**NEWS RELEASE**

East Carolina University News Services

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**ECU Libraries negotiate new agreement with Elsevier**

GREENVILLE (02/02/21) - In a cost-saving move, East Carolina University’s libraries have signed a new contract with longtime publisher Elsevier to provide a journal package that includes the most-needed titles for faculty and students.

The agreement reduces the amount that ECU spends on Elsevier Freedom Collection journals by 75%. Elsevier is the largest publisher of scholarly journals in the world.

“While this change was driven by the immediate budget shortfall facing the ECU libraries caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe that it is a necessary first step in aligning library subscriptions and commitments with our existing budget and with university and UNC System values and mission,” said Janice S. Lewis, director of academic library services.

The savings will allow the university’s libraries to build a tailored collection from diverse vendors to better meet the needs of the university.

In addition, libraries will be able to balance the budget while investing in systems that foster open scholarship and information sharing. Funds will be redirected to vendors that emphasize open access, transparency in pricing, and financially viable business models.

ECU has licensed Elsevier’s “Big Deal” collection for more than a decade, but the cost was unsustainable in light of budget cuts and price increases. ECU’s five-year agreement for the Freedom Collection was scheduled to end on Dec. 31, but last July, the ECU Libraries exercised an early termination clause in the agreement to end it a year early.

Negotiations began on a new agreement, and library staff collected and analyzed information to determine a priority title list. A faculty survey provided valuable information about the titles most important for teaching and research, Lewis said.

The new UnSub service helped the libraries predict costs and fulfillment in various cancellation scenarios. This analysis incorporated usage and cost per use data as well as articles published and cited by ECU authors.

ECU libraries also negotiated changes to Elsevier’s proffered agreement to align it with ECU’s values for sustainable scholarship. These included removing Elsevier’s standard confidentiality clause, adding accessibility language and privacy protections for users, clarifying post-termination access, and reducing Elsevier’s proposed annual price increases. Elsevier agreed to all the requested changes. The four-year agreement can be terminated early if sufficient funds are not allocated to enable ECU, in the exercise of its reasonable administrative discretion, to continue the contract.

The new title list is available on the ECU Libraries website at https://sustainablescholarship.ecu.edu/wp-content/pv-uploads/sites/18/2021/01/Elsevier-subscribed-titles.xlsx.

ECU will continue to provide access to the nearly 600 open access titles published by Elsevier.

Researchers also will continue to have access to Elsevier journal content through existing library subscriptions and purchased backfiles, open access journals and repositories. For access to non-subscribed content, patrons are encouraged to take advantage of ECU’s robust interlibrary loan services or to search for legal open access copies using tools like Unpaywall or the Open Access Button. Library staff will monitor use and demand and make adjustments as needed.

“The support of the ECU Academic Council, the Deans councils, the Faculty Senate and the University Libraries Committee has been invaluable throughout this process,” Lewis said. “We also appreciate the counsel and resources provided by colleagues in the Carolina Consortium, the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition. We will share our new license agreement with these organizations to ‘pay it forward’ and assist in our colleagues’ future negotiations with Elsevier.”

Beth Ketterman, director of Laupus Library, said, “The project management and negotiations around this change to our Elsevier deal are both great examples of how our libraries work well together. Library leadership and key decision-makers were able to come to the table with the shared goal of reducing expenses while prioritizing critical information investments for our ECU community of scholars. This process also helped us develop and communicate our vision for what sustainable scholarship is for the university which will be critical for us as the publishing landscape continues to evolve in the years to come.”

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