note that I would have no problem with "marriage" being something that's done entirely by religious organizations—as long as government replaces it with some other form of commitment that has the 1,100+ perquisites that currently exist for married couples, *and only for married couples*. Get government entirely out of marriage (that is, the rite and agreement with that particular name), and I have no problem. Of course, neither do same-sex couples: Any number of ministers in Metropolitan churches, Unitarian Universalist congregations, and other faiths will be only too happy to wed two men or two women who are committed to one another. Would my wife and I still have a church wedding? Hard to say.

"It's for the children." Hogwash.

I don't remember any questionnaire when we went to get a marriage license, asking us whether we intended to have children. We don't have them, and won't. Should our marriage be annulled?

My father remarried at age 89 to a wonderful 91-year-old woman. I suspect there was never any possibility of those two having children—and that wasn't a bar to their getting married.

"For the children" means that any person who's infertile, either by choice or by chance, should be barred from marriage.

"The Bible says..." Well, for one thing, freedom of religion only works if there's also freedom *from* religion, and the government currently provides all those perquisites to married couples. Thus, marriage has to be considered a secular union. Don't push Biblical attitudes toward right and wrong too far. There's at least one passage in the Bible that appears to praise drunken incest (Genesis 19:30-38), and certainly more than one case of polygamy without condemnation.

I also take into account that the case I'm most personally acquainted with: Two wholly-committed people were able to get married in San Francisco before the courts temporarily stopped a peaceful and loving process. That couple includes one woman who's a military veteran and considerably more religious and conservative than I'll ever be, and another woman who's a minister and presumably understands the Bible fairly well.

Was Gavin Newsom legally right? I don't know. (I know he surprised a lot of people, given that he's a happily married businessman who's relatively conservative by SF standards. But then, it took Richard Nixon to open U.S. relations with China.) Was he morally right? I believe so. I won't comment on "Ax Handle Romney" or other players in this ongoing drama (if you don't get the reference, you're younger than I am). I was fascinated by an article in today's San Francisco *Chronicle*, filed from South Boston, that suggests people there aren't terribly concerned about Massachusetts' legalization of gay marriage—and that some "family" groups are getting desperate because "two years might not be long enough to show that gay marriage undermines marriage." For once, I agree with the "family" people: I suspect two *centuries* of gay marriage won't be long enough to show that it undermines the institution of marriage!

Semi-reformed slutty "virgins" getting "married" for two days to have a good ol' time with an old boyfriend may weaken the institution of marriage. People on their 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> marriage may weaken the institution. Fifty percent divorce rates may weaken the institution. Or, in all those cases, it may not. *Everyone* who cheats on their spouse weakens the institution, as does every man who believes his spouse is some sort of slave and lesser being.

Loving couples where both are men or both are women? Couples who have been together for decades (four of them, in the first San Francisco ceremony)? These couples strengthen marriage as an institution. They also strengthen society and help to undo a long-standing wrong.

If you find that so disagreeable that you'll never read *Cites & Insights* (or anything else I write) again—well, that's your privilege. Don't let the door hit you on your way out.

## Trends & Quick Takes

# RFID in Books? Why Not People?

That's the dream of Applied Digital Solutions, according to a Declan McCullagh brief in the March 2004 *Computer Shopper*. The company "is hoping that Americans can be persuaded to implant RFID chips under their skin to identify themselves when using a credit card or ATM, a technology the company calls VeriPay." The spokesman for ADS says he's been "chipped" and that having RFID surgically implanted is ever so much better: after all, you can't leave your forearm in a taxi.

Chris Hoofnagle of the Electronic Privacy Information Center isn't thrilled. "When your bank

card is compromised, all you have to do is make a call to the issuer. In this case you have to make a call to a surgeon.” The short piece doesn’t suggest how much it would cost to *have* a surgeon implant this device—and seems a bit confused as to size. Late in the story it says some RFID tags are “half the size of a grain of sand”—but the implanted unit is described as “a tiny 12x2.1mm RFID tag.” Well, 12mm is roughly half an inch; 2.1, about one-twelfth of an inch.

Heck, you won’t have to give your teenager a GPS-enabled cell phone and insist that it be on standby. Once she’s chipped, you should be able to track him anywhere, anytime. As, presumably, could anyone else, including any government agency or clever stalker.

No wonder it’s hard to write satire these days.

## Big Drop in Book Sales!

That’s the headline (in essence) and here’s the first sentence of a May 13 AP story: “Not even Harry Potter could prevent a big drop in book sales in the United States in 2003.”

So it’s finally happened? Print book sales are falling apart? A *big* drop—which should mean at least 10% by any reasonable definition of “big”?

Here’s the rest of the story, according to the Book Industry Study Group. In 2002, 2.245 billion new books were sold in the U.S. That’s impressive: Close to nine books for every adult, in a country where (supposedly, and despite two-thirds of adults using their libraries) almost nobody reads books. Those sales accounted for \$27.1 billion in revenue.

In 2003, 2.222 billion new books were sold, accounting for revenues of \$27.8 billion. That’s 2.5% more sales revenue, and a “big drop” of—let’s see, 23 million divided by 2.24 billion—1.02%. *One percent.*

An industry consultant blames this “big drop” on used book markets (particularly for college textbooks) and on competition with “magazines, cable, radio, music and movies.” (Not the internet?)

Does this mean that a 1% *increase* in book sales would constitute a “big increase”? Or is it only bad news that gets hyped out of all proportion?

## Desktop DOA!

That’s right. “By the end of 2004, the desktop as we know it will be DOA.” That’s what John Morris says in his March 2004 column in *Computer Shopper*. Dead on arrival: Desktop PCs, RIP.

Here’s the solid evidence for desktop PCs disappearing by the end of this year: “By 2007, portable PCs are expected to account for nearly half of all PC shipments in the United States and almost 40 percent worldwide, according to market researcher

IDC.” You say that having a slight majority of shipments in 2007 doesn’t quite equate to disappearing by the end of 2004? What kind of pundit are you?

Morris goes on to say that traditional designs are becoming obsolete and that all-in-one PCs and “convergence” devices, or “lifestyle PCs” if you can stomach the term, are hot stuff. Are they selling well? There’s no indication, and in fact he later says that for now, lifestyle PCs will remain “nice products.” Some of us might say that a Gateway Profile or Apple iMac sitting on top of a desk is, in fact, a desktop computer. More so, actually, than my traditional midtowers at work and at home, since both of them sit on the floor.

As far as I can tell, the quoted sentence in the first paragraph stands supported by zero evidence and refuted by the rest of the column. Morris spends *lots* of time enthusing over PCs with TV functions built in, and as with most personal computing writers, he either isn’t aware or doesn’t care that none of those PC-TV combinations produce picture quality equal to plain old TV sets. I suppose it’s like highly-compressed MP3 portable players: It’s digital, so it must be better. If you’re a hotshot technology writer, you can say any damfool thing and get it printed.

## Cheap Ink? Maybe Not

*Consumer Reports* (May 2004) tested widely-available off-brand cartridges for Canon, Epson, and HP ink-jet printers. Sure, brand-name ink seems awfully expensive—but this seems to be a case of getting what you pay for. Some offbrand cartridges turned out to be *more* expensive than the printer-brand cartridges on a cost-per-page basis, and—for printing 8x10 color photos, at least—none were significantly cheaper. In most cases, print quality also suffered. Their conclusion? Off-brand ink *might* make sense for black text printing—but for graphics and photographic printing, you’re better off with the printer’s own brand. Personally—and yes, I hate to pay the price for Epson’s DuraBrite ink—I wouldn’t take the chance (and, when it comes to offbrand cartridges, I’m pretty sure nobody else has Epson’s archival-quality/fade-resistant ink formulation).

