

SEEKING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE UK

How do the University of Chicago Press's titles compare to Elsevier's in terms of median price? How long does it take first-time submitters to self-archive a work through the Internet? How do librarians and publishers feel about the concept of a national site license for a collection of journal titles? These questions about our current scholarly communication system are addressed in recent reports commissioned in the United Kingdom. It is worth taking a close look at three of these reports as much of the data collected and many of the findings are highly relevant for North American research institutions.

Oxford University Press commissioned a detailed study of the journal prices of 12 large scholarly publishers. Moving beyond traditional journal-pricing models, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) sponsored two fascinating studies: one examining librarian and publisher perspectives on appropriate business models for journal content and the other analyzing faculty attitudes and behaviors relating to self-archiving and publishing in open access journals.

Journal Prices in the Traditional Marketplace

Late in 2004, Oxford University Press (OUP) released the findings from a study of journal prices of 12 publishers of scholarly journals, both commercial and not-for-profit. Working for OUP, Sonya White and Claire Creaser analyzed eight major commercial publishers and four university press publishers.¹ While most of the data cover only a five-year period from 2000 through 2004, the pricing information is sliced and diced variously by broad subject area, by price per point of impact factor,² and by price per page. Each publisher's list was analyzed by quartile as well as by median journal price, and the top-priced journal for each was tracked.

When data are analyzed in that much detail some surprises are bound to emerge along with the broader picture. In general, conventional wisdom was affirmed by the observation that Elsevier had the highest median journal price for its list by a wide margin. Less intuitive was the documentation that showed Elsevier with the lowest rate of increase among the commercial publishers. In fact, two university presses posted higher rates of increase in median journal price.

Looking across subject categories, the commercial publishers generally demonstrated high median prices relative to the university presses. However, despite the obvious trend, universal truths are clearly rare as the University of Chicago Press had higher median prices than several commercial publishers in the arenas of biomedicine and science. Conventional wisdom was

again supported by the finding that the price per impact factor was generally substantially higher for the commercial publishers than for the university presses analyzed.

White and Creaser's quartile analyses of each publisher's title list are very unusual among pricing studies and provide a more detailed picture of pricing practices. Quartile analysis highlights the range of prices set across different titles in a publisher's list and tracks how price increases might vary between the most and least expensive journals on the list. For instance, most of the median price increase in a publisher's list could be the effect of increases in the most expensive titles alone. In theory, expensive journals might become less expensive while less-expensive titles grow more expensive over time. Despite the potential complexity of title-by-title pricing, the overall pattern shown by this study was overwhelmingly that publishers raise prices nearly consistently over the price range of their titles, i.e., all of a given publisher's titles tended to increase at about the same rate.

While the White and Creaser study holds few surprises for well-informed members of the library community, their substantial documentation along with some surprising details and unusual analyses make this work worth careful examination.

Librarians' and Journal Publishers' Perceptions of New Business Models

It is perhaps beyond obvious that librarians and publishers have different opinions about the success and viability of possible new business models for journal publishing. The Rightscom study commissioned by JISC both documents the gap in perspective and looks at reactions to a set of potential new business models.³ The business models considered range from a national site license to several pay-per-view options to several models that create open access.

The researchers conducted lengthy interviews with librarians from a wide range of higher education institutions. Similarly, interviews were conducted with journal publishers, both commercial publishers and not-for-profit publishers. These interviews yielded a varied list of observations, some generalizations, and many descriptions of diversity of opinion based on the type of institution represented.

It is no surprise to find that the librarians interviewed emphasized the need for wide access to a broad base of resources. Both pay-per-view, particularly user-based pay-per-view, and bundled models were not attractive to librarians. In contrast, publishers emphasized that declines in profitability were unacceptable and that greater overall levels of investment in journal collections were needed to accommodate growing volumes of scholarly output. Libraries and publishers tended to view each

other as excessively wedded to print publishing. Publishers reported they were neutral on open access.

One of the unique aspects of the study was the development of seven business models that were used to elicit reactions from librarians and publishers. Responses to the various models suggest the difficulty of building broad support for change. While some models seemed to offer few attractions to any of the respondents, none was broadly popular either. Even within the library community surveyed, significant variations were found in responses from different categories of institutions.

In general publishers and librarians alike objected to business models that impose constraints on usage and liked models offering predictability. Pay-per-view models were seen as problematic because of their tendency to constrain use and reduce predictability. Publishers were happy with bundled models and accepted consortial models, if not always enthusiastically.

