

## Open access

### Response to SSHRC's consultation on open access

The following document expresses some views and concerns among our member journals. Since some individual member journals have responded directly to the SSHRC Consultation within the designed framework, we will simply emphasize a few points here.

1. We appreciate an open forum about open access, given the convergence of Internet technology and the importance of research dissemination. However, it is our belief that the consultation process would have benefited from better advertisement during the last Congress. Some background information could have been provided to the different stakeholders ahead of time, to facilitate the process.
2. The definition of open access is a given: open access is based on the idea that the results of publicly funded research should be available free of charge to all Canadians. Two questions here: (1) Is free access equivalent to open access? and (2) What about the full spectrum of research that is not funded by SSHRC? These are very important questions for our members given that scholarly journals operate on very tight budgets and publish all types of research that may or may not be funded by SSHRC grants. Can we restrict Canadian research in the humanities and social sciences to SSHRC output only, particularly when many projects are not funded because of a lack of SSHRC resources?
3. Some members have expressed concern about the future of print journals. Is it assumed that electronic journals will replace print journals, or is there room for both? Assuming a move toward electronic learned journals from print journals, it should be done in a reasonable time period, as decided by journals and their readerships.
4. So far, open access is a proposed business model and print format is a distribution mode. There might be some confusion if open access is assumed to be for electronic journals only. Open access versus commercialism is one thing, and electronic distribution versus print distribution is another. In fact, one could have open access or commercialism with both electronic and print versions.
5. Electronic journals cost money to produce and distribute. They go through the same processes of managing and peer review as print journals.
6. Open access journals may lead to decreased revenues to journal publishers. Most academic journals in the social sciences and humanities operate very differently from those in technology and the natural sciences, which tend to focus on serving the interests of their disciplinary scholars and funding agents on a for-profit basis. Canadian journals in the social sciences are published with very limited resources for a much broader audience.

7. Repositories require an appropriate infrastructure. We must also consider all the ramifications. Views about the Quebec Erudit project differ among CALJ members. The Ontario Scholars Portal (26 universities) has been put in place to give access to a wide spectrum of journals electronically (and free of charge, given a licensing agreement), and other projects are being undertaken. CALJ members would suggest a single repository for Canadian learned journals in the humanities and social sciences, assuming the proper logistical support.
8. Legal issues: Copyright of electronic published articles must define clear lines of responsibility between the authors, journals, etc.
9. A culture of open access is yet to be developed and might be a prerequisite to the implementation of the system.
10. Fees/cost issues. Academic journals invest a great deal of time in the peer-review process. Of all submissions to journals, a small percentage (around 30%) will be published. Fees go beyond published articles. The prepublication process is expensive and has to be considered.
11. SSHRC grants to scholarly journals have been declining over the past few years, and they will continue to do so in the future. Whether or not there is a system of open access, funding must be restored to appropriate levels to support the dissemination of scholarly work in Canada.
12. Finally, SSHRC would be demonstrating its commitment to maintaining high-quality research if it were to support CALJ's efforts toward building on the strengths of its members, such as the new Best Practices Manuals and our other projects.

Prepared by Brigitte Lévy, CALJ President, October, 31, 2005