## Quicker Takes

- It’s amusing to read true video enthusiasts bemoan the state of the world. Michael Antonoff reviews the Dish Network DVR 921 HDTV Receiver/Recorder in the April 2004 *Sound & Vision*. The DVR 921 costs \$999 plus \$5 per month (and you need to be a Dish HDTV subscriber, which will cost at least \$35 a month) and includes two HDTV tuners and a 250GB hard drive—enough to

store up to 25 hours of HDTV (although it's already highly compressed, HDTV uses a *lot* of space). Great—but the introduction is more remarkable. “Video enthusiasts long ago concluded that watching TV without a video hard-disk recorder (HDR) is tantamount to cruel and unusual punishment... Without the convenience of time-shifthing, HDTV is a source of unrelenting torment.” Whew. Good thing I'm not a video enthusiast (apparently); the “unrelenting torment” of actually watching a show when it's scheduled would apparently drive me nuts.

- Sigh. I won't comment on *Wired Magazine's* 2004 Rave awards in general, but the award to three founders of the Public Library of Science does require a note. The award is in the science category and claims to be “for cracking the spine of the science cartel,” an absurd overstatement, but that's not even the problem. This is the problem: “In October 2003, PLoS published *the first open source, peer-reviewed journal, PLoS Biology.*” [Emphasis added.] Unless “open source” has some special meaning here that only applies to PLoS, this is a direct slap in the face to BioMed Central and the scores of other open access peer-reviewed journals established over the last 15 years (*Public-Access Computer Systems Review* among them). PLoS does publicity better than any of the longer-established journals and got bigger funding than any of them, but that doesn't make it first. Or second. Or fiftieth. Oh, and somehow Michael Eisen now gets credit for coining the term “open access.” Good grief.
- So legal music downloading seems to be doing well, even though you're getting inferior sound at a fairly high price and with restricted use rights. So do the big labels recognize that more creative prices might make sense? You know, like selling older pieces for 75 cents, or offering cheaper “album” downloads? Not according to Real Networks' Rob Glaser, as reported in *Wired News*. Instead, the record labels want *higher* prices for downloads. But then, that's consistent with their continued claim that piracy is destroying the industry—even as more studies show that's pretty clearly not the case and as actual point-of-sales records show *increased* retail music sales.
- Speaking of music downloads, it's always good to be reminded that the Jobs Reality Distortion Field seems to affect its creator as well as those around him. Here's what Steve

Jobs said about iTunes on its first anniversary: “iTunes has exceeded our wildest expectations during its first year.” Here's what happened: iTunes sold 70 million songs online during that year, a solid achievement. But here's the background: When iTunes was introduced, Steve Jobs promised it would sell *100 million* songs during its first year. So here's the combined message: “Seventy percent of the number we promised actually exceeds our wildest expectations for performance.”

- Will RSS readers clog the web? That's the headline on an April 30 *Wired News* story, noting that some RSS aggregators hit blogs and other sites much too often—and that, to the extent people have their own individual aggregators on their own machines, it may represent a considerable increase in traffic. The story does note that Bloglines and other web readers pretty much eliminate this problem, since Bloglines will only check a site once an hour even if 20,000 subscribe to that site—and that most of the problem comes from badly-designed or badly-configured aggregators. (Anna Creech wrote a thoughtful commentary on this story at eclectic librarian on May 4; she concludes: “Perhaps the best thing for us to do is to educate ourselves about which RSS aggregator we use and how it may affect the bandwidth of the feeds we download through it.”)

## Library Access Perspective The Empire Strikes Back

Somehow that seems like an appropriate overall term for several clusters of material, including some of the proceedings and commentaries from a set of (U.K.) House of Commons Science and Technology hearings on STM publishing and a bunch of other commentaries specifically including part of an ongoing *Nature* debate. My sense in reading this is that open access publishing must be perturbing the STM oligarchy *a lot*; otherwise, they wouldn't be so busy spreading misinformation about it.

In addition to notes here, I've seen other cases where representatives of commercial and scholarly publishers assert that open access journals don't have proper peer review procedures embedded in their operating assumptions. Since this is *clearly* false—free scholarly journals have used proper peer review for more than 15 years, and it's explicitly part of contemporary OA models—I have to wonder whether this is ignorance or malice.

One key question that may never be answered is critically important if you assume—as I do—that one way or another, a substantial portion of open access publication fees is likely to be diverted from library funding. The question is how many STM articles actually get published each year. That’s particularly important given the uncertain issue of how much has to be charged for each published article in order for OA journals to survive in the long run, and the wide range of such fees at present (the two dominant numbers being BioMed Central’s \$500 and PLoS’ \$1,500).

Some OA advocates assert 2.25 million articles a year. Elsevier claims 1.2 million articles a year. That’s a huge difference. If Elsevier’s claim that \$4.5 billion is spent on STM journals is correct—that’s how Elsevier arrives at the \$3,750 “cost” per published article overall—then consider two outcomes:

- For 2.25 million articles a year, \$1,500 fees (PLoS) yield a total cost of \$3.375 billion dollars. Since publication fees *won’t* replace all of the money spent on STM journals (quite a few journals add value beyond refereed articles in their print editions, and even OA journals charge for that added value and for print subscriptions), it’s not at all clear that there would be any overall savings.
- For 1.2 million articles a year, however, the total cost comes out to \$1.8 billion, which would seem to assure overall savings to the community, even with lots of money spent on print extras.

Interestingly, PLoS’s own cost analysis (mentioned in the regular LIBRARY ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIP section in this issue) shows \$870 per article as their total *production* costs, plus \$20 to handle each submitted manuscript regardless of whether it’s published. I could poke at those numbers—e.g., if there are an average of six graphics per article, then why does the analysis show \$138 per 11-page article for graphics layout at \$12.50 per page—but never mind. (Based on PLoS’ analysis, a text-only journal should have total costs of about \$565 per published article and \$20 per submitted article.) PLoS arrives at a total cost of \$1,070, assuming a 90% rejection rate. Note that PLoS’ model properly includes significant amounts for copy-editing and layout.

I would apologize for the length of this section—but as with other similarly long thematic sections, part of this is for the record. I want to be able to come back in two or three years and trace what’s happened without trying to return to primary materials, and I particularly want to be able to refute charges of strawmen or red herrings.

## UK Hearings

I don’t have all the unedited minutes from the hearings and certainly lack most of the position papers. I’m going to ignore substantial portions of the hearings that had to do with aspects of STM publishing other than pricing, open access, and copyright.

### *Elsevier’s position paper*

A good starting point may be *Elsevier’s comments on evolutions in scientific, technical and medical publishing and reflections on possible implications of Open Access journals for the UK*, dated February 2004 and apparently a position paper for the UK parliamentary hearings. I don’t know whether the 15-page PDF will be available at any given point: It’s apparently already appeared, disappeared, and reappeared through at least one cycle.

“The current worldwide system of Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) publishing has evolved over hundreds of years, and we believe it serves science and medical communities well.” I’d be surprised if Elsevier said the system was broken. “Hundreds of years” hardly says much about the relatively recent dominance of commercial publishing in STM, but never mind.

One ongoing quandary is just how many peer-reviewed STM journals and articles actually exist. Elsevier claims 1.2 million articles a year published by “some 2,000 STM publishers,” the articles then used by “millions of researchers.”

Elsevier asserts that 97% of UK researchers have direct access to around 90% of Elsevier journals—and that “UK citizens have access to all Elsevier journals and articles either directly through their local libraries, or via inter-library loan agreements.”

Then comes the attack on several fronts:

- The OA model “risks penalising the UK because British researchers produce a disproportionately high number of articles every year.” British researchers supposedly contribute 5% of all STM articles while British spending on journals is about 3.3% of the world total—if you believe Elsevier’s figures.
- OA risks “undermining public trust.” The subscription model “ensures high quality, independent peer review and prevents commercial interests from influencing decisions to publish. This critical control measure would be removed in a system where the author—or indeed his/her sponsoring institution—pays.” The specific claim is that, because publication fees are only for *accepted* papers, OA publishers would be under continual pressure to increase output “potentially at the expense of quality.”

- Even the highest OA article fees “cover only about 40-60% of the estimated total costs” to publish high-quality articles—which means “to provide all the *revenue* to publishers that they currently make.” The equation of costs with revenues is a constant in the empire’s counterattack.
- Universal access requires print, since only 11% of the world’s population uses the Internet and “only 64% of UK citizens have ever been online.”

