

ROCKETED PERIODICAL FEES FORCE THE LIBRARY TO SEEK ALTERNATIVES

The subscription fees of major periodicals have rocketed in the past five years, for example, in 2000, it was still possible to subscribe 2,230 different periodicals for a budget of NT\$ 35,780,000, whereas in 2004, it required NT\$ 56,110,000 for 2,602 periodicals. In light of this situation, the main library of TKU organized a symposium last week (April 3rd) to discuss this issue and countermeasures. During which, the director of the library, Huang Hong-chu gave a talk on the adoption of Open Access (OA) system in order to manage the increased price without comprising too much the quality and quantity of the periodicals university subscribes each year.

The countermeasures she suggested in the talk include choosing either the paper or the electronic version of a periodical rather than both at the same time; joining associations of electronic periodicals in Taiwan so that university can benefit from having access to a wide range of periodicals with minimum costs; no repeated subscription when periodicals have been subscribed by individual department of college and in cases when subscriptions prove to be impossible due to membership restriction, an copying system through interlibrary cooperation should be in place. Above all, in face of the heightened cost, the best way is to implement OA that has been widely adopted by the international academic community.

OA is a relatively new on-line system that has emerged as an effective way of grappling with high subscription costs. It is based on an liberal and democratic thinking arguing that results of academic research should be made available to the public without cost. Publication process is identical to any traditional periodical; all publications will go through peer review as well. The major difference is that the authors themselves in the OA system finance the cost of publication. Some on line services

such as the Public Library of Science in the US and the BioMed Central based in the UK are well-known examples that swear by such a system.

Huang Hong-chu also cautions at the same time that free on-line access is not without its disadvantages. For example, as Google, the renowned search engine, is about to launch its 15,000,000 electronic versions of various publications, the issue of quality and reliability remains under scrutiny. It is vital for the library to screen the vast data available on the net so as to ensure users a certain degree of integrity. (Ying-hsueh Hu)

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