

***Publishing Humanities
and Social Science
Journals***

***A pilot study of eight journals published
by US Associations***

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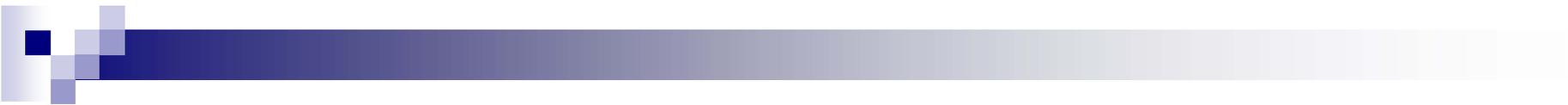
Why study HSS journals?

- STM journals the major emphasis within scholarly publishing
- HSS journal business data largely out of date
- Move to OA in STM journals likely to exert strong “pull” on HSS
- What are the implications of changing the business models of HSS journals in order to achieve increased free access to their journal content?
- Framework required to analyze current, real business data
- Pilot study (funded by Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) set out to develop tools & methods to test if OA sustainable



The 8 associations participating in this study:-

- American Anthropological Association
- American Academy of Religion
- American Economic Association
- American Historical Association
- American Political Science Association
- American Sociological Association
- American Statistical Association
- Modern Language Association



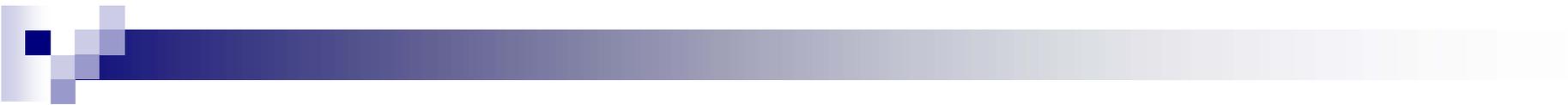
The 8 journals covered a broad range of subject disciplines:-

- “Humanities”: modern languages, history & religion
- “Social sciences”: economics, sociology, anthropology, politics & statistics
- ALL available online & print
- Six quarterlies, three bi-monthly or 5 times/yr
- Titles for pilot study selected by the participating Associations



Initial observations: compared to STM journals (Waltham: JISC 2005 report)

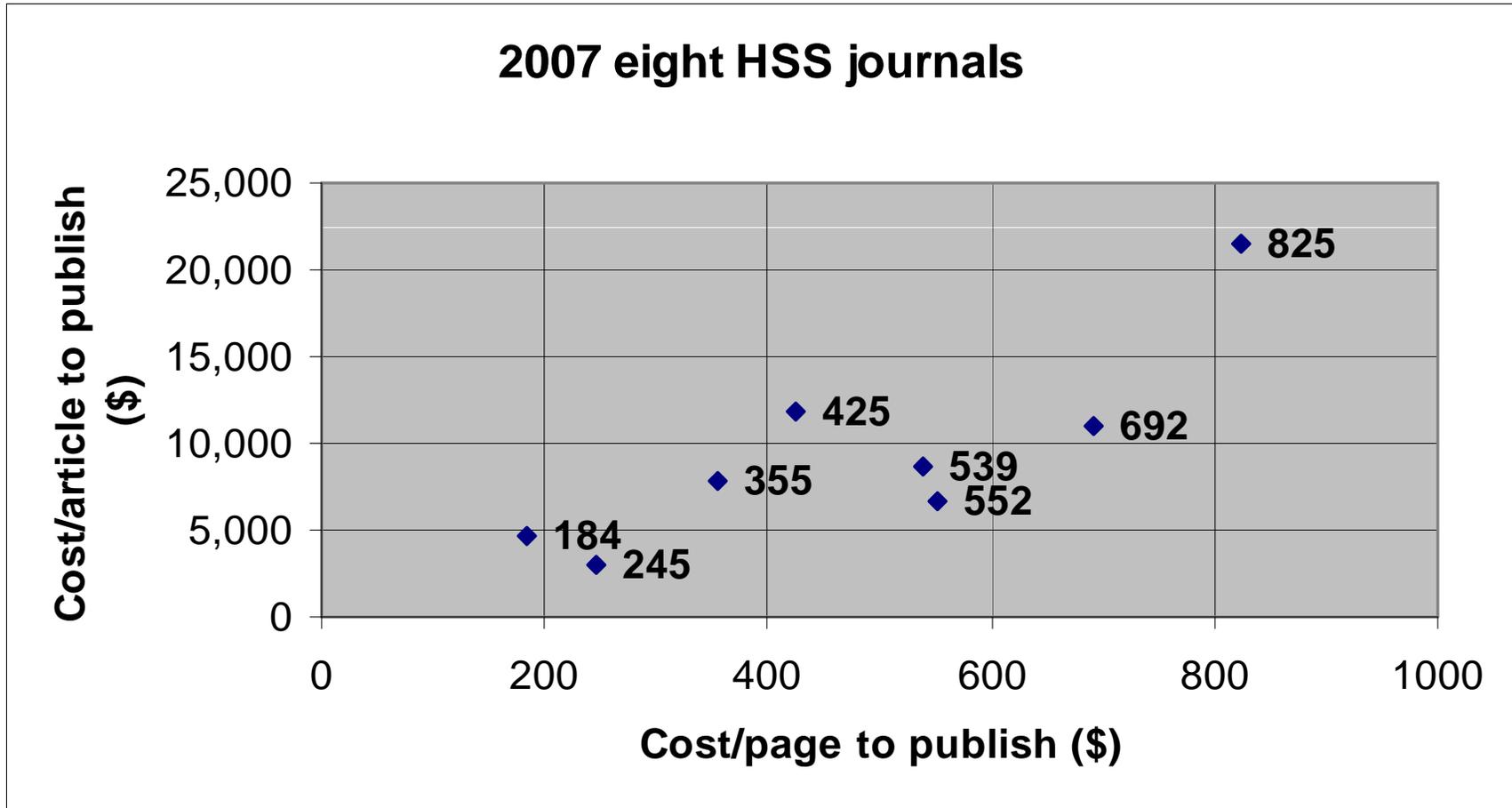
- Peer-reviewed article content less, range 24 – 121 articles/yr: Ave 55 (or 62%) of pages published
- Peer-reviewed articles longer, range 12pp->28pp: Ave 19pp
- Highly selective ‘flagship’ status of these journals, range 4%->49%: On average > 10% of articles submitted are published
- Advertising pages on average are high, given publication frequency
- Authors largely from USA (82% in small random sample)
- Speed of publication not a driver (for most)



