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copyright in the library

Scholarly communication

The world of scholarly publishing is in revolution. Nevermind that many scholars are unaware of it. Ask them about the revolution and expect some blank stares.

For those of us who study scholarly communication, the world presents a myriad of new opportunities for providing wider access to the results of scholarly research such as institutional repositories, open access archiving and publishing, university presses collaborating with libraries on digital publishing projects, as well as new forms for scholarly discussion and interaction such as blogs and wikis devoted to every imaginable subject, and the Institute for the Future of the Book's innovative platforms, Commentpress and MediaCommons. And there are new business models evolving to support all these new opportunities. But walk the halls of academe and talk to faculty and researchers, and you're more likely than not to find its business as usual. Look at the library's budget for acquisitions, and it's probably business as usual. Look at the quarterly financial statements of the few remaining mega-publishers of scientific, medical and technical journals (after so many mergers and acquisitions), and it's business much better than usual.

So what's all this scholarly communication fuss about?

Change in the world of academe is slow and painful; it's two steps forward and one back. You can go away for a decade and come back and not have missed much. Still, things are really changing. Really. I first drafted and posted this page about 10 years ago, I'm editing it today, August 27, 2007, and I am in fact making changes. For starters, there was not a single link on the old page that still worked, but surprisingly, all the resources I linked to 10 years ago are still out there (and Google helps me find them quickly).

In September, 1997, ARL and the Association of American University Presses (AAUP) sponsored a symposium on [The Specialized Scholarly Monograph in Crisis](#). We no longer talk about a crisis. You can't call something that goes on for more than a decade a crisis. But the problems described by symposium participants have not been addressed. They've gotten worse. There are now university presses practically on life support.

In November, 1997, ARL, AAU and the Pew Higher Education Roundtable sponsored a discussion among leaders of higher education focusing on concrete steps the university community could take to regain control over scholarly communication. A summary of the group's conclusions, "To Publish and Perish," is contained in the March 1998 issue of [Policy Perspectives](#). This article contains many references to earlier works on this subject.

Since then, a string of studies have continued to document the decline of the scholarly monograph. In summer 2007, [Ithaka](#) published its report, [University Publishing in a Digital Age](#), and soon after, the [Institute for the Future of the Book](#) (which wasn't around, at least not by that name, in 1997) [made the report available for comment through its new platform, CommentPress](#). Speaking of [CommentPress](#), check it out. And [ScienceCommons](#). And [MediaCommons](#). [Public Library of Science](#). [PubMed Central](#). [SciVee](#) and [nanoHub](#). See, things are happening.

Each year, Charles W. Bailey, Jr. compiles a [Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography](#) that references hundreds, er, update that to thousands, of articles, books, electronic documents and other resources that help us see what's going on. And there's the [DOAJ](#), the [Directory of open access journals](#). And [Sherpa's RoMeo](#) database that helps us to determine publishers' open access policies. The [fall issue of ARL's bulletin \(2007\) was devoted to the subject of university publishing](#) and included very concise, well-written and very readable commentary from a variety of angles.

If you don't know about these issues, do check out a few resources. I'd recommend the [CommentPress edition of Ithaka's report](#) because just a few weeks into its online networked life, it already includes valuable commentary from the community, providing a fuller picture of the problems than the report alone. [ARL's bimonthly bulletin on university publishing](#) is also excellent and through its variety of perspectives, gives a broad overview. But in spite of problems, the leaves on the trees are shakin' -- find out what's going on in your neighborhood and get involved.

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