Details include descriptions of the Big Deal in the UK, a claim that the STM publishing market is “highly competitive,” with 2,000 publishers publishing 16,000 “unique learned journals,” the assertion that no STM publisher “has disproportionate power,” and a more detailed discussion of why OA models won’t work.

“A wide range of supporting evidence shows that costs exceed \$3,000 per article at existing quality levels... For example, the Open Society Institute suggests Open Access publishers will need to recoup \$3,750 per article published... By contrast, *Science* magazine estimates that it would have to charge \$10,000 per article in a pay-per-article model... Similarly, the American Journal of Biological Sciences estimates that the journal *BioScience* would have to charge \$7,000 per article. “\$3,750...is in line with Elsevier’s estimated mean costs per article across the range of its some 1,800 journals.”

Elsevier also takes credit for “nurturing new areas of science” by launching 31 new journals a year. The claims that article quality would suffer from OA are repeated and expanded. The significance of existing OA journals is dismissed with the note that “ISI, the industry standard that provides key data...on the quality of research, currently measures only two out of some 500 Open Access Journals...”

Elsevier claims that OA models would increase fraud and malpractice because individual researchers would lack the resources and legal expertise to identify infringements and pursue transgressors. “Publishers, together with their journal editors, have been vigilant in identifying and taking action against issues such as multiple publication and plagiarism.”

### *BioMed Central’s response*

On or around February 23, 2004 Jan Velterop issued a set of comments on Elsevier’s position paper, noting that Elsevier seems “curiously ill-informed” about OA publishing.

Regarding UK researcher access, Velterop notes that this seems to assume that all UK researchers work for academic institutions. The UK National Health Service does not have Elsevier’s Big Deal, and smaller biotech (and other science and technol-

ogy) companies surely have researchers but no assurance of Elsevier access.

Velterop’s response to Elsevier’s assertion that OA would penalize the UK—and would penalize major universities to the benefit of commercial organizations and the like—includes the following:

Scientists and institutions benefit from making their published research available to a wide audience—it is by publishing influential research that institutions acquire a reputation that brings them high levels of funding and top researchers. And the cost of dissemination is tiny compared to the cost of doing the research in the first place... In the traditional environment, the less well-off institutions, which publish little research, effectively subsidize (through subscriptions) the publication costs of better-off institutions, which publish a lot.

Velterop’s response to the whole argument that OA models would undermine article quality and the peer review process is pointed, although the first sentence raises some questions about grade inflation:

If a student pays tuition fees, does that make his exam easier to pass? The overwhelming majority of the journals published by Elsevier have traditionally seen price increases proportional with the increase in their volume [and for other reasons]...As a result, they would benefit from a higher acceptance rate in the same way that they imply Open Access publishers do.

As regards OA viability, Velterop says Elsevier’s estimates are based on inefficient operation of traditional publishers. Elsevier also claimed (which I didn’t quote in detail) that their huge profits result in technological innovation as well as nurturing emergent areas of science to which Velterop responds: “It is not huge investment by a large corporation that best drives innovation in the online world. Open platforms drive innovation, as the internet has shown.” Later, he notes that OA publishing means that a publisher doesn’t have to demonstrate a commercially viable market for subscriptions in order to begin a needed new niche journal. “This allows journals to develop in new niches that would have been too small or too poor to support a traditional journal. BioMed Central has published several journals that show how the previous publishing models had failed to cover a particular area, e.g. *Malaria Journal*.”

Velterop mostly makes fun of Elsevier’s blather about print publishing and the non-Internet population. “It is somewhat bizarre that Elsevier imagines that the 89% of the world’s population who have never used the internet are somehow likely to have access to print copies of Elsevier journals.” In any case, as he notes, the most prominent OA publishers *do* offer print subscriptions, “and the logic that some people may want to pay for print has very little bearing on open access.” Taking on Elsevier’s note

that “only” 64% of UK adults have ever used the internet (68% when Velterop looked), he asks, “How many UK adults have ever gone into a scientific reference library?”

I find his next two comments a little discouraging, frankly:

(a) Many of the libraries who receive a copy of BioMed Central journals that have a subscription component, such as Genome Biology, have asked us not to send the print, as they actively find print a problem.

(b) We offer any library the opportunity to receive, at cost, a print archival copy of all or a portion of the research that we publish. Not one library has so far taken us up on the offer. *Print seems to be of rapidly decreasing importance to libraries.* [Emphasis added]

I know: It’s STM journal literature. I’ve gone on record in the *May American Libraries* saying it’s probably a good thing that 90% to 95% of STM journals are likely to become electronic-only. Still...shouldn’t libraries take *some* interest in the only proven method for long-term retention of this information?

Velterop goes to town on the longer version of Elsevier’s attack on OA quality and significance. He notes that authors choose journals based on reputation, so *every* journal has an incentive not to damage its reputation; that many respected journals *already* have page charges (at least for color figures); and—again—that the temptation to accept more papers is *precisely* the same for subscription journals that charge more as they get bigger as it is for OA journals: More articles means more revenue.

Then he catches Elsevier in a flat-out mistruth: The claim that ISI only provides impact measures for two OA journals. “BioMed Central alone has 6 journals that currently have impact factors... ISI explicitly tracks 22 BioMed Central journals and several more of these will get impact factors in June 2004. And citations of the other 80+ BioMed Central journals are already captured and tracked in ISI’s cited reference database, so although ISI does not yet produce journal impact factors for these journals, if one wants to find out how many times an article has been cited, one can do so.”

### *The March 1 hearing*

Adam Hodgkin described the hearing in a LibLicense post: “By my estimate, in addition to the Committee members and Expert Witnesses, there were 80+ citizens and interested parties in the Committee meeting room. Deep green and gilt wallpaper—worthy of a Lord Chancellor—four large chandeliers, leather back chairs...and three enormous full-length portraits of 18<sup>th</sup> c. parliamentarians on the walls.” The first witnesses were from Blackwells, John Wiley, and Nature Publishing Group; two Elsevier representatives appeared later. Hodgkin

draws particular note to the point at which Wiley’s Dr. Jarvis might have lost the sympathy of his audience: “when he appeared to be arguing that it was a good thing that the general public cannot get access to specialist scientific journals.”

The uncorrected transcript of the hearing was made available a few days after the hearing itself. I’m obliged to note that neither witnesses nor Members have had the opportunity to correct that record, and that the transcript is not yet an approved formal record of those proceedings.

In the uncorrected transcript, Jarvis makes it clear that Wiley doesn’t provide delayed open access—“we make quite a lot of sales of back-issue information.” Robert Campbell of Blackwell weighs in early claiming the dangers of OA: “We think there is a danger that an author-paid model could lead to lower standards.” He also claimed OA was not “popular amongst authors.” Nature’s Dr. Charkin repeats the bizarre claim that they’d have to charge “£10,000 to £30,000 per article” (\$18,100 to \$54,300) “to replace our revenues.” At least he recognizes that it’s revenues (not costs) that are being used to arrive at these estimates.

Campbell calls Britain a “net exporter of knowledge” based on the claim that it produces 5% of journal articles and only pays 3.3% of total journal subscriptions. I, for one, would assert that, if British researchers read 20 times as many articles as they produce, Britain must surely be a net *importer* of knowledge by any rational measure—and, based on the 5% to 3.3% discrepancy, that importation is being subsidized by the rest of the world.

The chair asked whether there was a demand for open access publishing. Seems like a simple question. Here’s the answer:

**Dr. Charkin:** We are just running a survey through all the authors to *Nature* to find out. We ran an open access debate about a year ago within *Nature* and there really was not overwhelming support. Clearly, there is some sort of a groundswell, but it certainly was not overwhelming, and early indications from procedures at the National Academy of Sciences in America and such like have not really supported the contention that it is huge.

Of course, the chair didn’t ask whether there was “overwhelming support” for OA; he asked whether there was a demand, which “a groundswell” would seem to affirm.

