

# Resisting Commercial Influences On Accessing Scholarship: What Literacy Researchers Need To Know And Do

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There is an unfolding crisis in scholarly publication that literacy researchers need to know about as well as how to respond appropriately to this crisis. The issues that define the crisis and appropriate responses to it exist at the intersection of two trends. First, academic publishing has been increasingly commercialized. Second there is an increasing array of digital modes, models, and tools available to disseminate and access scholarship online, including not only online journals, but also websites, wikis, blogs, podcasts, and other forms of digital communication. The increasing options for providing digital access to scholarship provides opportunities simultaneously for new commercial models of academic publication as well as the means to circumvent and resist excesses of commercialism driving research publications.

These two trends have changed and will continue to change the landscape of academic publishing. These shifts in how research is disseminated demand that all scholars rethink their core values and how those values will be manifested in sharing their scholarship, particularly in relation to the options for online dissemination and access. Further, as we will argue, scholarly publication is a dimension of literacy. Therefore, literacy researchers should be at the forefront of scholars who understand how digital communication serves to foster and mediate literacy learning. Nonetheless, as we will also argue, literacy researchers, as a whole, tend to be unaware of the critical issues affecting their own literate lives. Failing to address these issues facing all academic scholars may thus unintentionally contribute to trends that are not in the best interest of their own scholarship and that may be detrimental to the state of scholarship in their fields, trends that reflect a larger commercialization of all aspects of education. This article aims to mitigate that shortcoming.

*Commercialism and academic publications.* Two recent events reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* point to the escalating commercialism affecting scholarly publication. In 2006 the entire editorial review board of the mathematical journal, *Topology*, resigned to form a new independently published journal entitled *The Journal of Topology* (Monastersky, 2007). Their action

was a protest against Elsevier, *Topology's* commercial publisher and the largest publisher of scientific journals. That action reflects the wide criticism of Elsevier among scholars and research librarians because of the high prices it charges for journals, but also for its strategic grouping or "bundling" of online journal subscriptions, which often hamstring library budgets (Johnson, 2006). The editorial board's new journal, to be managed and produced independently by the London Mathematical Society, will cost libraries \$570.00 per year for four issues compared to Elsevier's \$1,665.00 per year for six issues, making the new journal a third less expensive and more affordable for libraries and individual subscribers.

The second event is that the Association of American Publishers (AAP) recently hired "a public relations firm with a hard-hitting reputation to counter the open-access movement, which campaigns for scientific results to be freely available to the public" (p. A18) (Brown & Monastersky, 2007). The article in which that statement was made also alludes to the connection between AAP's hiring of the public relations firm and an AAP news release from May of 2006 strongly opposing the Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006. That proposed legislation introduced by U.S. Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) would require researchers who receive funds from a federal research agency to make their findings freely available within six months of publication.

*Catalysts for change in research publications.* As these events illustrate, the longstanding, necessary, and generally positive partnership between commercial publishers and scholars to produce print publications has become severely strained and may be on a course to unravel completely. Certainly one catalyst for that change has been the increased emphasis among some, but not necessarily all, commercial publishers on maximizing profit by charging whatever the market will bear to please what are often larger conglomerate owners and/or their stockholders (Edwards & Shulenberg, 2003). That trend is reflected in the otherwise unexplainably steep increases in journal prices and in the trend towards mergers and the consequent reduction in competition (e.g., Taylor & Francis's acquisition of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, the publisher of NRC's *Journal of Literacy Research*). The debate within the NRC Board as to whether or not to turn the publication of the *Journal of Literacy Research* over to Lawrence Erlbaum Associates reflects a growing awareness of the challenges literacy scholars and their professional organizations face in disseminating their work.

