**SPARC: The Scholar Publishing
& Academic Resources Coalition**

**Coalition for Networked Information
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The system of scholarly publishing is a complex process that is centered on the intellectual property of the faculty author. Until recently, it was routine for faculty in the process of publishing to transfer the copyright of this property to the publisher. The intellectual property and the attendant rights form the economic basis of the publisher's investment. For many generations, this system, dominated primarily by scholarly societies and university presses, appeared to serve authors, publishers, and the education and research community well. During the 1960s, however, these traditional outlets could not expand fast enough to provide the increased capacity for publishing generated by a system of higher education that was rapidly expanding. Commercial publishers stepped in to fill the need. Some of these publishers discovered that some journal publishing could be very lucrative. A few have exploited the market and are doing everything they can to ensure future profits. Over the past decade, this phenomenon has contributed to a sustained period of significant price increases for scholarly resources, especially those in science, technology, and medicine, where the publishing environment is increasingly commercial and increasingly consolidated.

One key strategy in counteracting these trends toward higher prices is to provide additional prestigious and cost-based outlets for the best faculty work. To this end, ARL recently approved the development of a project called SPARC -- Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition -- a project that seeks to encourage the development of competition in the scholarly publishing marketplace.

SPARC is conceived as a partnership project of ARL and other educational and research organizations. Its mission is to be a catalyst:

- To create a more competitive marketplace for research
  information by providing opportunities for new publishing

ventures, endorsing new publications and information products, and recruiting authors, editors, and advisory board members.

- To promote academic values of access to information for research and teaching, the continuation of fair use and other library and educational uses in an electronic information environment, and the ethical use of scholarly information.
- To encourage innovative uses of technology to improve scholarly communication by collaborating in the design and testing of new products; advancing new publishing models as appropriate applications of electronic networks, such as Internet2; and developing systems and standards for the archiving and management of research findings.

Why SPARC and Why Now?

Increased competition was identified as a key strategy for addressing rising prices for serials ten years ago, but change has been slow in coming. A number of critical factors, however, have now converged to make the transformation of the scholarly communication system possible:

- Alternative models of scholarly communication are now economically and technologically feasible. The rise of the Internet and World Wide Web have made it possible for anyone to publish.
- Capable partners are ready to join with research institutions to create new publishing alternatives.
- Libraries and universities are prepared to redirect budget resources to support new forms of scholarly publishing.
- Faculty and academic administrators will support initiatives that offer realistic alternatives for disseminating research findings and scholarship.

Partnerships

SPARC seeks to partner with organizations that share the following values:

- Fostering a competitive market for scholarly publishing by encouraging new participants in the publishing field that are committed to principles of cost-based pricing.
- Implementing policies for intellectual property management emphasizing broad and easy distribution and reuse of material and the ethical use of scholarly resources.

- Encouraging innovative applications of available information technology to enrich and expand research and scholarship and the available means for distribution.
- Assuring that new channels of scholarly communication sustain quality requirements and contribute to promotion and tenure processes.
- Enabling the permanent archiving of research publications and scholarly communication, including those published in digital formats.

Potential partners may include:

- Professional societies and university presses interested in launching new publishing initiatives.
- Start-up electronic publishers that have already created publications in subject fields dominated by commercial publishers.
- For-profit enterprises that offer new strategies for controlling costs and improving access to research information.
- "Visionary" enterprises, including both discipline and institution-based server models, seeking to create entirely new economic models for scholarly communication.

ARL recognizes that SPARC is only one of a number of strategies that must be undertaken simultaneously to ensure long term access to scholarly research. Other strategies include working aggressively in the legislative arena to ensure fair use and other educational and library uses of copyrighted works in the digital environment; investigating options for faculty and the university to retain and better manage intellectual property rights; and the decoupling of the academic credentialing process from formal publication. But none of these strategies will work without the support and involvement of faculty, academic administrators, and the research and scholarly community. With these constituencies, ARL will pursue SPARC as one effort to build the partnerships necessary to create a future for scholarly communication that is robust, innovative, and affordable.