

LIBER Endorses Action by Dutch Librarians

The UKB consortium in the Netherlands, which comprises all Dutch academic libraries, have recently issued a policy statement on the unreasonable pricing of academic journals (see below). UKB says that solutions must be sought at national or even international level. UKB has invited other libraries to publicly support this initiative.

LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche, the Association of European Research Libraries) endorses the opinion of UKB that the price increase of scholarly journals, notably those of some of the commercial publishers, has for years exceeded that which might be expected on the basis of price increases in general, currency rates and the expansion of the market. LIBER agrees with the opinion of the UKB that - where there used to be a certain balance between the various parties in the information chain - this balance has been irresponsibly disturbed by the price policies of a number of publishers. This is detrimental to the services of libraries to their users, and hence to the development of science.

Therefore LIBER wants to support the initiative of UKB and will be actively considering its own contributions to this endeavour. LIBER will be publicising its efforts in this area and will be maintaining close contact with other library organisations nationally and internationally in order to share information.

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POLICY STATEMENT BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES ON THE PRICING OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

Introduction

The increase in the price of scholarly journals, notably those of some of the commercial publishers, has for years exceeded that which might be expected on the basis of price increases in general, currency rates and the expansion of the market. As elsewhere in the world, the majority of subscriptions to these journals are attributable to university libraries. The budgets of universities and their libraries fall far short of the price increases of scholarly journals. As a result libraries are continuously cancelling subscriptions and hence they are hampered in the fulfilment of their prime task, namely providing their users with a broad and varied supply of scientific information.

Academic libraries acknowledge the importance of publishers for the selection and dissemination of scientific information and for the development of science in general. The libraries are however of the opinion that - where there used to be a certain balance between the various parties in the information chain - this balance has been irresponsibly disturbed by the price policies of a number of publishers. This is detrimental to the services of libraries to their users, and hence to the development of science.

This problem, often referred to as the serials crisis, is too big for a single institute to tackle; the best approach is to look for solutions at a national or even international level. For a balanced policy libraries should move along several lines simultaneously:

- promoting cooperation between libraries in the area of collection building;
- increasing awareness of university boards for the importance of scientific information services and the financial resources required;
- redressing the balance between scientists and libraries on the one hand and publishers on the other hand in the interests of scientific development;
- developing university policies for publishing the results of scientific (research) of academic staff.

The latter two points are worked out in this statement. The prime instrument libraries have to redress the balance is to refuse to accept irresponsible price increases and/or unfavourable conditions of sale and usage. If such refusal assumes the form of a common action on the part of academic libraries, this

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could be a powerful measure in persuading publishers to revise their price policy. Refusal by scientists and their employers to offer their publications to certain publishers and their journals would be an equally powerful tool in reaching this goal.

Position of UKB

The academic libraries in the Netherlands associated in UKB, which comprises all university libraries, the Royal Library, and the library of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, have at an earlier stage played an important role in the development of so-called Licensing Principles, in which libraries drew up guidelines for the conditions under which they can access electronic information sources. These Licensing Principles have been echoed all over the world and are recognised worldwide as a yardstick for negotiations with publishers.

UKB is prepared to take the initiative once again in formulating a policy for academic libraries in reaction to the price development of scholarly journals. In doing so UKB will, as much as possible, acknowledge and utilise the development of library consortia throughout the world, starting in Western Europe. In addition, the policy on this subject will complement that on the Licensing Principles with regard to the availability of electronic information.

UKB will strive to aim its policy at and attune it to organisations of academic researchers, such as the universities and national institutes for scientific research (in the Netherlands particularly the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, NWO, and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, KNAW).

Action Plan

a.

UKB will give its member libraries information on the reasonableness of price increases of publishers and *make recommendations on the continuation or cancellation of subscriptions.*

b.

UKB will *approach fellow organisations in other countries and also international library organisations* with a view to getting them to endorse and adopt this policy.

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c.

UKB will *publicise its policy*, the reasons behind it and the consequences of it, as widely as possible in all relevant media.

d.

UKB will *inform research scientists and their representative bodies and societies* about its policy and *request them to refuse their cooperation, whether as authors, referees or editors, with journals which in the opinion of UKB undergo unreasonable price increases.*

e.

UKB is prepared to *create a platform at a national level (and to promote the creation of a similar international platform) for dialogue with publishers over the fairness of price increases* and hence to help avoid unnecessary opposition between libraries on the one hand and publishers on the other hand.