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CONSORTIA LICENSING, INFORMATION AS INFRASTRUCTURE

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Firstly, I'd like to thank the organisers of this meeting for asking Academic Press to participate in what so far has been an interesting meeting. Secondly, it gives me great pleasure to be one of the few scientific publishers invited to talk.

As we approach the end of this millenium and makes plans for the next, it is appropriate that we should question the practices and norms that have been with us for the past few decades.

What I would like to talk about today is Academic Press' vision of scholarly communication for the next millenium, a vision that has become a reality for many already.

At Academic Press we believe that the current model of scholarly communication, based on the submission of articles from authors to publishers, that are then sold back to libraries by journal subscription, is a model that can no longer survive.

The spiraling prices of journals that this model fosters is a disservice to all parties concerned - the author, the library, the reader, and indeed to the publisher. By focusing on scholarly information as a commodity to be sold, the scientific community has been forced to enter a crisis in communication, where library funding cannot keep pace with scientific output.

But of course this is not news to anyone here today, and I do not wish to dwell on the past, but look to the future and discuss how Academic Press are seeking to resolve this crisis.

The central concept behind our new way of thinking is that access to basic scientific information be seen as part of the "infrastructure" of any research or higher education establishment, and therefore part of the fabric of any society that values an educated and informed citizenry.

The word "infrastructure" instantly suggests a focus on technology, and of course it is by taking advantage of new technologies that we have the most opportunities for change and reform. It is worthwhile briefly reflecting on previous changes in the dissemination of information and knowledge brought about by technical revolution. Steve Harnad notes that there have been "three revolutions in the history of human thought", those of language, writing and print. Through the technological innovation of the printing press knowledge was prised from the hands of the custodial guardians of "the truth" and made available for all. Harnad states that "we are on the threshold of a fourth" revolution - the notion of the "Post-Gutenberg Galaxy".

The fourth revolution that the internet is the driving force behind offers the chance to widen access to knowledge even further. At Academic Press we wish to provide a service where anybody who would like to use our published material can do so with ease, wherever they are, and still without money changing hands at the point of use. This applies not only to users at universities, but at public libraries, schools and commercial libraries too.

It is most encouraging to see that this philosophy is already prevalent in South Africa. Whilst preparing for this meeting I read with great interest the work that has already been done by the CALICO group in the Western Cape. It seems that we are sharing the exact same vision! To quote directly from the CALICO online brochure, "enhancing access throughout the wider community" will play "a vital role in providing the information network necessary for sound reconstruction and development of the region." Indeed CALICO has identified over 300 possible participants in their program of libraries at all levels in the community. Perhaps most important of all is CALICO's statement that "free information flow and access to information are also critically important to any democracy, and especially to South Africa's – in which many aspects of our social system run the risk of being continuations of the old order through lack of skills and capacity."

This approach is also being taken by the GAELIC group, of which the University of Pretoria is a member. The group states that in their planning they have "considered the entire library and information community in South Africa".

This national approach to library management exactly matches Academic Press' vision for scholarly communication, and its focus on the infrastructure of information provision.

So how specifically can Academic Press work with such consortia in achieving their aims? I'd like to discuss our models in a little more detail.

Our program consists of two elements: APPEAL, the new business model, and IDEAL, the electronic library of all 175 journals that we currently publish.

APPEAL is an acronym for Academic Press Print and Electronic Access License. It is important to note that our model concerns not only electronic access to journals, but print journals too. However our pricing scheme "uncouples" print from electronic access.

The basic premise behind APPEAL is that of aggregating spending to provide collective access to material. To use an example, if a consortium consists of 5 institutions, each subscribing to various Academic Press journals but collectively to

all 175, an APPEAL license allows access to all 175 journals electronically by each of the 5 institutions. So an individual library may go from subscribing to 30 journals in print to having e-access to 175.

Most interesting, for library directors and vice chancellors in particular, is the fact that access to these journals is at 90% of the combined holdings of consortia members. Print subscriptions, which are entirely optional, are then offered at a deep-discount of 25% of the current list price.

An APPEAL license also relaxes copyright issues within the consortium. We will allow the photocopying and distribution of all material anywhere inside the consortium.

So we believe this approach taps into the very infrastructure of information provision, and indeed can provide more for less – a concept alien to the scientific publishing world a few years ago!

I would not like to go into more detail at this stage about out model, nor talk at length about the technical aspects of our electronic library, but return once again to the idea of widening access to information.

We are well aware that libraries require more than just Academic Press journals, and that users may search for information using a variety of databases and tools. As such , we have reached agreements with many third parties that enable searches for published material. Many of these services appear to already be in place in South Africa, through the SABINET service. For example, anyone using OCLC's FirstSearch or MedLine in their research can access the full-text Academic Press article if their institute has an APPEAL license. We have similar agreements with the American Mathematical Society service MathsNet, CHEMPORT, and BIOSIS amongst others.

Most interesting of all perhaps is our work with other publishers, particularly Wiley in the Digital Object Identifier project. This will allow linking from references in Wiley articles to references in Academic Press articles, and vice versa.

Of course for users to take full advantage of these services, as many points of access to the material need to be licensed as possible. This is our aim for a country such as South Africa. Indeed it is an aim we have nearly achieved in other countries in the world. For example, in Finland all universities and most polytechnics and research institutes have access to our material. Our next goal is to license all the public libraries in the country. In this way we feel we are truly changing information provision by providing access "on-tap" wherever it is needed.

So what is the next step for establishing this infrastructure in South Africa? It would appear that the philosophical issues have already been addressed, and the technological infrastructure is in place through SABINET and co-operatives like CALICO and GAELIC. The pertinent question of course is that of funding. Here we can draw experience from other parts of the world that already have APPEAL licenses.

In the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Funding Council provided a top-slice of total funding to pay for all universities to access our journals. In this way, the infrastructure was paid for before regular funds reached the universities themselves. We see this as by far the most preferable way of providing funds without directly reallocating resources at the institute level.

The alternative approach is that of funding from the ground up, which could be a slower way to provide access to the widest group possible, and also more difficult from an administrative point of view.

By adopting this first approach, I would like to suggest that South Africa would be more than ready to move ahead in the provision of a national infrastructure for access to full-text scientific information. Although I am speaking on behalf of just one publisher, I am convinced that initial work with Academic Press will be just the start of taking the country into the next millennium as a place where a fantastic education can be had by all.

Thank you.