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University of California Update on Discussions with Nature Publishing Group

In 2010, a dispute arose between the University of California (UC) and the Nature Publishing Group (NPG) over a proposed increase in the fees that UC pays to license NPG journals. When this disagreement became public, each organization aired statements explaining its position. Following a face-to-face meeting in August of that year, UC and NPG subsequently issued a joint statement describing our intention to work together to address current licensing challenges and to explore new approaches for sustaining scholarly publishing.

Since that date, UC and NPG have held regular meetings, which have included representatives of NPG, the California Digital Library, the UC University Librarians, and UC Faculty from the Academic Senate and Administration. This document is intended to update UC Faculty and Librarians as well as the wider stakeholder community about the status of these discussions and to share our perspective on the current challenges facing libraries, authors, and publishers alike. It does not necessarily represent NPG's current or future positions, beyond a willingness to continue in good faith discussion of these issues through 2012.

While UC and NPG occupy different positions in the scholarly ecosystem, our discussions have revealed agreement on the following key points:

- The current scholarly publishing system is under increasing pressure due to multiple factors including: a decreasing share of university budgets for libraries (which is currently the main source of revenue for publishers); increasing scholarly productivity (both in terms of output and pace); growth in journal titles offered by publishers; demands on libraries for access to more content; and increasing licensing fees charged by publishers.
- The strain on scholarly publishing is exacerbated by a relatively recent trend in which library budgets have been forced to absorb more of the publication costs than in previous eras where there were diverse revenue sources such as print advertising, page charges, personal subscriptions, and memberships that supported society journals.
- The costs for the most competitive journals are closely tied to high rates of submissions (both legitimate and frivolous), yet the submitters themselves bear none of these costs.
- The promise of digital scholarship to transform research and accelerate progress in the sciences and the humanities is impeded by current licensing models that restrict sharing, aggregation, and reuse; maintaining such restrictions is costly for publishers and consumes funds that could be used to innovate and increase the circulation of important work.
- New publication models that rely on publication fees, institutional support, and other sources of revenue are now more common and better understood, and should play an increasing part in the ecosystem of scholarly publication.

Our discussions have also raised questions on which we continue to seek common ground:

- Is research publication a service to readers, a service to authors, or both? How should those aspects be factored into any business model? Who should pay for research publication?
- What is the appropriate role of extramural research funds in the dissemination of research findings? Is publication a part of the research? What about publications that are not funded by research grants, as in most of the Humanities?
- What should be the continuing role of libraries and their parent institutions in supporting research publication and ensuring long-term stewardship of the scholarly record?
- Can incremental adjustments to existing subscription-based business models provide a sustainable path for open access and newer and more transformative uses of scholarly material?

UC Faculty and Librarians believe that the model for scholarly publishing today is neither sustainable nor is it in the interests of faculty, the University, or the tax-paying public that funds much of the research. UC will continue to support and give preference to models that increase open access, relieve pressure on library budgets, and ultimately sustain scholarly publishing across the disciplines. Among other things, we are committed to pursuing the following goals:

- UC will give preference to open access models supported through publication fees, institutional support, or similar mechanisms over subscription-based models wherever possible.
- Universities and research institutions should fund mechanisms and incentives to promote open access publishing. These mechanisms should include at a minimum:
 - Institutional support to subsidize publication in open access journals.
 - Institutional-level programs that encourage publishers to provide reasonably priced open access options instead of subscription-based agreements.
 - Developing and implementing standards by which open access publishing can be appropriately evaluated and credited in promotion and tenure decisions.
 - Consideration of the equitable distribution of publication fees across funding-rich and funding-poor disciplines.
- We encourage publishers to consider using submission fees as a means to mitigate the cost of high impact journals.
- In their role as authors, editors, and peer reviewers, scholars should push for wider accessibility and usability of research, including technological innovation in the use and reuse of scholarly material.
- As members of scholarly societies, faculty and research authors should continue to work to make society journals open access and to reduce dependency of societies on subscription income.
- Universities and funding agencies should explore alternative funding mechanisms that tie publication costs to research and teaching in the University rather than relying solely on library acquisition.
- Universities should adopt open access policies and mandates that enable Faculty to retain their copyrights and deposit their work in open access repositories.

We recognize that scholarly communication is a complex system that cannot be transformed overnight. While our negotiations with NPG have not yet resulted in any specific proposals for change, they have been positive and productive. Although we have not yet reached agreement on a model that would allow us to add new NPG journal titles, UC and NPG have agreed to maintain their existing license while discussions continue. We look forward to exploring with all publishers, societies, funders and universities new models that we believe are vital to assure the future of scholarly communication.

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