"Author Sponsored Journals" A Practical Variation of the "Open Access" Business Model

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- For subscription based journals, revenue is essentially proportional to the number of subscribers. That is, rates must go up if subscriptions are going down.

- There are not many options left to offset declining subscriptions through more efficient productions. HJM takes full advantage of LaTeX . Authors do their own typesetting in HJM style. HJM no longer provides free offprints. Authors receive for free final PDF file

- Journal production is a prototype of an "inelastic business environment" where a few major providers compete in a limited market. For journals the market consists currently of maybe one thousand internationally recognized research institutions and there are only about a handful of major publishers.
- The major publishers are in a better position to open new markets in academically strong but still under represented markets, like China and South America.

- Micro publishers, like HJM don't have a marketing division and depend on authors from these countries to get new subscriptions. But this is a somewhat limited option.

- Unless small non-profit journals find new revenue sources their rates may go up more than what is justified by inflation. Over time they may lose their traditional advantage of providing low-priced alternatives to commercial publishers.

Online Subscriptions

- First problem: How to incorporate online access into HJM's subscription model. HJM considered only a few possibilities:

- Charge only for print and make electronic editions freely available without subscription . This was quite popular in the late nineties. But according to information I got from leading librarians at Digital World Math Libraries, like Goettingen, they were not willing to pay a higher rate to compensate for lost subscriptions. I gave up on this idea. I am glad that I did.

- Let HJM join larger organizations and let them handle restricted access. HJM did not see a sensible benefit.

- HJM decided to offer free online access for subscribers of print. Thus we offered only a one price option: "Print+Free Online"
- Online includes access to the full archive, from Vol. 1, 1975 on. Regardless of subscription history.
- Access requires a license which has been borrowed from the original AMS license.
- Restrictions: No ILL's, no perpetual access. All access is lost after cancellation. Legal justification: Libraries buy only access but no possession of files.

- My belief: Files of published material should remain in the hands of the publisher. Publishers are responsible for maintaining the archive of published material. Of course organization like AMS reviews, Zentralblatt, and the Institute for Scientific Information have free and unrestricted access to produce their products. For inexpensive publishers, Portico and Lockss are of not much importance.

- For publishers, files are a major asset and should not be given away easily, certainly not for free.

- Some publishers believe in a moving wall. HJM never did. Moving walls are bad business. Moving walls take away a main incentive for establishing a new subscription, namely a free run of the whole journal. In most cases for getting a new subscription, this benefit of a subscription was the deal maker. Moving walls are similar to free online access but delayed by a few years. In mathematics, papers stay current for many years. I agree with the LMS that published papers shut be put behind a *subscription wall.*

- HJM does not have a published policy on posting final versions of accepted papers on arXiv. Only a minority of HJM authors are doing this anyway. In contrast, Susan Hetzlet from the LMS blames arXiv for the low number of subscriptions of the Journal of Topology. Because 90% of the authors of this journal post their papers on arXiv according to Hetzlet, there is not much incentive left for libraries to subscribe to this prestigious journal. Because arXiv is fully owned and operated by Cornell which itself is a library and publisher, I foresee legal issues with arXive in the future.

- The majority of our subscriptions still include print. Despite the popularity for compact shelving it looks to me that major universities still maintain a periodicals reading room.

- The demise of print would work to the advantage for smaller journals because a much larger percentage of journal revenues is spent for print related expenses, about 50%, while it is only about 5% for expensive journals.

- Elsevier offers no combined price for print plus online. Print is the same as online. Thus print is highly discouraged, a library that wants print+online pays twice for content, for example about $7,000 for JFA instead of the advertised $3,200

Open Access and its Variations

- Open access is somewhat of a misnomer, access is free but only for the reader. For the authors there are "processing charges". Oxford Open charges $3,000 while charges for Hindawi journals depend on the journal. For new journals, like "*Algebra*" there are no fees while for the established "*Abstract and Applied Analysis*" charges are $1,200 per article.

- For most publishers, Open Access is synonymous with the "*Author pays Business Model*"

- Peter Suber calls this a common misunderstanding in his paper "Open Access Overview"

- Peter Suber lumps together the vast number of OA journals that impose processing charges and the very view non-fee based free access journals. They may be called FA journals, versus OA journals.
- Most FA journals depend on volunteers who work for free or small academic stipends. Sustainability of FA journals remains on shaky grounds unless they can find an underwriter, say the host institution. This does not constitute a viable business model.
- Suber does not like the idea of authors using their own money to meet processing charges of OA journals. This is his favorite claim:
- *A growing number of universities maintain funds to pay publication fees on behalf of faculty who choose to publish in fee-based OA journals.*

- My own experience in dealing with universities that advertise publication in OA journals has been mixed. But I actually managed to get payment from a non-subscribing library in Germany. I sent them an invoice of $600 ($1800 -$1200 long paper discount) for a 60 pages paper. The library agreed to pay $300. According to the library, the other $300 were covered by the Italian co-author's library through a subscription. Of course, I accepted the deal. The German author was also informed to be prepared for an invoice of $100 as his share of the deal.

- This whole process took several months, and numerous emails involving even the departmental head and dean. The email exchanges were not exactly on friendly terms.
- The dean was unaware of his library's support of page charges something he felt were unethical.
- Suber wants to see subscriptions disappear in favor of OA journals
- *"...as OA spreads, libraries will realize large savings from the conversion , cancellation, or demise of non-OA journals"*

- Suber does not say what libraries will do with the savings. He might not be aware that they might spend it on more big deals with the mega publishers. According to information I got from an HJM author, his university in Belgium cancelled recently all journals that were not part of package deals.

- Only because of heavy protest of the math faculty, AMS journals could be saved. For journals like HJM there was no money left.

- HJM is subscription based but since its inception in 1975, HJM has asked for voluntary page charges. Until recently, few if any, authors considered our request seriously.
- In recent years, the situation has changed quite a bit: Most papers are now grant supported, and major grant providing organizations, like DFG or NSFC, support page charges.
- In 2012 for about 25% of accepted papers we received a request for an invoice close to the suggested amount of $30 per page.

- My take: As long as a journal has a measurable subscription base, going OA doesn't make much sense. Authors then have to make up for lost subscription revenue.

- Asking authors for money is a sensitive issue. Requires a case by case decision, some sort of profiling is needed. Authors should be supported by major national grants. However, for some countries, or type of authors, it's a hopeless case.

- In asking for contributions, journals like HJM are somewhat like public television: Subscription play the role of public funding and asking authors for money are our perpetual fundraising events. Only inexpensive non-profit journals can do this in good conscience.
- However, this kind of fund raising is very time consuming. It involves heavy correspondence with authors, invoicing and book-keeping. The money doesn't come in for free

- Supported papers are published on a somewhat expedited schedule in order to stay competitive with OA journals. Of course, payment is not the only criterion for faster publication. Younger authors are also given preference.

- Like most societal and non-profit journals, HJM allows authors self-archiving. That is we follow the green route. So far, not a single paying author asked for open access on the HJM website.

- For some countries payment of page charges is illegal. Japanese authors need offprints for justification of page charges.

- Authors from better but non-subscribing institutions are encouraged to buy an issue for $100 at the time of publication

Conclusion

- Only the future can tell whether our kind of hybrid version of OA will be successful: Subscription based with low rates but asking for modest voluntary page charges from grant supported authors, or for tax deductible private donations mainly from authors of non-subscribing institutions.

- My take: I am quite optimistic. Besides providing some benefits for payments, it is also a matter of convincing authors about the virtues of supporting a journal that is run and owned by the math community.