

Dear Colleagues:

Last spring, the UIC Senate voted to support the initiative of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a consortium of 12 American research universities, to encourage faculty to retain rights to their scholarly works by using a document called an author's copyright contract addendum. We are writing to urge you to find out more about this initiative which is part of a larger national effort to address issues in scholarly publishing.

Scholars, provosts, librarians, patient advocacy groups, members of Congress, and even some publishers, have been building repositories and open access journals, conducting studies, and introducing legislation to ensure the future of research and the health and well-being of society.

As you know, when your article is accepted for publication you are expected to sign a copyright transfer or publication agreement. In many of these agreements, you may be giving a publisher exclusive rights to your work for the entire term of copyright in all formats. You may or may not be allowed to use your work in your own classroom, to include it in a work edited by you, or to post it on your personal website without asking for permission and possibly paying a fee. This allows some publishers to charge unjustifiably high prices for journals (especially in science, technology, medicine, and increasingly in the social sciences) and determine who has access and what they can do with the work. It allows publishers to develop proprietary electronic systems that inhibit the use of sophisticated tools, like text mining, to navigate across a broad set of the literature to find connections that may not otherwise be obvious.

The high prices of journals have led many libraries to cancel subscriptions, limiting the number of scientists and scholars who have access. More importantly, the potential of the digital environment to transform scholarly communication could be undermined by private and publicly-held companies whose interests are guided by those of their owners or shareholders. By retaining rights to your work, principally the right to post your work in a publicly accessible repository, such as PubMed Central or UIC's repository Indigo, your work is accessible by all scholars, scientists, and the public indefinitely. You are taking a step to help build new systems of scholarly communication.

You can find resources from the CIC, including the CIC's Statement on Publishing Agreements and sample Addendum to Publication Agreements for CIC Authors at <http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/projects/scholcomm> and at the CIC URL, <http://www.cic.net/>. In the near future, this information will also be available at the UIC Office of Technology Management (OTM) website at <http://www.otm.uic.edu/>, and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research website at <http://www.research.uic.edu/>.

As the creator of a work, you may hold rights under the U.S. Copyright Act. This letter is not intended to be legal advice and the University does not provide legal advice to faculty about their individual publishing contracts. You are encouraged to seek legal advice from your own personal attorney to ensure protection of your legal rights.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

R. Michael Tanner
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Elliot Kaufman
Secretary of the Senate & Chair of the Executive Committee