

Non-profit publishing: open access and the end of copyright transfer

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A major advantage of non-profit publishing is that we can maximize free access to all cell biologists. Consequently, online issues of the journal become 'free to all' six months after publication. We also participate in the HINARI initiative, which gives third-world countries instant free access to the scientific literature. JCS online is produced and archived in collaboration with HighWire Press (HWP), the internet imprint of the Stanford University Libraries. Toll-free inter-journal linking gives JCS readers free access to any cited article in the HWP archive, which includes *The Journal of Cell Biology* and *Molecular Biology of the Cell* and is the largest archive of life-science articles on the planet.

In 2004, we will be extending free access to JCS further by offering authors the option to make articles 'open access'. Open access is an online publishing model in which subscription revenue is replaced by publication charges and, as a result, each article becomes freely accessible online to all internet users as soon as it is published. Championed in some quarters, open access may not suit everyone. Its sustainability as a business model remains unproven, and so at present there is a good case for not completely abandoning current subscription-based models [Held, M. J. (2003) Proposed legislation supports an untested publishing model. *J. Cell Biol.* **162**, 171-172]. We are therefore adopting a hybrid approach. Authors can choose to pay a publication charge for open access or have an article published in the normal way at no cost (in which case it will remain accessible only through a JCS subscription for the first six months). Initially the publication charge for open access will be subsidized by COB at the introductory rate of US\$800 (£500/€750).

Another significant change that JCS authors will note in 2004 is a shift away from copyright transfer. Authors often understandably feel hard done by when asked by publishers to sign over copyright. JCS has always had a flexible attitude to copyright, allowing authors significant freedom to use material elsewhere. We are now going a step further by replacing copyright transfer with a licence agreement. Authors will henceforth retain copyright and be free to re-use material from their articles and post PDF versions on their websites. Instead of a copyright agreement, JCS will receive a licence from the author to publish and archive the work and can therefore continue to ensure that the digital information is safely stored and remains accessible to readers.

These initiatives are intended to extend our service to authors and readers. We welcome feedback from all members of the cell biology community.

**Fiona M. Watt (Editor-in-Chief) and
Richard Sever (Executive Editor)**