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ACM Publications: Access and Sustainability

The dissemination of research results and other technical information is one of the primary ways in which ACM carries out its mission as an educational and scientific society. As such, ACM seeks to make its publications

accessible to as wide an audience as possible. However, in doing so ACM also has a responsibility to its members, as well as to the profession at large, to ensure that its publications program is sustainable far into the future. Balancing these sometimes competing goals has always been a challenge. It hasn't gotten easier in the digital age.

The centerpiece of the ACM publications program is the ACM Digital Library (DL) and its associated *Guide to Computing Literature*. Through these outlets, ACM provides free access to the metadata of over 240,000 articles that ACM publishes, as well as to more than one million bibliographic citations to the computing literature at large. The

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metadata ACM provides is extremely rich, containing forward citations, clickable references, unique author bibliographic pages, along with citation and download counts.

ACM supports the desires of individual authors to make their work universally available by posting the accepted (uncopyedited) versions of their articles on their own Web site or institutional site. Thanks to the very effective indexing provided by Web search engines, this, in effect, provides significant free and open access to the latest results of computing research.

A large modern professional publishing program does incur expenses, however. For example, ACM provides access to professionally developed tools for tracking submissions and reviews, paid administrative assistants for editors, professional copyediting of journal articles, as well as development and oversight of the publishing program itself, including investigation and redress of charges of plagiarism.

ACM's commitment to sustained, long-term access to its publications rests with its DL. Support of this archival library, including clean metadata, search mechanisms, high-performance data server development and maintenance, as well as preparation for migration to future data formats, also incurs significant cost.

To help recover these costs, access to the full text of the definitive versions of articles published in the ACM DL does require a subscription. As a non-profit,

ACM is committed to hold the costs to the community at a very low level. This is accomplished by close attention to providing highly cost-effective internal operations, which are supported by the volunteer effort of ACM reviewers and editors.

ACM has thus far elected to use subscriptions rather than an "author pays" model to support the publishing program. In a discipline where much research is not supported by large grants and is not performed at large institutions, requiring authors to bear the expense of the publications program would shut out important segments of the community and severely impair research progress.

ACM's low prices for access to its DL have enabled wide availability (currently over 2,500 libraries worldwide). In addition, ACM facilitates access to its literature around the world through a pricing structure that is adjusted to individual's status (such as, professional vs. student) and geographic location.

ACM continues its commitment to keeping the barriers to access of ACM's research publications as low as possible subject to its responsibility to sustain long-term accessibility and growth. We will continue to track new publishing models and developments in our quest to provide the best service to ACM members and the community at large.

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