Colleagues,

As many of you know, the system by which scholarly works are given away to commercial publishers and then sold back to colleges and universities is increasingly unsustainable. The ongoing crisis in scholarly publishing, coupled with shortfalls in state revenue collections, has created a continuing and significant issue regarding library resources, and we want you to be aware of changes anticipated for 2017.

Over the years, the libraries have been fortunate to avoid reductions in its collection budget. However, the cost of electronic resources (which represents 70 percent of our collections expenditures) increases at a rate of four to five percent annually, meaning that even the flat collections budget under which we have operated since 2009 significantly reduces spending power. Each year, we have identified low-use resources for cancellation, but we have long known that we would eventually need to cancel more heavily used resources. Unfortunately, that prediction was realized last year as we were forced to cancel a number of journals and databases that received relatively high use.

Throughout 2016, we have been closely evaluating our subscription to the Springer journal package for possible cancellation. This is a large journal package with approximately 1700 titles. We collected usage statistics for every Springer title and found that 355 titles in this package received fewer than five uses in more than three years. When we more closely evaluated the 500 of the journals receiving the highest use, we found that KU Libraries provide access to more than half of these titles in other subscription databases, with the
first year embargoed. Consequently, not only are the KU Libraries paying twice for access to these journals, we are essentially committing to the total cost of this journal package for just one year of access to those titles and subsidizing content little used by the KU community.

During our negotiations with Springer so far, we have found them unwilling to offer us a smaller package of the journals that are actually used by KU students and faculty. Because of this and the fact that we will not have the funds to pay for the journal package with the proposed price increases, we have rejected Springer's first 2017 package offer and we will most likely not renew when our subscription term ends in December 2016. Our negotiations with Springer have been in collaboration with other members of the Greater Western Library Alliance (a consortium of 36 academic libraries located largely in the western half of the United States), many of whom have joined us in rejecting the publisher's initial offer.

What will happen?

We will retain electronic access to the legacy collection content for which we have paid dating from 2016 to 1997 (depending on publication start date). A significant number of titles will be available through aggregator databases with a one-year embargo. We will be able to quickly fill requests for additional journal articles through our document delivery service, often in less than 24 hours.

We will also reallocate some of the funds we have spent on the package to retain subscriptions to important journal titles on a title-by-title basis. We need your feedback to do this. We have updated the website with the list of the top 500 journals from the Springer package. We encourage you to review and share this information and send us your comments via the web form. We also plan to send out a survey later this fall asking faculty to identify their most important journal titles, with the hope we can compile a list of the most essential journals from all publishers.

We understand that the libraries' resources are vital for the work that you do, and we will continue to approach this situation in a thoughtful and transparent way. The need for this kind of action is also a useful reminder of the importance of the commitment to open
access that we share on the KU campus. Though challenges lie ahead, KU Libraries are committed to serving the evolving needs of scholars, students and instructors at the University of Kansas, and we appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

Kevin L. Smith
Dean, University of Kansas Libraries