

Imperial College Union  
Journal Pricing Policy  
*A Note by the Deputy President (Education)*

### **Background**

1. Academic journals sit at the heart of a research university such as Imperial;
2. High journal subscription prices have been an issue for a long time now; the Imperial College London Library (“the Library”) has in the past obediently paid organisations for access to the necessary journals;
3. These journals are either provided on an individual basis or as a “big deal” via large publishing companies such as Elsevier or Wiley-Blackwell;
  - 3.1. The “big deals” allow Imperial to access thousands of journals;
4. Large publishing companies are aware of the need for their product, which is reflected in their pricing:
  - 4.1. Subscription prices rise by about 6% every year (double the rate of RPI);
  - 4.2. The UK HE sector spends almost £200m/year on access to journals and databases (10% of total QR funding for sector);
  - 4.3. About 50% of the Library’s budget is currently spent on journals;
  - 4.4. From 2005 – 2009 Elsevier’s profits have increased by £600m;
5. The Library has been hit hard by the financial crisis, uncertainty in the future of HE funding and the decline in value of sterling;
  - 5.1. The Library has had to squeeze their budget, resulting in less resource for staff, books, maintenance of facilities etc.;
6. ASPI (Affordable Subscription for Periodicals Initiative) is a steering group within the RLUK<sup>1</sup> (Research Libraries UK) which are leading a campaign to combat the issue of overpriced journal subscriptions;
7. The ASPI Steering Group is asking for:
  - 7.1. Significant, real-term price reductions (15%);
  - 7.2. Prices (and any future rises) to be paid in sterling;
  - 7.3. No up-front payment of the full subscription price;
8. Should these demands not be met, the Library will cancel its subscriptions and find other ways to provide Imperial with the journals it needs;
  - 8.1. A comprehensive contingency plan is being created to ensure the transition to a more open-source model; this could cause some short-term disruptions to journal acquisitions in the future.
  - 8.2. About 10% of journals are currently available for free;
  - 8.3. 5% of journals make up 40% of journal subscription use;
  - 8.4. Our subscriptions end in January 2012.
9. All Russell Group Vice-Chancellors support this campaign, as do the NUS and ULU.

### **Believes**

1. The Library, and the resource it provides, is central to Imperial’s academic student experience;
2. Publishers are currently exploiting UK HE libraries by charging them overpriced sums for academic journal subscriptions;
3. The Library is being unnecessarily compromised in its ability to provide us with a far-reaching learning and research material, due to overpriced journal subscription rates;
4. Publishing companies should take into account the budget constraints of the Library and offer a fairer rate for academic journal;

### **Resolves**

1. To publically endorse the Library, RLUK and all other involved institutions in the campaign to lower the cost of journal subscriptions, to pay in sterling and to not have to do so upfront ;
2. To support the Library in developing a contingency plan in case publishers decide to not back down.
3. To take a leading role in informing the student body about this campaign and the possible consequences of having to cancel journal subscriptions;

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<sup>1</sup> RLUK represent 29 of the largest research and university libraries in the UK.