Response by Tony Seward to Steve McKinzie's Opinion in "Rough Seas and *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*: Differing Opinions by Two Academic Librarians

OPINION #1: ROW STRAIGHT AHEAD"

While welcoming Steve McKinzie's support for *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* (LIBRES 2001 Volume 11 Issue 1; March 31) we would like to make one purely factual correction, and to offer a price comparison, in order to clarify the situation for your readers.

Mr McKinzie states that "The flap over subscriptions began in May, 1999, when the noted science publisher Elsevier purchased the publishers of *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*.....subscription costs to the journal went up almost immediately, an increase that, according to Elsevier's critics, was as unjustified as it was expected."

The actual sequence of events and price increases was as follows:

July/ August 1998	JAI Press Inc. (the previous owners) announce their price increases for 1999, including a rise in the institutional price of <i>JAL</i> from \$160 to \$195. The new price was printed in the last issue of the 1998 volume.
Late November 1998	Elsevier assumes ownership of JAI Press Inc.
Fall 1999	Elsevier announces new prices for 2000 - <i>JAL</i> price held at \$195.
Fall 2000	Elsevier announces new prices for 2001 - <i>JAL</i> price raised by 6.7% to \$208.

Thus it becomes apparent that Elsevier was not responsible for the substantial 1998/9 price increase, subsequently held the price steady for two years, and only introduced an increase in 2001.

We also welcome this opportunity to examine the claims on price made for *JAL*'s new competitor, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*. The publicity for *portal* emphasises that its launch is to serve "as a rallying cry against inflated journal pricing". Although it is too early to make an exact comparison on a price per page basis, since *portal* has so far only published two issues, it is worth making the point that issue for issue *JAL* is cheaper than *portal*. The institutional price for a print-only subscription to *JAL* is \$208 as against \$148 for *portal*, but the former has 6 issues, while the latter is quarterly. The comparative price per issue therefore works out as \$34.67 for *JAL*, as against \$37 for *portal*. We have deliberately focused on the pricing for print-only, since comparisons between the electronic-only and print + electronic options available for each journal would be too complicated and lengthy to undertake here. However, with the range of electronic options offered by Elsevier through ScienceDirect, we are

confident that such comparisons will be equally favourable to *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*.

For full information on the pricing policies of each journal see:

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jacalib>

<http://www.press.jhu.edu/press/journals/pla>

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