Journals' Online Access Costs Are a Shared Burden

I would like to suggest that the American Institute of Physics and the American Physical Society consider adding their journals to the list of prestigious publications whose contents more than six months old are available online for free (see, for example, http://www.highwire.org/lists/freeart.dtl). Some of us have access to AIP and APS publications, but many do not because of the cost.

In my opinion, this free online access would not cause a drop in journal subscriptions. Those of us who publish in AIP and APS journals need current issues, so we will not cancel our subscriptions if we have free access to older issues.

I have great difficulty gaining access to nonphysics journals; scientists in other disciplines have similar problems accessing physics journals. Free access to scientific publications encourages cross-disciplinary research, but commercial publishers will not be the ones who take the first step.

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BLUME AND BRODSKY REPLY: The American Physical Society and the American Institute of Physics would like nothing better than to have our journals available without charge, not only after six months, but immediately. There are, however, very real costs for the peer review, composition, production, distribution, and maintenance of the online journals; these costs must be met and someone must pay. At present, our major source of revenue is subscription charges, with author page charges providing a much smaller part of our income. (An examination of Joaquim Fort's list of "prestigious journals" that make their content available after some time shows that the majority are medical journals, which have the possibility of significant income from pharmaceutical advertising, which is not available to us.) As not-for-profit societies, we cannot run the risk of losing subscription revenue, which would likely follow from making our journals available without charge after six months.

Beyond material published online since 1995, APS and AIP have also been putting their earlier content online: APS, back to the beginnings of *Physical Review* in 1893, and AIP, back to 1985, with publications back to 1975 scheduled to go online this year. Substantial costs are involved, which must be covered. These backfiles are available at very affordable prices by subscription or modest fees for single articles. We believe this fee structure makes the material easily available to cross-disciplinary researchers. If we made these files of earlier articles available without charge, then someone—presumably the subscribers to current content—would have to pay extra. The entire community must cover the cost of distributing physics research results. If we do something that reduces charges for one group, we must raise prices for the others.

MARTIN BLUME
Editor-in-Chief
American Physical Society
MARC H. BRODSKY
Executive Director
American Institute of Physics

Letters and opinions are encouraged and should be sent to Letters, PHYSICS TODAY, American Center for Physics, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740-3842 or by e-mail to ptletter@aip.org (using your surname as "Subject"). Please include your affiliation, mailing address, and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Subaru is Public, Too

The News Notes item reporting that construction of Gemini South telescope had been completed (PHYSICS TODAY, January 2002, page 26) states that Gemini North and South are "the only telescopes in the 8-meter class that are public, meaning that any astronomer in the seven partner countries . . . can apply to use them." Actually, a set percentage of Gemini's observing time is granted to each partner country in proportion to its financial contribution to the project. Within each country's portion, proposals from that nation compete with each other. For most US astronomers, the share of Gemini observing time will be the most accessible source of observing time in the 8-meter class.

All of the 8-meter class telescopes are "public" in one way or another. The four telescopes that make up the Very Large Telescope operated by the European Southern Observatory will be the only telescopes in the 8-meter class that are public in the sense that any astronomer in the member nations of ESO can apply to use them. Proposals from all member nations compete for observing time based on scientific merit.

Subaru Telescope, operated by the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, is the only telescope in the 8-meter class that is public in the sense that any astronomer in the world can apply to use it. Currently, two-thirds of all Subaru Telescope time is dedicated to open use. The other third of the time is for engineering, the director's discretionary time, and for University of Hawaii observers. Of Subaru's open-use time, 90% presently goes to Japanese astronomers and 10% to non-Japanese astronomers. This ratio reflects a current preference for Japanese proposals, but not a policy, and is subject to change in the future.

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Antiferromagnetism Questions Asked and Answered

The obituaries are the first thing I read every month when I get a new issue of PHYSICS TODAY. I find them to be a highly personal and fascinating way to become acquainted, albeit loosely, with historical developments in widely ranging topics in physics through the eyes of the deceased's colleagues. However,