



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
California Digital Library

415 20<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oakland, California 94612

June 4, 2010

## Re: Informational Update on a Possible UC Systemwide Boycott of the Nature Publishing Group

Dear UC Divisional Chairs and Members of the UC Faculty,

UC Libraries are confronting an impending crisis in providing access to journals from the Nature Publishing Group (NPG). NPG has insisted on increasing the price of our license for *Nature* and its affiliated journals by 400 percent beginning in 2011, which would raise our cost for their 67 journals by well over \$1 million dollars per year.

While *Nature* and other NPG publications are among the most prestigious of academic journals, such a price increase is of unprecedented magnitude. NPG has made their ultimatum with full knowledge that our libraries are under economic distress—a fact widely publicized in an [Open Letter to Licensed Content Providers](#) and distributed by the California Digital Library (CDL) in May 2009. In fact, CDL has worked successfully with many other publishers and content providers over the past year to address the University's current economic challenges in a spirit of mutual problem solving, with positive results including lowering our overall costs for electronic journals by \$1 million dollars per year.

NPG by contrast has been singularly unresponsive to the plight of libraries and has employed a 'divide and conquer' strategy that directs major price increases to various institutions in different years. Their proposed new license fee is especially difficult to accept in a time of shrinking UC library budgets and with the many sacrifices we all continue to make Systemwide. Capitulating to NPG now would wipe out all of the recent cost-saving measures taken by CDL and our campus libraries to reduce expenditures for electronic journals. More information about the UC Libraries' concerns, including a history of previous unsustainable price increases from this publisher and others, is available on the CDL's *Challenges to Licensing* page at <http://www.cdlib.org/services/collections/current/challenges.html>

UC Libraries have already taken a stand against NPG. After recently acquiring *Scientific American*, NPG doubled the institutional site license fee and raised the price of an institutional print subscription seven-fold. In response, UC Libraries, along with numerous other institutions throughout the country, discontinued their license to the online version and reduced the number of print subscriptions. As a first response to the current NPG proposal, UC Libraries plan to forgo all online subscriptions to any new NPG journals. But more drastic actions may be necessary.

### ***What can UC Faculty do to help?***

UC Faculty and researchers author a significant percentage of all articles published in NPG journals and are a major force in shaping the prestige of its publications. In the past six years, UC authors have contributed approximately 5300 articles to these journals, 638 of them in the flagship journal *Nature*. Using NPG's own figures, an analysis by CDL suggests that UC articles published in *Nature* alone have contributed at least \$19 million dollars in revenue to NPG over the past 6 years—or more than \$3 million dollars per year for just that one journal. Moreover, UC Faculty supply countless hours serving as reviewers, editors, and advisory board members.

Many UC Faculty now believe that a larger and more concerted response is necessary to counter the monopolistic tactics of NPG. Keith Yamamoto, a Professor and Executive Vice Dean at UCSF ([yamamoto@cmp.ucsf.edu](mailto:yamamoto@cmp.ucsf.edu)) who helped lead a successful boycott against Elsevier and Cell Press in 2003 (<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA379265.html>), has begun to assemble a group of Faculty that will help lead a UC Systemwide boycott of NPG. This means that unless NPG is willing to maintain our current licensing agreement, UC Faculty would ask the UC Libraries to suspend their online subscriptions entirely, and all UC Faculty would be strongly encouraged to:

- Decline to peer review manuscripts for journals from the Nature Publishing Group.
- Resign from Nature Publishing Group editorial and advisory boards.
- Cease to submit papers to the Nature Publishing Group.
- Refrain from advertising any open or new UC positions in Nature Publishing Group journals.
- Talk widely about Nature Publishing Group pricing tactics and business strategies with colleagues outside UC, and encourage sympathy actions such as those listed above.

We clearly recognize that the consequences of such a boycott would be complex and present hardships for individual UC researchers. But we believe that in the end, we will all benefit if UC can achieve a sustainable and mutually rewarding relationship with NPG. In the meantime, UC scholars can help break the monopoly that commercial and for-profit entities like NPG hold over the work that we create through positive actions such as:

- Complying with open access policies from Federal funding agencies such as the NIH (<http://publicaccess.nih.gov>).
- Utilizing *eScholarship*, an open access repository service from CDL ([http://www.escholarship.org/publish\\_postprints.html](http://www.escholarship.org/publish_postprints.html)).
- Considering other high-quality research publishing outlets, including open access journals such as those published by PLoS and others.
- Insisting on language in publication agreements that allows UC authors to retain their copyright ([http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/manage/retain\\_copyrights.html](http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/manage/retain_copyrights.html)).

A full list of journals currently licensed from NPG by UC Libraries is attached. We will keep you informed as this situation progresses, including the possibility of canceling all NPG titles. Please feel free to contact the University Librarian on your campus with questions or concerns, or any of us. You can also communicate your concern to key contacts at NPG. The managing director of NPG, Steven Inchcombe, and other members of the executive committee can be reached at [exec@nature.com](mailto:exec@nature.com).