The chair dug into *Nature*’s absurd per-article costs. The response: “Very crudely, £30 million of sales: we get income of £30 million and we publish 1,000 papers a year.” That doesn’t speak to the advertising revenues of *Nature* or to the considerable portion of its content that is something other than refereed scientific papers. In essence, this representative is asserting that an author-paid model would

mean abandoning all other forms of revenue and supporting all existing subscriptions and costs through the small pipeline from submitted papers—even though *existing* OA journals offer value-added features at a price.

Sure enough, Dr. Jarvis speaks out *against* access to STM articles on principle:

One of the things that intrigues me is that there is some evidence that some of the support for open access is coming from outside the research community. There are some very high-profile stories of members of the public who want to read this kind of information. Without being pejorative or elitist, I think that is an issue that we should think about very, very carefully, because there are very few members of the public, and very few people in this room, who would want to read some of this scientific information, and in fact draw wrong conclusions from it.... I will say again: let us be careful because this rather enticing statement that everybody should be able to see everything could lead to chaos. Speak to people in the medical profession and they will say the last thing they want are people who may have illnesses reading this information, marching into surgeries and asking things.

I omitted the middle section in which Jarvis wholly undermines his incredibly elitist argument: “I think the mechanisms are in place for anybody in this room to go into their public library, and for nothing, through inter-library loan, get access to any article they want.” So, on the one hand, we shouldn’t have open access because *it’s too dangerous* and, you know, doctors don’t *want* patients to be asking questions—and, on the other hand, we don’t need it because any member of the great unwashed can get anything they want anyway. All clear now?

One of the committee members didn’t buy it:

That is not what Dr. Virginia Barbour is saying, the molecular medicine editor at *The Lancet* [an Elsevier journal]. She feels that patients should be able to access papers about their medical conditions. What are you doing to ensure that patients who are not scientists have access to quality medical journals that could help them have a better understanding of their own illnesses?

Jarvis then says, sure, they can get access at no cost, but not immediately on their desktop screen at home. “Again I would take issue with that view. This is something that sounds like a very good idea, but there is a lot of information in the world which most of us need help with and to be talked through. You could get yourself in a terrible mess if you go and read this kind of information, which is pretty archaic, much of it.” (I’m guessing he either said or meant “arcane,” unless Wiley has unusually long publishing delays.) This stuff is too dangerous for lay people to read—and, to be sure, they can read it if they really want to. Better they should just use Google and believe whatever they find there, right?

Later discussions included pushing at price inflation and an attempt by at least one publisher to lay the blame for library budget problems at those damn librarians (albeit not in so many words) thanks to good old Andrew Odlyzko, who apparently still believes that the only worthwhile function of academic libraries is to move STM articles from one researcher to another. To wit, the problem with library budgets is “the library overhead.” “If you look at the whole system, two-thirds of the cost of journals is the library, not the publisher”—a true statement *if and only if* the only function of a library is to provide access to journal articles.

One interesting interchange came when a committee member noted that he was “old enough to remember when there were very few commercially published journals around, and when scientists and people in humanities published in the journals of their learned societies... The evidence shows that not-for-profit journals—and a lot of those are published by learned societies—are more highly cited than your journals are; but they are a damn sight cheaper. How can you justify it?”

Wiley’s Jarvis danced around the question in a remarkably convoluted statement—and, when the committee member pushed on the question again, asserted that scholarly societies “subvent their costs” through member fees. Amazing; Now the members of scholarly societies are *subsidizing* the journals, not the other way around!

Here’s another price point: For Blackwell, with a 15% profit margin, the total revenue per article came out to £1,250 (\$2,262), a bit more than \$1,500 but a lot less than \$3,750—and Nature’s Charkin admitted that this figure was more or less accurate for Nature Publishing Group’s academic journals, albeit not for *Nature* itself.

Much of the rest of the hearing involved copyright. Here’s Dr. Jarvis’ definition of a copyright system: “the unimpeachable right of an author to publish their work wherever they want for no cost.” Hmm. I’d really like to publish *Cites & Insights* as an insert in *TV Guide*, since I’d reach a much larger audience; does copyright give me that right? (Bad example. How about *AARP Magazine*, with the nation’s largest circulation?) For that matter, I wasn’t aware that the author of a third-rate piece of pseudoscientific claptrap had the “right” to publish that work in, say, *Science*—but maybe I don’t understand copyright all that well.

Sure enough, later on we have the claim that publishers need copyright assignment to protect the authors from plagiarism and infringement. “If your author’s work is then stolen or changed, what publishers can do because of their scale and their reach is to do something about that. Individual authors

would find it very difficult if their article was used and changed.”

The second session had as witnesses Crispin Davis and Arie Jongejan, both from Elsevier. Elsevier’s position paper includes many of their key arguments, but a few items may be worth noting. Elsevier feels put upon by this whole discussion of price increases: After all, the company is making much more of their backfiles available online and downloads keep increasing, so libraries are really getting bargains thanks to Elsevier’s beneficence. And, Elsevier says, every customer has a wide range of options: the Big Deal is just one of many choices.

According to Davis, *every one* of those 1.2 million articles “is in a respected journal, distributed to 250 countries round the world, reaching some 12 million scientists.” He’s making that claim on behalf of *every single refereed STM journal in the world*, an estimated 16,000. Every one respected, every one reaching 12 million scientists, every one distributed to 250 countries. Even those with three-digit circulations.

Naturally, Davis raises the specter that third-world institutions and authors wouldn’t be able to afford OA publishing; you’ll never see Elsevier recognizing that waivers exist. Davis also repeats the odd metric that, because Elsevier claims that UK institutions pay 3.3% of total subscription fees (which he rounds down to 3%), this means “we consume three percent of the world’s research.”

One questioner notes the charge that pharmaceutical companies are paying scientists to claim authorship for research articles they didn’t write. After Davis says that accepting such articles would be against their policy, Jongejan can’t help himself:

That is exactly the reason why we are concerned on the open access model.

He may not be saying in so many words that OA invites fraud and malpractice, but I can’t think of any other way to read that sentence.

Elsevier also claims to be a moderating influence on pricing in STM publishing—which might even be true, since its “modest” 6% to 7.5% annual increases may pose a problem for other STM publishers that want to emulate Elsevier’s 34% profit margin but haven’t yet raised prices high enough. One questioner notes that when Davis worked in consumer goods he would have given his eyeteeth for 6-7% annual price increases. Davis says that libraries look at increased usage and realize they’re getting “fantastic value for money.” That’s why no institutions are questioning the Big Deal: It’s such a bargain.

### *The Open Society Institute responds*

Elsevier’s position paper claims lots of evidence that it costs \$3,750 to publish STM articles with proper peer review. They cite the Open Society Institute as

a basis for that claim. On March 3, Melissa Hagemann of that society’s Open Access Project sent out a note to appropriate lists, saying in part:

Unfortunately, the [OSI] Guide has been misquoted to the effect that the authors estimate the cost of a published journal article at \$3,750. Such a claim is incorrect. As the Guide text makes abundantly clear, the table containing this number serves only to illustrate a simple method by which such fees may be determined, and all the figures used in the illustration are identified as hypothetical.

Citing such a heuristic example will only be perceived as uncritical. As all the numbers in the Guide’s illustration are contrived and clearly identified to be so we obviously adduced no evidence to substantiate them. None of the numbers in the illustration are represented to be industry averages, nor can they reasonably be mistaken as such.

We ask that all those who have been misquoting the OSI Guide desist from doing so in the future.

Sally Morris of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) was unwilling to accept that statement, saying (in part):

I cannot imagine that the authors plucked a figure out of the air believing it to be misleading. Surely OSI/SPARC aren’t backing off this figure simply because publishers agree with them?

Until this discussion started, they had gone up considerably in many publishers’ eyes for having taken a much more rational approach to costs than had some other OA enthusiasts; it would be a pity to undermine this perception now.

To which David Prosser, director of SPARC Europe, responded (in part):

What I do know is that the guide authors did not want to mislead readers and that is why they described the figure as a ‘hypothetical example,’ a ‘sample author fee projection’ and a ‘simple illustration.’