Another catalyst for change has been the increasing availability and use of digital tools for accessing and disseminating scholarship. On the dissemination side there are increasing numbers of open-access (i.e., freely available without subscription fees) journals, some of which have strenuous peer-review processes and have acquired a status equivalent to mainstream printed journals (Lessig, 2006; Willinsky, 2005). On the access side, during the previous three years, the ERIC database was converted to web-based searching and involved the ERIC developers in seeking agreements with publishers to allow full-text access to as many published articles as possible. Likewise, Google has introduced Google Scholar, in an attempt to extend the use of its popular commercial browser into the scholarly domain. Google has also released a beta version of Google Book Search (<http://books.google.com/>), which has the ambitious goal of making the text of every published book searchable online, albeit in a way that does provide access to the full text of each book. That move too has met with strong resistance from commercial publishers concerned with copyright violations. The publishers have threatened legal action, with the hope of an eventual out-of-court settlement in which Google would pay publishers fees for copying their copyrighted books (Toobin, 2007).

Thus, scholars have new and increasingly powerful means at their disposal for circumventing the constraints inherent in print publications and that in the past sustained the necessity of working with commercial publishers. Commercial publishers, on the other hand, like the news and entertainment industry, are seeking new financial models for making their products commercially viable on the web. For example, Springer Publishing (2007) provides an "open choice" option whereby authors pay a \$3000 "article processing charge" to make their article open access. Scholars seeking to share their research face the choice of having to pay for dissemination of research or pursuing other less-expensive options.

*Cause for concern.* Why should literacy researchers be concerned about these issues? Foremost, we are part of a larger community of scholars who have a responsibility to monitor and to maintain the free flow of scholarship among each other and to society in general. And, as the developments discussed thus far suggest, the current status of accessing and disseminating scholarship is both volatile and vulnerable. While most literacy researchers have free access to journals and databases through their libraries, most teachers and parents, as well as audiences in developing countries throughout the world, do not have such access to either print or online journals. To protect our core values as scholars and enhance access and dissemination of our scholarship digitally to as large an audience as possible, literacy researchers need to resist the commercialization of research dissemination and to foster democratic access to that research.

As literacy researchers, we should have a particular interest in these issues for at least two reasons. First, publishing academic work is an important, if often unexamined, dimension of our own literacy. Secondly, as literacy researchers, we are keenly aware that literate practices can function to liberate ideas and bring about open dialogue. Or, literate practices can be used to control and concentrate power by inhibiting the free exchange of ideas and findings. Allowing profit-driven commercial forces to dominate dissemination of literacy research or ignoring the potential influences of these forces may undermine the democratic ideals of literacy. Further, more than other scholars, we must be aware of potential threats to our own literate practices and participate actively in defending these practices against the threats of commercialism. Likewise, as literacy researchers, we should be at the forefront of the scholarly community addressing new forms of digital literacy and literate practices (Leu, 2006) in the area of scholarly publication.

It is also important that this issue not be framed as a simple binary opposition between all commercial publishers and all literacy researchers. Many publishers share scholars' interest in fostering wide dissemination of research. At the same time, scholars need to negotiate with and prod commercial publishers to protect their interests in using alternatives for digital dissemination of their work. For example, in the contract negotiations with Lawrence Erlbaum Associates related to publishing *Journal of Literacy Research*, NRC included clauses that support broader dissemination (e.g., leveled pricing that reduced subscription fees for third-world countries, and publication rights on the web after two years). To the publisher's credit, these clauses were readily incorporated into the contract.

Further evidence of a heightened awareness is the NRC Board's decision in 2004 to commission an Ad Hoc Committee on Accessing Literacy Research Online<sup>1</sup>. Committee members examined issues facing researchers and libraries in their own universities, as well as interacting with Anne Fullerton, Assistant Director of Publications for the International Reading Association; it also

sponsored forums at the Miami and Los Angeles NRC conferences. This report summarizes some of the issues related to commercialization of scholarly publications that we have addressed over the past two years. In subsequent sections we further delineate the dimensions of the problem, identify specific issues and suggested actions, and make some preliminary proposals.

### DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

For more than a decade, the precipitous rise in the cost of institutional subscriptions to academic journals has concerned research librarians (e.g., see Okerson, 1991) and scholars (e.g., Reinking, 1996) who have called for more independent, selfless sharing of scholarship, and less commercial, avenues to publication. Data from the Association of Research Libraries (2004) indicated that research libraries are paying more for fewer journals. While the Consumer Price Index grew by 68% between 1986 and 2003, and costs for monographs grew by 82%; costs for journals grew by 215%.