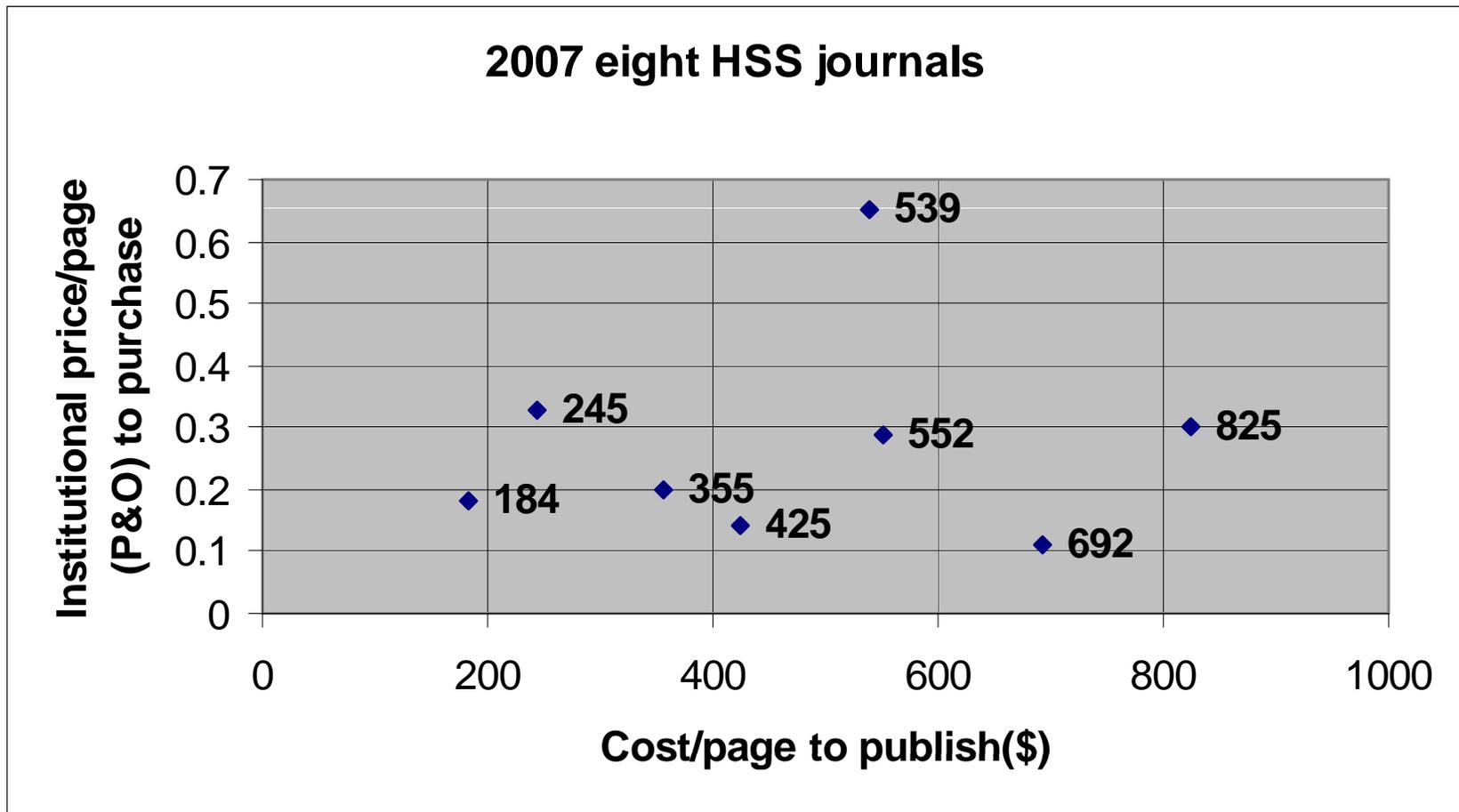
Methodology

- Collect & collate business information in consistent & comparable formats over most recent 3 fiscal years (2005->2007)
 - Two templates provided to each publisher
 - ‘Author & readers’ = subs, site licenses, consortia, pricing & article submissions data
 - ‘P&L’ = ALL revenues & ALL costs of publishing
- “Imagine that the journal disappeared overnight—what costs would the association have to meet?”**

Averages are misleading



Results are complex but *everyone* wants averages!





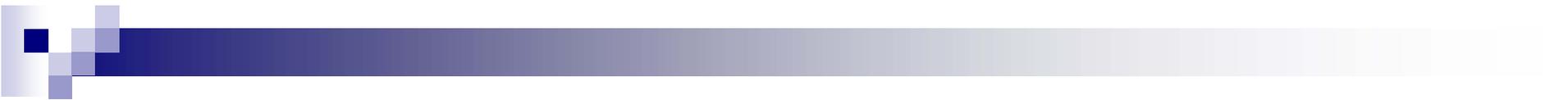
Journal revenues & costs 2005-2007

- Analyzed on a per journal, & per page basis; cost per article poor measure as article lengths varied (range 12pp->28pp)
- Costs increased by average 6%
- Revenues increased by average 10%
- Number of articles published : stable
- Advertising revenue up for 5 journals emphasizing their visibility *in the print version*



Overview of journal costs & revenues

- Cost per page published in 2007 ranged from \$184 -> \$825
- Revenue per page published in 2007 ranged from \$203 -> \$1,480
- Some of the journals lost money in one or more of the years considered



Surplus or deficit?

- Differences in business philosophy drive financial performance at the individual journal level
- Association leadership agreed with this statement (attributed to OUP)

“For (any journal) to remain viable we, the publisher, need to receive sufficient revenue to cover both direct costs and indirect costs. In addition, we need to make a surplus, which, as a university press, we reinvest into further publishing developments, and directly into the academic community via contributions to our parent university.”



What about 'author pays' – Gold OA

- Per page costs for peer-reviewed article content *only* & removing costs of *print*
- Longer articles
- High proportion of non-peer reviewed content



What about depositing articles in online repositories :‘Green’ OA?

- Under active experimentation
- Of the 8 publishers – 2 are ‘green’, 1 is ‘white’, and 1 is ‘blue’
