

14 April 2010

Dr Malcolm Read OBE
Executive Secretary
Joint Information Systems Committee

Dear Malcolm

On behalf of my publisher colleagues, can I thank you again for setting up the opportunity for our candid exchange of views on Monday. We were asked to respect the Chatham House rule in relation to the meeting, by which we take it that we can report the information received but not the identity of the speaker, and we shall respect that in any external communication.

On the positive side, we agreed the potential benefits from fostering a further migration to e-only delivery, and identified the opportunity to work towards national site licences through extension of projects such as SHEDL. There could also be timely opportunities for collaboration on the stewardship of research data, where a comprehensive survey has shown that there actually is an access problem, in contrast to the 93% global levels of satisfaction with access to journals. As publishers, we set out the significant efficiency and productivity gains which we believe have been achieved through the investments of our industry over the last decade, and we explained the continuing investments that we are making to enhance functionality for researchers and access beyond the core university community.

Unfortunately the positives seemed to end there. The JISC side appeared to see recent efficiency gains as a natural result of electronic publishing rather than deriving from publisher investments, and seemed unsympathetic to our complaint that recent JISC advocacy for open access misrepresented publishers and promised savings for universities that cannot realistically be achieved, especially at a time of impending cutbacks in overall declining university budgets.

Instead, the JISC side foresaw a diminishing role for publishers, and indeed libraries, in the face of declining research outputs as universities seek better value from the scholarly communication system. Publishers see their mission as to support researchers, but JISC appeared much less concerned about that and warned that the cost of that support must be borne by university budgets as a whole. Indeed, the JISC side appeared to advocate a strategy of self-publishing via repositories, universities managing and exploiting their own intellectual capital, as the way ahead. We note however that the JISC budget has now risen to exceed the entire amount spent by the UK universities on journals.

It is hard to know where we go from here. Publishers will of course continue to collaborate with the procurement company, JISC Collections, and we are investing in the joint RIN-JISC-RLUK-PRC 'Transitions' portfolio of research, but beyond that we seemed to end up further apart than when

we began, unable to identify how best to work together constructively for the benefit of our mutual constituency.

If we are wrong in this interpretation, we would be happy to reconvene with your colleagues for a further discussion. In particular, perhaps you may want us to convene a separate specialist group to pursue the data issue.

Yours sincerely

Graham Taylor, The Publishers Association

On behalf of Nick Fowler (Elsevier), Bob Campbell (Wiley-Blackwell), Rhonda Oliver (The Biochemical Society) and Robert Parker (Royal Society of Chemistry)

CC: Sir Tim O'Shea
Professor David Baker