As publishers increase costs, libraries faced budget cuts, resulting in reductions in the journals available to faculty and students (Cornell University Libraries, 2006). Between 2004 and 2006, the University of Minnesota Library cancelled a million dollars worth of subscriptions to 2,250 journals (University of Minnesota, 2006). To maintain subscriptions for expensive, prestigious journals in the sciences, libraries may cut journals related to literacy research.

These cuts in journal subscriptions are occurring at the same time that the amount of research is increasing—the number of published research reports grew by 138% between 1986 and 2003 (Cornell University Libraries, 2006). However, when libraries cancel journal subscriptions, as well as cut back on book purchases, less of this research is available to scholars and the public.

Why these increased subscription rates? A key factor is the increased corporate ownership of journals. Based on analysis of Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, commercial publishers now play a role in publishing over 60% of all peer-reviewed journals, owning 45% outright and publishing another 17% on behalf of non-profit organizations (Crow, 2006). As is the case in the media industry, there is an increasing consolidation of corporate ownership of journals with six commercial publishers publishing about 30% of all titles; their publications account for about 60% of the market's revenue (Crow, 2006). And, given the high costs of journals, these publishers are doing well. The corporation, Reed Elsevier, owner of Elsevier, which publishes 2,232 journals, and also owner of Harcourt Education, has reaped double digit profits for the past several years (Reed Elsevier, 2007); for the first half of 2006, their profits were up 14% (Jones, 2006).

Because the publishing units within conglomerate corporations are seeking to make greater profits from their journals, they increase subscription fees that libraries have to pay for bundled packages of journals. For example, Elsevier bundles its journals into a single package that must be purchased in its entirety for multiple years. This results in all-or-nothing choices for selecting journals. Libraries cannot reduce costs through selective purchasing of journals within the bundle (Johnson, 2006). Such strategies seem particularly dubious when the increased use of digital publishing has meant that publishers' traditional contribution to the process through typesetting, printing, and marketing, has been less crucial.

Professional societies that also publish journals have difficulty competing with these large commercial publishers, even though the price per page for commercial journals is four to five times that of journals published by professional societies (Crow, 2006). Professional societies such as NRC, NCTE, IRA, and AERA have difficulty competing with commercial publishers' financial investments in marketing and their business expertise, leading to NRC to turn to Lawrence Erlbaum to publish *Journal of Literacy Research* or AERA to enter into an agreement with SAGE publishers to publish AERA journals in both print and online formats (Levine, 2006). However, these arrangements can alter authors' own dissemination rights. John Willinsky (personal communication, April 11, 2007) noted to our committee that in 2003, AERA allowed AERA authors to post articles on their websites:

In June 2003, AERA Council passed a resolution granting authors permission to post articles published in AERA journals on their personal websites or in an area that is designated to them on an institution's website. This policy will be effective until AERA otherwise provides electronic reprint access to journal articles (<http://www.acra.net/publications/?id=309>).

However, now that AERA journal articles are being published by SAGE, Willinsky noted that under SAGE's policy, authors of these articles must wait to "post their papers after a 12-month embargo, and only then, post their final refereed draft (and not the publisher's copy)."

Another challenge faced by professional societies is that when their journals are not bundled with other journals, they run the risk of being dropped from the library shelf. Under these constraints librarians are sometimes forced to cancel subscriptions to journals published by professional associations, non-profit and small commercial press journals, including potentially the *Journal of Literacy Research*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, and the *NRC Yearbook*. As Edwards and Shulenberger (2003) posit,

... an unexamined reliance on the market has helped create a crisis in scholarly communication. Unless something is done to reverse the situation, serious and perhaps irreparable harm will be done to the nation's research and scholarly enterprise (p. 11).

