At its annual Midwinter meeting in January 1999, Journal of Academic Librarianship board members discussed the ramifications of Elsevier's recent acquisition of the title. The thesis of this resulting editorial is that academic librarians who talk to their faculties about transforming their scholarly communications by moving away from commercial publishers cannot concurrently serve on an Elsevier-controlled journal board. Only consonant discussions and actions can undergird the integrity and moral force needed to be effective in the academy. The rationale of those leaving the board involves a discussion of journal microenvironment, the journal macroenvironment, the contribution to librarianship, the balance between responsibilities to campus and the profession, and the endgame. JAL readers are encouraged to communicate their reactions to gstclair@andrew.cmu.edu. These comments will be posted on the home page at www.suffolk.edu/admin/sawlib/jal/jalhomep.htm.

**Journal Microenvironment**

Tony Seward and Barbara Barrett, representing Elsevier, were attentive to questions about the future pricing of JAL itself. They predicted that the price for the journal would not rise dramatically. JAL entered the market in 1977 priced at $14 for individuals and $15 for institutions; prices rose gradually to $29 for individuals and $65 for institutions until 1993 when Morningside Press sold the title. In 1994, JAI Press priced the journal at $39 for individuals and $80 for institutions. From 1997 through September 1998, prices were $60 for individuals and $160 for institutions. In November 1998, prices rose to $75 and $195 respectively. The latest increase, 22% and 25%, the largest in the journal’s history, occurred during a time period when JAI Press still belonged to the Johnsons who were negotiating the sale to Elsevier.

At the board meeting, Seward and Barrett made a strong commitment to the continuing quality of the journal and proposed solutions for problems with late publication of issues. Production of the journal is likely to improve in timeliness and in quality. Whether Elsevier ownership will have an effect, either positive or negative, on the quality of submissions cannot yet be assessed.

**Journal Macroenvironment**

While the price of JAL itself was certainly a concern, board members had more pervasive issues with the new owners. Academic libraries are a third party payer in the scholarly communications system. Teaching faculty produce scholarly content in their disciplines and consume it, but the bills, which have been inflating at 12% a year for longer than a decade, are paid by the library. In the inevitable environment of journal cut after journal cut, librarians are actively discussing scholarly communications issues, such as intellectual property management, choice of publishers, and decoupling certification from print publication, with the campus community. Librarians bring forward resolutions on university retention of intellectual property to faculty senates, librarians watch as the cost of science journals shapes college curriculums, and librarians lament the demise of the humanities monographs which can no longer be purchased because budgets are suborned by science serial price increases.

For librarians who are highly visible on campus around these issues to be working with Elsevier poses a moral and professional conundrum. Among commercial publishers, Elsevier has been one of the most aggressive in steeply increasing its prices to libraries. Sue Martin, Director of Libraries at Georgetown University, urged other board members who are actively engaged in such initiatives to consider walking the walk. As board members discussed what Elsevier action would make continuing on the board possible, Martin suggested that rolling back prices on all journals would resolve her moral dilemma. That does not appear to be forthcoming.

**Contribution**

Within the expanding journal environment, the JAL enterprise has been a compelling one. The journal, now celebrating its 25th year, has contributed positively to the quality of librarians and libraries. Studies of the relative esteem in...
which various publications are held rank it first or second
among all journals in the field. Anecdotal evidence indicates
that readers like the high quality of the articles, the engaging
nature of the columns, the quick guide to the literature, the
editorial comments, and the overall focus on practical prob-
lems.

Serving on the JAL board gives members the opportunity
to shape the growth of the discipline. By selecting certain
topics and themes rather than others, the board shapes the
future of the field. The board actively recruits material for
publication in the Journal and the editors often commission
works on compelling topics. Board members who are con-
sidering leaving will miss participating in this enterprise,
sharing ideas with each other, and seeing themselves as part
of the noble and historic print enterprise. For the editor, it
will be the end of nine years as the shaper of and voice for
progressive scholarship in librarianship—nine years of focusing
on change issues necessary to ensure a bold future.

BALANCE
In spite of these many contributions to librarianship, board
members also serve as librarians on our campuses; their loy-
alities are torn. Faculty and administrators trust librarians
more than they trust computer centers, scholarly societies,
bibliographic utilities, and commercial vendors to preserve
the heritage of the past. Librarians as a group have a reputa-
tion for fairness, reliability, and truth. Beyond that image,
many have traversed campus talking with department after
department about their responsibility to keep communica-
tions in their disciplines affordable and thus available for
students and faculty. Board member Nick Burckel noted that
as a matter of simple equity and fairness librarians need to
follow their own advice. Working for Elsevier will blemish
both our professional image and our individual reputations.

ENDGAME
Larry Hardesty wished that those board members who had
strong reservations about the change in ownership had con-
cluded their discussion and registered their decision to leave
at the Midwinter board meeting. He thought that would send
a clearer and more powerful message to campus constituents.
The device of this editorial with its opportunity for others in
the profession to contemplate the moral dilemma and com-
ment on it allows for a time of quiet reflection, individual
weighing of divided loyalties between the profession and the
campus, and consultation among ourselves via a listserv. It
also allows the general editor, Peter Hernon, time to find a
replacement for the editor, some column editors, and several
board members. Karyle Butcher noted that staying through
1999 to see through the publication of articles already se-
lected by the board seemed to be a reasonable and accept-
able compromise. It is orderly and deliberate in line with the
reputation for reliability.

CONCLUSION
In my January editorial, I noted that for librarians, change
was certain. A new publisher, a new editor, and new edito-
rial board members will create a different journal in the
same way that the move from Morningside’s ownership and
Martell’s editorship to JAI Press and Hernon/St. Clair did.
The JAI Press epoch is ended. The signators below commit
to other enterprises—renewed efforts on campus to aide
scholars in their discipline communications, other venues for
shaping librarianship as a profession, and the certain knowl-
edge that actions were consonant with words.—Gloriana St.
Clair

Don L. Bosseau
Nicholas C. Burckel
Karyle Sue Butcher
Deborah Dancik
Ronald F. Dow
Robert F. Dugan
Larry Hardesty
Eddy Hogan
Charles B. Lowry
Charles Martell
Susan K. Martin
Sarah M. Pritchard
Helen H. Spalding
Jack Sulzer
The editor wishes to thank Stephen Lehmann whose edit-
ing of her work over the last five years has regularly en-
hanced its quality.

PUBLISHER’S COMMENT
Elsevier Science notes, with regret, the decision by Gloriana
St. Clair and some members of the editorial board of the
Journal of Academic Librarianship to leave their positions
this year. We want to thank them for their work on the jour-

With the continued support of existing and new members
of the board, we expect the journal to maintain the same
high level of quality and relevance that has characterized it
in the past. As is evident from the Editorial and from the
Visions column in this issue, editorial independence has not
been compromised by the change in ownership. We only
wish that those members of the board who resigned before
actually working with us would have stayed and continued
to provide their comments to us, as part of a joint effort to
improve the scholarly communication process.

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