

October 14, 2009

Steven Inchcoombe,  
Managing Director, Nature Publishing Group  
The Macmillan Building  
4 Crinan Street,  
London N1 9XW  
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Inchcoombe:

We the undersigned are all library directors of liberal arts college libraries and members of the Oberlin Group, a consortium of eighty selective liberal arts college libraries in the United States. As such we are concerned with the education of tens of thousands of undergraduate students each year. A twenty-first century liberal arts education includes an understanding of the scientific and technological underpinnings of our society. We seek to provide the students and faculty of our institutions with access to a broad range of scientific literature, including accessible, popular scientific journalism. As such, your increase in the 2010 subscription price for *Scientific American* magazine from \$39.95 to \$299 in print and from \$1,000 to \$1500 (depending on the size of the college) for an annual license for the online version of the magazine is unreasonable and hinders our ability to meet the information needs of our library users.

This increase is disturbing for a number of reasons. First, the announcement of the increase came as many libraries were in the final stages of renewing their annual subscriptions to journals, magazines, and newspapers. This gives us little time to consult with our library users and make a considered decision about whether to cancel this subscription or not. Secondly, this increase comes during a severe economic recession, when most libraries are cutting costs and are asking publishers and other vendors to preserve long standing relationships by holding down or forgoing price increases. Further, *Scientific American* is one of the oldest American magazines that seek to inform a general audience about advances in science and technology, with a publishing history that reaches back to 1845. While we understand that all publications need to be financially viable, such a dramatic increase at the present time indicates that shortsighted commercial interests have overturned *Scientific American's* traditional mission of disseminating scientific knowledge to its broad readership. Your actions are likely to result in many libraries canceling subscriptions thus threatening the future of a historically important magazine. Finally, this increase indicates that the new owners of the magazine have failed to understand the role it plays in our library collections. *Scientific*

*American* is not a core scholarly journal, which publishes unique scholarly research. The kind of accessible science reporting published in the magazine is readily available in many other published sources.

You should expect to see a significant number of subscription cancellations from libraries due to the drastic increase in subscription costs and the late notice of these changes. We urge you to reconsider this price increase and to return to a more reasonable pricing structure for both print and online versions of this magazine.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bagley, Director of Library Services, Agnes Scott College  
John P. Kondelik, Director of Libraries, Albion College  
Willis Bridegam, Interim Librarian of the College, Amherst College  
Carla B. Tracy, Director, Thomas Tredway Library, Augustana College (IL)  
John R. West, College Librarian, Austin College  
Jeffrey Katz, Dean, Information Services and Director of College Libraries, Bard College  
Anne Chase, Director of Library Services, Hutchins Library, Berea College  
Sherrie Bergman, Librarians, Bowdoin College  
Elliott Shore, CIO, Director of Libraries & Professor of History, Bryn Mawr College  
Carrie Rampp, Library & IT, Bucknell University  
Samuel Demas, Carleton College  
Richard Doyle, Director of Library Services, Stewart Memorial Library, Coe College  
Joanne A. Schneider, University Librarian and Professor, Colgate University Libraries  
Carol Dickerson, Library Director, Colorado College  
W. Lee Hisle, Vice-President for Information Services and Librarian of the College, Connecticut College  
Lynn Scott Cochrane, Director of Libraries, Denison University  
Rick Provine, Director of Libraries, DePauw University  
Eleanor Mitchell, Director of Library Services, Waidner-Spahr Library, Dickinson College  
Scott Silverman, Library Director & Coordinator of Information Services, Earlham College  
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Pamela Snelson, College Librarian, Franklin & Marshall College  
Janis M. Bandelin, Director of Libraries, Furman University  
Robin Wagner, Director of the Library, Gettysburg College  
Barbara Fister, Academic Librarian and Department Chair, Gustavus Adolphus College  
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Merrily E. Taylor, University Librarian, Washington and Lee University  
Theresa S. Byrd, Ohio Wesleyan University  
Dalia L. Corkum, Library Director, Whitman College  
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David Pilachowski, College Librarian, Williams College  
Mark A. Christel, Director of Libraries, The College of Wooster

*The Oberlin Group is a consortium representing 80 libraries of selective liberal arts colleges. The primary purposes of the consortium are to discuss library issues of common concern, share information on best practices in library operations and services, license electronic resources of interest to member institutions, cooperate in resource sharing, and establish communities of practice.*

<http://www.oberlingroup.org>