These reductions in the availability of journals come at a time when faculty and students have grown accustomed to accessing journal articles online and as university libraries have focused increasingly on enhancing digital access to their holdings. Increased access has certainly expanded the opportunities for disseminating scholarship and created demand for more electronic access among scholars. A survey of faculty and student library use at seven universities found that half of the readings by faculty and three-fourths by students were of digital texts (Tenopir, 2006), and those levels will likely increase.

Another consequence is that to cut costs some libraries have opted for electronic-access-only bundles that give researchers rolling access to only the most recent articles, for example, those published within the past five years, but not older articles, thus undermining libraries' archival function, resulting in less access to historical materials.

And, given the shifts in library budgets to cover increased costs for journal subscriptions, libraries have had to cut back on book purchases. Between 1986 and 2001, as libraries struggled to cover increased costs of journal purchases, book purchases declined by 9%, representing

approximately 90,000 books for the typical research library (Case, 2002). And, in some cases, libraries have reduced online access to scholarship (Association of Research Libraries, 2004).

There are also less obvious, more indirect consequences to library reductions in book purchases. For example, a publisher such as Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, whose education titles will now be published under Routledge: Education, an outlet for the work of many literacy researchers, until recently could count on a new book being purchased by approximately 800 libraries. According to Naomi Silverman, acquisition editor for Erlbaum (personal communication, November 20, 2006), now it can count on less than 100. That means that a publisher such as Erlbaum publishes fewer books and only those likely to have a broad appeal. The consequences are particularly dire for publications of certain forms of qualitative literacy research such as ethnographic studies, which are often too long for journal articles. Book publishing reductions also affect researchers whose work focuses on highly specialized topics with a small but important readership. It is less likely that book-length reports about specific aspects of literacy learning will be published. Newer scholars, too, whose names will not yet draw a wide readership, are more likely to be adversely affected than well-established scholars.

Commercial interests also threaten the dissemination of scholarship by placing increasingly tighter restrictions on the use of copyrighted material, particularly in the digital realm. Popular conceptions and legal interpretations of copyright and ownership of the content have always interfered to some extent with the free flow of scholarly information (e.g., see Kaufer & Carley, 1993; Reinking, 1996). These copyright restrictions hinder scholars from fully expressing their work (e.g., see the editorial note following the McEneaney (2006) article in *Reading Research Quarterly*). Nonetheless, it has been difficult to apply and to enforce conventional copyright laws applied to digital content, which has threatened commercial ownership of digital content. That threat led publishers of books, magazines, media, and music publishers along with the film industry to lobby Congress to pass the Digital Millennium Copyright Act that created "digital rights management" designed to protect publishers' copyrighted material by extending legal definitions into the digital realm (Dames, 2006).

One of the problems with the increasing control of the publishing industry over digital materials is the understandable requirement that if scholars want to include copyrighted texts, images, or video in published reports, they must obtain written permissions. However, those permissions are often difficult to obtain given such challenges of not being able to determine the actual owner of certain texts. One study found that when permission letters were sent to publishers requesting different permission options for digital copying of books, only about half of the responses provided a definitive decision granting or denying permission (Haigh, 2006). Twenty-five percent of copyright holders did not reply and 16% of the holders could not be located. The response time averaged three months. Fifty-four percent of the replies denied permission for any copying. Thus, out of the total requests, only 24% granted permission, often with some restrictions. Given these difficulties in obtaining permissions, scholars are then less likely to incorporate copyrighted material in their work, something that is particularly important for scholars publishing multimodal texts related to digital and media literacy.

The control of the publishing industry on copyrighted digital texts was further manifested by The TEACH Act (The Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization Act) passed in 2002

that defines limitations on the use of certain digital texts for online courses by only students enrolled in a course, as well as how long texts can be retained and the proportions of texts that can be used (Simpson, 2005). Given the increased popularity of online courses that rely on sharing of digital texts, instructors are coping with the restrictive limitations of The TEACH Act (Reyman, 2006). While instructors in face-to-face courses can employ some digital texts under definitions of fair-use of copyrighted materials, instructors of online courses face more stringent restrictions in their use of copyrighted materials due to The TEACH Act.

