

INFORMATION ACCESS ALLIANCE

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INFORMATION ACCESS ALLIANCE WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR REVISED ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHER MERGERS DESPITE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S RECENT APPROVAL OF CINVEN AND CANDOVER PURCHASE OF BERTELSMANNSPRINGER

Washington, D.C. – The Information Access Alliance (IAA), a group of seven library organizations, will continue to push for revised analysis of publisher mergers despite the recent announcement that the Department of Justice has approved the sale of BertelsmannSpringer to Cinven and Candover. The Alliance is concerned that mergers of this sort will bring about a reduction in access to critical research information due to the heightened journal costs that result.

British private equity firms Cinven and Candover announced on Tuesday, August 26, that the U.S. Department of Justice has approved their acquisition of BertelsmannSpringer and its merger with Kluwer Academic Publishers (KAP), which they acquired in January 2003. The new entity, re-named Springer, will have revenues approaching €880 million, making it the second largest publisher of scientific journals in the world, trailing only Elsevier Science. The European Commission approved the sale on July 29. On June 18, Cinven and Candover appointed Derk Haank, former Chief Executive of Elsevier, as Chief Executive of Springer, effective February 1, 2004.

“Needless to say,” notes Mary Case of the Association of Research Libraries, a member of the IAA, “we are very disappointed with the Department of Justice’s approval of the merger of BertelsmannSpringer with Kluwer Academic Publishers. We foresee only increased prices for libraries and decreased access to important resources for researchers and the public as a result of this transaction.”

The Information Access Alliance, a coalition of seven leading library organizations in North America, urged the Department of Justice to block the acquisition and subsequent merger of KAP and BertelsmannSpringer because of its concerns that the transaction will result in reduced access to critical research information. Libraries are the primary market for STM journals. Over the last two decades, the prices libraries pay for journals have risen at three times the rate of inflation. Analysis by the Alliance suggests that mergers have played a significant role in this inflation.

The Alliance will continue to support further research and analysis of past mergers and their effects on consumers and small publishers. In July, the Alliance announced the publication of a white paper that examines the impact of mergers among scholarly and legal publishers and calls for a new standard of antitrust review of merger transactions in this industry by antitrust enforcement agencies. The white paper and other material on the Alliance's efforts can be found at www.informationaccess.org.

Information Access Alliance member organizations

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to providing leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy. Our more than 5,000 members respond to the legal information needs of legislators, judges and other public officials, corporations and small businesses, law professors and students, attorneys, and members of the general public. <www.aallnet.org>

The American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and largest library association in the world, is a nonprofit organization of over 64,000 librarians, library trustees, and other friends of libraries dedicated to the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all. <www.ala.org>

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association, is a professional association of academic librarians and other interested individuals. ACRL currently has a membership of approximately 12,400, accounting for nearly 20% of the total ALA membership. ACRL provides a broad range of professional services and programs for a diverse membership. <www.ala.org/acrl>

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is a nonprofit organization of 124 research libraries in North America. ARL programs and services promote equitable access to and effective use of recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship, and community service. <www.arl.org>

The Medical Library Association (MLA) is a nonprofit, educational organization of more than 900 institutions and 3,800 individual members in the health sciences information field, committed to educating health information professionals, supporting health information research, promoting access to the world's health sciences information, and working to ensure that the best health information is available to all. <www.mlanet.org>

SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) is an initiative of universities, research libraries, and library organizations that supports increased competition in scholarly publishing. SPARC publishing partnerships and educational activities encourage expanded dissemination of research and reduced financial pressure on libraries. Its worldwide membership currently includes 277 institutions and organizations, with 188 members in the United States. <www.arl.org/sparc>

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is the international association representing the interests of thousands of information professionals in over seventy countries. Special librarians are information resource experts who collect, analyze, evaluate, package, and disseminate information to facilitate accurate decision-making in corporate, academic, and government settings. The Association offers a variety of programs and services designed to help its members serve their customers more effectively and succeed in an increasingly challenging environment of information management and technology. SLA is committed to the professional growth and success of its membership. <www.sla.org>