



Sustaining Values and Scholarship

A Statement by the Provosts of the Big Ten Academic Alliance

June 10, 2019

We, the provosts of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, are committed to sustaining and advancing equitable modes of sharing knowledge. Our 14 institutions embrace individual mission statements that support the common good, equity of access, and the global impact and reach of our research and scholarship. Collectively, our institutions' more than 50,000 faculty are supported by over \$10 billion (2017) in research funding, and our institutions have similarly invested significantly in our capacity to further our missions to advance knowledge. Together, we produce roughly 15% of the research publications in the United States.

Universities are fundamentally about creating and sharing knowledge. Research and scholarship reflect the cumulative benefits of recorded knowledge. And students learn by exploring the discoveries and creative endeavors that have been shared over time. Simply stated, past knowledge fuels new knowledge, advancing global progress and individual growth. However, our systems of sharing knowledge no longer work in support of our academic enterprise.

The current system of academic publishing is complex and has evolved unlike traditional markets. In its current state, academic publishing behaves as a price-inelastic market, with little relationship between demand and price. Cost increases for publications have been unrelenting with highs of 10-12% annual inflation in the 1990s and now a more "modest" rate of 5-6% that still outpaces the CPI. Publisher mergers and acquisition of non-profit society publications by commercial entities, along with "big deal" aggregations for publisher databases, have contributed to an unsustainable model. Today, five commercial publishers control a majority market share of academic journals, the venues in which a large proportion of our scientific and other discoveries are documented and shared. The majority of published research is locked behind paywalls and accessible only to a shrinking number of institutions whose libraries can afford the subscription or license.

In 2006, we shared [an open letter in support of taxpayer access to federally-funded research](#). In 2012, we [repeated our advocacy](#) for open access in the face of potentially restrictive legislation to curtail that openness. Since then, our institutions have further invested in systems, repositories, and local policies to support open access to the works of our faculty. And we have encouraged our libraries and faculty to work together to assess the value of purchased or licensed content and the appropriate terms governing its use. With Big Ten libraries' expenditures on journals exceeding \$190 million, we recognize that our institutions are privileged in the level of access we provide our campuses, yet the status quo is not sustainable.

Demand for open access continues and has been furthered by the rise of open access publications, federal and institutional open repositories, and an insistence by public funders that research results must be widely available—that equity be fostered. While no current model offers a fully tested framework to recognize the intellectual and financial resources our universities contribute to publishing, it is incumbent on our institutions to advance more sustainable modes of funding publishing.

The Big Ten Academic Alliance will continue its advocacy for a sustainable and open ecosystem of publication. We believe the recent actions of the University of California and European institutions represent a critical pivot in that ecosystem. These and other similar efforts reflect growing momentum and urgency about the need for change. We believe the academic community must take action to better recognize and to rebalance the contributions that authors, institutions, and publishers make. Most importantly, the values of the academy toward the advancement of knowledge must prevail.

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--Lauren Robel, Provost & Executive Vice President, Indiana University
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About the Big Ten Academic Alliance:

Headquartered in the Midwest, the Big Ten Academic Alliance is the nation’s preeminent model for effective collaboration among research universities. For more than half a century, these world-class institutions have advanced their academic missions, generated unique opportunities for students and faculty, and served the common good by sharing expertise, leveraging campus resources, and collaborating on innovative programs. Governed and funded by the Provosts of the member universities, Big Ten Academic Alliance mandates are coordinated by a staff from its Champaign, Illinois, headquarters.



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