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Op-Ed-Opinions and Editorials-Reaction to "A Publisher's View of the SPARC Initiative"

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Reaction to "A Publisher's View of the SPARC Initiative"

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Anthony Watkinson made me a pretty unhappy camper with his piece in *Against the Grain* ("A Publisher's View of the SPARC Initiative," December 2000-January 2001), specifically his misrepresentation of our editor-publisher relationship. Indeed, he was responsible for the pricing of *Evolutionary Ecology* from 1988 to 1994, and indeed our relationship was amicable (after all, we are both sweet gentlemen). But to say that "every year (he and I) agreed (on) the price," does not begin to describe what happened. What happened most years was that I learned of the price either in promotional material or actually on the inside cover of the first issue of the year. What else happened in most years was me whining about the price!

I have stopped whining. *Evolutionary Ecology Research*, the journal I founded in 1999 to compete with *Evolutionary Ecology*, costs libraries about 25 cents per page, quite similar to the cost of *Evolutionary Ecology* during its first year of publication by **Chapman and Hall**.

Mr. Watkinson also relates that subscriptions to *Evolutionary Ecology* reached a plateau. Not exactly. They were declining. It is possible that the decline began after his tenure. However, in 1986, the original **Chapman and Hall** aimed for one thousand subscriptions by 1992. I have this in writing. Of course, that storied firm based its projections on a price structure quite different from that of its successor. My impression was that **Watkinson** was rather happy with the subscription level. In fact, that always troubled me; it seemed to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Watkinson is certain that my calculations of profit for *Evolutionary Ecology* are wrong. Certainty is an elusive commodity. To perform my calculations I used numbers, not memory and not guesses. That they are substantially correct is being demonstrated by the financial health of *Evolutionary Ecology Research*, the


new journal. I based my business plan for its prices on the same calculations. Nevertheless, **Mr. Watkinson** may be correct in his calculations too. In the first place, my calculations were for the year 1998, four years after **Watkinson's** responsibility for *Evolutionary Ecology* pricing ceased. In addition, a large firm like **International Thomson**, charges many overhead expenses against its assets. I had no way to account for these. However, one must ask whether they are justified as expenses for a journal that we have demonstrated can be produced without them.

Mr. Watkinson should return to the Website of *Evolutionary Ecology Research* (<http://www.evolutionary-ecology.com>). There he will find that the original editorial, which he declares confidently "now removed from the site," is still there. In fact, it has always been there. Every page published in *Evolutionary Ecology Research* remains on the

site and is fully accessible to our subscribers. (Note that some pieces, such as the editorial to which he refers, are also

accessible to nonsubscribers.)

Finally, let me address the issue of copyright transfer. **Anthony**, please stop worrying about it. It is a bogeyman. Just look at the way *Evolutionary Ecology Research* and its authors handle the matter. We stipulate in print that our subscribers may freely use our articles for noncommercial research and teaching. They need no further permission. We give our authors electronic copies of the PDF files for their papers. This immediately allows them to distribute reprints electronically or by hardcopy. After one year, they are also free to post their article on their own Website. Meanwhile, subscribing libraries may even send copies of articles by interlibrary loan to nonsubscribers. That is accessibility! The only time one needs to seek out an author for permission is when one intends to profit from his/her work. *Evolutionary Ecology Research* believes that requirement to be totally appropriate.

But these are all details. The basic point, the real lesson missed by **Mr. Watkinson's** article, is that **SPARC** has worked and keeps working. Without it, I have no doubt whatsoever that the spiral in journal prices would have continued unabated. Librarians, banding together in defense of knowledge, should be very proud of what they have accomplished. 



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tem: Australian Catholic University, Australian Institute of Music, Avondale College, Board of Studies NSW, Charles Stuart University College of Law, Jansen Newman Institute, National Gallery of Australia, NSW Department of Corrective Services, NSW Police Academy, Sydney Church of England Grammar School, Southern Cross University, Study Group Australia, and The University of Sydney Conservatorium of Music. The UNILINC has provided a Shared System since 1984. The Ex Libris ALEPH 500 system will replace DRA software, which has been in use for several years. For more information on UNILINC, visit www.unilinc.edu.au.

This is from **Today's Legal News**, 6 April, 2001. <info@LAWNEWS-NETWORK.COM> Lexis-Nexis and West are battling for small-firm, solo lawyer sales via the Web. Visit the Automated Lawyer Spotlight at <http://www.law.com/cgi-bin/nwlink.cgi?ACG=ZZZFX6CWSJIC>.

What is and will be the impact of the Web on the publication or original research? *Nature* has just launched a Web debate on "Future e-access to the primary literature." The debate is freely accessible via *Nature's* home page <http://www.nature.com> or directly at <http://www.nature.com/nature/debates/e-access>. Needless to say, this is an important topic and the papers from April 6 include views from notables such as: **Ann Okerson** (Associate University Li-

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