These growing limitations on access and dissemination have not been ignored among academics. Scholars at the University of Virginia (University of Virginia Library Collections, 2003) argued that their mission of providing research in widely-accessible journals to influence society and build their scholarly careers, as well as their need to have some control over their work, is at odds with a commercial publishing model driven by the need for increased profits and controlling copyright. In an open letter to university presidents and provosts, Bergstrom and McAfee (2005) observed:

It is time to recognize a simple fact, and react to it. The symbiotic relationship between academics and for-profit publishers has broken down. The large for-profit publishers are gouging the academic community for as much as the market will bear. Moreover, they will not stop pricing journals at the monopoly level, because shareholders demand it.

But, what exactly can literacy scholars do to address this erosion of equitable access to knowledge and its production?

#### RESOURCES FOR STRATEGIC RESPONSES

In 1997 the Association of Research Libraries initiated a coalition of related organizations called the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) to address problematic relationship among academic publishers, libraries, and researchers (see <http://www.arl.org/sparc>). SPARC has spearheaded efforts to respond productively to the problem posed by the increasing influence of commercial forces on publication of research reports. Other institutions and collaborations such as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a consortium of 12 mostly Big Ten research universities, have also joined the fray, as reflected in their sponsorship of a conference on issues of digital dissemination in CIC libraries (for papers: <http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs/CenterForLibraryInitiatives/Archive/ConferencePresentation/Conference2007/home.shtml>). Scholars have also employed institutional tools for managing the access, archiving, and search functions related to their own work through use of open access repositories and open access journals. We briefly introduce these tools before outlining strategies for individual and collective action.

##### *Institutional Tools: Open-access Repositories and Journals*

One of the strategies for fostering availability of research is through the use of open access institutional repositories established by research universities or professional organizations (Anscombe, 2005). In Britain, the Sherpa Project ([www.sherpa.ac.uk/](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/)) has sponsored a number

of these repositories. The University of California's eScholarship repository ([repositories.cdlib.org/escholarship](http://repositories.cdlib.org/escholarship)), the New York University repository ([archive.nyu.edu](http://archive.nyu.edu)), and DSpace developed at MIT (<http://www.dspace.org/>) (Papin-Ramcharan & Dawe, 2006) provide access to its faculties' research reports. The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration uses the Connexions system ([cnx.org](http://cnx.org)) developed at Rice University to provide for free online publications of its research (Ascione, 2006). Universities such as MIT have provided access to course syllabi and materials through their OpenCourseWare project ([ocw.mit.edu/index.html](http://ocw.mit.edu/index.html)).

Individual scholars such as John Willinsky (2005) and Lawrence Lessig (2006) have engaged in specific efforts to promote open-source publishing, as reflected in Lessig's Creative Commons project ([creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)) designed to provide scholars with a means to grant access to their work with a limited number of restrictions.

Scholars have also established open-access journals—online journals accessible without subscription fees and permissions for reading, copying, downloading, sharing, and storing research reports. By publishing in open-access journals, scholars can publish their reports relatively quickly, rather than having to often wait for extended periods of time to publish in non-open-access journals (Antelman, 2004). Scholars can also reach audiences that they would not reach otherwise, for example, teachers or public policy makers who often do not or cannot obtain access to expensive, less accessible journals.

There are (as of summer, 2007) approximately 1400 peer-reviewed journals currently listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals ([www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)). Many of these journals are in science and medicine where the costs of print publication have always been high but where the importance of quick, open access is particularly important. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) provide free access to research it funds to the public on the PubMed Central site (Johnson, 2004). However, even the NIH will require a six-month delay in making reports available in order to protect the journals in which these reports appear (Johnson, 2006). Nonetheless, among the 1400 journals listed are 168 education-related journals, 37 journals in Anthropology, and 58 journals in Psychology. (Another useful site that lists open-access education journals is the one maintained by the AERA special interest group Communication of Research ([aera-cr.asu.edu/ejournals/](http://aera-cr.asu.edu/ejournals/))).

