

STM Publishing: Scientific Information in the Digital Age

Society benefits from the pursuit, distribution, preservation and usage of scientific discovery and knowledge. Scientific, technical and medical (STM) publishers are trusted partners in this endeavour and an indispensable link in the chain of creating, registering, certifying, formalising, improving, disseminating, preserving and using scientific information. STM publishers continue to make long term investments in publications and information services around which emerging and established scientific communities coalesce and evolve.



STM publishers have embraced the electronic and networked world and have invested heavily in it. Over 90% of journals are available online today, and publishers are retro-digitizing journals published in the print environment, often back to Issue 1, Volume 1 (in some cases going back 100 years). The result is that such content is more accessible and more widely used online today, and is also being cross-referenced with the constant stream of new knowledge that research communities generate.

STM publishers already provide online access to their catalogues since it is their main method of disseminating and providing access to their customers. Online STM publications and information services to a large extent define what STM publishers do and they are at the core of their mission and existence.



The e-book market for academic and educational titles has been growing rapidly, particularly in the last couple of years. Publishing and providing access to e-books online and offline constitutes another core market area for STM publishers. Many are retro-digitising their backlists in a fashion similar to that which has already been done in the journal market.

The e-Revolution of STM publishing commenced long ago, but accelerated exponentially beginning in the late 1990's. It has transformed not just how a scientific discovery is described, registered, certified, disseminated and preserved for posterity, but also the methods and procedures used in such registration and dissemination. Today, STM publishers offer not just entire books and entire journal issues for purchase and access online, but also chapter of books, individual elaborate illustrations (eg anatomical charts) and individual journal articles.

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STM publishers invested heavily very early in digital content, and they continue to invest in developing new tools and knowledge management techniques that will make research output ever more rapidly accessible for research and education (whether in traditional educational establishments or distance learning institutions).

STM publishers' innovations are not confined to tools and technology. They continue to refine traditional business models which centre around a mix of sales, pay-per-view and subscriptions coupled, where appropriate, with suitable Digital Rights Management (DRM). STM publishers also invent and experiment and compete with new business models to disseminate content; open access and hybrid forms between subscriptions and author-pays/grantor pays models are some examples.



Licensing practices and business models with respect to content and value have also rapidly evolved, with licenses for “core” content, discounted access to “non-core” content, and access to individual journal articles and book chapters and other small book contributions. The evolution of business models has resulted from negotiation and interaction with institutional customers, in some cases consortia and national entities.

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