



Cuts to Library Jeopardize Berkeley's Reputation and Ability to Conduct Research

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Berkeley – The Graduate Assembly wishes to express its concern over recent cuts to the library.

Statewide budget cuts and skyrocketing journal subscription costs together are driving deeper and deeper cuts in the number of academic journals that Berkeley can offer its scholarly community. This double bind directly threatens faculty and students' ability to conduct world-class research. Berkeley is not alone in this dilemma – university libraries nationwide are struggling to support the research missions of their institutions while confronting the journal publishing industry, which is increasingly out of sync with the financial realities of these leaner times.

The struggle to cope with these harsh realities may lead to significant changes in the way university libraries manage their collections and the way faculty and students conduct and publish research. Academic journals drive scholarly research in most fields. The quick turnaround time of journals facilitates dissemination of the most current research, and in many fields scholars orient their research goals around publications in article format.

But with budget cuts and inflation in journal subscription costs, the question becomes which journals can be cut from a library with minimal impact on research priorities. Library collections staff consult closely with faculty and students when determining which journals can be cut, but the individualist and disciplinary bent of scholarly research often leads to recommendations like "Make your cuts from other people's journals, not the ones I need." However, as faculty and student research becomes more and more interdisciplinary, it becomes difficult to decide where cuts should be made.

In the end, university libraries are stuck footing the bill for publication of academic research, because they must buy back rights to faculty and student research—at exorbitant prices—in order to provide access to the scholarly community. This ironic situation has led some scholars to search for alternate publication models, for example using the Internet to distribute research. The e-Scholarship project at the California Digital Library and Project Euclid at Cornell both have online publication projects ready to go, but it is clear to librarians that they alone cannot make this new model work. The success of alternate models requires awareness on the part of faculty and students of the problems inherent in the current model.

The Graduate Assembly calls on faculty, administrators, and graduate students to support a significant culture change in academia; we must create an environment in which faculty and students can choose to publish their cutting-edge research outside the standard academic publishing industry. This is particularly important now, as we're faced with severe budget cuts and no sign of imminent relief. Change in culture requires a shift away from individual scholars locked into disciplinary boundaries, fighting to protect access to their own journals. Instead, we must encourage a broader vision of the scholarly community, one that pools its resources to foster and support the publication of research from all its constituents.

The sweeping culture change required to move beyond the traditional publication model is beyond any one university, but it is within the realm of possibility for one university to start the ball rolling. Next time you wonder why the university does not subscribe to your favorite journal, we encourage you to think about where your last article was published.

For more information on the problem, please visit:

<http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu:8081/scholarly/economics.html>