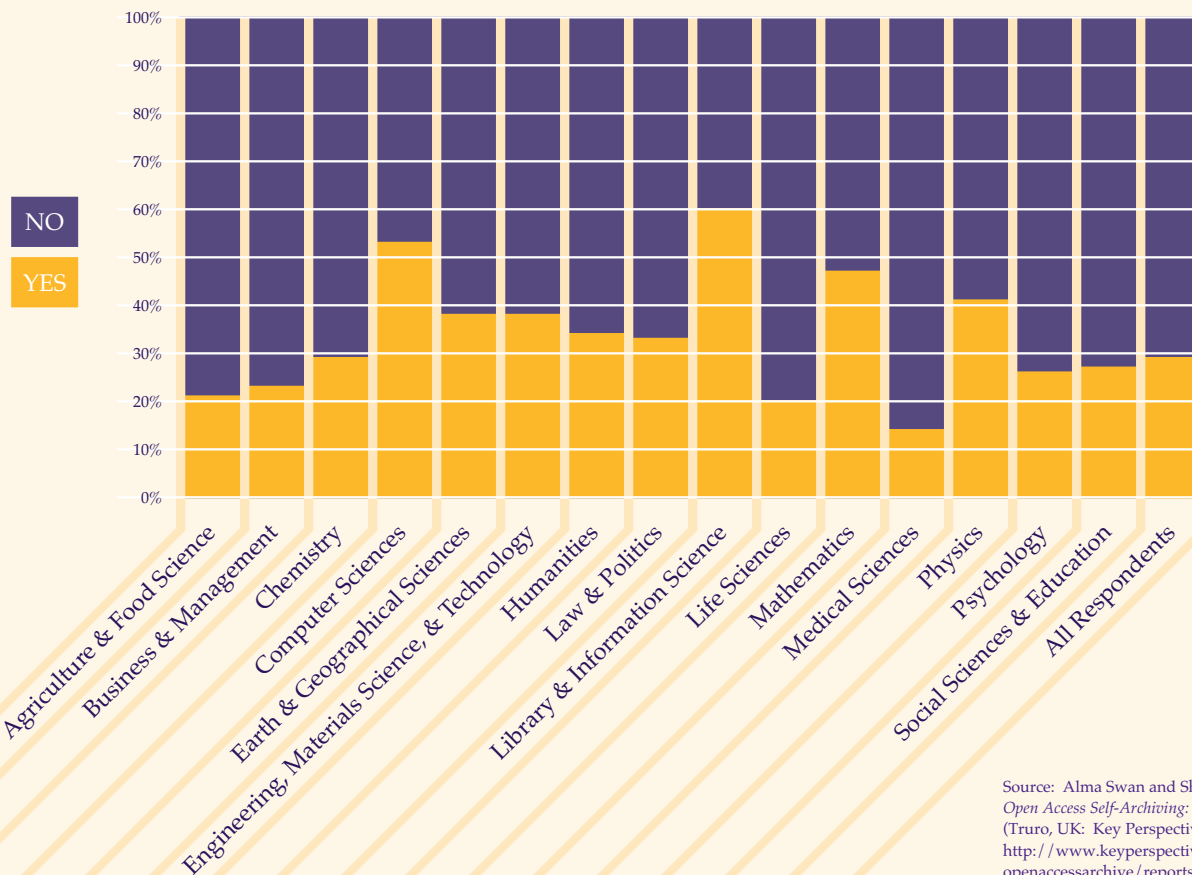
The report findings underscore that all business models involve trade-offs. Clear dissatisfaction with the

status quo was documented as well. Given the fundamental differences in objectives and concerns between publishers and librarians and the diversity of benefits obtained by different institutions within higher education, the findings highlight the complexity of identifying viable new models for journal publishing.

Authors' Attitudes and Behaviors Regarding Self-Archiving and Publishing in Open Access Journals

Turning from the world of buying and selling journal subscriptions to look at authors, a fascinating study on author responses to open access was commissioned by JISC and reported by Key Perspectives, Ltd.⁴ Using data collected late in 2004, the report is based on survey responses from almost 1,300 authors from around the globe. Only 7% of respondents indicated they were from the UK (27% were from North America). The study examined awareness of the ability to self-archive works and the attitudes and experiences of those authors who had archived works. Respondents also reported on their choice of open access journals to

AWARENESS OF SELF-ARCHIVING AS A MEANS TO PROVIDING OPEN ACCESS



Source: Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown, *Open Access Self-Archiving: An Author Study* (Truro, UK: Key Perspectives, 2005), 45, <http://www.keyperspectives.co.uk/openaccessarchive/reports.html>.

publish articles. In addition, in several places the authors compared their findings to an earlier survey allowing them to report on trends over time.