They did not describe the figure as an ‘estimate of the average cost of publishing a paper across all journals’ or even as a ‘figure for a single journal.’ Unfortunately it is being quoted as such and that is why there was felt to be a need to issue a clarification.

Nobody at OSI, SPARC or SPARC Europe is ‘backing off’ from the figure in the business guide for the simple reason that none of us ever put it forward as an example of the real costs of publishing a paper!

Morris still wasn’t satisfied:

Illustrations illustrate something. The authors must have thought the illustrative figure was in the right ballpark, surely?

Prosser:

The table illustrates how to do the calculation—that’s all. It really is that simple.

Since Blackwell turns a profit with total *revenue* per article around \$2,250—including all the costs of



print subscriptions and licensing negotiations—it certainly seems reasonable to believe that \$3,750 as a *cost* per article for purely electronic publishing was pulled out of thin air. Particularly since those responsible for that number say so.

### *Day two, indirectly*

I didn't read the transcript of the second day of hearings, but would note a few items from Richard Poynder's April 1, 2004 report at *Information Today*. Vitek Tracz of BioMed Central: "The role of publishers in the process of publishing scientific papers is wildly, incredibly exaggerated and overblown. We publishers are facilitators. It is the scientists who do the research, who publish, who referee, who decide."

Harold Varmus (PLoS) challenged the suggestion that OA would reduce access. Maybe developing countries don't have computers at every desk, but "every institution has a desktop computer, and you can download the appropriate articles." Varmus would like to see public research funding made contingent on OA publishing for the results.

Nonprofit publishers—society publishers, by and large—are nervous. "They fear that any action by government to curb commercial publishers' excessive profits could inflict damage on them." Julia King (Institute of Physics) doesn't believe OA as currently defined is a sustainable business model. The Royal Society issued a press release claiming that OA would require an extra \$3.5 million annual funding.

Varmus accepted the possibility that OA was a potential threat to societies, which might have to adjust their business plans—that is, accept that library subscriptions should not be used to subsidize non-publishing activities. Varmus went a bit further: "Maybe there are too many societies."

### *BioMed Central issues another response*

Some time after the March 1<sup>st</sup> hearing, BioMed Central issued a 12-page document stating 11 "myths" about Open Access. After the first-page summary, each page includes a one-sentence myth, a direct quotation arguing that myth, and a response from BioMed Central. Without repeating BioMed Central's response to Elsevier's position paper, a few of the myth responses are worth noting.

- **Myth 4: Patients would be confused...** (See the Jarvis comments above). BioMed Central: "This position *is* extremely elitist. It also defies logic. There is already a vast amount of material on medical topics available on the Internet, much of which is junk. Can it really be beneficial for society as a whole that patients should have access to all the dubious medical information on the web, but should be *denied* access to the scien-

tifically sound, peer-reviewed research articles?... Patients suffering from diseases are understandably motivated to put in the effort to learn more about their conditions, as the success of patient advocacy groups in the USA has shown. Patients absolutely should have the right to see the results of the medical research that their taxes have paid for."

- **Myth 5: It is not fair that industry will benefit from Open Access.** (Jarvis' claim that corporate subscribers would be big winners with OA because they don't produce many research articles.) BioMed Central: "To say that they do not contribute significantly in terms of publishing research is inaccurate. Industry publishes a significant amount of research itself, and also funds much research within the academic community that then goes on to be published."
- **Myth 7: Poor countries already have free access to the biomedical literature.** BioMed Central: "The list of eligible countries has many notable omissions [such as] India, Pakistan and Indonesia... Countries such as Brazil and China... are also excluded from the eligibility list, even for discounts. There is an obvious explanation for these omissions. These larger countries have significant research programs, so publishers can generate substantial income by selling subscriptions to them. It appears that traditional publishers will only offer Open Access to the developing world when they can be sure it won't affect their profits... Many low-income countries have already started their own Open Access journals. Meanwhile, BioMed Central currently offers a full waiver of the article processing charge to authors in low and low-middle income countries."
- **Myth 9: A high-quality journal such as *Nature* would need to charge authors £10,000-£30,000 in order to move to an Open Access model.** BioMed Central: This only applies to *Nature* itself, and even there it's wildly off the mark. In practice, a significant fraction of *Nature*'s revenue is spent to commission and produce the rest of its content—News & Views, book reviews, commentaries, etc. Even if the research articles were freely available online, this other content would drive healthy subscription revenue. This "front matter" is far more widely read than the research articles; it's not clear whether making those articles OA would have *any* negative impact on subscriptions. Nor would it be likely to eliminate or sub-

stantially diminish *Nature's* impressive ad revenue (included in the per-article calculations!), yet those are assumed to fall to zero in *Nature's* calculation. And, for that matter, the supporting claim that *Nature* rejects 9 out of 10 research articles is misleading: Rejected papers can be passed along to other Nature Publishing Group journals (e.g., *Nature Medicine*) with the referee work already done, sometimes allowing immediate acceptance. BioMed Central does the same with its top-tier *Journal of Biology*.

- **Myth 11: Publishers need to take copyright to protect the integrity of scientific articles.** BioMed Central notes that it's "exceptional[ly] rare for a scientific publisher to use copyright law to defend the integrity of a scientific paper on behalf of an author. In fact BioMed Central knows of no situation where this has happened." BioMed Central asserts, with some evidence, that the insistence on copyright transfer is to protect publisher profits by controlling access.

### *Hearings continue, April 21*

The first session had library people as witnesses—Lynne Brindley (British Library), Peter Fox (Cambridge), Frederick Friend (Joint Information Systems Committee, JISC) and Di Martin (University of Hertfordshire). Note the same caveat as above: These are uncorrected transcripts. I'm only covering roughly the first half of the first session.

The chair noted that librarians say there is a crisis in the provision of scientific publications, but publishers deny it. "Tell me the truth. Who is right? They cannot both be right."

Friend: "There is certainly a crisis, in that libraries are not able to buy all the content that they need to supply their users, and the reason for that is that the periodical side of our budgets is rising much more rapidly than the cost of other information. That is the key factor." (He did not note that STM journals increase in cost *much* more rapidly than journals in the humanities or other periodicals.)

Fox offered a specific example: Ten years ago, scientific journals took 25% of Cambridge's materials budget; that has gone up to 33% "and rising," which means "taking about half a million pounds a year out of the resources available for purchasing books and journals outside the scientific area..."

The chair, in a lively mood, continued:

Publishers tell us that the problem lies with libraries and their failure to promote themselves to university authorities. They are saying you are bunch of wimps really, I guess. Is that true?

Brindley began, "That is an unacceptable comment, lacking in any evidence, frankly." She noted the efficiency gains in university libraries and BL's need to cope with 43% inflation in journals *over five years*.

The chair again: "it is rumoured that a lot of people say that with the digital age you do not need those vast ranges of buildings that you have now, and the huge acreage they cover..." Martin notes contrary evidence: "We have seen an exponential rise in use of digital information, but we have seen no reduction in usage statistics of our buildings, or indeed in our book loan figures."

How about "overheads"—which, again, seem to be taken as "everything except the journal subscriptions." Trained reference librarians? Overhead. Selectors? Overhead. Buildings? Overhead. Martin notes that they've had a *reduction* in staffing even as they needed to add a new post to deal with licensing; she believes that overhead has been reduced. When asked if they could be more efficient, she says they've been *being* more efficient.

Brindley responded to a question suggesting all-digital publishing. "The evidence...suggested that we would be living, at least until 2020, with a very hybrid system of both digital and print publications... The evidence...is very much that people do still come in to consult material." She also noted the problem of secure, long-term preservation of access to digital material.

One of the committee members asked why bundling (the big deal) is so unpopular with libraries. Fox: "Bundling requires us to buy journals that we do not necessarily want in order to acquire things that we do want, and is pushing more and more of our budget into the pockets of a smaller and smaller number of publishers... [It] is reducing the amount of money available for the output of the publishers that do not bundle."