There are a number of open-access journals that NRC members edit or contribute to, including: *CITE Journal: Contemporary Issues in Technology and English Language Arts Teacher Education* (<http://www.citejournal.org/>), *Exploring Adult Literacy* (<http://literacy.kent.edu/cra/new.html>), *The Journal of Literacy and Technology* (<http://www.literacyandtechnology.org/>), *KAIROS: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* (<http://english.ttu.edu/Kairos/>), *Language Learning and Technology* (<http://llt.msu.edu/>), *Literacy Teaching and Learning: An International Journal of Early Reading and Writing*, (<http://www.readingrecovery.org/sections/home/ltl.asp>), and *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction* (<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-educ/CIJournal.cfm>).

As researchers turn to open-access journal options, and as these journals gain wider readership and enhance their reputations and status, then publishers' current monopoly on and financial control over scholarly dissemination is challenged, forcing publishers to change their packaging practices and/or to reduce the price of journals. Although this certainly raises questions about how publishers can continue to publish journals and still make a profit, the current profit-driven financial models of scholarly publication need to be altered if literacy researchers hope to broaden the reach and impact



of their scholarship. The fact that even many current non-open-source journals offer some or all of their content free after a certain time period and still survive financially suggests that journals may still be able to survive by loosening their controls over publication rights.

#### *Individual and Collective Strategies*

If we are to manage strategically the literacies of the digital economy, we must first recognize the many strategies available to us. Consider some of the following recommendations:

*Publish in open-access journals.* Researchers publishing in open-access journals not only take intellectual capital away from those who would monopolize it, but they also gain some additional benefits. As previously noted, reports published in open-source journals are published more quickly and often reach different audiences than is the case with non-open-source journals. And, their work is disseminated much more broadly. Research on this issue is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to compare citation rates of non-open-access with open-access journal articles because there are far more non-open-access than open-access journals. When citation rates for the articles from non-open-access journals that authors have made open-access through self-archiving are compared with articles from the same journal issues, self-archiving of articles results in much higher percentages of citation rates (Harnad & Brody, 2004). One study examined the citation rate, web viewing of abstracts, and text downloading of the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* after 13 articles published in 1996 were made available on the Web (Coleman & Malone, 2006). Articles made available online were more likely to be cited than articles available only in printed form. After the articles were available online, the articles received a total of 5,008 views of the abstract and 1,035 downloads of the full text by a world-wide audience, access that is important for reaching audiences in countries in which scholars lack access to research reports.

Given the current realities of tenure and promotion committees, which are often biased toward printed journals, it may be incumbent on senior scholars to lead the way in online publication. Doing so would build the prestige of online journals and eventually make it less risky for their more junior colleagues to publish in online venues. As a field, we might also sanction authors who publish in less well-known online journals to announce publication of their work in forums such as the NRC listserv.

*Consider criteria for choosing publishing outlets.* When considering outlets for their work, literacy researchers should consider not only the historical prestige and circulation of a particular outlet, but they should consider to what extent commercial factors affect its distribution and availability. Some of that information may be common knowledge for particular outlets. For example, journals published by some for-profit publishers may limit access while journals published independently by non-profit professional organizations are likely to be less influenced by commercialism than for-profit publishers. One example is Rockefeller University Press which provides free access to all of their content six months after publication and free immediately for 142 countries (Schlomat, 2007).

In deciding on publishing options, researchers can research the background and performance of a journal by studying indexes comparing the cost effectiveness of various scholarly journals. One metric that has been used is price per article or citation; that information for many journals can be found at <http://www.journalprices.com>. Professional organizations such as NRC might also

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make available information about literacy journals and book publishers that have a good record in minimizing commercial barriers to dissemination.

*Promote the creation of open-source repositories and custom search engines.* Literacy researchers should work with their universities and organizations such as NRC, IRA, and NCTE to create open-source repositories to house and share their research, including their data sets (Willinsky, 2005). These repositories can then serve as sites for further online discussions and analysis of research, providing virtual meeting sites for the literacy research community. As recommended by John Willinsky (personal communication, April 11, 2007), NRC could, on its website, "set up a dedicated Google custom search engine that would identify literacy materials under a wide range of sub-topics with the actual papers distributed and archived throughout the world (<http://google.com/coop/cse>)."

