

NETWATCH

edited by JOCELYN KAISER

Libraries Protest E-Journal Prices

An international coalition of academic libraries has added its voice to a growing chorus urging publishers to hold down prices for electronic journals.

NEWS

Without fairer pricing agreements, the coalition says, costs will soon outpace the ability of libraries to buy electronic pubs.

"We're not out to put publishers out of business. What we really want to do is engage them in a dialogue," says Arnold Hirshon, vice provost for information resources at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, who helped draft a statement for the 1-year-old International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC), 42 groups representing more than 5000 libraries

(see www.library.yale.edu/consortia/statement.html).

ICOLC's statement notes that libraries are struggling to add electronic journals to print collections on flat budgets while publishers routinely tack on surcharges hiked each year for inflation. "You can draw an exponential line on this ... and you just can't keep doing that," says Hirshon. The statement calls for publishers to commit to lower prices for electronic journals than for print and to permit electronic-only subscriptions. It also criticizes publishers for passing on full R&D costs when many products are still bug-ridden. The coalition says its statement was inspired in part by similar principles adopted last fall by Dutch and German libraries (*Science*, 28 November 1997, p. 1558).

Mother of All Global Change Sites

The Web is supposed to usher in an effortless new era in scientific data exchange. One pioneer is NASA's spiffy Global Change Master Directory (GCMD), a place where earth scientists can track down data they need or share their own results.

SITE VISIT

The site is packed with 5200-and-growing descriptions of satellite and ground-based data sets on "the atmosphere, hydrosphere, oceans, solid earth, and biosphere." To list a data set, researchers fill out a form with fields like key words, date, country, and contact info, which can include a URL. Those looking for data can either specify fields or do a free-form, "Yahoo-like search," says project manager and climatologist Lola Olsen. Among records found by typing in "aerosols" and "nitrogen oxide," for

example, were an acid rain study in Ontario and meteorological data from the Kuwaiti oil fires. The directory also helps forge scientific links, Olsen says. Last year, for instance, one researcher used it to find colleagues studying the 1997 European floods.

More than 13,000 unique users now click on GCMD every month. "This is the only site like this that I know of on the



gcmd.nasa.gov

planet," says University of California, San Diego, geophysicist Bernard Minster, who serves on GCMD's science users working group. Indeed, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Web page describes GCMD as "the mother of all global change sites."

The compleat medical site. The *British Medical Journal* has just turned its traditional online journal into much more: a gateway to a wealth of resources organized by key word (www.bmj.com). Click on "asthma," for example, and you'll get a list of asthma books, jobs available in respiratory medicine, and related articles in other journals; or sign up for e-mail alerts to new articles on a specific topic.

HOT PICKS

Page of contempt. Self-appointed bad science debunker Steve Milloy skewers studies on everything from the risks of diet drugs to global warming on The Junk Science Home Page (www.junkscience.com). Although Milloy's acerbic wit makes some researchers' blood boil, others find many of his points valid—or at least entertaining.

Better teaching. Browse a database of more than 1500 projects and organizations working to improve K–12 math and science education at The Online Guide to Math and Science Reform (www.learner.org/theguide/).

The coalition hopes to open a dialogue with at least a dozen major academic publishers, from associations such as the American Chemical Society to publishing giants like Elsevier Science and Springer-Verlag, Hirshon says. Elsevier's John

Tagler says that publishers and libraries see eye-to-eye on many issues, but that others—including pricing—remain unresolved. "In the transition period," he says, "print is the only barometer we have for pricing the electronic."



Flower power. More than a century ago, German botanist Hermann A. Köhler compiled a set of medicinal plant drawings so detailed and accurate that many plant scientists still rely on them today. Some 270 of these chromolithographs from Köhler's 1887 *Medizinal-Pflanzen* are on display at the Missouri

NET PICS

Botanical Garden's Web site.* Shown here are the opium poppy (above), the source of opiate drugs, and spring adonis, used as a cardiac stimulant. James Zarucchi, managing editor of *Flora of North America*, made the slides from one of the few remaining copies of Köhler's three-volume set while a graduate teaching assistant at Harvard in the 1970s. "I found it very useful to take photos from that work because they were so good," he says.



*www.mobot.org/MOBOT/research/library/kohler/welcome.html

SCIENCE ONLINE

In this week's Enhanced Research Commentary: "Chemical Communication in Bacterial Biofilms," Kolter and Losick discuss a report in this issue (Davies *et al.*) and how bacteria form organized colonies. The online version contains links to related Web sites, including *Biofilms*, a virtual book; "Biofilms—The Movies," humorous tutorials about biofilms; resources provided by the American Society for Microbiology; lab home pages; and more.

www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/280/5361/226

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