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University of Washington Faculty Senate Resolution regarding support for the UW Libraries' Principles in Licensing Scholarly Resources

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Class C resolution regarding support for the UW Libraries' Principles in Licensing Scholarly Resources

WHEREAS, a healthy and sustainable scholarly ecosystem is one where knowledge is openly discoverable and openly shared, where there is a diversity of options for researchers to publish and disseminate their work, and where investments made by the University prioritize advancing broader impacts of research and teaching for the public good; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the UW Faculty Senate endorses the UW Libraries principles in licensing scholarly resources as follows:

- **SUSTAINABILITY:** The UW Libraries negotiates for terms that build and support sustainability and the open sharing of knowledge created at the University of Washington. We prioritize agreements that move past the historical pricing models that uphold artificial rationing of knowledge and we work with publishers to move towards models based on sharing. We are shifting spending away from purchasing content from proprietary, closed, for-profit scholarly information providers and increasing investments to create and support community-owned infrastructure and shared digital resources.
- **ACCESS AND EQUITY:** The UW Libraries negotiates terms to preserve and further equitable access to knowledge for all faculty, researchers, and students at the University of Washington. We seek agreements that elevate voices from historically minoritized, ignored, and silenced groups. We actively negotiate for agreements that ensure equitable access for persons with disabilities and protect the privacy of researchers and their ability to conduct their research without sharing personal information. As an institution committed to advancing the public good, we continue to work toward the creation of an open scholarly ecosystem where barriers that restrict access to research and to publishing are eliminated.
- **SUPPORT OF SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING:** The UW Libraries supports the breadth and depth of scholarship and teaching at all levels at the University of Washington. We do this by being part of a network of shared collections in research libraries worldwide that allows our researchers to reach into the collections anywhere in this network to access what they need to complete their research. The UW Libraries negotiates agreements that support sharing across this network of collections. We prioritize agreements that allow us to curate our collections in alignment with research and teaching priorities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the UW Faculty Senate supports the UW Libraries to discontinue negotiations that conflict with these principles.

Approved by:
Senate Executive Committee
April 4, 2022

Approved by:
Faculty Senate
April 14, 2022

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Why are the faculty being asked to support the UW Libraries' shift toward a sustainable scholarship environment?

A: Academic journals are essential resources for UW faculty, both as a medium for exchanging information and as a means for [professional advancement](#). The [rising costs](#) associated with accessing these journals have become [unsustainable](#), requiring a shift in the market. UW faculty serve as both [producers and consumers](#) of these publications, often at no cost to the publishers. These roles, combined with the importance of academic journals, make faculty support integral to the UW Libraries' shift toward a sustainable scholarship environment.

Q: Why is there concern regarding the sustainability of the scholarly ecosystem?

A: Large research universities pay millions of dollars annually to access academic journals. Following various [mergers and acquisitions](#), five companies—Elsevier, Wiley, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Sage—have assumed responsibility for [50 percent](#) of the market. As competition has decreased, these companies have [dramatically increased](#) their prices, further straining library budgets. Libraries have responded by [redistributing funds, canceling subscriptions, forgoing new purchases, and cutting back on services](#). These unsustainable practices are negatively impacting university education and scholarship.

Q: In what way is UW Libraries investing in community-owned infrastructure and shared digital resources?

A: UW Libraries provides researchers with access to “resources [more vast and more diverse](#) than any single library could possibly provide on its own” through participation in the shared network known as the [collective collection](#). This includes [partnerships](#) with the HathiTrust Digital Library, Orbis Cascade Alliance, The Center for Research Libraries, Greater Western Library Alliance, and Western Regional Storage Trust, among others.

Faculty and researchers can already publish and share their work through [ResearchWorks](#), the open-access repository operated by UW Libraries. Through [strategic reinvestment](#) of savings negotiated with vendors and publishers, this repository could grow into a genuine alternative to conventional journal publishing.

This resolution will empower UW Libraries to pursue expanded [support for faculty who publish openly](#). Open access publishing is not a perfect solution given the cost of [article publishing charges](#) (APCs) and [read-and-publish agreements](#). Still, it directly serves the faculty's interests by “promoting the visibility and accessibility of their work, resulting in greater impact and recognition; helping them retain distribution rights; and aiding preservation of the scholarly record” ([FCG Chapter 54](#)).

Q: How are these issues connected with UW Libraries' upcoming negotiations with Elsevier?

