



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 23, 2010

**To:** All Faculty, SIU Carbondale and SIU School of Medicine

**From:** David Carlson, Dean of Library Affairs  
SIU Carbondale

Connie Poole, Associate Dean for Information Resources  
SIU School of Medicine

**Re:** Issues Related to University of California and Nature Publishing Group

You may have read recent coverage in the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) about an ongoing dispute between the University of California System (UC) and the Nature Publishing Group (NPG). The situation arose when the UC libraries were presented with a 400% increase to the cost of their system-wide site license to the 67 journals published by NPG, including their flagship journal, *Nature*. This increase would boost the price per journal at UC from \$4,500 to more than \$17,000 per title.

In response, the California Digital Library, the UC Libraries, and the University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication issued a joint letter to the UC faculty detailing the financial unsustainability of the NPG proposal. Importantly, the letter reminded faculty of the significant contributions that they make to Nature journals in the form of writing and peer reviewing articles, and serving as editors and advisors to NPG journals. (Further details of the controversy as well as responses and counter-responses are available at <http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/>).

The UC system has announced that it will be foregoing subscriptions to any new Nature titles. The UC faculty, led by the Executive Vice-Dean of the UCSF Medical School, has begun a push for a UC system-wide boycott of NPG. This means that, unless NPG agrees to more reasonable terms, faculty could call for cancellation of all Nature journals, and refuse to publish in, peer review for, or serve as editors of NPG publications. The faculty were also asked to consider publishing in open-access journals, or placing their articles in an open digital repository.

Morris Library and the School of Medicine Library, Springfield, have experienced price increases from NPG as well. Some specifics: the two libraries entered into a licensing agreement with NPG in 2004; since then, our total cost has increased 300%. Last year, NPG took over another leading resource, *Scientific American*. This year, the subscription price for SA in print format increased 650%! As a result, Morris Library cancelled one of our subscriptions to the print copy – and neither library subscribed to the online version because the pricing was exorbitant, some *ten times higher* than the print copy! If we continue to see increases of this magnitude from NPG we may also find it necessary to take actions similar to those at UC.

The pricing demands and increases from NPG are particularly stark, but they are not unique. At Morris Library we have been advised of numerous price increases from

publishers to subscribed titles that greatly exceed the national rate of inflation. For example, last year alone Morris Library received notification of price increases exceeding 10 per cent for 775 journals; we were notified of increases exceeding 20 per cent for another 315 journals.

What happens when we are faced with steep price increases to “must have” journals such as *Nature*, *Scientific American*, and other publications? We are forced to cancel subscriptions to other journals, forego subscriptions to new journals and other e-resources, and cut purchases of books that would be of use to our faculty, researchers, and students.

In formal and informal conversations with faculty about these issues, one response heard is that the University simply needs to find the money for these resources, as they are essential to the support of scholarship, teaching, and research. No one would support increases to libraries’ materials budgets more enthusiastically than we do! However, we need a system that does not take advantage of libraries’ needs to provide their campuses with essential resources. These price increases are unjustifiable and especially egregious when one considers that they come at a time when institutions around the country are having to cut operational and materials budgets, and that the national inflation rate is in the range of two to three percent.

You, the faculty, own the system of scholarly communication. It is meant to serve the interests and needs of the academy *not* the profit of commercial publishers. At best, we can say that the current system is not optimally serving us and, more pessimistically, that it is broken. Let’s start to take it back. Here are some actions that you can take to create change:

- Be aware of the financial value of the work you contribute when you write, review, and edit articles.
- Whenever possible, choose to publish in journals with equitable business models – open-access journals, or those with reasonably priced subscriptions.
- Assert your rights as an author. Negotiate with publishers for better control of and broader access to your published work through an author addendum such as the Scholar’s Copyright Addendum (<http://scholars.sciencecommons.org/>).
- Place a copy of your work in SIU’s digital repository, [OpenSIUC](#), and encourage your colleagues to do the same. This will not only be a positive contribution, but will advance the visibility, impact, and reach of your research.
- This past year, the SIU Faculty Senate and Graduate Council endorsed a [resolution](#) for faculty to support Open Access. A second resolution called for faculty to “grant SIUC permission to make his or her scholarly journal articles... openly accessible in OpenSIUC.” Support this effort and provide your permission when you are surveyed in the Fall.

If you have questions on these issues or other ideas for action, please do not hesitate to contact us. We would also recommend the SPARC web site (<http://www.arl.org/sparc>), which contains a number of helpful resources and information on these issues. Help make the scholarly publishing system more equitable and sustainable for all of us.

We look forward to hearing from you.

DC/hdw