- Length of embargo period?



Reflections: Factors affecting publishing costs

- Submission: Acceptance ratios
- Amount of editorial work pre- & post-acceptance
- Print circulation & effectiveness of print provider
- Non article content- amount & type
- Research article length



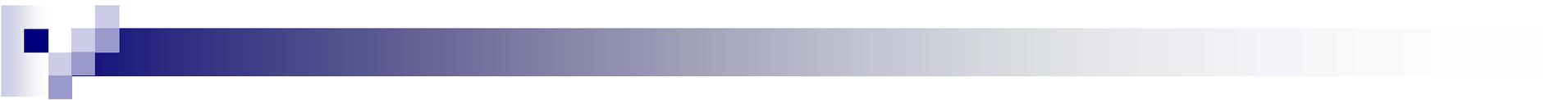
Reflections

- Non-cash contributions not assessed within scope of study but ‘in-kind’ contributions made by universities & faculty
- Academic library subscriptions strongly relied upon & subsidize Member copies
- Print copy “essential” especially within humanities
- Revenues from print deliver margin
- Online journal pricing does not reflect online value

HHS journal study – so what?

Eight HHS journals 2007





Further research

- Limited sample size -> much care in generalizing
- Larger dataset from small, medium & large associations – are the pilot study figures representative?
- Ranges of journal costs & revenues by discipline, frequency, extent & circulation will most accurately reflect the true complexity of supply-side costs & revenues
- What is best practice?
- What about the current full costs of existing OA journals on HSS?



‘Buy in’ - what we learned

- Providing the detailed information for cross publisher comparison requires considerable staff time & effort.
- Even this study which was focused on a small & committed group of associations ran into issues of the political & administrative will to provide all the data requested.
- Essential to require at the outset commitment from associations **AND** their publishing partners



For more about this study see:

- *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*: Full report to be published in volume 41, number 3, **April 2010**.

- *Learned Publishing*: an overview of the report to be published in:

Waltham M. Humanities and social science journals: a pilot study of eight US associations. *Learned Publishing*, 23: No. 2 **April 2010**: 39-46

- Any questions do contact me: mary@marywaltham.com