

UC poll on impact of loss of access to current Elsevier articles via ScienceDirect

In February and March 2020, UC's Council of University Librarians (CoUL) launched a brief sentiment poll to gauge the impact of loss of immediate access to current Elsevier content via ScienceDirect on the UC community.

The poll was developed and sponsored by the UC Academic Senate Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication (UCOLASC) and the UC Libraries. This summary was prepared by CoUL and UCOLASC.

The poll was open for five weeks earlier this year and was completed by over 7,300 UC affiliates (37% faculty, 31% graduate students, 9% undergraduate, 8% postdoc, 5% staff, 5% researcher, 5% other). As its purpose was to support the libraries in improving services for and communication with the UC community, the poll was distributed broadly but informally, without population sampling or IRB review. Because it was not a scientific survey, we are unable to share the raw data.

Impact on Research, Teaching, Learning: Regarding the impact of the loss of immediate access to current Elsevier journals on respondents' research, teaching, or learning: 33% reported significant impact, 44% some impact, and 21% no impact. Unsurprisingly, given Elsevier's journal portfolio, the proportion reporting significant impact was greater from health sciences-affiliated respondents: 52% significant impact, 40% some impact, 6% no impact.

Access to Articles: Respondents reported they are taking multiple approaches to get the articles they need, including asking a colleague at another institution (37%), finding them online (27%), using interlibrary loan (14%), and asking the author (11%). More than 1 in 4 (27%) report not pursuing any method to get the article.

Support for UC's Position: Thirty-nine percent of respondents agreed with the statement "I strongly support UC's goals of cost containment and enabling open access to UC research." Strong support was less common among health sciences-affiliated respondents (18%). Another 25% (26% of respondents in the health sciences) agreed with the statement, "Despite the inconvenience, I understand what UC is working to accomplish and am managing my work around it." Only 14% of respondents (24% of respondents in the health sciences) selected, "This is very frustrating. I need fast access to Elsevier articles for my work and UC should do whatever it takes to finalize an agreement as quickly as possible."

Impact on Relationship with Elsevier: Most reported the situation has no impact on their relationship with Elsevier (68%), but 15% reported it is affecting their decision to publish in Elsevier journals, and 13% their reviewing of Elsevier articles.

UCOLASC and the UC Libraries are encouraged that, despite the inconvenience, faculty, researchers and students across the system remain strongly supportive of UC's position in these negotiations. In continued partnership between our faculty and UC Libraries, we look forward to reengaging in formal negotiations with Elsevier to seek a positive resolution.