*Self-archive research reports.* As institutions are employing open-source software to create repositories (Open Society Institute, 2004), that can be searched by sites such as Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>), literacy researchers are increasingly turning to self-archiving of their reports on their own web sites or on institutional repositories (Anscombe, 2005). As reported by the Open Citation Project (2007), self-archiving can increase citations rates by 50%-250%. Self-archiving requires that authors maintain some copyright control over their work. (For self-archiving policies: <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>).

*Promote online access of your professional organizations' publications.* Researchers could lobby organizations such as IRA, NCTE, or NRC to enhance online access to its publications after certain time periods or to provide free access to these publications for people in developing countries. For example, NRC is currently making all of the past *NRC Yearbook* chapters available online.

*Organize to challenge publishers' packaging of journals.* University faculty need to lobby their libraries to challenge publishers' attempts to sell bundled packages of journals that limit access to certain journals not included in these packages. After faculty at a number of research universities voted to take stands against publishers, in 2003, Harvard University, Cornell University, MIT, and Duke University cancelled portions of their Elsevier subscriptions because of the financial pressures caused by bundling (Fedecsco, 2007; Willinsky, 2005).

*Negotiate copyright agreements in publishing in non-open-access journal.* Literacy researchers should be more assertive in negotiating reasonable copyright agreements with publishers of their works. Rather than routinely signing a standard copyright form that typically transfers all rights to a publisher, researchers should carefully read such contracts and, if necessary, negotiate retaining copyright. The Create Change project ([www.createchange.org/changeandyou.html](http://www.createchange.org/changeandyou.html)) of the Association of Research Libraries provides strategies for such negotiations.

If a publisher refuses to allow retaining copyright, researchers should seek consent for their own self-archiving, distribution, or public display of their reports for non-commercial purposes, for example, posting an article on their personal web site and/or making the report available after a six-month period (Suber, 2006). Or, authors may attempt to change the language of agreements to make them less restrictive (Crews, 2006; Crews & Wong, 2004). Many publishers are open to including such clauses in copyright agreements if pressed by authors. For example, Elsevier now allows authors to post pre-print versions of reports on the Internet as well as these reports on their own sites (Schloman, 2007).

Because publishers often want to publish an author's works, authors often have some leverage to negotiate these agreements. However, they are not likely to make such accommodations unless they are requested to do so by authors. For this negotiation, researchers can employ the sample agreement letter available from SPARC (<http://www.arl.org/sparc/>). Researchers can amend agreements by replacing language with their own language or by adding a separate agreement document (Crews, 2006; Crews & Wong, 2004).

*Lobby to provide free access to researchers in developing countries.* Researchers in developing countries often do not have access to print journals and therefore can often only access research reports online. However, their universities often cannot afford to pay for online access. Faculty should therefore lobby publishers to provide free online access to researchers in developing countries (Willinsky, 2005).

*Promote consolidation of indexes.* Given the growth of self-archiving, university repositories, and sites such as ERIC or Education Full Text, as well as publishers' own separate journal indexes that do not include open-access reports, researchers currently have to wade through a myriad of different online indexes (Fedesco, 2007; Willinsky, 2005). Faculty need to organize to work with publishers and libraries to consolidate indexes that also include open-access reports, resulting in projects such as the personalized MyLibrary portal at the University of Minnesota that organizes access to online resources (Thorp, 2007).

*Serve on editorial boards of open-source journals.* Literacy researchers should welcome opportunities to serve on the editorial boards of online, open-access journals given the power editorial boards have in legitimizing a journal's reputation and setting publishing policies. The presence of well-known researchers on boards may then attract junior faculty seeking publication outlets. Researchers currently serving on an editorial board for a non open-source journal should check the ownership of the journal; they can find out from their libraries whether a commercial publisher operates in good faith, and then make decisions regarding board membership based on that understanding.