A: Elsevier publishes over 2,700 digitized journals, accounting for roughly [18 percent of global research and 28 percent of citation share](#). Access to its publications, which include prominent science, technology, and medical journals, is primarily provided by “[Big Deal](#)” subscriptions. Elsevier has [repeatedly increased](#) the cost of these subscriptions while [maintaining profits](#) upward of [39 percent](#). Subscribing to journals individually is [financially impractical](#), further destabilizing the scholarly ecosystem. The 2019 agreement between UW Libraries and Elsevier will expire later this year.

Q: What were the terms of the previous agreement?

A: UW Libraries negotiated a [three-year licensing agreement](#) for Elsevier's ScienceDirect Complete Collection, Complete Freedom Collection, and Cell Collection collections of journals, which was projected to include roughly 2,500 titles in all at the time of the negotiations, including 875 perpetual access titles. UW Libraries agreed to pay \$2,542,858 in 2020 with an increase to \$2,568,287 in 2021 and another

increase in 2022 to \$2,632,494. UW also negotiated to drop the nondisclosure agreement and received a 10 percent discount on the Electronic Subscription Fee. The cost of the agreement accounts for roughly 15 percent of UW Libraries' total budget for journals, books, and other materials.

Q: How does the previous agreement compare to those negotiated by other academic libraries?

A: Other R1-rated [research institutions](#) that have negotiated for Elsevier's ScienceDirect Complete and Elsevier's ScienceDirect Freedom packages include Purdue University, which reports its most recent expenditure on the ScienceDirect Complete collection as \$2,875,079 in 2018, and Johns Hopkins University, which reported a cost of \$2,743,234 in 2014. More general subscriptions to ScienceDirect include the recent University of Massachusetts System five-year deal (\$4,499,438 in 2022). This shows the strong efforts of the UW Libraries negotiating teams over the years.

Q: How does this resolution reflect broader institutional commitments?

A: This resolution is aligned with the UW [Sustainable Academic Business Plan](#), which establishes near-term goals of cost reduction, investment in infrastructure, and expanded access. This plan is identified as "the cornerstone of the UW's strategic framework to maintain excellence in teaching, scholarship and research in light of financial realities."

As stated in Chapter 54 of the [Faculty Code and Governance](#): "As a public university, the University of Washington is dedicated to making its research and scholarship freely and widely available to the people of Washington and the broader research community." This echoes similar statements in the university's [Vision & Values](#).

Q: What does sustainable scholarship have to do with access and equity?

A: Leaders of UW Libraries agree that existing publishing models [perpetuate global inequities](#):

"We believe the current proprietary, closed, for-profit scholarly information ecosystem ... undermines the democratic ideals of liberal education. We view access to information as a social justice issue, and for-profit publishers' unsustainable pricing models, demand for nondisclosure agreements and insistence on paywalls hinders the pursuit of knowledge, impedes our support of an informed citizenry and restricts research for the public good."

There is also growing concern about [vendors' surveillance](#) of electronic resource use by scholars and students. The risks associated with this for-profit data gathering may be higher for immigrants and members of historically minoritized groups.

Q: Can I still access articles published by Elsevier if the negotiations end without an agreement?

A: Yes, there are a few different ways to access journals and articles published by Elsevier, as well as other publishers. One way is to search for an open access (OA) version of the article you wish to read. Google and Google Scholar are great places to start. There are also browser plug-ins that can be installed which search for OA articles, such as [Open Access Button](#) and [Unpaywall](#). There are also online repositories where authors have self-archived copies of their work, such as [PubMed Central](#). Interlibrary loan is another excellent option, and librarians in the [ILL department](#) would be happy to assist you. A final suggestion is to request the article from the author. You can even reach out to the author on Twitter using the hashtag #icanhazpdf. UW Libraries is preparing to reconvene the [Alternative Access Committee](#) this fall to support and plan for future access.

Q: Have any other academic libraries ended contract negotiations without an agreement?

A: Yes, and here are some examples: [Florida State University](#) has canceled two Big Deal contracts, Springer in 2016 and Elsevier in 2019. University of California canceled its Elsevier contract in 2019 and successfully renegotiated a contract in 2021. The University of Delaware also canceled its Elsevier

contract in 2021, and Purdue University opted for a one-year title-by-title contract for 2021. There are many more examples of Big Deal cancellations posted on [SPARC](#)'s website.

Q: Is the proposed resolution only about Elsevier?

A: No, the intended impact extends beyond any single publisher. This Class C resolution will support all the upcoming Big Deal negotiations that the UW Libraries and the University of Washington need to execute in the near future. A focus on sustainable scholarship, access and equitability, and support of scholarship and teaching will drive all negotiations so that our institution can responsibly provide knowledge to all who seek it.