When asked about best and worst practices—and given the statements of publishers that they offer lots of flexibility—Martin noted that her experience does *not* show flexibility to be the case: "We find that publishers tend to approach us in terms of selling us a fixed product, and we have to negotiate very hard to get any flexibility within those products." "The starting point is 'take it or leave it.'"

Later, continuing the question of which companies are best and which are worst, Friend noted that ALPSP members are easier to deal with. Two examples of publishers that "have been very difficult to deal with":

One would be Elsevier, where last year we [JISC] spent about six months doing national negotiations, and we are still spending another four months in sorting out the details at proposal level. You agree [on] a national price of, say, 5 percent [above] what

you paid last year; but then, when the detail gets down to local level, you find that the reality is very different. That negotiation has been extremely time-consuming, and is still not resolved for many universities. Another example I can give you is the American Chemical Society, where we have had great difficulty on long-term access.

Are the universities finding that learned society publishing is being squeezed out or forced into bundling by the commercial houses?

Friend: "The short answer is 'yes.'"

Friend believes bundling is on the way out, "and I see it being replaced by open access" in a gradual change.

Then there's the supposed competitive marketplace and what it means in reality.

Fox: "The problem is that we are in a monopolistic situation. If an academic needs an article from a particular journal, an article from a different journal will not do; and therefore they have to subscribe to that journal." He went on to note that required copyright transfer maintained that monopoly. Then there's the other problem: "The people that are paying for the journals, i.e., the libraries, are not the people that are [making] the decision whether or not they are purchasers."

Discussion continued with problems of long-term access on electronic-only subscriptions (when you cancel a print journal, you get to keep everything you already paid for; not so with most ejournal subscriptions), licensing issues, limits on access, and UK tax issues.

Moving to open access, Friend has no doubts: "I am certain open access is viable in the long term." JISC has a membership with BioMed Central to cover publication payment for authors in UK universities, and is also putting money into institutional repositories.

### *Second session: Scholars*

This group of witnesses included four professors and the chief executive of the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society. It became clear that at least some of the professors were editors for commercial journals and, from appearances, seemed to have been well coached for the session.

Professor Williams (tissue engineering and editor of an Elsevier journal), who does not believe he is conservative: "I do not see that there is any significant problem in S&T publishing at the present time. I think it is a very robust situation." He noted nothing about library costs, just that he finds online access very good.

On the other hand, Prof. Crabbe (biology) claimed to speak for "colleagues not only in my own university but others" in being "totally supportive" of OA, and "at the forefront of open access for scien-

tific community." When asked about a split, Williams admitted there was—and, in stating his opposition, came down hard on OA: "Right now, in the way it is going—and I compare some of the journals which I see in my own area with that which I edit myself—I see a very big difference in quality. It is the quality of the science that is being published and the quality of the publication media that is of greatest interest to me." Prof. Hitchin (math) chimed in, saying "up-front payments in particular are a big issue. They create large problems for certain disciplines in one of the open access models"—specifically, problems for independent researchers not supported by grants.

Prof. Fry (microbial ecology) saw "tremendous problems with the proposed models for open access"—both claiming that printed journals don't really cost much more than internet-only journals (printing and distribution is "a very small part of the overall cost") and that OA could hurt learned societies. He said that learned societies support the majority of conferences and congresses, "largely from their profits from publications." In other words, the libraries are paying for the congresses indirectly—and, for Fry, this was the proper way of things.

As to bundling, Williams saw the need for commercial publishers to bundle—and Fry said, "Bundling has been extremely valuable for the users of journals because it has increased their access to journals enormously." (Fry is publication manager for a society that publishes through Elsevier, and gains enormously from online income as a result of Elsevier's bundling.)

There was more, most of which I'm not discussing here. The scholars didn't seem to think turning over copyright was an issue at all (the licensing person wasn't so sure). Institutional preprint archives were discussed, with some jabs from "the current system works just fine" people about "any old scientific garbage" being on such sites. One committee member suggested that OA might result in "pressure, direct, indirect, perceived or otherwise, on the journal to publish, with less stress on the quality, and, secondly, to speed up, possibly to the detriment of quality, the process of review and publication..." Prof. Crabbe said flatly that, if that happened, no one would publish in such a journal. "It only takes one journal, one paper, one bad paper in a journal for that journal to get a very bad reputation."

Prof. Williams also owned up to saying there was no reason that all colleges and universities needed the same access to scientific publications—those not working at the cutting edge may not need access to the highest quality publications. And, for that matter, he believed that "[the vast majority of institutions] could not, in fact, understand what we

publish, and I think one has to be very careful in determining policy on the basis that everybody should have free access to what we publish.” This variant on Jarvis’ earlier suggestion that it’s dangerous for the public to have access to arcane medical research—this time saying that even most academic institutions ought not to have such access—was very nearly the ending point.

But not quite. Mrs. Carr (from the licensing society) responded:

Well, words failed me there, for a moment. I think if somebody does not understand what they are reading then they do not understand it, but not to have access to it, if it is the author’s wish that they should, or indeed if the community needs it, must be a cause for concern. I am speaking there personally, in a sense.

And the chair closed with the kind of statement I just don’t think you get in Congressional hearings in the U.S. (more’s the pity):

I think you had better take him for a drink, Jane, and beat him over the head.

After which, of course, he thanked them all.

## More Attacks and Counter-Attacks

According to a February 24, 2004 *Open Access News* post, Rudy Baum offered an attack on OA in *Chemical and Engineering News*, entitled “The open-access myth.” In the piece (which I haven’t read directly, but I *know* that Peter Suber’s reporting is trustworthy), Baum states the “myth” as this: “STM publishers add little value to the research they publish and therefore should not charge institutions for subscriptions to the electronic versions of their journals, or, at the very least, they should provide open access to the public a short time after publication.” While it’s true that some open access advocates diminish the value added by STM publishers, that’s certainly not a general stance of the movement; instead, OA advocates believe that up-front payments are a better way to pay for the value that publishers add.

Baum isn’t clear “what advantage is conferred by shifting the cost of publishing from libraries to researchers.” Suber responds that open access itself is the benefit. From my perspective, an equally important benefit is that such a shift makes the costs evident to the researchers, which might yield savings through shifts to more cost-effective methods, which in turn might free up library funds—which might then enable libraries to carry out their whole range of missions (only one of which is transmitting STM articles) effectively.

Baum again: “The open-access movement’s demand that an entirely new and unproven model for STM publishing be adopted is not in the best interests of science.” Suber notes that it’s certainly not

entirely unproven, since OA journals have been around for considerably more than a decade—but another answer might be that most OA advocates do not *demand* that all STM publishing immediately convert to article-payment models.

## Stanford Report

The *Stanford Report* had two Vantage Points in its February 26, 2004 issue, both from very high-profile Stanford professors. Donald Kennedy, president emeritus, Bing Professor of Environmental Science, Emeritus, and editor-in-chief of *Science*, says that “subscription journals are here to stay.” Early on, he misstates the general economics of OA publishers:

The “open access” movement means that neither individuals nor institutions, like libraries, will pay to receive the journal through subscriptions to the print journal or site licenses for the online version.

But many, perhaps most, OA journals *do* charge for print subscriptions, a charge to cover the cost of printing and postage. Online access is free—and site licenses are irrelevant, thus eliminating one significant cost to the publisher.

Kennedy says he thinks “it is a good thing that we will now have both models in play.” He also says that the “author-pays” model is plausible in biomedicine—but “in less populated and well-supported fields, such support is far less readily available.” He goes on to assert that a rising tide of OA submissions will make the author-pays model more difficult to sustain. “That’s because it costs almost as much to reject a paper responsibly as it does to accept one. The higher the rejection rate, the larger becomes the expense budget that must be met from the fixed revenue from author fees.” He goes on to mention additional costs for journals that add news and perspective pieces to refereed articles—which, to be sure, are part of the *priced* value-added extras in some OA models. The problem with the assertion is that it assumes that a rising tide of submissions means lower quality submissions in general, thus a higher rate of rejection. If there are more submissions and they’re good quality, there’s no problem: e-journals don’t have inherent page limits.

