

# UC BERKELEY ★ FACULTY CONFERENCE ON SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

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Breakout session: **Working with Societies**  
2:10 session

Facilitator: **Daniel Greenstein**, Associate Vice Provost and University Librarian, California Digital Library

Session description: Societies hold a central role in scholarly publishing – the publishers they select, the prices, and the access and archiving policies they support are lynchpins in the economy and distribution of scholarly information. How can societies balance fiscal concerns and widespread access to the literature? Hear from colleagues who have brought these issues to their societies.

➤ *The following are informal notes taken during the breakout session. They are not intended to serve as a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.*

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This was a wide-ranging discussion. From it emerged a variety of issues and challenges affecting and involving scholarly societies. A number of practical actions were also identified.

## Issues and challenges

Scholarly societies cover a wide spectrum of size, business models, and journal publication strategies. They cannot all be treated or dealt with in the same way. American Physical Society and National Academy of Sciences, for example, are models of large and well respected societies that are working to find models of publication that do not impose such heavy access costs on users. American Chemical Society and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, on the other hand, act as commercial publishers. They seek to subsidize society activities on the back of their journal subscription revenues. Many other smaller societies publish only one or a small handful of journals which at best break even. As the economics of and markets for scholarly journal publishing change, societies may need to be encouraged to rethink their publishing aims and strategies, even to reconsider their business models where these rely heavily on journal revenues which are unlikely to be sustained.

## Possible practical actions

Explore whether and to what extent the UC, possibly in combination with a number of open-access publishers (e.g. PLoS) and academic societies can develop and sustain journal publishing platforms offering these as a utility to societies interested in utilizing the platform to keep their publishing costs down. Such platforms needn't impose a single business model on all societies/publishers that use them. Rather, it can be agnostic to business model, thereby allowing different societies/publishers to explore different models, but in all cases keeping journal production and development costs down. Interesting questions arose about the scale at which such a utility platform would need to be contemplated to be economical.

If the university does develop such platforms (perhaps in combination with others), it should actively seek to encourage use of it by societies that are presently publishing through commercial or high-priced publishers (e.g. through Elsevier, Blackwell, for example). Approaches to societies could be made through UC faculty who serve on their boards.

We need to work through our faculty and university leadership to encourage leading academic organizations (AAU, ACLS, AAAS, Social Science Research Council) to become active in this space, lending support to publishing practices that promise the lowest cost access to scholarly publications. They need at least to become as engaged as European research entities and organizations.

Involvement of such associations is only likely to be encouraged, even instigated by practical, catalytic efforts that are mounted in large research universities like UC or in university consortia (UC and the big ten Midwestern universities). It was suggested that the faculty and researchers at CIC and UC together produce between 10 and 15% of all US scholarly publications. A combined approach to take institutional actions that encourage and support open-access publications or investment in publishing infrastructure that enable scholarly society to publish and distribute materials at the lowest possible cost. In this regard, attempts to mobilize academic associations like the AAU, ACLS, etc), and practical efforts to support and promote new forms of scholarly publishing within UC are neither unrelated nor mutually exclusive paths of action.

The university should provide some coordination in the support of faculty who will be making different publishing choices in order to take full advantage of open-access and other related means for distributing their work. Although campus-based initiative will be essential, the CDL and/or Office of Scholarly Communication can support such campus initiatives, for example, by acting as a clearinghouse for information about alternatives, opportunities, etc., and by providing appropriate operational infrastructure (e.g. the eScholarship repository, etc).

Societies are run by faculty. Such a coordinated approach to informing and supporting faculty then could be utilized to identify faculty that have Board-level roles within societies and provide those faculty with the support, advice, guidance, etc they might need to help them work with their society to address some of the difficult business and other issues that grow out of their publishing interests.

Working through its faculty, UC should identify and work with societies that are interested in exploring innovative means of scholarly communication. Some societies are already active in this arena; their work should be explored and evaluated to encourage emulation or further innovation. Examples of innovation include the APS which sources a large proportion of its article content from the ArXiv preprint server, adding value to article content that is already "published" (via ArXiv) by putting it through a peer review process and including it in society journals. The IMS is exploring innovative means of indexing and annotating existing scholarship. The American Mathematical Society is developing "pathways" to a broad mathematical literature appropriate to different audiences in K-12, higher education, and general audiences. In each of these cases, societies are seeking ways to add sustainable value to the scholarly communication process by enriching scholarly work that is already published rather than by owning that work and selling access to it.

*notes by Ann Jensen  
March 31, 2005*