

OPEN ACCESS:
How can we get there from here?

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- **There are many definitions of OA.**
- **By most of these the APS journals are OA.**
- **For this discussion we will consider OA as full availability without barriers on the publisher's web site.**
- **APS considers this a desirable goal.**
- **But there are significant costs to be recovered - how can this be managed? And how can we get there and stay there?**

- **APS has two OA journals: Physical Review Special Topics - Accelerators and Beams (since 1998 - supported by sponsorship) and PRST - Physics Education Research (since 2005 - supported by author or institutional charges). Neither fully recovers its costs.**
- **Both are small journals, so losses are easily covered by revenue from our larger journals (i.e. APS is also a sponsor).**

How can we convert our large journals to OA from subscriptions?

Three worries: how to stay solvent while

- Transitioning.
- Sustaining.
- Reversing (if the above fail).

The role of CERN

- CERN wanted to promote OA for particle physics articles. APS's PRL and PRD were important journals.
- At a meeting in Geneva in December 2005 a task force was organized to pursue this goal.
- We examined closely the requirements for us to make PRD OA - \$3.5 million (for 2400 articles) excluding print! Splitting PRD would halve the cost, but would delay the start by two years.

- **The risk was enormous - loss of solid subscription revenue, reliance on continued sponsorship by CERN and others, and a need for increases in sponsor fees to cover increases in submissions. The sustainability question caused us to examine reversibility, with considerable concern.**
- **We concluded that the three worries were sufficiently great that we would not risk an immediate transition to OA.**
- **But we still wanted to try to find a route.**

We concluded.....

- **“Free-to-Read” - continue subscriptions, but allow anyone - authors, CERN, funding agencies, institutions, grandparents, lovers, etc. - to pay to make any articles on our site available for reading by all.**
- **Initial cost: \$975 for Phys Rev; \$1300 for PRL. (About 1/2 the full cost per article.)**
- **Use increased revenue to lower subscription costs, especially to smaller institutions, and to offset risk. As the number of FTR articles increases and subs are lost we would increase charges. Eventually we could transition to full OA.**

- **Still - worries about sustainability. There is no loss if sponsorship is discontinued - access is still there. Stopping a subscription, on the other hand, leads to a loss of access. Both have problems, but there is more leverage. And moral suasion is not a business model.**
- **But publishing is not a theoretical science, rather it's an experimental art. There is no substitute for doing the experiment, and for watching closely what others do.**

The following slides are for responses to questions

Numbers

Assuming author charges

- **Annual budget for journals: \$30 Million.**
- **16,000 articles published; \$1900 per article.**
- **At 50% honoring rate \$3800/article.**
- **Needs dealing with 16,000 authors or their institutions, requiring a larger “development” staff than current subscription staff! (even larger if in addition institutional support is sought).**

Conclusions

As presented at CERN, Dec. 2005

- We will not for the present embrace open access beyond what we already do.
- We will continue to make our journals as widely available as possible by broadening consortia and continuing tiered pricing for subscriptions.

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EDITORIAL DESK

Open Access to Scientific Research

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A number of influential scientists have begun to argue that the cost of research publications has grown so large that it impedes the distribution of knowledge. Some subscriptions cost thousands of dollars per year, and those journals are usually available online only to subscribers. This looks less like dissemination than restriction, especially if it is measured against the potential access offered by the Internet. That is why a coalition led by Dr. Harold Varmus, the former director of the National Institutes of Health, is creating a new model, called the Public Library of Science.

Several years ago Dr. Varmus's group issued an open letter, signed by some 30,000 colleagues, calling on the publishers of scientific journals to make their archived research articles freely available online. Most journals declined, so they would not undercut the profitable business of selling expensive subscriptions to libraries. But there is a basic inequity when much of the research has been financed by public money.

The Public Library of Science plans to confront that inequity by establishing a new series of peer-reviewed journals that will be freely available on the Internet. The first ones, published this October, will be PLoS Biology and PLoS Medicine. The aim is to create a freer flow of data about research and results. The journals will pay for themselves by charging a small fee to the organizations and institutions that support the research.

Most of us, admittedly, will not have much use for free access to new discoveries in, say, particle physics. But it is a different matter when it comes to medical research. Popular nostrums abound on the Web, but it can be very hard, if not impossible, to find the results of properly vetted, taxpayer-financed science -- and in some cases it can be hard for your doctor to find them, too. The Public Library of Science could help change all that, creating open access to research. The publishers of scientific journals are naturally skeptical, but the real test will come in the marketplace of ideas. What will matter this fall, when the new journals make their debut, is how many scientists choose to publish in them rather than in the journals traditionally deemed the most prestigious in their disciplines.