*Formulate promotion and tenure review criteria to include open-access publishing.* Promotion and tenure criteria currently value publishing in top tier, non-open-access, refereed print journals as opposed to refereed, open-access journals. Faculty should revisit these criteria to take into account both scholarly rigor and the impact of scholars' work on society through its availability in open-access journals. The Modern Language Association (2003) issued a statement positing that in tenure review, "the standing of an electronic journal should be judged according to the same criteria used for a print journal. These criteria include the journal's peer review policy, rate of acceptance, the nature of its editorial board and publisher, and its general profile in the field it covers" (p. 4). A more recent report by the MLA Task Force on Evaluation Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion (2006) concluded that "departments and institutions should recognize the legitimacy of scholarship produced in new media, whether by individuals or in collaboration, and create procedures for evaluating these forms of scholarship" (p. 2).

*Address issues of publications with graduate students.* Literacy researchers also need to address these issues with doctoral students preparing to be scholars. They could engage students in discussions of how commercialism may negatively affect the scholarly community, particularly in relation to publication, as well as professional ethics that include activities such as paid consulting

and charging fees for various other services, discussions that rarely occur explicitly or systematically within doctoral programs.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous sections, we have highlighted some of the negative effects of commercialism on the dissemination of scholarship occurring at the same time that online production and access make dissemination easier and less costly. Those negative effects suggest that literacy researchers in general and NRC members in particular should make a concerted effort to resist these commercial influences that are clearly at odds with allowing our work to be readily accessible to scholars, practitioners, policy makers, and members of the public. However, the first step in moving toward an appropriate response is an informed awareness of the relevant issues and of the dimensions of the problem leading to more direct involvement of individual researchers and of organizations such as NRC.

Our hope is that literacy researchers will engage in discussions of these issues with their own faculties and research libraries by supporting initiatives aimed at resisting commercializing scholarship as well as experimenting with new methods of online dissemination and access.

NRC, as an organization concerned about literacy research, might work in conjunction with other professional organizations to consider a variety of responses to these issues, including creating a task force that delves more deeply into the issues. The task force would be charged with developing specific recommendations for increasing the availability of literacy research through alternative open-access venues as well as additional actions individual members could adopt related to their own publications.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge that this relatively brief introduction to a clearly troubling escalation in commercialism within academic publishing may not adequately portray the complexity of the issues and the scope of the changes and challenges that may be in the offing. Many of the relevant issues are controversial, and reasonable people with differing perspectives may not agree fully about the extent of the problem or how to respond to it. New models for dissemination and access are needed, and many are being tried, although, to date, no one model fully and satisfactorily addresses all of these issues (Edwards & Shulenberger, 2003).

Nor is there any easy solution for addressing these issues. For example, online open-access journals, although less expensive to operate than print journals, nonetheless, incur costs. Who will pay for these costs and under what conditions? If universities underwrite such journals, might funds for journal subscriptions be redirected toward operating independent non-profit journals? What would the implications of such a move be?

Neither do we wish to suggest that all commercial publishers are only interested in profit and in pushing prices to the limit regardless of the consequences for meaningful dissemination and access. Publishers are also searching for new models that continue to add value and expertise to dissemination and access, but that allow them to recoup a reasonable profit. We believe that it is advisable to maintain open channels of communication with publishers by working with them on mutually acceptable approaches for publishing literacy research.

In the end, we hope that our report will stimulate a heightened awareness of how commercialism has increasingly influenced what scholarship gets disseminated and accessed. We hope too that it has given literacy researchers not only insights into the dimensions of the problem, but also ideas for becoming involved in resisting excesses of commercialism and in finding constructive alternatives. We must go into the digital literacy era with our eyes open and with the understanding that differential access to knowledge and its production is a matter of democracy and social justice as well as of scholarship and personal agency.

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## FOOTNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Accessing Literacy Research Online include David Reinking (Chair), Richard Beach, M. Trika Smith-Burke, Amy Carter, Debbie East, Peter Johnston, and Norm Stahl.