Nearly half of the respondents reported having archived a work. Self-archiving was defined quite broadly to include both posting a work to a Web site and depositing a work in a repository that complies with the Open Archives Initiative (OAI). While Web posting was quite common, repository deposit was substantial. In many categories, deposit of refereed works had doubled since an earlier survey in January of 2004. These findings document that institutional and disciplinary repositories have made remarkable headway in changing scholars' behavior in a surprisingly short period of time.

Disciplinary variations were also tracked, showing an array of variations in deposit activity. Earth scientists, for instance, were most likely to have deposited a postprint in an institutional archive while medical scientists were most likely to have placed a postprint on a Web page.

Anxious to examine how onerous authors find self-archiving to be, the authors of the study gathered data on author perceptions of the ease of deposit and the amount of time required. Reassuringly, 54% of respondents described their first self-archiving experience as easy or very easy; however, 20% reported some level of difficulty. According to 75% of those who had deposited a work, it took less than an hour to archive their first work.

Since it seems that most authors have little actual difficulty depositing works, the question arises "Why don't more authors take advantage of self-deposit of their works?" The most common objective respondents cited for undertaking their publishing activities was to communicate their research results to their peers, an objective consonant with self-archiving. The answer to the question "Why not?" appears to be unawareness of the availability of self-archiving mechanisms. Of those who had not used self-archiving, 71% reported being unaware of the option. Lack of awareness of this option varied by discipline but ranged from 86% in the medical sciences to 40% in library and information sciences. The low level of awareness of self-archiving opportunities in the medical sciences is surprising in light of the announcements earlier this year by the US National Institutes of Health recommending public access deposit of funded research⁵ and by the Wellcome Trust and the Research Councils UK mandating public deposit.⁶

Authors were also asked about their choice of open access journals as publishing venues. In the past three years, 24% of the respondents indicated they had published in an open access journal. The most common reasons for choosing to publish in open access journals were support for the principle, a perception of an

enlarged readership, shorter publishing timelines, and an expectation that citation rates would be enhanced.

Perhaps the most interesting question asked by the survey was how authors would respond to mandated deposit of works into OAI-compliant repositories instituted by employers or funding agencies. Nearly 80% of respondents indicated they would comply with such a mandate willingly while less than 7% indicated that they would not comply.

Overall, the survey paints a remarkable picture of the dissemination of the relatively new concept of author self-archiving. Uptake is happening quickly, with the main barrier being simple lack of awareness of the option. Authors who try self-archiving generally have a positive experience and tend to use the option again. Resistance to mandated self-archiving is very low among scholarly authors although unfamiliarity with the options is clearly a challenge. The findings reported here suggest that authors are likely to be supportive of mandates or recommendations for public deposit from funding agencies but there is substantial work to be done to increase awareness of archiving venues.

- ¹ Sonya White and Claire Creaser, *Scholarly Journal Prices: Selected Trends and Comparisons*, LISU Occasional Paper no. 34, (Loughborough: LISU, 2004), <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/downloads/op34.pdf>.
- ² Thomson ISI calculates the impact factor of a journal by dividing the number of current-year citations of articles published in that journal during the previous two years by the total number of articles published in that journal during the previous two years. For more information, see <http://www.isinet.com/essays/journalcitationreports/7.html/>.
- ³ Rightscom, Ltd., *Business Models for Journal Content: Final Report* (London: Rightscom, 2005), http://www.nesli2.ac.uk/JBM_o_20050401Final_report_redacted_for_publication.pdf. Note: A presentation given by Hugh Look, of Rightscom, including some information not given in the report itself is available at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/Hugh%20Look.ppt.
- ⁴ Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown, *Open Access Self-Archiving: An Author Study* (Truro, UK: Key Perspectives, 2005), <http://www.keyperspectives.co.uk/openaccessarchive/reports.html>. Note: A set of summary charts and tables based on the survey data is available in a presentation offered by Alma Swan at <http://www.surf.nl/en/bijeekomsten/index6.php?oid=6>.
- ⁵ US National Institutes of Health, "Policy on Enhancing Public Access to Archived Publications Resulting from NIH-Funded Research," February 2005, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-022.html>.
- ⁶ Research Councils UK, "RCUK Position Statement on Access to Research Outputs," June 2005, <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/access/statement.pdf>; Wellcome Trust, "Wellcome Trust Position Statement in Support of Open and Unrestricted Access to Published Research," June 2005, http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD002766.html.