Kennedy hopes “that *Science* will continue to serve, as it has for many years, the world’s largest general scientific society.” He also says he hopes PLoS succeeds—and finishes by saying “I know of no normative standard by which their [model] or ours can lay special claim to the moral high ground.” Personally, I see no plausible scenario in which *Science* will lose its stature or its subscription status; like *Nature*, it’s not a key part of the problem.

Patrick Brown, professor of biochemistry and co-founder of PLoS, offered a piece entitled “Free online scientific journals make sense.” He notes that

the U.S. government spends more than \$50 billion a year on nonclassified research and explicitly raises the issue of lay access to the results of that research:

But if your mother learns she has breast cancer and desperately wants to find what researchers have discovered about her disease, or when your daughter in high school reads a story in the *New York Times* about the latest research on climate change and wants to see it with her own eyes, they face a perverse and unnecessary obstacle. They, and countless others around the world who would benefit from timely access to scientific and medical knowledge, cannot freely access the published results of research financed by their own tax dollars.

He goes on to complain that, although Stanford has access to most of the scientific literature, they can't "Google" the millions of scientific articles. He goes on to call the traditional STM business model "a vestige of an era when printing articles in paper journals and transporting them in trucks and boats was the most efficient way to disseminate new scientific discoveries and ideas." Now, he says, research articles are "delivered much more efficiently and conveniently via the Internet" and concludes that charging for access is "therefore no longer economically necessary, rational, or fair."

Brown throws in one argument that makes me cringe, since I believe its implications are clear:

An "open access" system for scientific publishing will not entail new expenses, nor should it place a financial burden on the authors. The governmental and private institutions that finance the research already pay most of the costs of scientific publishing indirectly—through the funds they provide to research libraries. These same institutions would accomplish far more with the same money by phasing out subscription payments to restricted-access journals and, instead, paying for open-access publication of the research they support.

There it is: Don't add OA fees to research grants; take the money away from the libraries.

### *SPARC Open Access Newsletter #71*

This March 2 issue begins with an "objection-reply" on the theme, "Whether the upfront payment model corrupts peer review at open-access journals." It's an excellent, detailed discussion. If you don't normally read *SOAN*, I'd suggest you get this issue ([www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/03-02-04.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/03-02-04.htm)) and read the first three pages. Much as I love to poke at weak points and overstatements in OA advocacy, I find no fault with anything in Suber's multipart refutation of the "corruption" suggestion, one of the most common attacks on OA.

The next article offers "Top 10 priorities for the OAI community." I don't talk much about OAI, partly because of personal issues and the incredibly cavalier attitude of some leading OAI proponents toward libraries, but it's a good list to consider.

### *Les Grivell: "Access for all?"*

This viewpoint, which appeared in *EMBO reports* 5:3, is a useful overview of some of the issues regarding OA and OAI. It's worth reading and should be readily available online. I think I detect a slant, but maybe I'm wrong, so I'll just note that Grivell considers viewpoints on several sides of the issues and writes clearly.

### **The *Nature* Discussion: Access to the Literature**

This *Nature* "web focus" began April 2 with an introduction from Declan Butler, European correspondent for *Nature*. You'll find the whole thing at [www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/](http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/), and I suspect new contributions will be added to the discussion after this issue appears. I reviewed the introduction and the first twenty documents in the debate, but only mention a few of those documents here. (Two of them were the Kennedy and Brown Vantage Points from *Stanford Reports*, discussed earlier in this section.)

Butler's introduction frames the issues fairly and includes two paragraphs I find particularly telling:

One jarring aspect of proposals to reform scholarly publishing is that, all too often, they implicitly consider 'journals' as a single homogeneous entity, to which one universal publishing model can be applied. On the contrary, diversity is everywhere. In any discipline, journals range from high quality 'must reads' with high rejection rates—which in turn result in higher costs per published paper—to publications which add little value to the articles as submitted, and are read by few apart from the authors themselves.

Journals are also published by a range of patrons, from individuals, and commercial publishers, to learned societies who use publication revenues to support their community in other ways. Likewise, a journal might be run largely by scientists working for free, or by professional editors. Some are electronic only, some have print editions. The list goes on. Any discussion of publishing models must surely take into account this heterogeneity. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

One caveat, one that I would apply to the whole discussion about much higher costs for journals with high rejection rates. For most refereed journals (STM or otherwise), referees work for free. For many refereed journals, so do the editors. With electronic submission and routing, it's reasonable to believe that the actual costs to the publisher for *rejected* articles should be very low. Most of the costs associated with *published* articles are for copy editing, preparation of graphics, preparation of metadata, and conversion of the article into a form appropriate for publishing (and, for print journals, printing and

postage). But the cost per published article for all of that work is the same, regardless of whether the journal publishes four of every five articles submitted or only one of ten. If \$1,500 is a plausible publication cost (and that seems high), wouldn't \$20 be a sufficient submission cost to make an efficient all-electronic refereeing system work?

Here's the next-to-last paragraph—and you probably already know my answer to the questions: Yes and Yes.

Could these costs be paid for in other ways than the traditional reader-pays subscription model, and under what circumstances? Or will the outcome be a mix, with open access prevailing for certain types of publication, and elsewhere, market demand for greater access to the literature driving imaginative deals between publishers and libraries to make such access more affordable.

### *Sally Morris, ALPSP*

ALPSP is clearly in a conflicted position on this whole issue, as this piece shows. It begins: "It is no accident that much experimentation with the Open Access journals model, where costs are covered by payments made on behalf of the author rather than on behalf of the reader, is being carried out by learned societies and other not-for-profit publishers."

She goes on to express cautions, then turns to the critical issue—and the one where I'm least sympathetic to ALPSP and learned societies in general. She provides an argument in the second paragraph that I find remarkable and, at least for the U.S., wholly disingenuous.

Where [societies] do make a surplus—and not all do—it is typically invested in such activities as promoting public education, subsidizing conference fees or membership subscriptions, and providing research grants and bursaries. If, as seems likely, the author-end cost-recovery model were further to reduce surpluses—which are already modest compared with some commercial publishers' profits—these other services would inevitably suffer, and it is arguable that both science and society would be the poorer.

Some people argue that it is not right that library budgets should pay for societies' other activities. But it is perhaps fair to ask where those library budgets come from: ultimately, they come from the taxpayer, meaning, primarily, business. If, on the other hand, these society services were no longer subsidized, who would have to pay? In many cases, it would be the individual scientist—paying more for society membership, more on conference fees and travel. The alternative of more direct subsidy from taxpayers' money, whether to the societies themselves or to the individual scientists, might have considerable drawbacks in terms of independence and academic freedom.

Say what? Now, ALPSP works in the UK, and maybe the primary source of all library budgets in the UK is business taxation. I don't believe that to

be true in the U.S., and especially not for private universities. In any case, it's a shell game: The thesis that it's acceptable for societies to subsidize their own operations on the backs of libraries, while not rallying to improve library budgets. I argue that *it is not right that library budgets should pay for societies' other activities*. Period.

### *Karen Hunter, Elsevier*

She calls the essay "Open Access: yes, no maybe." But what you'll read is her assertion that even PLoS is "charging substantially below the actual cost of publication" with its \$1,500 fee. Thus, for Elsevier to "experiment," they would have to charge the "real cost of publication"—that is, the entire amount that Elsevier *makes* from print and electronic publications, including profit—and "we would be endorsing a model that at the moment is unsustainable."

"We think that the so-called lack of access is a red herring." After all, there's always ILL—but not to the electronic version, given most licensing restrictions. She raises the usual hobgoblin of editorial independence, those who lack the funds for publication payments, and the disruption of a model that "has evolved over centuries" (but has become primarily commercial over a very few decades). It's a classic Elsevier piece, albeit slightly less heavy-handed than some.