Sincerely,



Laine Farley  
Executive Director  
California Digital Library  
University of California, Office of the President  
[laine.farley@ucop.edu](mailto:laine.farley@ucop.edu)



Richard A. Schneider  
Associate Professor, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery  
University of California – San Francisco  
Chair, University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication  
[rich.schneider@ucsf.edu](mailto:rich.schneider@ucsf.edu)



Brian E. C. Schottlaender  
The Audrey Geisel University Librarian  
University of California – San Diego  
Convener, University Librarians Council  
[becs@ucsd.edu](mailto:becs@ucsd.edu)

CC:

Henry Powell  
Professor of Pathology  
University of California, San Diego  
Chair, Academic Senate

Daniel Greenstein  
Vice Provost for Academic Planning, Programs and  
Coordination  
University of California, Office of the President

Thomas Leonard  
University Librarian  
University of California – Berkeley

Helen Henry  
Acting Co-University Librarian  
University of California – Davis

Gail Yokote  
Acting Co-University Librarian  
University of California – Davis

Carol Hughes  
Acting Co-University Librarian  
University of California – Irvine

Deb Sunday  
Acting Co-University Librarian  
University of California – Irvine

Gary E. Strong  
University Librarian  
University of California – Los Angeles

R. Bruce Miller  
University Librarian  
University of California – Merced

Ruth M. Jackson  
University Librarian  
University of California – Riverside

Karen Butter  
University Librarian & Assistant  
Vice Chancellor  
University of California – San Francisco

Sharon DeDecker  
Acting University Librarian  
University of California – Santa Barbara

Lucia Snowhill  
Acting University Librarian  
University of California – Santa Barbara

Ginny Steel  
University Librarian  
University of California – Santa Cruz

**Number of journals:** 67

**Includes:** 25 Nature-branded journals  
42 academic and specialist journals

Note: NPG publishes 85 journals in total, including titles not licensed at UC. For a complete list of publications, see <http://www.nature.com/siteindex/index.html>

Nature	EMBO Journal
Nature Biotechnology	EMBO reports
Nature Cell Biology	European Journal of Clinical Nutrition
Nature Chemical Biology	European Journal of Human Genetics
Nature Genetics	Evidence Based Dentistry
Nature Geoscience	Eye
Nature Immunology	Gene Therapy
Nature Materials	Genes & Immunity
Nature Medicine	Heredity
Nature Methods	Immunology and Cell Biology
Nature Nanotechnology	International Journal of Impotence Research
Nature Neuroscience	International Journal of Obesity
Nature Photonics	ISME Journal
Nature Physics	Journal of Antibiotics
Nature Protocols	Journal of Cerebral Blood Flow & Metabolism
Nature Structural & Molecular Biology	Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology
Nature Reviews Cancer	Journal of Human Genetics
Nature Reviews Cardiology	Journal of Human Hypertension
Nature Reviews Drug Discovery	Journal of Investigative Dermatology
Nature Reviews Genetics	Journal of Perinatology
Nature Reviews Immunology	Kidney International
Nature Reviews Microbiology	Lab Animal
Nature Reviews Molecular Cell Biology	Laboratory Investigation
Nature Reviews Neuroscience	Leukemia
Nature Reviews Rheumatology	Modern Pathology
American Journal of Gastroenterology	Molecular Psychiatry
American Journal of Hypertension	Molecular Therapy
Bone Marrow Transplantation	Neuropsychopharmacology
British Dental Journal	Obesity
British Journal of Cancer	Oncogene + Oncogene Reviews
Cancer Gene Therapy	Pharmacogenomics Journal, The
Cell Death & Differentiation	Prostate Cancer & Prostatic Diseases
Cell Research	Spinal Cord
Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics	

Below is an overview of online journal subscriptions and license fees managed by the California Digital Library for the entire UC System. Individual UC campuses also purchase many journal subscriptions locally and those figures are not included here. Please consult with your University Librarian for more information about online journal subscriptions at each of the ten campuses.

- Amount spent for online journal licenses for UC Systemwide: \$24.3 million
- Current number of online journals for UC Systemwide:<sup>1</sup> 7,846
- Average UC cost per journal:
  - Life and health sciences: \$4,142
  - Physical sciences and engineering: \$6,814
  - All journals (includes social sciences and humanities): \$3,103
- Current average UC cost per Nature Publishing Group journal: \$4,465
- Proposed average UC cost per Nature Publishing Group journal for 2011: \$17,479
- Increase in UC Library materials budget from 2005–2009: 7.46%
- Increase in major journal package license fees from 2005–2009:<sup>2</sup> 15%
- Reduction to UC Library materials budget in 2010: -\$1.9 million
- Current number of journals licensed from Nature Publishing Group: 67
- Increase in Nature Publishing Group license fees from 2005–2009:<sup>2</sup> 137%
- Proposed increase in Nature Publishing Group license fees for 2011: 400%

In 2010, CDL successfully reduced the cost of many major licenses by 15% or more in response to the current economic downturn. Virtually all publishers with whom we have concluded agreements in 2010 have cooperated with us to address UC's budget challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes research journals licensed directly from publishers only. More than 30,000 journals are available systemwide including aggregated databases.

<sup>2</sup> A small percentage of this increase is due to licensing additional journals from these publishers.