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# Public Goods and Open Access

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# Should we plan a complete revision of the scholarly communications system or a minor overhaul?

- Without doubt, the system is broken
- Scholarly information is denied to some and rationed to all on the basis of ability to pay
- Archiving, Open Access, Public Goods-based modification of the current journal system are proposed as solutions
- Before moving to advocacy, let me share my vision of the future with you

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# Supply and Demand

- Supply

Enormous volume explosion in both journal articles and scholarly monographs

Doubling of NIH funding and rapid emergence of sophisticated science throughout the world

Creation of campus electronic archives will accelerate and add to this volume by making working papers, grant final reports, dissertations, book-length unpublished monographs, preliminary versions of published articles, data bases, etc. readily available

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# Supply- continued

Faculty refereed and non-refereed material will increasingly be available electronically for free as faculty understand the utility of exposing their material to the largest possible audience

GoogleScholar's digitizing and indexing of these resources will add to the flood of information

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# Demand

- Scholars and students increasingly will desire materials in digital formats and will place little value on other formats
- University budgets for information resources will continue to increase more rapidly than overall university budgets
- Journal prices will continue to rise at a more rapid rate than library budgets so libraries will continue to reduce the number of journals to which they subscribe. UNSUSTAINABLE

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# Demand- continued

- Federal funding agencies, by cutting the average size of grants, effectively will reduce demand for Open Source journals
- Monograph purchases will continue to fall as library budgets continue to be directed disproportionately toward data set and serial purchases

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# Role of Institutional Repositories

- A “must” if a university is to keep track of, make accessible and preserve the born-electronic scholarship of its faculty
- A “must” if a University is to be able to demonstrate to its funding public its productivity, importance and worthiness as a funding recipient
- An unnecessarily expensive “must” if done by every university. Economies of scale will lead to multi-institutional repositories.

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# Will Gresham's Law Prevail?

“Bad money drives good money out of circulation”

- Judgment: We have more supply than demand, i.e. more to read than we can read
- Unfortunately, the average quality of the material available is declining as unrefereed material or unrefereed versions of refereed material are increasingly accessible through various archives
- Reduced journal subscriptions and a decline in scholarly monograph purchases will reduce the proportion of traditionally refereed scholarly material that is available
- Thus it is increasingly likely that less of that material that is referenced in scholarly articles will have **full** authority behind it.
- Bad Scholarship may drive good scholarship out of existence

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# So what? Don't we care about content and not about form?

- Form locks the article's content into a package that carries with it:
  - The value added to the article by the refereeing judgment and editorial work put into it
  - The ability of others to locate the work cited and determine for themselves whether the interpretation given the work in the article in which it is cited is correct
  - Conveys to the reader the opinion of the article's author at the time at which the article was published, putting that opinion into the proper historical context

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How do we alter the forces that lead to this vision of the future?

- Embrace again the Circle of Gifts
- Embrace the Public Goods Model

**Two Essential Elements:**

- Scholarship is a public good
- Refereeing must be preserved

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# How Funding Agencies Should Deal With Public Goods to *Alter this Vision*

- As a condition of providing funding specify that exclusive copyright can be given to scholarly journal publishers for only six months
- That the scholarly journal publisher must submit the resulting article in the form in which it was published to the funders' publicly accessible archive six months after the date of publication

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# How Does this Differ from the New U.S. National Institutes of Health Policy?

- Copyright cannot be permanently given to a journal; NIH now permits such gifts
- The journal itself must submit the article to the funding agency portal; NIH requests that the author submit a version of the article
- The funding agency portal would contain the article in the form in which it is published; NIH may have the article in some other form in the portal
- The article must be deposited in the portal six months after publication; NIH requests submission zero to 12 months after publication
- The funding agency portal would contain all articles published; NIH will receive only those articles the authors choose to submit or the publishing journal permits them to submit.

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# What Would Follow Widespread Implementation of this Public Goods Model?

- Journals and refereeing would survive
- Journal price increases would be mitigated
- Large, comprehensive public archives maintained by the funding agencies would emerge
- Universities would focus scarce resources on repositories of unpublished material
- Libraries would remain an essential part of the scholarly communications process
- Gresham's law would not prevail

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# What Do I Mean by “Funding Agencies?”

- Government Funders
- Private, Nonprofit Foundations
- Nonprofit Research Institutions
- Private, For Profit Funders
- Universities

# Why Not Rely Upon Author Self-Interest to Promote a Voluntary System that Populates Publicly Accessible Archives?

- Such voluntary archives will never be complete
- Such voluntary archives will not always contain the article in the form in which it was published and will thereby promote Gresham's Law
- Such archives can be defeated by publisher restrictions

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# Why a six month's delay?

## Why not immediate deposit?

- It is important that subscription-based journals survive
- Journals must have something to sell if they are to survive and fund refereeing
- Six months publication delay should permit journals sufficient marketability to cover necessary expenses
- Six months publication delay will reduce the ability of journals to raise prices seemingly without limit

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# Why Not Open-Access Journals with no Publication Delay instead of Subscription Journals with a Six Month's Delay?

- Fine, provided that they are not funded by fees charged to manuscript submitters or article authors
- Such author–funded journals:
  - Shift the full cost of journals onto research universities and largely exempt teaching schools, private firms, research institutes, etc. from the cost
  - Permit an opening for for-profit firms to take larger shares of the market for journals away from societies

# Let's Avoid Making the Perfect the Enemy of the Good

- That is what some have done to date by arguing the free, immediate posting must occur and that posting after six months is undesirable
- Clearly, immediate, free posting would be desirable if it did not threaten the economics of journal publication and referring.
- But it does pose such a threat
- Indeed, such an argument has so threatened journal publishers that they have thrown their efforts into opposing any legal requirements of free posting at any time and the result is watered down policies like NIH's

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# A Modest Revolution.

- We do not have to start from scratch
- Both for profit and society-based subscription journals can be part of that future
- Open Source journals can also be a part of the future but we do not have to completely change the distribution basis of the scholarly journals industry to produce a bright future for scholarly journals

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# But can we achieve this end?

- Yes!
- The public goods nature of what we are doing is undeniable as the volume of scholarly output would wither dramatically if public funding stopped
- Both scholars and the general public understand this public goods nature and will collaborate to compel governments to legislate accordingly
- Private foundations already understand the public goods argument and will willingly follow along
- Biggest problem may be with scholarly societies whose bureaucracies value self preservation more than the objectives of the society

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Let a thousand flowers bloom but let's get on with the public goods model.

- Contact legislators and public funding bodies
- Contact foundation boards
- Begin discussions within universities about the legitimacy of mandatory requirements that all faculty scholarly journal articles become publicly available after publication
- Recapture scholarly societies that have forgotten their purpose