

NEWS RELEASE



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Study Identifies Factors That Could Lead to Cancelled Subscriptions

London, United Kingdom– November 9, 2006 –A major study of librarian purchasing preferences has revealed the factors that could prompt a librarian to substitute Open Access materials for journal subscriptions. According to a study commissioned by the Publishing Research Consortium, the length of the embargo period and peer review are key determinants in a librarian's decision to maintain or cancel journal subscriptions.

This study raises questions about previous claims that librarians will continue to subscribe to journals, even when some or all of the content is freely available on institutional archives.

“Overall, librarians are very sensitive to quality, how quickly the content is made available, the version of the content, and content cost”, said Chris Beckett, Director, Scholarly Information Strategies Limited. “As a result of our work, we can simulate how these different factors interact and what effect different combinations of factors have on the relative appeal of subscription journals, licensed databases, and content on Open Access archives.”

The study, conducted by Scholarly Information Strategies in July 2006, surveyed over 400 librarians internationally. As well as collecting their general attitudes to open access, conjoint analysis was employed to identify the relative importance of specific decision-making factors such as price, embargo period, article version, and reliability of access. This approach avoids selection bias and produced data models that show the likely impact on subscription or cancellation behavior under different market scenarios. The model outputs can be highly useful for developing products, understanding price sensitivity and examining other practical issues.

“Because most content is delivered to the research community via libraries, it is critical to understand how librarians make decisions,” said Bob Campbell, Chairman, Steering Group of the Publishing Research Consortium and President, Blackwell Publishing. “This study will help publishers better analyze and evaluate how alternative acquisition methods might impact how they sell journal subscriptions to librarians.”

The full report of the study, “Self-Archiving and Journal Subscriptions: Co-existence or Competition?” can be accessed on the PRC site at www.publishingresearch.org.uk

About the Publishing Research Consortium

The Publishing Research Consortium is a group representing publishers and societies supporting global research into scholarly communication, with the aim to provide unbiased data and objective analysis. Our objective is to support work that is scientific and pro-scholarship. Overall, we aim to promote an understanding of the role of publishing and its impact on research and teaching. For more information, visit www.publishingresearch.org.uk.