

Update #1 December 2004 (12/7/04)
to The Challenge for Ohio Higher Education
Providing Access to Scholarly Publishing (1/28/04 r.1)

OhioLINK ACTIONS FOR 2005 and 2006 BEING TAKEN

In January 2004 the OhioLINK library community, through its library directors and web site www.ohiolink.edu/journalcrisis, advised the Ohio higher education community that our ability to provide robust access to scholarly journals was at great risk. In short, we laid out the current scenario:

1. For a number of years the “crisis in scholarly publishing” has been a hot topic among academic librarians and increasingly the scholarly community. The background, issues and possible solutions in this crisis have been spoken to by many parties.
2. From 1986 to 2000 the CPI rose 57 percent, journal prices rose 227 percent, and library budgets did not keep pace. The number of journals published increased by 58 percent.
3. Into the 1990’s, across Ohio’s 13 largest universities, only 25% of scholarly journals could be purchased on each campus, on average. This rationed access to scholarly journals ranged as a low as 10% on several campuses with 8 campuses less than 25% and only one above 50%. Independent colleges and community colleges were able to acquire only very small fractions of scholarly journals.
4. The scholarly communications system needs fundamental changes. But under the current structure Ohio higher education libraries, through the cooperative Electronic Journal Center (EJC) licensing program of OhioLINK, have been able to dramatically address the problems of annual rising costs and decreasing title accessibility. By combining library funds into a group purchase, we have licensed full sets of publisher journals and made these available electronically to every university, community college, and 38 of 44 independent colleges. We have controlled costs below market averages and greatly expanded access.
5. Weak recent and current Ohio state budgets put additional strain on our ability to purchase journals, even more effectively as a group. Publishers still are demanding price increases above rates we can sustain. We warned that, for 2005 and 2006, we must have pricing relief and adequate budgets that enable us to balance the library and OhioLINK operating and capital budgets. Without this balance we saw no alternative other than to reduce our financial commitments with the result of fewer titles being licensed.

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The OhioLINK F05-F06 capital appropriation, passed by the Ohio General Assembly in December 2004, is \$90,000 less than the F03-F04 appropriation. The prospects for the upcoming F06-F07 operating appropriation are not good with most scenarios indicating a flat or decreased appropriation. The current annual operating appropriation is already \$700,000 under its F01 peak.

The OhioLINK Governing Board fully reviewed our financial situation in September and determined that a series of significant steps were needed to balance the equation. The rationale and actions needed are found in the board's October 14th letter at www.ohiolink.edu/supportohiolink/OLfundingproblemletter.pdf.

In addition to \$200,000 in general database funding cuts and the institution of an annual library membership fee totaling \$200,000, major action was authorized for electronic journal licenses. Beginning in 2005, OhioLINK management in consultation with the library community will reduce electronic journal licenses by up to \$750,000 annually without cost transfer to libraries. Future issues of the least used journals in our current licenses with major commercial publishers will be eliminated. Through this process we will make necessary cost cuts while preserving access to the vast bulk of used electronic journals, still far in excess of the traditional print collections held on each campus in the past.

What does this mean specifically for electronic journal access?

Beginning in 2005, we will reduce the number of active titles we receive from Blackwell Publishing and Springer (formerly Springer-Verlag and Kluwer Publishing). In the case of Blackwell this constitutes 144 of 573 active titles. For Springer this constitutes 346 of 1056 active titles. These are the least used titles of these two publishers across the OhioLINK community and reflect all academic disciplines. Titles that we will no longer receive represent 4% of the annual downloads from active titles. Title lists can be found at www.ohiolink.edu/journalcrisis/EJC2005cancels.xls. This has no impact on journal issues already purchased and loaded into the EJC through 2004.

In 2006 we will likely reduce the number of titles we receive from Elsevier Science, Wiley, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, and Emerald. Cancellations may vary and are subject to negotiation with each publisher.

This unfortunate action, while necessitated by the immediate financial scenario, is consistent with long-term adjustments necessary for sustainable access to an expanded, stable set of scholarly journals under current market practices by publishers. As long as the publishing industry continues to expand the size and number of journals and to raise prices without regard for the financial ability of the library community there remains a fundamental problem with the economics of scholarly communication. Our group licenses will still provide all of Ohio much broader access to scholarly journals at rates that are more sustainable than individual library purchases, but we need fundamental changes to create a sustainable system of expanded journal access.

We ask that the Ohio community of libraries, faculty, and administration work actively within the scholarly and publishing communities to create a healthy, long-term system for the production and dissemination of scholarly research. It is critical that in some way the current dysfunctional system be corrected. To that end as we try to work with the established publishing community we think Open Access, NIH required archiving, and other publishing models need to be investigated and experimented with. The OhioLINK library community is active in these arenas.

We will distribute in the future additional information as needed on these vital matters. Thank you for your consideration and understanding.

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