These guides are tools designed for library leaders to use for organizing a summer- or semester-long discussion series. Each guide offers a brief scoping statement, a suggested reading or resource to review, and a set of discussion questions to launch an hour-long informal conversation among library staff.

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Developed by the Association of Research Libraries
Office of Scholarly Communication
The complete series is at www.arl.org/sc/brownbag/

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Increasing Access to Publicly Funded Research

Discussion Leader’s Guide (revised May 2008)
Each brown bag session provides an opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of a particular set of issues involved in the changing processes of scholars’ communication efforts. This guide is designed for a simple hour-long lunchtime discussion. Prework will be essential in creating common ground and providing a foundation for the conversation. Distribute the assignment at least a week prior to the session. A list of discussion questions are arranged in sequence below, but feel free to skip some if you want to spend more time on particular questions. It is not necessary to distribute the questions before the session; however, if you think it would be helpful to your group in launching discussion, consider sharing a couple of the questions in advance.

Scoping Statement
With the implementation of the NIH’s Public Access Policy in April 2008, discussion of the potential value and effects of widespread public access to the products of funded research has accelerated, particularly among science researchers.

This discussion will focus on the concept of public access. There are many good arguments for creating public access policies for funded research. These might be widely discussed in the sciences, but may apply to other disciplines as well. Unfortunately misunderstanding about the practices and effects of depositing works for public access are not uncommon. This makes articulating the processes for achieving public access and the benefits for researchers and the advancement of research fronts particularly important.

Note there is also a discussion guide on author rights that complements discussion of public access to funded research.

Goals
Participants begin a process of educating themselves about the ongoing discussion on public access to federally funded research.

Participants develop strategies for engaging faculty attention to the implications of public access policies for the advancement of research.

Optional Tools for Facilitating Discussion
• A flip chart or white board for brainstorming and gathering responses, particularly for the later questions.

• Copies of the Swan article.

Prework for Participants
(Distribute prior to the session.)
http://www.americanscientist.org/template/AssetDetail/assetid/55131/page/1

Discussion Questions

Access to federally funded research is often discussed from the standpoint of its potential benefits for taxpayers outside of academe. What are some ways that public access can be expected to accelerate the progress of research?

Researchers individually can expect to benefit from public access policies such as the NIH policy. What might be the advantages for a scientist when her or his works are available in a repository through a public access policy?

Many other countries are rapidly implementing public access policies. For example, almost all British funding bodies have public access policies with mandatory six-month deposit of works. A Canadian policy calls for a six-month embargo. Only one US federal funding body has a policy and it allows a 12-month embargo. What might be the implications if US or Canadian funded research is substantially less accessible than the works of researchers and scholars from other countries?

How is a mandatory deposit policy different from a policy on open access publishing?

Some publishers worry that libraries will cancel subscriptions to journals in large numbers if substantial numbers of articles are available in public repositories. What are your reactions to this concern?

All U.S. proposals for public access policies have been limited to science, technical, and medical research. Why has this been the case? Why might it be helpful for other fields to consider similar policies?

Many of the arguments for policies affecting funded research also support depositing works in an institutionally focused repository. What are the parallels? Are there ways to jointly promote both practices?

Further Reading

Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Policy on Open Access to Research Outputs.
http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/34846.html

SPARC Resources on Public Access to Research http://www.arl.org/sparc/advocacy/

Alliance for Taxpayer Access Web site http://www.taxpayeraccess.com