### *Kate Worlock, EPS*

After several other commentaries (including the two republished from *Stanford Report*), Worlock weighs in with "Open access and learned societies," an unusually long piece for this debate. It has some gems: A survey found that 80% of scientists belong to at least one learned society. That means 20% of scientists find no learned society worth joining: A startling figure. There's another estimate of how many refereed journals are out there: this time it's 21,000. And one poll found 87.5% of responding learned societies getting a surplus from their publishing activities. If that's true, Morris' "and not all do" is true, but just barely.

Then things get weird. There's an argument that one reason for membership is that scientists are "paying for exclusivity and receiving it" through their membership subscriptions to journals, and that membership would be less valuable if everyone has access. There's a new counter-OA argument: Scientists *want* restricted access to articles!

Another numbers paragraph notes 765 journals in the *Directory of Open Access Journals* as compared to 21,000 journals in Ulrich's—but weakens that by noting that the 21,000 includes monographic series. (*DOAJ* now lists more than 1,000 OA journals, so it's at least 4% of the journal world at this point.)

Unfortunately, Worlock goes on to quote at some length the Open Society Institute "\$3,750" cost. She then goes on to find that ALPSP benchmarks show a median cost of £450, which, at \$815 or so, is considerably below PLoS' \$1,500 charge.

After that, there's the usual anti-OA confusion: Societies will wish to continue print (and can, since there's no bar to charging cost recovery for print subscriptions). The majority of journal authors aren't dissatisfied with the present system (but libraries are going broke). Humanities research is cheap, making publication charges difficult to cover (but humanities journals *aren't the problem*, as they're relatively inexpensive in any case). "The move to open access is still very much an untested concept," after more than a decade of journal publishing.

"Learned societies exist to foster and disseminate knowledge, and undertaking an open access experiment which could threaten the economic survival of the society would be unlikely to be seen as an acceptable risk." Doesn't that reason for existence argue forcefully *for* experimenting with OA?

*Jan Velterop, BioMed Central*

His piece is "The myth of 'unsustainable' Open Access journals," and he argues forcefully that the *current* STM publishing system is "unsustainable." He quotes one of UC's academic senates to that effect. He also notes that specific publishing-related services can be unbundled, each step charged for separately. This raises interesting possibilities: The print version of a journal might not come from the original publisher at all, for example. (The Creative Commons BY license required by some OA publishers makes this straightforward: Any other agency is legally free to reprint those articles for a price.)

*Thomas J. Walker, University of Florida*

Walker discusses hybrid publications, "open access by the article." These are journals that charge for subscriptions, but if an author pays a publication fee, the online version of that article will be free for all use. For the Entomological Society of America, which began using this model four years ago, 62% of published articles were open-access last year; for another society, the figure reached 66% by 2003.

The publishing charges are *very* reasonable. The American Society of Limnology and Oceanography charges \$350 for a 10-page article; ESA charges \$124 for an 8-page article. More recent attempts at the hybrid models involve charges ranging from \$995 to \$2,160, "but I would argue...that these fees are unnecessarily high." He believes the hybrid model offers many benefits, including increased loyalty from members—that is, scientists who *want* broad access rather than exclusivity.

*John B. Hawley, Journal of Clinical Investigation*

"Is free affordable?" To JCI, yes. The journal's been around since 1924; when it went online in 1996, it immediately provided free and unrestricted online access. They've found that the policy is one "that the journal can afford." It's a detailed paper, including what's involved in publication, the percentage of rejections (almost 90% for JCI), and other aspects.

*...and many more*

I've omitted quite a few for various reasons. We have the proud open access publisher saying, well, no, it's not *really* sustainable and we're pulling back. We have Thomson ISI saying that, as far as they can determine, there's no correlation between the publication model and the journal's impact: OA neither helps nor hurts measurable ISI-style impact—but it's awfully early to say.

All in all, a fascinating ongoing debate.

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## The Library Stuff

Misek, Marla, "eScholars of the world, unite!" *EContent* 27:3 (March 2004): 36-40.

Do traditional book and academic publishers actually "reject millions of manuscripts each year"? Are online publishers really "more inclined to publish content," and if that's true, does it carry implications for quality control? For that matter, is it really reasonable to call UC "the world's largest research collection"?

Maybe, maybe not—and I'm not sure any of those questionable assertions have much to do with this article. Misek offers a readable overview of California Digital Library's eScholarship Repository—which, interestingly, is not only open to the public for free downloading, but also open to *submissions* from outside UC.

An interesting view of how the repository works, its connection to EditKit, an "end-to-end publication system" for digital publishing, and plans for the future. The repository isn't huge yet: It had 2,366 freely-accessible papers in November 2003, and a mid-January count suggests that about two papers a day were being added. There's more to the repository, including an ejournal and "dozens of research series." A good non-scholarly of this project.

Fryer, Donna, "Federated search engines," *Online* 28:2 (March/April 2004): 16-19.

A good discussion of metasearch engines from a distinctly commercial perspective. Worth reading,

but read cautiously—and when someone says there’s an opportunity for libraries to “out-Google Google,” don’t assume that’s possible in a way that users would find convincing. (Yes, libraries can offer relevant results that Google can’t; no, it’s not likely that any library vendor can provide the speed and “relevance” ranking that Google does over a range of bibliographic and full-text databases.) The article seems to ignore results-handling issues entirely, and holds that “partial de-duping [that is, deduping only the first few returns from each database] is better than none,” adding, “This is an issue that NISO will have to address.” I’m not part of NISO’s metasearch initiatives, and wonder what they’re going to come up with; surely enforceable standards that would make cross-database relevance ranking and deduping feasible are among the least likely outcomes.

Burke, Linda, “The saving grace of library space,” *American Libraries* 35:4 (April 2004): 74-6.

Linda Burke notes the continued doomcryers in the library field—“we won’t need buildings any more, and our circulation is dropping”—and wonders why people don’t seem to have abandoned large bookstores. Her community college library needed renovation and was under pressure to add more computer workstations. After the renovation, not only did students come in far more often to use the computers, they also used the rest of the library’s facilities. With some active marketing and changes to make the library more of a community center, and some new activities, many more patrons began to use the library—and circulation, which had been declining or flat, went up by more than a third. As this heartwarming article concludes, “There is no downside to a packed, well-used library.”

Janes, Joseph, “Reality by consensus,” *American Libraries* 35:4 (April 2004): 90.

Some columns are worth revisiting; this is one of them. Janes discusses his experiments with “the ESP game,” in which you and an anonymous online partner see up to 15 images and provide labels for the images. If your label matches your partner’s label, you earn points.

So what? This experiment (a research project from Carnegie Mellon) may offer insights as to how images can reasonably be indexed. Sure, you can index art images by the painter and provenance, and other images by source and date (if you know that), but what can you say about the images themselves? “People often choose the obvious, the easy, and the concrete”—and somehow that’s not surprising.

This experiment won’t yield an index to all the images on the web. It isn’t a substitute for profes-

sional indexing. But the more we know about how people think of images, the more likely it is that we can find ways to retrieve them.

Janes, Joseph, “Librarians are not search engines,” and Pace, Andrew K., “The business of search engines,” *American Libraries* 35:5 (May 2004): 58 and 60-61 respectively.

If you didn’t read these columns carefully when they appeared, go back and do it now. Janes objects to a T-shirt (or something) he saw with this catchphrase: “Librarians: The Best Search Engines.” He notes that any search engine is mindless and that librarians really don’t want to be in direct competition with search engines. This is another case where librarians need to get the story out—what you actually do, why it counts, why it’s worth paying for, and why it’s not something a computer can replace.

Pace discusses the state of commercial web search engines and makes one strong assertion: “Make no mistake, the search engine companies are not in the business of creating relevant and accurate Web search results. Google is an advertising firm—they all are.” That’s not quite right. Google is no more an advertising firm than any commercial radio or TV station. Like those, all or nearly all of Google’s revenue may come from advertising, but that’s because Google (like radio and TV) offers a service people find compelling enough to make the ads workable.

Google is a business, and that business depends on advertising revenue. That doesn’t make it an advertising firm, and it doesn’t make it evil. On the other hand, Pace makes a lot of other points with which I generally agree—and they’re points that librarians need to think about. Also worth reading.

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## The Details

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