

October 19, 2009

Dear Oberlin Group, c/o Jonathan Miller

I received your letter, dated October 9, 2009 and read it with great interest. I admire the commitment of liberal arts educators to providing students with an understanding of science and technology, and I very much appreciate your respect for *Scientific American's* role informing general audiences of new advances, both in the United States and the rest of the world.

With regard to your points, I would like to address them roughly in reverse order. Firstly, I would like to correct a misunderstanding. There has been no change in the ownership of the magazine. *Scientific American* has been part of the Holtzbrinck group since 1986. Holtzbrinck also owns Nature Publishing Group (NPG), with the purchase of Macmillan Publishers Ltd back in 1995. The changes in management structure simply reflect the changes in the publishing industry and the wider global economy, as we all adjust to the new realities of new media and evolving business models.

I accept your point that *Scientific American* is not a core scholarly journal, at least as far as specialist audiences are concerned. However, in press coverage of your letter, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* referred to *Scientific American* as "probably the nation's most venerable source of science news written for a general audience". We at Nature Publishing Group share this respect for *Scientific American's* educational role, and it informs our strong and ongoing commitment to the publication. In addition, the magazine provides a unique opportunity to read substantial and insightful feature articles, written by leading scientists with a personal perspective. We plan to expand the content and scope in 2010, and we hope readers and subscribers will see the magazine as a unique resource and essential reading, both in print and online. We are excited about the potential editorial synergies, and look forward to further enhancing our understanding of the needs of academic, liberal arts and consumer audiences.

I do recognise that some libraries may choose to cancel their subscriptions following a price rise. However, I do not accept that this represents short-term commercial interests threatening the future of the magazine. The ongoing changes in our industry are real, and we need to ensure *Scientific American* survives as a thriving publication, with revenues to support further investment and development. The subscription price has not increased in many years and, at \$299 for an institutional print subscription, still represents excellent value for your students and faculty. The online site licence product provides campus-wide access, allowing the cancellation of duplicate print copies, and still generally costs less than a \$1 per reader.

It is unfortunate that this increase comes at a time when library budgets are under extreme pressure following the recession, cuts in some areas of public spending, and a fall in value of institutional endowments. But it is these very factors, along with widespread adoption of broadband access over the past couple of years that have so massively impacted the publishing industry. That said, I am truly sorry that you regard the announcement as too late, and disruptive to the annual renewals process. The price was set in summer of this year, and communicated through the usual channels in early September. We had expected that this would give institutional subscribers enough time to consider their 2010 renewal and the benefits of a subscription. I can only apologize if this was not the case, and I can assure you that we will learn from this experience, and improve our library communications.

I hope our mutual commitment to *Scientific American* will ensure its ongoing success. I assure you we will be working hard to ensure the magazine remains a valued part of your library holdings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Inchcoombe', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Steven Inchcoombe
Managing Director